

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Colonel John I. Daniel, III

COLLECTION: 4700.0946

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: John Davis

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATE: 5/23/74

FOCUS DATES: 1943-1946; 1948-present; Nov 1965-Nov 1966; June 1971-Apr 1972

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1383

Early family life and education in Zachary, LA; traveling as a child; Depression; raising vegetables and livestock; extracurricular activities; Boy Scouts; small town life; attending LSU during WWII; went on active duty in summer, 1943; boot camp and flight prep school; flight training in Chapel Hill; Navy decided they had too many pilots, so Daniel went to control tower school; worked as control tower operator in Marshall Islands as war was ending; felt guilty that he didn't get to war sooner; serving on a merchant ship from Hawaii down to the Marshalls; sleeping on deck of merchant ship; war was over, but Japanese still shot at planes if they flew over; daily routine in Marshall Islands; swimming and playing on beach during leisure time; allotted two soft drinks or two beers per day; loitering in Hawaii, not in a hurry to go home; returned to mainland, enrolled in University of Mississippi; transferred to LSU; ROTC at LSU; veterans taking ROTC for commission; attended flight school at Randolph Air Force base, Texas; bombers; learning to fly; transferred to Germany, brought wife and daughter; transferred to France as budget accounting officer; volunteered to go to Korea but wasn't sent; transferred to Amarillo, Texas; flying different types of planes; enjoyed his career more than his wife did; photo reconnaissance missions in Germany and France, 1956-1961; family's adjustment to Europe; went to school in Oklahoma, got BS and masters in industrial engineering; exercise in Turkey in 1965; transferred to Philippines, 1965; big welcome when they landed in Philippines; tours in Vietnam; fast buildup of troops in Vietnam; housing shortage for troops; flying supplies into South Vietnam; moving Army troops short distances by air; didn't have much time to talk to soldiers; flew mission to Saigon in 1953 or 1954, delivering planes to French; French losses in and before battle at Dien Bien Phu; wide roads the French build in Vietnam to avoid ambush; Vietnamese were content to let Americans do their fighting; primitive air fields; traffic and delays while waiting for plane to be allowed to take off; Saigon air strip busier than Chicago's O'Hare airport; Chennault's Louisiana Tigers.

Tape 1384

Served in Vietnam from 1965-1966, and from 1971-1972; flying small airplane; lengths of Vietnamese runways; flying conditions; refueling; improvements in runways between his two Vietnam duties; attacks on runways; improvements in radio communication and water between 1966 and 1971; flying the C-7 plane, which was too small for his duties; moving Americans and Vietnamese from place to place; Americans visiting Vietnamese orphanage at Cam Ranh; not much contact with locals; as a colonel, avoided getting out into community because he was an attractive target; shutting down Cam Ranh Bay; breaking down valuable aluminum runway, sending it home; auctioning off salvage materials; black market activity; Scotch whiskey welded shut so people unloading it can't steal it; airplanes hit by small arms fire; ranks of pilots; training pilots in Vietnam; flights between Thailand and Vietnam; Coast Guard operated Loran navigational system out of Chiang Rai, Thailand; didn't get credit for his missions to Vietnam; didn't get to eat in nice restaurants or stay in good hotels; trying to find a hotel to stay at; got a house trailer when he went to Cam Ranh Bay; as colonel; huts the enlisted men stayed in; lounge entertainment in Vietnam; officers' club; people who worked on closed bases; boredom and loneliness far from home; military gave up on punishing soldiers for seeing prostitutes; tried to keep black and white soldiers integrated; racial tension at Cam Ranh Bay; American attitudes toward ARVNs; getting attacked at Cam Ranh Bay; high motivation of NVA; rocket attacks; opinions about the Vietnamese as pilots; training Vietnamese commanders; negative attitudes of some American soldiers toward Vietnamese pilots; planes designed to protect fuel lines; using airplanes to fire mortars to disable machine guns rather than risking lives of ground troops; using sensors and infrared tracking; disposing of military possessions after war; US shouldn't have gotten involved in Vietnam if it wasn't going to fight to win; governmental/military decision-making process; flying airlift missions; liked seeing Vietnam from the air; landing planes in the swampy delta.

TAPES: 2 (T1383, T1384)**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 2 hours, 40 minutes**# PAGES TRANSCRIPT:** 76 pages**RESTRICTIONS:** None