

ORAL MEMOIRS
OF
BARNETT (BARNEY) BROOKS

An interview conducted on
April 28, 2015

Interviewer: Christine Lamberson

Angelo State University
West Texas Collection

“War Stories: West Texans and the Experience of War, World War I to the Present”

LEGAL STATUS: The oral memoirs of Barnett Brooks are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on April 28, 2015.

This interview was conducted at Angelo State University as part of the *War Stories* Project.

Interviewer: Christine Lamberson

Transcriber: Alicia Dudley

Editor: Christine Lamberson

The electronic file and complete transcript of this interview were processed in the Department of History at Angelo State University and are available at the Dr. Ralph R. Chase West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

LAMBERSON: My name is Christine Lamberson and today is April 28th, and we are doing an interview for the *War Stories* Project. Could we start by...could you tell me your name?

BROOKS: Okay, it's Barnett, but I go by Barney Brooks.

LAMBERSON: Okay, great. When and where did you enlist in the Armed Services?

BROOKS: I guess I was uh going to college out here when it was a 2-year college. And uh that's when they came around with a team, an Air Force team. And said, "If you can pass these tests, you can go into pilot training." And I always wanted to be a pilot. Before I was 12 years old, they had a contest for building model airplanes and uh if you...the winner would get a free pass. We had 3...3 theaters in town. And you would get a pass, a free pass for a year, whoever won that building...that best model. And I won it.

LAMBERSON: That's great.

BROOKS: For a year I could go to the movies. And normal price for the movies was 6 cents, under 12 years old.

LAMBERSON: Wow, that's great. And so, what made you want to join? Just 'cause you loved planes or...

BROOKS: Yeah. Well I...we built model airplanes all the time and used to fly them. And uh flying models. And you could buy them for 5 cents a box...they'd give you a box that'd have all the stuff in it to build the models for 5 cents. Most of them were for 25 cents to build a regular size model, but the real cheap...the little ones were a nickel. But anyway, we used to build them and we'd fly them out where Goodfellow Field is now. And one time when we were out flying them there was a couple of people...a couple of men out there and they had a tent and they had shovels and stuff like that. And I asked one of them, I said "What are y'all gonna do?" And he said, "Sonny, we're going to build an Army Air Base here." And they did.

LAMBERSON: That's great. So what year did you enlist?

BROOKS: Uh well let's see, I was going to college out here in '48, so I guess in '48 I signed up. But uh they said they'd let me know what class I'd be for pilot training. And then I guess I got a letter later on, and they said I would be in 51-A Class, which starts January of 1950. And I'd report to Perrin Air Force Base that was by Sherman, Texas. And the first part-the 1st of January of '50, 1950.

LAMBERSON: Okay, and so...and then how long were you in for?

BROOKS: About 23 years. Yeah. I was in the Naval Reserve, you know, here in...While I was still in high school. They had a Naval Reserve and we would go to that 'cause they'd pay you 2 dollars, it was just to go to the meeting once a month. And that was great.

LAMBERSON: Uh huh. So, you were in that in high school, and then you enlisted in the Air Force...

BROOKS: Uh huh.

LAMBERSON: ...when you were in college? Okay. And so, during your years of service were you...uh you were a pilot?

BROOKS: Yes.

LAMBERSON: And then, could you talk a little bit about your rank and the progression of your career? Just the overview.

BROOKS: Well I started out in East Texas. That wasn't until I was...the first jet...the first trainer that we had. It was a prompt trainer. And then uh, about oh we lost like 50% of the class was washed out of pilot training, and it was a tough class to get through. And then out of that 50% that made it through basic, only...we had 8 that went to fighters. That uh, Williams Field, Arizona. And I was 1 of the 8 that uh made it to fighters. And that's where our...we were out there probably uh, oh 3 or 4 months. And that is when jet planes had first come out. So, they gave us uh 65 hours of jet time, out there. Uh, the class before us had uh...they only gave them 35 hours, but so many of them were crashing that they said, "We got to up the time on those cadets." So, they jumped it from 35 hours to 65. So, we got 65 hours of training.

LAMBERSON: And that was in Arizona?

