

VETERAN: JERRY DAVIS MINTON
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INTERVIEWER: GREG KUBES
COURT REPORTER: JANET McCONATHY
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MR. KUBES: Good morning. Today is September 29, 2011. My name is Greg Kubes. I am conducting an oral history interview at the Tarrant County Bar Association offices in Fort Worth, Texas. The court reporter today is Janet McConathy with the Texas Court Reporters Association.

Our veteran this morning is Mr. Jerry Minton. His date of birth is August 13, 1928. He served in the United States Air Force from March 1951 to March 1955.

Good morning, Mr. Minton.

MR. MINTON: Good morning.

MR. KUBES: Yes. Glad to have you here with us. If you --

MR. MINTON: Glad to be here.

MR. KUBES: Yes. Wonderful. Thank you. Thank you very much for your service to our country, and we're very honored to capture a portion of this here.

MR. MINTON: It was an honor for me to serve.

MR. KUBES: Yes. If you can, please state your place of birth.

MR. MINTON: Fort Worth, Texas.

MR. KUBES: Okay. And what are the names of your parents?

MR. MINTON: My dad's name is R.B. Minton, and my mother's name is Anna Davis Minton.

MR. KUBES: And do you have any siblings? If so, how many and what ages?

MR. MINTON: I had one sister who died about five years ago

in her early 70s.

MR. KUBES: Okay. Very good. And where did you grow up?

MR. MINTON: Fort Worth, Texas.

MR. KUBES: God bless you. Me too. Harris Hospital?

MR. MINTON: Saint Joseph's.

MR. KUBES: Saint Joseph's. All right. Were your parents in the military?

MR. MINTON: No.

MR. KUBES: What did your parents do? Are they -- were they from around here as well?

MR. MINTON: Well, my mother was born in Mount Pleasant, Texas; came here in her early teens with the family. My father was born in Fort Worth, Texas. She was a lifelong housewife, and he managed, along with my grandfather and his brother, the Minton Blue Bonnet Packing Company, a small packing house out on the north side of Fort Worth.

MR. KUBES: Very good. Now, I imagine your sister, she probably wasn't in the military?

MR. MINTON: No.

MR. KUBES: Okay. So were you drafted or did you enlist?

MR. MINTON: I enlisted.

MR. KUBES: And so you were living here in Fort Worth at the time?

MR. MINTON: Sure was.

MR. KUBES: And very interested to know, please share with us, why did you join? If you can, take us through that.

MR. MINTON: Well, I had graduated from the University of

Texas in August of 1949 and came home and went to work in the packing house. And the next June, the Korean War kicked off. It actually wasn't a war. They called it a NATO -- not a NATO but a UN police action. And I knew that I was single, 21 or 22 years old, good health, and that I would be drafted. But I love to fly. It's was a lifelong thing with me. I started flying when I was in high school. And I thought, Well, I'm going to go - it's my duty to go - but I want to fly. So I enlisted as an aviation cadet and was assigned to the class that started in March '51, Class 52-Baker.

But I found out in the course of enlisting for aviation cadets that people who had a bachelor's degree in industrial management, which was what my major was, were entitled to apply for a direct commission. And so I applied, and I was accepted as a cadet and passed the physical and were -- was waiting for the reporting date the following March. And I think in November I got a letter in the mail appointing me as second lieutenant in the Reserves of the United States Air Force. So I just requested that I be assigned to the same training class but as an officer rather than as an aviation cadet. And so that's that part of the story.

MR. KUBES: Wow. That's great. So you were able to come in at an officer level?

MR. MINTON: Right.

MR. KUBES: And -- very good. What did it feel like, if you can please share with us, the first days of service? So you're in there as a second lieutenant officer in training. So you're coming in at a level -- a nice entry level. What did -- if you can, go ahead and share with us what the first days looked like actually in service.

MR. MINTON: Well, it wasn't typical of what you may see in the movies or what have you because while I was waiting to report for active duty, I got a check in the mail to buy uniforms, so I went down to the old Washer Brothers' store in Fort Worth, which probably no one here remembers, and bought myself a suit of uniforms and drove up to the basic flight training school at Paris -- Perrin Air Force Base at Sherman, Texas. And I drove up to the gate and returned the guard's salute, went to training headquarters, presented my orders. They processed me and assigned me a room in the BOQ, which is bachelor officers' quarters, and in a few days we started classes, flying and ground school. So the things that you read about basic training and boot camp and what have you, well, as you may see on television, I didn't participate in that.

MR. KUBES: Yeah. Very interesting. You had mentioned that you were intrigued with flying before. Had you flown before you joined the Air Force?

MR. MINTON: Yes. I -- when I was a small boy, there was a

barnstormer -- I don't know that you've heard of those or

not --

MR. KUBES: Crop duster?

MR. MINTON: -- and he was giving airplane rides out on the southeast side of Fort Worth in a big pasture, flying an old Ford Tri-Motor and would take about ten people at a time. It was a Tri-Motor airplane, three engines, wicker seats on the inside. My dad bought a ticket, I think 4 or \$5 apiece, for myself and my mother. He didn't care to fly, so he sent us. And I thought that was just great. I was probably seven years old, and I started building model airplanes and reading books about flying and about the flying and the aces and everything in World War I. Everybody wanted to, you know, chase the Red Baron or some variation thereof.

And when I was in my last semester at Northside High in Fort Worth, I found out that I could take flying lessons in a Piper Cub out at Meacham Field. And so without the knowledge of my parents - God rest their souls - I put together nickels and dimes and quarters from lunch money, this, that, and the other and little gifts,, and compensation for chores, and I would save that money. And every time I could put together a few dollars, I'd go out and take a flying lesson. So I soloed in an airplane before I was out of high school, and then I gave it up for a while while I was in college, but it was always a

fascinating thing to me, still is. I would give anything

to fly today. Only I would want to -- I would like to ride in an F-16 out at the Reserve squadron, but that's not available.

MR. KUBES: So it was pretty easy to pick which branch you were going to go into?

MR. MINTON: I had no doubt in my mind I was going into the United States Air Force.

MR. KUBES: Wonderful. Wow. And so your first days there in the officer group, what did it feel like? What were the emotions that were coming through you that -- when you first enlisted? You're starting training. You're now in your first days of serving. What were the emotions?

MR. MINTON: I thought it was great. I was getting paid to fly. Now, I had to learn to do it the Air Force way. They didn't care what you knew when you got there, although everything that you had learned helped some, but some of it you needed to unlearn and learn the Air Force way. So I was happy as could be.

MR. KUBES: Do you remember some of your instructors? Do some of them stand out? Any individuals or names?

MR. MINTON: Well, there were four of us assigned to an instructor for flight training. There was a first lieutenant named Lucien E. Stone, and I lost track of him after flight training. I think I ran into him at some base in the United States, and I heard later on that he had

retired and was living down by Cleburne, but I never did

look him up. And there were other instructors in ground school. There were a lot of them, and --

MR. KUBES: Were there --

MR. MINTON: But I don't -- I can remember faces but not names.

MR. KUBES: Any nuggets of wisdom that you remember from Lucien Stone? Any interesting --

MR. MINTON: Not in particular. He was a good young pilot. I do remember that one of his favorite things to do when we approached the end of a flying period, if we were at, say, 9,000 feet and needed to get down to 2,000 feet, his idea of a quick way down is just to put the airplane in a spin and spin down to 2,000 feet and lose altitude quickly and in a particular spot. And I liked that too. I liked aerobatics.

MR. KUBES: Very good. So it was relatively pretty easy to get through training, very eager, they were paying you to fly.

MR. MINTON: Sure. I did pretty well.

MR. KUBES: Very good. So within your -- so you are about to join the Korean service.

MR. MINTON: Right. The Forgotten War.

MR. KUBES: Yeah, The Forgotten War?

MR. MINTON: That's what people call it now, if they call it anything. Most people have forgotten. They remember

World War II and Vietnam.

MR. KUBES: After your training, where exactly did you go?

MR. MINTON: Well, I went through basic flight training at Perrin Air Force Base in Sherman, and after basic training I was assigned to jet advance to become a jet fighter pilot. And the base that I was assigned to was at Bryan, Texas, Bryan Air Force Base, and so when I graduated from basic flight training, got in the car, took my gear, and moved into a BOQ at Bryan. There we flew T-6s and T-28s, prop planes, before they transitioned us into jets.

MR. KUBES: I'm sure you had a University of Texas longhorn pen on to show --

MR. MINTON: Not on a uniform.

MR. KUBES: You couldn't?

MR. MINTON: It's not prescribed. It's a -- you would have had to take it off or someone would have taken it off for you. You wore the applicable insignia.

MR. KUBES: I gotcha. So after your training down in Perrin and then Bryan, Texas, where were you assigned? Where did you go? Were you actually then deployed out to Korea or --

MR. MINTON: No. When we got our wings, they also handed us orders to report to Japan, actually, for processing to Korea with temporary duty en route for fighter gunnery training at the fighter gunnery school in Las Vegas, Nevada. That's Nellis Air Force Base. It is still the

fighter gunnery school. So I drove out there and was there

for about two months.

MR. KUBES: Okay. And then after your time in Las Vegas, Nevada, at the Air Force base out there, the school, where did you go after that?

MR. MINTON: I went to Korea.

MR. KUBES: Where -- was there an exact location there in Korea that you were at?

MR. MINTON: They flew us on a chartered airliner to Tachikawa Air Force Base just outside of Tokyo, and we processed there and were assigned to a squadron, and then we moved down to Iwakuni, Japan. Of all things, after flying across the Pacific Ocean from Sacramento, California to Japan, they moved us from near Tachikawa to Iwakuni on a train, old Japanese troop train. And then we rode a combat cargo plane into -- I was assigned to the 80th Squadron, 80th Fighter Bomber Squadron at K-13, Suwon, South Korea. I was flown in there and delivered into the hands of the 80th Fighter Squadron, which I was very lucky, a fine squadron, and I'm glad I was assigned to it.