BROOKS: Uh huh. That's uh Williams Field, it's uh a close town outside of Phoenix, Arizona. Right by Superstition Mountain because we used to fly around the mountain all the time.

LAMBERSON: And then where did you go from there?

BROOKS: Uh we uh...soon as we graduated...we graduated let's see, February the 10th of 1951. Pilot Training, we were brand new 2nd Lieutenants. And uh, 12 of us went to Gunnery School at Las Vegas, Nevada. And we had like 1 week off before we had to go to Gunnery School. And from there we went straight to Korea.

LAMBERSON: So, how long was that...was Gunner School?

BROOKS: I think it was 8 weeks.

LAMBERSON: Okay. Pretty short. And so, then you were deployed to Korea. Did you expect to be deployed to Korea? During your training did you know that's where you'd be going?

BROOKS: Oh, I had no idea. But we kinda thought that longed to be it.

LAMBERSON: Okay, might be a possibility. Okay. And what did you think when you were deployed. Were you um, uh...how were you feeling about it? And then, what did you know about the conflict going on in Korea, the actual war?

BROOKS: Yeah. Well, I didn't know much about it, but I knew um that...well I got on the...when I was home talking to the folks and all here in Angelo, and when I knew I was going...there was a war going on and so I said...my Mother, well, I told my Dad, I said, "You think my mother, maybe, outta not go out there" cause I had an airline ticket to go out to Las Vegas. "Think she better not go? She might break down or something?" And uh, I talked to her too and she said, "No, I'm okay." So, I quit worrying about it.

LAMBERSON: That's great. Alright, so you said you arrived in Korea in May of '51?

BROOKS: Yeah.

LAMBERSON: Okay. And so, what was your mission in Korea. What were you spending most of your time doing?

BROOKS: They uh, well they gave us more training.

LAMBERSON: Uh huh.

BROOKS: And we were flying with the big tanks too. That the factory Lockheed said we couldn't do that. Cause they were too heavy and they actually bent the wings on the airplanes. And uh, they had lots of accidents on the account of that. And we got that training and uh started flying. And we normally flying...flew a four. Four airplanes. The lead-1. And then 2 was the weakest one or the one that had the less experience. Number 3 was like an element leader and he was uh...he was just under the flight leader in experience, I guess. Then, number 4 was a little bit better than number 2. So, that's how we'd fly the missions. And we'd take off and...From Kimpo. We were in Kimpo Air Base and that was uh, just right outside of Seoul, South Korea.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

BROOKS: When we'd hit... most of most of our targets were in North pretty well way North Korea. We could see China. We could see the river. Uh we could see the...well later on we could see the MiGs. But when I was first over there we didn't have any MiGs [Mikoyan-I-Gurevich Soviet aircraft]...um the enemy airplanes. The enemy jet fighters. The Russians were flying them. So uh...we normally carried 2 bombs. A 1,000 pounder or two 500 pounders. And we'd bomb um a rail yard or and particular armed place like that. And uh then, we would strafe. We had .650 caliber machine guns in the nose and we'd just kind of...Entrail our the formation...Entrail was number 1 leading and he would just kind of S-turn back and forth and we would all...all the airplanes would be behind him. When he would see a target, something that looked pretty good, well he'd go down and shoot it and we'd all be shooting whatever we could find around there too that looked like good targets. So, we'd do that on the way back home from

whatever we hit out there. But we normally just hit places like where the...we hit Pyongyang too. That's the capitol, you know, of North Korea. We'd go up there and we hit it and we would try to knock out the gun positions, so the B-20...I think...I guess they were B-50's or B-29's would come over and they would bomb it. So, that was pretty...we called it flak you. It had a lot of flak, they were really shooting at you. I think I got hit there one time too.