MR. KUBES: So sounds like that was one of the premier squadrons?

MR. MINTON: It was a very fine squadron. The -- it had fought -- had an outstanding record in World War II of flying P-38s, and then when the Korean Conflict started, it was based in southern Japan at a base called Itazuke. And

they were among the first to ever take jets in combat for

the United States Air Force. They were flying the F-80, which is what I flew, and that was the first jet that the U.S. Air Force ever bought in quantity, and it was the first jet that the U.S. Air Force ever went to war in.

MR. KUBES: Very good. And what was your job? What was your assignment, your role within?

MR. MINTON: Fighter pilot.

MR. KUBES: Fighter pilot? Did you have a partner who was in there with you or was it just a one man --

MR. MINTON: One airplane, one man.

MR. KUBES: One-man aircraft?

MR. MINTON: Just single cockpit.

MR. KUBES: Did you -- you had mentioned combat. Did you see combat?

MR. MINTON: I flew 100 combat missions.

MR. KUBES: 100. Wow.

MR. MINTON: People are confused by what they have seen in movies and on television. They mostly see movies of jets chasing each other and trying to shoot one another down, chasing the fabulous MiG and trying to become a MiG ace. But we were actually a fighter bomber squadron, so our job was dive bombing, occasional skip bombing, dropping Napalm, cutting bridges, railroads, bombing air bases, supply dumps, gun positions, mostly what was classified as close support of ground forces. The -- we weren't MiG fighters.

If you had to, well, you'd do your best, but we didn't have

the airplane for that. And I never did engage a MiG, rarely saw them because we had other fighters that were faster, newer, and their sole job was to keep MiGs off of us, so that was not really a major part of my war. We kept our eyes open, believe me, but we were air to ground.

MR. KUBES: Wow. So I would imagine -- did you do -- did you run many operations? Were they all during the day? Did you run them throughout the evening? All day long?

MR. MINTON: Those airplanes did not have the equipment to do all-weather work. They had no radar, and instrumentation was very limited, so we didn't have the all-weather capabilities. Occasionally, they would send a flight of four up to drop. They were guided by radar from the ground, and they would give them headings, altitudes, air speeds, and they would drop on command from the ground. But they were either in or over clouds, so they didn't see what they hit, what the target was. But I didn't fly any of those missions, and there weren't very many of them at all. I don't think they were very successful.

I got there in July of '52 and in the late fall of '52, they started some solo night missions. And we would take a atypical bomb load for the F-80. We would take a couple of 500-pounders and four 260-pound fragmentation bombs that were set up to drop in training. And we knew where their MSR, main supply routes, were, so they would

send us up one at a time in the dark to try to spot them.

They couldn't move on their roads and railroads during the daytime because we would be all over them, so they had to move at night. And they would sometimes run with their headlights on or their parking lights or what we call blackout lights. And on a clear night, you could spot them very easily, just like a stream of ants with little lights on them. And when you spotted them, you would -- I guess different people had different tactics, but I would fly over the thing and then come at it from the rear and drop the bombs right down the convoy. It was kind of a modified dive bombing, I guess; more or less glide bombing, and drop on them one pass, go home.

MR. KUBES: Were there any casualties in your unit?

MR. MINTON: I think during the time I was there we lost about eight pilots. During the course of the Conflict, I think the squadron lost about 45 pilots.

MR. KUBES: Tell me about a couple of your most memorable experiences.

MR. MINTON: You mean missions?

MR. KUBES: Yes.

MR. MINTON: Well, one that I remember very clearly was on Christmas Eve of 1952. By that time I was a flight commander. I was made a flight commander, I think, on December the 1st, '52. They assigned our flight, which was A-flight of the 80th, for a night mission on Christmas Eve,

and I took it. And as I told you, we didn't really have

the equipment for all-weather, and when I went out to the airplane, preflighted it, it was snowing and the ceiling was very low, and -- which I didn't like, but, you know, it didn't make any difference what you liked. That was what you were assigned.

And I took off and it was in the overcast almost immediately, popped out on top, and went up north of the assigned section of the MSR, which was just south of Sinanju, North Korea. And it was clear on top and then in the front, but the snow disappeared by the time I got the other side of our front lines. I remember flying about 30 miles west of Pyonyang. It was their capital then and the enemy capital today. And I was surprised to see lights all over Pyonyang; not like Fort Worth or New York or something on Christmas Eve, but a lot of lights, and it kind of surprised me.

But I found a -- I found a convoy and dropped on them, and I was really apprehensive about making an approach back to the base in snow and low ceilings. The only approach we would have had would have been the so-called GCI approach, ground-controlled instrument approach, which we didn't practice very often. And I got back to about 15 miles south of our lines and looked up ahead of me at the base, and the thing had cleared out and the stars were out. And I was one happy pilot because I

wasn't going to have to make an approach in the snow.

And when I got back to the quarters, people had champagne and other things and all the goodies that they had gotten from home, and they were having a Christmas Eve celebration. And I -- I just thought that was absolutely great. I was glad to get that one out of the way and then celebrate Christmas Eve. It was nice.

MR. KUBES: That's a wonderful story.

MR. MINTON: And, oh, I don't know, there are several that you can remember, but to me that was probably the most interesting.

MR. KUBES: Very good. And I imagine you probably were never a prisoner of war, not captivated [sic] or --

MR. MINTON: Didn't plan on it, and I -- and I wasn't.

MR. KUBES: Okay. You were not?

MR. MINTON: No.

MR. KUBES: Very good. Hallelujah. That's wonderful.

MR. MINTON: My attitude in those days was that I think I'd have rather been killed than captured. They were not nice.

MR. KUBES: Were you awarded any medals or citations?

MR. MINTON: I was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with Three Oak Leaf Clusters, and I'm entitled to wear the United States Presidential Unit Citation and the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, and some other, what I call them, "I was there" ribbons.

MR. KUBES: Wow. How did you get -- the first one you

mentioned was a Distinguished Flying Cross?

MR. MINTON: That was -- citation was for an attack on a very heavily defended bridge at Kunu-ri, North Korea. If you want to read about the infantry battle at Kunu-ri, get the late General S.L.A. Marshall's book entitled The River and the Gauntlet. It's probably in the library here in Fort Worth.

And very heavily defended bridge, been bombed many times, and that didn't mean that no one had ever hit it, it just meant that they couldn't -- they would repair it very quickly and -- but I got my flight in, and we took down the span of that bridge and good day's work.

MR. KUBES: Wow. Very good. And on the -- I think the first thing you had mentioned was a Distinguished Flying Cross.

MR. MINTON: Yes.

MR. KUBES: And what is that awarded for, if you can share with us what that -- how is that given?

MR. MINTON: Well, it was for distinguished accomplishment, I guess, on a mission or in flying.

MR. KUBES: Thank you. We appreciate that. So during your time in Korea, how did you stay in touch with your family?

MR. MINTON: By mail.

MR. KUBES: How long did it take for the mail to be sent and received?

MR. MINTON: We had excellent mail service, and I think

probably three or four days for a letter to get back to the States and vice versa.

MR. KUBES: That's quick. That's good.

MR. MINTON: I think it might be somewhat quicker than the mail today.

MR. KUBES: How about the food? What was the food like during your service out there?

MR. MINTON: Well, it wasn't Del Frisco's Steak House, but there was plenty of food and -- I didn't like it, but -- GI cooks are not chefs, and we had a lot of bully beef and various kinds of canned items, frozen items. I really missed salads and, you know, fresh vegetables. Instead we got canned bacon and powdered eggs, reconstituted milk, powdered milk, which I didn't eat. But the thing that I liked and -- I still like it, and most people just turn green when you mention it, was Spam. As having been raised in the meat packing business, I knew what Spam was and what was in it. And people complained about Spam. When I saw Spam on the chow line, I went, Boy, this is going to be great. And so we had -- we had plenty of food and it was good food, but it was not what you would order if you went out.

MR. KUBES: How about essentials, the supplies? Did you have plenty of supplies?

MR. MINTON: Yes. Yes, we had plenty of supplies.

Occasionally, we would have a -- what we call a stand down

for a day or two, and it was to allow the ground crews, who just did a magnificent job, just an incredible job -- they worked out in the open for the most part in hot, hot weather and the coldest winters you can imagine. But we would either get short on parts -- the airplanes were getting old and they had seen a lot of heavy duty so they required a lot of maintenance, and also, we burned a lot of fuel. And they would get behind on the quantity available at the fuel dump for the base, and we would just have to stand down for a couple of days until they built up the fuel supply. There was another fighter group on the other side of the field, the 51st Fighter Intercept, flying F-86s. They were top cover and forward cover for the fighter bombers. And so we burned a lot of fuel and burned a lot of ammo. And so if we got a day or two to stand down, well, that's part of the game.

MR. KUBES: I imagine before every flight there is a preflight checklist that you are going through and crossed off, making sure things are in order before you get that thing up in the air?

MR. MINTON: If I had saw a pilot that wouldn't go through a preflight, I wouldn't fly with him. But that was so ingrained in you from -- I mean, when I started flying Piper Cubs, one of the first things the instructor told me as a 16 year old how to walk around the airplane, what to

check, what to look for. And I'd do that today if I was

still flying. But you had a -- not a long checklist. You could -- obviously you had it memorized, and you would check things all on the outside of the airplane and the external weapons, bombs that you were carrying, and rockets, whatever. You checked those to see that they were mounted properly, safety wires were in place. And then you did a cockpit check just to see that all the switches were in the right place. But as I say, you memorize that. It was second nature.

MR. KUBES: Yeah. What were -- during your experiences there, were there any significant pressures or stress that you recall that -- during your experience?