And then, the 2nd mission was a pretty good one. Uh, we had the number 4 man...uh later on he went on to he went over to 86's while he was there after he finished up his 100 missions. Well, he went to 86's and he shot down 10 Russian MiG-15's, so he was a double ace. So then, but anyway we were letting down...the weather was just really bad...raining. We were deep into North Korea there. And uh as we...the lead...we would stay in formation because we don't know...nobody else knows how to fly instruments. The lead does, so you have to stay in formation with him in the clouds because if you don't you'd just crash someplace. So, we were in tight formation and letting down...he was letting down and he found a kind of a hole where he could get out...where he could see it. So he went through that hole. Well every gun position there was trained on that particular hole and just as soon as we got through that hole they shot and blew up number 4 man, no number 3 man. They blew him up and he was just right on the other side of the...I was on the left side of the leader and he was on the right side and so we kind of scattered there. And I really thought, "Well, I'm gonna die too." So I said, "I will take out as many of these gun positions until they kill me." And so, I started shooting as much as I could and the flight leader called me and he said, "Do you see me?" And I said, "Yes sir. I see you." He said, "Catch me because my instruments are out. I can't fly back with the weather." So, I caught him and so then I had to fly back and I didn't know zilch about flying in the weather. It's raining really bad, but I made it back and led him back to Kimpo. And I don't know...we don't know where number 4 went. I talked to him later, but I don't...he just broke out and ah, I don't know what all he was doing, but he, ah, you know, made it back. I'm trying to think of his name, but I'll get his name.

LAMBERSON: That's fine. And this is one of your 1st missions...

BROOKS: 2nd...that was my 2nd mission.

LAMBERSON: Your 2nd mission, wow.

BROOKS: So, as I parked the airplane I thought, "I only got 98 more missions." So, that's what saved my life, is when the flight leader called me and said that his instruments were out and I'd have to lead back because I would of kept on going till I was knocked out.

LAMBERSON: So, could you talk a little bit more about, or could you talk about what you found most challenging about your service, or some of the hardest aspects of your time in Korea.

BROOKS: Well, I guess when you get to know some of your buds and everything and then they're gone. I guess that makes a difference.

LAMBERSON: And how long where you there for?

BROOKS: 10 months.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

BROOKS: I finished my 100 missions on the 3rd of January of 1952. It took me that long, but like I say, we fly for 6 weeks and then we get a week off and then we could go to Japan if we wanted to and stay for a week, then come back and fly another 6 weeks. And we did have a week off every 6 weeks. So, then the...I was a flight leader then.

LAMBERSON: When did you become a flight leader?

BROOKS: Uh huh. I was the flight leader. Not until I had about 70 missions or so. And my assistant flight leader that I had was Jess Allen. And he went on and made 2 stars. And I didn't like him that much. Well, he was with me when I shot down a MiG now. And he wrote a book...he's got a book out called *From Jeep Driver to General*. That's the name of his book. I've got the book and he's got me in it. But I was trying to think of what else I was gonna say...oh about Jess...Jess Allen. When I went on R&R before...I still had some missions to fly, but I went on R&R and so Jess was gonna be the leader then while I was gone. And I told him this one particular boy was...Jerry Bingaman was his name. And I said, "Be careful of Jerry because he's pretty weak and you got to kinda watch him." And when I came back he had been shot down, no he had been lost because he had got in the weather and Jess had let down to a certain altitude...normally when you can't see the ground or anything and you're over close to the target you let down to within 1,000 foot of the highest mountain around there. And if you don't break out, well then you climb back up and you look for different targets. Well anyway, Jess let down and Bingaman was flying number 4 position. And he had a few missions. And he flew...he was number 4. I said, "Don't let Jerry fly anything but number 2" because it's a little bit safer position there. But he said another guy came in and he had less time less time than um than um Jerry. So he said, "I had to put Jerry at number 4." Well, he made a turn...we didn't have much power in those airplanes either, but he made a turn away from 3 and 4 which is really a no no unless it's just a real shallow turn because it takes so much more power to stay in there...to stay up in formation and especially number 4. But he made that turn and he said "When I didn't break out..." I was talking to him. He said, "When I didn't break out, I just pushed it over to 1 needle width turn and started climbing." And he was turning away from the element. That's his 3 and 4 man. And I said, "Jess, that was too much of a turn, no wonder you lost him." And he lost him and he crashed. So we never heard from him again. So...cause he had put him as number 4. Okay, so he lost him.