MR. MINTON: Well, there were some missions that, you know, were a lot tougher than others, and which it usually depended on the -- how heavily defended it was, how heavily defended the target was going to be. We always went through a -- with most of those missions, we went through a preflight briefing and we got a weather briefing and intelligence briefing, target photographs, routes in and out, you know, to and from the target. And the further north you went toward the Chinese border got your attention. And then there were certain targets, when they would tell you based on the area of reconnaissance, photos -- I mean, there were planes that flew in that had the duty of reconnaissance. There were no satellites, remember, or

anything in those days. And they would get pictures. They

would give you an approximation of the number of heavy guns, medium, various kinds of flak. And when the count got high, well, it got your attention.

MR. KUBES: Was there anything special that you did for good luck?

MR. MINTON: Yes. Before I went to Korea, my paternal grandmother gave me a silver dollar, which was minted in 1874, which was the year my maternal grandmother was born down in Georgia. And I carried that with me all the time, and I -- in fact, I even carried it with me when I flew with the Guard and after I left active duty in the Air Force. And when I quit flying military aircraft, well, I put it away. It's -- I still have it, but it's so worn from being carried in the pocket that the -- if you didn't know what it was, you couldn't tell. It's just -- all the features are worn off of it.

MR. KUBES: How did people entertain themselves during their service?

MR. MINTON: Oh, are you talking about in Korea?

MR. KUBES: Yeah, in general, in Korea. Your unit.

MR. MINTON: They read, they wrote letters, they read paperbacks. We had a newspaper, the Stars and Stripes. We played cards. There was a ping-pong table sitting on a concrete floor in squadron operations, and that ping-pong table was in operation I think every daylight hour. I got

so tired of trying to read. I would go to base operation.

I wouldn't hang around the quarters and -- or living quarters. I got so tired of hearing that ping-pong 12 hours a day. But, you know, the guys enjoyed it, and it's okay.

And we had an officers' club, so you had dinner, or before dinner or whatever, and you weren't going to do any flying, well, they had a good supply of beer and whiskey and what have you, and you'd go over and have a drink or two or three or whatever. So it was routine. Every six weeks you were entitled to five days in Japan. They would fly you down on a cargo plane and five days later you had a cargo plane ride back. I went once and came back, and I never did go back again.

You knew that you were going to rotate home at 100 missions, and so I'd just rather stay and fly a mission. You know, the average mission was only about an hour and a half. And so I just stayed and flew missions and -- until time to rotate.

MR. KUBES: So you mentioned there was some consumption of alcohol there. You've got to burn off a little stress there. Were there -- after you bought a couple of drinks, anybody emerge as an entertainer? Any singers? Any performers? Anybody wanted to --

MR. MINTON: Performers, no, but we had a lot of old fighter pilot songs that we sang. Some were disparaging of

other squadrons there and their abilities and their

character. There were two other squadrons in the group, the 35th and the 36th, and just a lot of standard fighter pilot songs. And somebody would get up -- if there were some companions around, they would get up and sing maybe their college fight song or alma mater, and The Eyes of Texas was sung a few times by a few of us. And usually if that happened, you know, you got a lot of hooted and -- hooting and hollering. And -- but, yeah, I mean, we could burn off a little steam. Didn't want to burn off too much steam because you might get a call to get up at 3:00 in the morning and go to a briefing.

And I remember one occasion, at least, when the colonel -- the wing commander or the crew commander came in about 9:00 and nodded at the bartender and told him to close it down. He said, Gentlemen, you need to get some sleep tonight. You're going to have a busy day tomorrow.

They had movies. I didn't go to a movie during the time I was there because everybody smoked, and you -- I went -- I think I went once and left because you could hardly see the movie for the smoke. And I smoked occasionally. I wasn't a heavy smoker, but I didn't want to sit through that movie.

And one time the USO was coming to the base and we got notice. And, you know, they used to bring movie stars and bands and what have you over. And I went down to see

the USO show, and it was Mickey Rooney. And I did not care

to see Mickey Rooney. If it had been Marilyn Monroe, you know, we probably -- a lot more of us would have stayed, but not Mickey Rooney.

Somebody could play a piano, and occasionally that would happen. And it was just a -- if there's anything normal about war, I guess it was a normal war.

One thing I -- and I -- I remember this and it's -- we -- of course, we flew up over the front lines, and I was so thankful - I think all of us were - that we had easy duty compared to them, because they were out there 24 hours a day whether it was rain, shine, cold, hot, mud, exposed to shell fire, artillery fire, mortars, snipers, and lost a lot of people. And I know I was very thankful when we were coming back to the base, particularly late in the day around sundown, that I knew that we were going back to warm quarters, decent food. And they stayed where they were and took whatever was dealt them. That's a hard life. And we still have young people doing it today. All volunteers. All volunteers. And people in this country don't know. I don't know because I wasn't on the ground, but I know enough that the country owes a debt to those people.

Pardon me. I might have drifted off your question a little bit.

MR. KUBES: Sure. No. That was wonderful. I appreciate that very much.

Curious to know, do you -- did you take any -- or

do you have any photographs from your service in Korea?

MR. MINTON: Oh, yes. I've got quite a few.

MR. KUBES: Who are some of the people in the photographs?

Who are some of the --

MR. MINTON: Oh, gosh. I drove down to Burnet, Texas yesterday and back to see an old friend and classmate of mine at Perrin Air Force Base. We've stayed in touch over the years, and he is in very bad shape. I have some pictures. I took him some pictures that I had when we were in basic flight training.

And, incidentally, one day I was leading a mission on the front lines to dive bomb some gun positions, and he was there and he was flying a forward air controller -- as a forward air controller. And he and several other friends at basic training, I invited them home on the weekend. They're from all over, although this guy was from Forney, Texas, went to SMU. And I called in with my call sign and reported to the control center who we were, where we were, and what kind of ordinance we were carrying. And all of a sudden I hear the radio, he said, Hey, Blue Bonnet, which was the name of the Minton packing company.

And I said, Forney, is that you?

He said, Yeah. How you doing today?

I said, Well, we've got a little business up here but we're doing fine.

And that happened a couple of times, and he was

not controlling our actual strike. I've always thought that the intelligence people really scratched their heads trying to figure out who Forney and Blue Bonnet were.

MR. KUBES: Is that your nickname? Everybody called you Blue Bonnet?

MR. MINTON: No. No, no, no. But he knew I would recognize that because that was the name of the -- we called it Minton's Blue Bonnet Packing Company, the one out on the north side. So he knew I would pick up on that. And I knew he was from Forney, Texas.

MR. KUBES: Are you able to share his name, the gentlemen in Forney?

MR. MINTON: Yes. His name is Dan Shipley. After -- a few years after the war, he went to seminary and became a church of Christ minister and spent his entire career in the ministry. And that's what I say, I went down to see him yesterday because he's not long for this world. And I -- he exchanged letters with my family. I say I brought him home a couple of times. He didn't have anything in particular to do on the base on the weekends. And so I took him letters. He and my family exchanged letters, and I -- my mother kept all those. I took them to him and I took him copies and pictures.

And I have pictures of a lot of people from flight training right on through Korea and afterwards. I still

keep in touch with a few people by email now and by

telephone. Not often, but in the past two weeks, I've talked to a couple of friends down in Florida, see how they were doing. And we exchange funny stories and things via email and have a class reunion or a squadron reunion every few years. So it -- the 80th Squadron, oh, I regarded it as almost a fraternity. I think most of us do. And I was never in a social fraternity in college, so the 80th Squadron was kind of -- had become my fraternity.

In fact, several of us, I think nine in total, have flown with the 80th all the way from World War II up to recent times. I went over to visit the squadron, which is still based in Korea, in 19 -- or in 2005 at their invitation as their guest. We had a wonderful week with them, so -- they treated us like royalty. They're flying F-16s today, the late models. They're too young to be doing that. They're all kids.

MR. KUBES: Did you keep a personal diary?

MR. MINTON: No. Wish I had, but I didn't.

MR. KUBES: Do you recall the day that your service ended?

MR. MINTON: I flew my last mission and then that was it. I mean, as far as combat service is concerned. Now, I spent two more years on active duty and -- but that was the end of combat service.

MR. KUBES: So you were just to fly 100 missions, and then that would terminate it. So you knew -- it was very easy

for you to understand where the light at the end of the

tunnel was?

MR. MINTON: Oh, yes.

MR. KUBES: So any feelings on that -- coming up on that 100th knowing that you are, I guess, about to return?

MR. MINTON: No, nothing in particular. I -- you know, I was glad to finish a tour and go back to the States. And the squadron commander offered me an opportunity to fly another 50 missions, and we were supposed to get -- our airplanes were just really wearing out. And we had brand new, late model F-86s that were on the way as deck cargo. And he said, If you will fly another 50 missions, he says, you can go down and help test these planes, learn to fly them, and then come back here. And, he said, I'll put you back in as commander of A-flight.

And I said, Colonel, thank you very much. I said, What other deals do you have?

Now, 20/20 in hindsight, I wish I had. I never did get a chance to fly the F-86, which was the top air-to-air fighter in those days. But if I had stayed, we knew that the F-86 was going to be limited again to the ground attack role. And they got them in and got them into action in May. I was already gone. And they kept up the dive bombing, strafing, napalming. And I never did get a chance to fly that plane. That's...

MR. KUBES: So what did you do in the days and the weeks

after your 100th mission there? So you're on your way home

and --

MR. MINTON: Well, I was sent down to Itazuke, which is where our rear echelon was. That's where our major inspections and battle damage repairs and everything were done down there. And they needed people to sit out in a little Plexiglas cubicle out by the runway to act as a runway control officer and to ferry airplanes back and forth between Itazuke and K-13, so I got six weeks of that. You know, I sat there on runway control and you're on the same channel as the approaching airplanes - not all of which were Air Force; some Marines, some Navy - and see that they had their gear down on final approach and that there were no collisions eminent, just kind of keep an eye out on all of them. And so I did that for six weeks before I caught a ride home.