Then, I finished my missions, like I say, July the 3rd. Then, so Jess then was the flight leader, and I was just kind of a helper over there. I didn't fly combat. He uh...There was another really sharp guy, his name was Leo Necase. And uh, we were pretty good buddies. Well everybody, you know, we stayed in the same tent together and stuff like that. But uh, Jess...they set him on a

mission cut the railroad tracks with our bombs. So, you could go down pretty low and line up there and you'd kind of kill the wind drift and everything and say, "Drop 1" and then if it was a straight stretch of track, drop the other one to try to cut those tracks, the railroad tracks 'cause they were using those so much. And he went too low okay, there was a time delay on the bombs, so here's Leo behind him and when he...I'm thinking about his flight. So, when Leo comes in it blows him up. And he hollers, "Mayday, mayday, mayday" and crashes. So, that was 2 people that he's lost. You know, there was never any call to do that.

So, it just...it was fairly exciting all the way.

LAMBERSON: And were you ever wounded or captured or...

BROOKS: Yeah, my 11th mission I was hit. And that's when I came back. And it was raining real bad at the base and I'm trying to land. I do have out landing gear. The landing gear came down okay, but I had been hit. It was right underneath...right underneath the uh engine. But I really didn't know how bad it was. But I didn't seem to have any flaps, so when I came down...our runway was so short there, we had swapped runways. We were taking off with a load with the bombs and not as much power as the F-86's had. So, we swapped bases with them because we could...they had a little bit longer runway than we did. But it was still PSP that pure steel planking for the runway, and when it's wet you just slide. There's not much breaking action at all. So, I got it down and it's a horrible landing there, but I couldn't get it stopped. So, I pulled the gear up and slid on off the end of the runway there and down a draw. And that's when I tore the nose off, and I went forward and hit the gun-site, we had a gun-site in the middle, and I went forward and it cut me up a little bit. And they took me to the hospital and that's when they offered me the...what do you call it?

LAMBERSON: Purple Heart.

BROOKS: The Purple Heart. They offered me the Purple Heart and I said, "Well, I'm just not hurt that bad, I don't need that." And gosh, I wish I had taken it. I kick myself now for not taking that thing. And uh...but I didn't take it. And um it got okay so then that was my 11th mission. So then, I kept on flying and I finally finished at 100 missions.

LAMBERSON: And the other one's you did not have any...you weren't hit or wounded on the other one's? The other one's...

BROOKS: Oh yeah, I never did get wounded or anything again, uh. I got hit some more, but I never did get wounded.

LAMBERSON: Okay. Okay. And uh what did you...how much interaction did you have with the South Koreans or the South Korean Military and what did you know going in?

BROOKS: Oh you know, we didn't...we didn't have a whole lot, much to do with them or anything. A lot of them worked on the base there, but we didn't have much communication with them at all.

LAMBERSON: And what did you...

BROOKS: And we had to bo-- we had normally we had the house boys and they would kinda look after the tents and stuff like that and sweep them out.

LAMBERSON: And what did you think about the local people or local culture?

BROOKS: Yeah, we didn't have any problem, but one time they had a parade of them when they were gonna sign something. I don't remember what it was. But they came...were marching through the base and I said, "Gosh, let's just give them a gun and turn them around and march them the other way." That was just yacking.

LAMBERSON: Could you tell me a little bit about your R&R time in Japan? What did you think of Japan? What did you expect it to be like or what was it like?

BROOKS: Oh yeah, it was, it was nice over there. It wasn't bad. The people treat you okay. There was no place to eat. Boy, we were about starved to death over there.

LAMBERSON: How often did you go over there? Did you go every time?

BROOKS: Yeah, every 6...every 6 weeks yeah we'd try to go over there. Cause there was nothing if you stayed in Korea.

LAMBERSON: And what did you think of the Japanese culture?

BROOKS: Yeah, I didn't think that much about it. It was alright.

LAMBERSON: Okay, great. Let's see...what did you...how did see your mission in the sense of how did you view the military's purpose being there or your purpose being there? The bigger picture; political mission?