MR. KUBES: So you caught a ride home. Did you go right back into the meat packing plant, go to Blue Bonnet --

MR. MINTON: No, no. I -- that was -- I had two more years of service, and I was assigned to the 1737th Ferrying Squadron of the Military Air Transport Service of Dover, Delaware. We were the only fighter pilots in all of the Military Air Transport Service. We had one squadron at Dover and one squadron in Amarillo, Texas, and one at Long Beach, California. We were ferrying -- all three squadrons were ferrying mostly fighters from factories and from

overhaul depots and from bases and from one base to another

or wherever they wanted the planes moved. But we were involved in what they call Project High Flight. And, remember, we're talking about the early '50s, and NATO was just up and running and they had to be equipped. And the Project High Flight was moving planes to the various NATO countries. So we didn't use air-to-air refueling. You see that now where they go up to the boom, refuel, and keep going. There was a little of that going on, but none of our planes were quipped, nor were we trained to use air-to-air refueling, nor did we have the tankers. So we would go up to Bangor, Maine, Dow Air Force Base, and then go over to Goose Bay, Labrador, and then hop across to Greenland and from Greenland to Iceland, from Iceland then to Prestwick, Scotland, and then on to the destination where the planes were supposed to go. Denmark, Norway, up to -- I took one from, I think, Ogden, Utah to Eskisehir, Turkey. But I ferried airplanes for a couple of years, not all of them on Project High Flight.

MR. KUBES: Then was your service ended after the ferrying?

MR. MINTON: Yes. In March. March 22nd, 1955.

MR. KUBES: Okay. So what did you do on March 23rd? Did you go right back into the family business or did you --

MR. MINTON: Yes.

MR. KUBES: And so you had a --

MR. MINTON: And I -- a few months after I got back, I

joined the Texas Air National Guard out of Hensley Air

Force base, Grand Prairie, Texas. It wasn't Hensley Air Force base. I beg your pardon. It was Hensley Naval Air Station, but the Guard was based out there. And low and behold they were flying F-80Cs, which is what I flew in Korea. So I flew with them for a couple of years while I was working at the packing house, nights and weekends, and occasionally take an afternoon off. And -- but then I took the advantage of the GI Bill and became a 29-year-old freshman at the University of Texas law school, and I never did do any military flying after that.

MR. KUBES: Did -- was your education supported by the GI Bill?

MR. MINTON: Partially.

MR. KUBES: Okay. Did you join a veterans' organization?

MR. MINTON: I joined the VFW and the American Legion, but both only for a year or so, and I never did go to meetings, never did participate, and finally dropped them. They were in favor of some things that I was not in favor of, and I'll just leave it at that. But I didn't want to participate in their activities.

MR. KUBES: Very good. So you went on to, did you say the UT law school?

MR. MINTON: Yes.

MR. KUBES: Okay. Very good. So you got to go back down to Austin?

MR. MINTON: Got to go back to Austin.

MR. KUBES: That was nice. And then so just tell us briefly about -- share with us -- so we got the -- our JD --

MR. MINTON: Yes.

MR. KUBES: -- our JD degree, and then what did you do after that?

MR. MINTON: In the first place, I married and had a couple of children at the time I started as a freshman, so the idea was to get through it as fast as possible. So I went from A to Z in 27 months and came back. And I was very interested in practicing law, but the -- there were few vacancies in good law firms in Fort Worth at the time, and the starting pay for a junior lawyer - and then remember I was in my 32nd year - was about \$350 a month. So I took a job with the old Fort Worth National Bank in the trust department and stayed there most of two years.

Then I had an opportunity to join a law firm called Hardwicke, Hattaway, and Pope, and that law firm still exists in a form. I think it's called Pope, Christie -- I think George Christie is the senior partner. But I left it after a couple of years of being the only associate for three very active partners, each of whom - and I say this in good nature - each of whom think they own you 100 percent. It was not a very happy thing. I don't think I ever worked as hard in my life except at the packing house.

But you'd go to the office at 7:00 in the morning and leave

at 6:00 in the evening, and sometimes go back at night or take work with you and go down for part of the day on Saturdays and sometimes on Sunday afternoons.

And so I had an opportunity to go down to Corpus Christi, Texas, and head up a small trust department there, and -- which I did for just a little over a year. And I ran into some people I knew at a bankers' meeting over in Galveston, and in a few weeks I got a call from one of them asking me if I would like to come back to Fort Worth with the old First National Bank, which has been through several iterations and is now Bank of America, and -- or is part of Bank of America. So I came back on January 1st, 1965, and stayed there for 20 years.

MR. KUBES: Did your military experience influence your thinking about war or about the military in general, or how did it?

MR. MINTON: Well, certainly that experience becomes a part of your life. The thing that has made the deepest impression on me is if you're going to fight a war, fight to win. We were the principal player in Korea in a UN operation. They didn't call it a UN operation, but it was 90 percent, I guess. The U.S. provided 90 percent of the UN force. Of course, there were South Korean troops there also. But we didn't win the war, although we could have won it. We just stopped in July of '53. And we still,

today, have about 30,000 troops over there. All total, the

combat casualties were about 35,000. A lot of other deaths not directly related to combat, and a lot of wounded, a lot of POWs, a lot of wealth and treasure and we're still there. And we had the capacity to win, but it -- I think the American people, through their Congress, decided that it was time to stop, and so we stopped.