BROOKS: Well, I don't know. I was just a kid. I was what...22. And I didn't think much about it. I just figured that that was what I had to do and stay over there and fly that. North Korea was trying to take over and so I was there to help out.

LAMBERSON: And how long did you stay in country after you had finished your 100th...?

BROOKS: Okay I finished January the 3rd, so I guess I...when they kept putting me on alert and stuff like that. Sitting on the runway on alert and I said, "They're gonna scramble me and I'm gonna get shot down." But I didn't. So, but I said, "I should be able to go home." So, I...we had a major that was the squadron commander and I went into see him and I said, "Sir, I finished my missions. I would like to go home back to Truman's Island." You know Truman was the

president. We called it Truman's Island. So he said, "Okay, I'll see what I can do." And so, I guess that...I guess it was the end of February so I finished in January so I had two months there before I got to come back.

LAMBERSON: Okay. Is there...are there any other particular missions or aspects of your time in Korea that you want to talk about? That was particularly noteworthy? Anything I've missed about Korea? I want to hear about the rest of your career as well, but since we've been talking about Korea.

BROOKS: Well, there was another one where the MiGs would get after us. I had uh...I can't remember his name. He was my wingman there when the MiGs came in. And the first time that well they were on that particular time they were pretty aggressive, and so they kept coming in after us. And so, all we could do—they were faster than us—so all we could do was turn into them head on. And they didn't like to make a head on pass. But this one particular one did. He kept on and made two passes head on, and I did hit him, but all I got was damage out of it. It didn't knock him down. But then, the time before when that Jess Allen was on my wing, this guy made a head on pass and we were actually flying the opposite direction and I spotted him coming in behind us there. So, I called a break. And normally when you call a break well, that flight, that particular flight...they break. You know, make a 180 degree turn to try to get out in case it was somebody pretty close there. And uh, so we all broke and made a 180 and he stayed coming in so I started shooting and that's when Jess Allen was on my wing. And I shot until he went...we just barely missed each other and he hit the ground. And uh so Jess said, "You got him." And I said, "Well, it'll be on the film Jess." And we didn't get along that much. [Laughs]

But I talked to where they did the film, and they said it didn't come out, but you know I got to thinking about that. I bet they were keeping that stuff and selling it because boy that was a good picture. You know, a head on pass with a MiG and you just barely miss him underneath. And then, he, that's when he hit the ground. But um, I told Jess, "We'll just count that for A-Flight. A MiG for A-Flight." And that was about it. A whole lot of that stuff is...you know the 86's would go after the MiGs, but that MiG was actually a little bit better airplane than that 86. So uh, it was built lighter, I guess. And would climb faster and probably turn a little bit faster. So, they had a pretty good time. And so, they didn't engage as much as you think with them. They pulled their shot to make sure they got them the first time. To slip up on them or something like that. It was a dangerous game.

LAMBERSON: Did you um...this question's on a slightly different subject, if that's okay. Did you have a lot of contact with your family while you were there? You write to your family a lot?

BROOKS: Oh yeah, mail was all free.

LAMBERSON: Uh huh, very good.

BROOKS: Um yeah, we'd get...I'd get...my Dad was the one that wrote quite a bit. We'd correspond and write to the family and send it to him 'cause he had the B&B Trading Company. It was where Legend Jewelry is, you know, down there. I think it was 18 East Concho. That's all I had to put on there. You know, back in the old days you could just put your name on an envelope and they would send it.

LAMBERSON: Name of the town and it would get there. Okay great. Um and so then you came back to the States after that?

BROOKS: Uh huh, then I was a flight instructor.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

BROOKS: So, for 4 years I instructed T-33's. And uh, that's when I had that one student there, that was Tom Stafford, that went to the moon.

LAMBERSON: Oh wow.

BROOKS: He uh...he orbited. He didn't land on the moon, but he was the commander. At that time, he was the only one that made General.

LAMBERSON: Wow. And where were you?

BROOKS: I instructed at Waco, Texas.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

BROOKS: Yeah. And in 1953, I've got him in the yearbook there too.

LAMBERSON: Oh, great.

BROOKS: I didn't bring that yearbook, but I've got it.