Same thing happened in Vietnam. We didn't lose in Vietnam. If you read history carefully, we won in Vietnam and then quit after 55,000 lives lost and no telling how many killed from other-than-combat action, prisoners, wealth, treasure, to say nothing of the families that lives were disrupted. And the American people - this is well documented - they didn't like it and they rioted, and so-called students, some of them who - I've seen pictures - look like they were 50 years old. So all that sacrifice over a period of ten years and we quit, and I -- we're in the process of doing it again. Seems like the people and politicians run out of patience before troops do. That's interesting. Think about it.

MR. KUBES: Yeah. Very good. So currently you're not in a -- are you in a veterans' organization or -- not really --

MR. MINTON: No.

MR. KUBES: -- an active participant? And, yeah, wow. That was very good. Were there -- how did your service and experiences, how did they affect your life?

MR. MINTON: Well, one thing was, that might surprise or

shock people, I did have some very interesting and memorable experiences. I learned a lot about people, good and bad, that came from combat. You learn a lot about people and how they respond, how they react, which ones will stick on your wing and maybe some that won't. There were very few of those, very few.

It also taught me that when you're called upon to do the extremely difficult, dangerous - maybe deadly - job, you do it; and you make tough decisions, and you live with the consequences; and usually you can do little more than you probably imagine you could do. And that was an asset to me the rest of my life up until now. People can do a lot when they're properly motivated, and like a lot of old timers, you -- and this has probably been happening since the beginning of the world, you think that some of the younger generations don't quite have that determination, that self-confidence, the veritable will to accomplish a given task when it's necessary. That's probably not very well-spoken, but I think you get what I mean.

MR. KUBES: Yeah. Absolutely. Are there any other pieces of information, anything else you would like to add that we have not covered in the interview?

MR. MINTON: Not a thing that I can think of. You know, when you ask somebody like me to start talking about war and telling war stories, you might as well lean back and

relax because we can go on for hours, and that's precisely

what happens when we get together for a squadron reunion or a flying class reunion. You back off and say, Well, now you remember when, and then that leads to -- and you can talk all night.

There is an interesting phenomenon, though - and I don't think it's limited to the military - and that is, we still like to get together. We are scheduled to have a flying training class reunion somewhere next year, and there may be just 20 or 30 that show up, and this is from all the bases where the 52-Baker class trained. There were a lot more other than just Bryan Air Force Base, Texas. And there will be a few on walkers and a few of them carrying an oxygen bottle, but if they can get to the hospitality room, they will either hoist a soda pop or a beer and the stories will start flowing. And I'm talking about people in their '80s, but they're proud bunch of people.

And the same thing with the squadron. The squadron association still has a newsletter, but this includes everybody that served with the squadron from 1941 until today. Whether or not you were with the 80th in combat in one war or another, it doesn't make any difference. If you ever flew with the 80th, well, you're entitled to join the association. And it's interesting because you see the old timers -- we lost one this last

summer. He would have been an ace in World War II, and a

few people showed up for his funeral down in Lometa, Texas. And then there will be people who are just out of the Air Force Academy and flight training and flew with the squadron maybe as recently as two years ago or what have you, and they will get together in San Antonio and -- next month. I forget what the date is. We are not going to be able to make it. We've had another trip planned.

But as I said, they will start swapping stories and experiences and it's interesting. You know, young people assume that you know everything that they know, and you don't. I know when they -- one of them asked me when I visited Korea in '05, said, How did you find your targets?

And I said, We looked for them.

Because they've got radar. And I like to say we had dumb weapons and maybe dumb pilots and now they've got smart pilots and smart weapons. You know, they can go up 12,000 feet and drop one bomb and take out a span of a bridge, and, you know, the thing will hone in on it. And, I ask them -- I see them take off -- a four-plane formation takes off one at a time. We used to take off in pairs together. And I said, How do you people join up after takeoff particularly when the weather is bad?

And they said, Oh, we just look for the plane ahead of us on the radar in the cockpit. And so it's a different thing.

Bright, sharp. I went to the -- I was invited to

go up with a group to the Air Force Academy in '08 and spend three, four days as their guest. They held a symposium up there on the Korean conflict. But, my gosh, I haven't -- I haven't seen that sharp a group of young people in one place in my whole life, and I know the same thing would be true if you went to the Air Force -- I mean West Point or Annapolis or what have you. But, you know, they're very cream of the crop and so properly utilized. We've got a lot of people coming forward to carry it on.

MR. KUBES: Yes. Well, Mr. Minton, we very much appreciate your time and great overview and some very good intimate details that you have shared. We are very blessed and thankful for you sharing your time and a very significant portion of your life. So we thank you very much.

MR. MINTON: Thank you. It was an honor and a privilege to serve.