LAMBERSON: Okay. Oh great. So, you were an instructor for 4 years then...

BROOKS: T-33's, the jet trainer.

LAMBERSON: Uh huh, great. And how did you like doing that? Or did you find that challenging or rewarding?

BROOKS: You build up a lot of flying time. I got more flying time than 9/10ths of the people in the Air Force.

LAMBERSON: And then...and then what did you do after that?

BROOKS: I tried to stay in fighters, but they had so many of them in fighters. So, they said, "If you will fly B-47's..." That was the first jet bomber that we had. They said, "If you'll fly B-47's, we'll give you your base of choice. So, I said, "Well okay, I'll go to Homestead, Florida.

LAMBERSON: Why did you want to go to Homestead, Florida?

BROOKS: I thought that Florida was a neat place. [Laughs]

LAMBERSON: Okay, great. [Laughs]

BROOKS: So, I went there and flew B-47's and then I was there, was there for about 2 years, I guess, and then they came around with the...needed some B-52 pilots, so I went and volunteered for that. So then, I went to B-52's and flew those until I retired.

LAMBERSON: And where...did you stay in Florida initially?

BROOKS: Yeah. Uh let's see, the B-47 was all in Florida and then I went to Albany, Georgia.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

BROOKS: I'm trying to think...I think that was B-52's in...no we might of still had to...I don't remember. Well I guess...I guess B-52's in Albany, Georgia. At Turner. Turner Air Force Base.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

BROOKS: So, that's when I flew those. And I did one time...we were doing a MITO-takeoff [Minimum Interval Take Off]. They'd just came out with it. It would hit the airplanes airborne...we were on alert all the time. So, they could get the airplanes off quicker by doing a MITO-takeoff. Everyone would takeoff, one right after the other. Okay, so the very first one we were going to do and the wing commander says, "I don't want anyone to abort." You know, cause a slight abort, there outta be some big wrecks out there. But I was leading. And I started down the runway and I guess I had 3 behind me. And I started down the runway and I knew something was wrong and I was watching the gages and instruments there. And I knew it was number 3 coming apart. Number 3 engine. And I aborted. We called it out, so everybody was able to stop in time. So, we aborted, but the wing commander said, "There will be no aborts." So I said, "I know that there's something bad wrong." And so, as we were taxiing, we taxied back in and parked. There were holes in the side of the engine, engine cowling there, where there's 2 in each one where it had come apart. And it had knocked hole, you had big flaps out there, it had knocked holes in there where the engine had come apart. So, I was really lucky because if I had taken off, I would have wiped out half of Albany, Georgia.

LAMBERSON: Oh, wow.

BROOKS: Cause when you take off...it could possibly, barely fly on seven after takeoff. But not...that would have thrown...you know would have blown the other engine that was....that we

had built in the same cowling with it. That would have gotten that other engine too. So, I saved half of Georgia...Albany Georgia that time. That wing commander never said one word.

LAMBERSON: No doubt. No doubt. And when...were you still doing some training and instructing after your time in Waco? Did you continue to do that sort of work? Teaching?

BROOKS: Oh well...in the bombers...it wasn't a bomber school, it was alert. We'd fly airborne. We'd fly 24 and 25 hour missions at least once a week. And we'd takeoff from Georgia and go to down the Mediterranean. We would refuel over on Bermuda. We refueled over those islands and then go on and fly down the Mediterranean...no...

LAMBERSON: The Caribbean...

BROOKS: That one we didn't. That was when I was a B-47, we'd refuel over Bermuda. And then we would land in Africa. That was in the B-47's. And then we were on alert in Africa. And we'd...oh I guess you'd set on there like a week at a time or something like that. You could get out and eat chow and meals and stuff like that. But we did that in B-47's. Then, the 52's...when I went to 52's we did the airborne alert. The airborne you know...the 47's we'd set on alert in Africa. But on the...in the 52's we stayed in the air. We would fly around the Mediterranean Ocean there, three trips, and then refuel again over Spain and then come back home to Albany, Georgia. That where...in 24-25 hours. And they were long flights and they were working. You'd work too. That refueling, sometimes you'd be wringing wet and they were all at night. Most of them were all at night, the refueling. And it was hard. You'd be, like I say, wringing wet there. Sweating so much, you'd get in that fuel. They had lots of accidents also.

LAMBERSON: What did you think of Africa?

BROOKS: Yeah, it was alright. We were Sidi Slimane, I don't know if you...that's in Morocco.

LAMBERSON: Uh huh.

BROOKS: Yeah.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

BROOKS: So, we'd uh...we stay there. Oh, I don't know.

LAMBERSON: Were you mostly...did you have any contact with local people or cultures there? Were you mostly at a base?

BROOKS: You know, when we'd get off on time we drove up to Port Lyautey, I guess. It's along on the water I think. Right close to the water there. Port Lyautey. Then we went over to the capitol of...what's called, Morocco, Boracco?

LAMBERSON: Morocco?

BROOKS: Yeah, the capitol...we went up there.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

BROOKS: I see it every now and then in the paper. And then one of those times they had the wall around a certain part of it. I'm sure...and I don't think you can go in there. I forgot what they call those.

LAMBERSON: Like city walls?

BROOKS: Huh?

LAMBERSON: City Walls, you mean surround the city?

BROOKS: No, certain sections there.

LAMBERSON: Oh, okay.

BROOKS: Walled around there. They look like just big adobe walls. But I don't remember what people that were in there.

LAMBERSON: Oh, okay. Okay.

BROOKS: It was just all good training.

LAMBERSON: Uh huh. Okay and so then uh you told me a little about the B-52's and your time when you were stationed in Georgia and doing those flights. So...so when is this approximately now that you're...were...like...late 1950's?

BROOKS: Oh, in '66. 66 is when I was in Vietnam.

LAMBERSON: Okay, so then after Georgia did you then get deployed to Vietnam?

BROOKS: After what?

LAMBERSON: After you were in Georgia did you...

BROOKS: Oh no, from Georgia the whole outfit went over there.

LAMBERSON: So, then you were deployed to Vietnam?

BROOKS: Uh huh, yeah.

LAMBERSON: Okay, yeah, so tell me about that.

BROOKS: We uh flew...we flew to Guam from Georgia. We flew to Guam in the B-52's and then we would fly the missions out of Guam instead of...but we all bombed you know, Vietnam or Cambodia or wherever they struck there. But I was in...real lucky because I didn't...you know

after I retired they started losing the 52's. They were getting them shot down quite a bit. They lost 25 of them over there. But ah, I was lucky because when I was over there we only went north....in the North Korea-- or ah, North Vietnam only one time and we didn't lose any on that particular deal. So, I was really lucky about that.

LAMBERSON: Where were most of your mission? In Cambodia? Is that what you said?

BROOKS: No in Viet...just in...they'd bomb, I guess close to where our troops were, they would bomb just past the troops there to try to knock out the ones they were fighting, I guess.

LAMBERSON: Okay. So, mostly in South Vietnam?

BROOKS: Uh huh.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

BROOKS: That's where they were. Well like I say, only went North one time. That was at Mu Gia Pass or something like that when we went north and bombed that one.

LAMBERSON: And so you were deployed in 1966?

BROOKS: Uh huh.

LAMBERSON: And how long were you...

BROOKS: For 6 months.

LAMBERSON: For 6 months. Okay. And uh what did you find...or I guess could you tell me a little about the differences between being in Vietnam and being in Korea? Or just a little bit more about your experience in Vietnam?

BROOKS: Well we were all stayed up pretty high when bombing in Vietnam. In Korea there were, you know, on the deck. And getting shot at every mission. So, it was a big difference there. We really didn't...I don't think I got...we got shot at in Vietnam at the time I was in. But you know, later on they did lose a bunch of them. And they were all mainly by missiles. But then the MiGs got a few of them too. I was lucky, but I was due to go back again to Vietnam and that's when I was stationed in Minot, North Dakota. I was flying the latest B-52's up there; the H-Model. And my wife said, "If you go back again..." She said, "I can't take care of these kids by myself again." So I said, "Well, I'll see if I can retire." So I applied for retirement and I got it.

LAMBERSON: So, did you go to North Kor....uh sorry, North Dakota right after you came back from Vietnam the first time?

BROOKS: Oh yeah, because they closed down Turner at Albany, Georgia. They closed down...the Navy took it over. So, the Air Force moved out.

LAMBERSON: Okay, so then you went to... Um, what did you...since you mentioned by this time you had a wife and children?

BROOKS: Uh huh.

LAMBERSON: How did being deployed affect your family, your family at home?

BROOKS: Well, I didn't like it, but I was deployed all the time.

LAMBERSON: Uh huh.

BROOKS: And right now, the old outfit I was in, in Korea, their still in Korea. But they send them...their fighting in Morocco, I mean not Morocco. But over there right now fighting ISIS. And their gone...the fighter pilots are gone all the time. It's a shame.

LAMBERSON: When did you get married? How long were you married during the...while you were in the service?

BROOKS: Oh yeah, I lost my first wife there when I was...some of that stuff is so old. It must have been I guess... oh, after I left Minot I guess is when she passed away. She had lymphoma and she lasted for several years before it finally got her. Yeah, I had retired and she was a real sweet girl. She was from Charlotte, North Carolina.

LAMBERSON: And when had you two gotten married?

BROOKS: When did we get married? Let's see...I met her when I was there in Florida.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

BROOKS: I met her in Florida. At Homestead, Florida, I guess. We got married in Folkston, Georgia. One weekend we just took off and run up there and got married.

LAMBERSON: Uh so, I've a couple more questions about Vietnam. What did you think about what the U.S. was doing in Vietnam or your mission in Vietnam, again in kind of a bigger picture question?

BROOKS: Well, you think about it...I guess most of it was politics, you know. And I really didn't think about the politics that much. I just tried to do my job and that was about it.

LAMBERSON: Okay great. And um, when you came back after your time being deployed in Vietnam, and once you retired did it...did your time in the service affect your conception of American Foreign Policy or of the Cold War or of those questions did you still stay out of that?

BROOKS: Yeah, I guess I kinda just stayed out of it. I think about it a lot now days. Golly, if they could only get somebody with some brains up there.

LAMBERSON: Fair enough.

BROOKS: And even in our...San Angelo there too. You think about how much the streets need repair. And what are they doing? They are working putting sidewalks in up there. And oh I don't think they need them, the special places they are putting them in, but they do things without thinking I think. I think I outta write a letter a lot of times and put it in the paper there. You know, things that need to be thought about and things that need to be done. And I wish they would listen to...do that.

LAMBERSON: Uh huh. Gotcha. Less so at the time, more so now, huh? Okay and then after you retired...or actually before I ask that...by the time you finished in the military, by the time you retired were you an officer at any point or did you have any...have I missed any questions or asking about you changing positions?

BROOKS: No, I just kept on flying. I kept instructing and flying. And I flew for different...I flew for years for...there was a Sooner Federal Savings and Loan out of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

LAMBERSON: Uh huh.

BROOKS: And I flew for them for years. You know, was their chief pilot.

LAMBERSON: And how did you find adjusting to civilian life after your...after your time in the military?

BROOKS: Yeah, I really didn't have any problem at all. I just went from one...day to day I guess and I didn't think anything about it.

LAMBERSON: How do you feel about your military service looking back on it?

BROOKS: Oh I'm glad I got it all and do it. And I think I did a good job all the time I was in. I think it was a hairy job too.

LAMBERSON: Okay, have I missed any questions? Are there any other questions you or you know aspects of your service you would like to share?

BROOKS: No, I can't think of anything.

LAMBERSON: Okay, so one other question that I had for this project. One of the purposes, as I mentioned before we started the interview, this project is being funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and part of the idea of the project is to sort of be making connections between veterans of earlier wars and conflicts that the U.S. was involved in and more recent veterans. Or for that matter, men and women who are just entering the service. So, I was also wondering if you have any advice for young men and women who are just entering the service now.

BROOKS: Times have changed so much. All I can say is, "Do your job and try to do it right, and I guess forgive some of the politicians."

LAMBERSON: Okay, anything else you wanted to add?

BROOKS: No.