Sign Oral History Project

Oral History Interview with
Arlie E. Judd, Jr. (USAF, Senior Master Sgt., ret.)

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Interviewer: Thomas Tulien

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NOTICE
This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted for the Sign Oral History Project and is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written word.

RESTRICTIONS:

INT: Thomas Tulien
ARLIE: Arlie Judd

INT: Like to start out with where you're from originally, school, how you entered the Air Force—where did you did your training. Let's go to the end of your career then we'll jump back to the incident.

ARLIE: Okay. Born in Kansas and dad was a contractor. We moved a lot and ended up in north Missouri. That's where I finished high school, and from there I enlisted in the Air Force and went to basic training down at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

INT: How old were you at the time you went in?

ARLIE: I was 18.

INT: Very young. You couldn't wait to get in there?

ARLIE: I really didn't have any alternative. I was finished with high school and when that was over, the alternatives were working construction or doing something of that nature, so—

INT: You were going to work with your dad?

ARLIE: Yes. And I had enough of that, so I enlisted in the Air Force and I got selected for radar maintenance and went to school at Denver for a year—was stationed at Salina, Kansas and worked on B-47's, for the bomb nav radar on B-47's for almost 10 years. And so I spent a lot of time at Smokey Hill and West Smokey Hill and then it was Schilling Air Force Base. And from there I went—they had what they had a gunnery range outside of Salina, Kansas and worked out there for about 2 years. I was still working on radar—on radar tracking systems for gunnery drones. And I applied for B-52 gunners training and was approved and went to school at Castle Air Force Base.

INT: When you say gunnery drones can you explain what you mean?

ARLIE: It was to train B-52 gunners, and they flew OQ-19 drones. Had a wingspan of about 15 feet and a fuselage about the same length. Four-cylinder engine, and it flew about 120 knots and they would fly those, and the gunners would lock onto 'em from a ground radar system. Same system they had in the aircraft, but it was on the ground, but they would lock on and track that drone and actually fire—live firing.

INT: And knock it out of the air?

ARLIE: Yes, and they knock 'em down. But that complex out there they had a complete field maintenance shop and they'd run that injured drone, if it didn't completely collapse, run it through the assembly line process and bring it out the other end and it looked great. There was a recovery process there.

INT: Interesting. I guess I had never thought about how they trained the gunner.

ARLIE: That was good training for 'em up there, and they started out training the gunners when they fired the 50 calibers from a pedestal, and that started way back out there a long time ago when they had to fire the 50 calibers back—the hand held, and then they got to advanced systems. With the B-52 they had automatic tracking and radar control. Four-50 calibers.

INT: And the guns were mounted in the fuselage somewhere?

ARLIE: They were in the aft part of the aircraft—in the back.

INT: They pointed back?

ARLIE: Yes.

INT: Not forward?

ARLIE: Right. They pointed back. They thought that the only problem was somebody overtaking from the backside, and they covered almost a 180° expanse in the aft quadrant, so they were covered quite well in the back part.

INT: In your experience with B-52's were they always attacked from behind?

ARLIE: They had enough counter measures and enough warning systems that they would know where the attack was coming from and the B-52's tactics to get away from the fighter attack was to go into a steep climb or steep dive and the fighter had a much smaller turning surface—couldn't keep up with that turn, but the B-52 could really make a steep turn because of the wing surface. But they would come up into formation—when we'd fly in Vietnam they would get into the formation and you couldn't tell on radar if it was cluttered enough to where you could see the other B-52's in the formation, but the fighter would get up and they knew how to blend, and get in there, but they never did attack generally.

INT: Did you lose B-52's in your unit?

ARLIE: Yes, but not to fighters as far as I know. It was always surface to air missiles, yeah. That was the main threat and the gunner's sitting in the tail back there, he had a really good visibility point so you could always see. When that missile started, as long as it wasn't overcast you'd see the flash on the ground and you could see it coming, and so you had a visual as well as the ECM countermeasures. You could turn into that missile and it would go by someplace, but then they started using proximity fuses and they got so that they could defeat the radar, then when they got some new equipment, when they turned their radar on, F-4's would just zero in on that radar beam and attack that, and so they just kept changing their tactics to where they finally got to where they just got in proximity fuses. And then they started putting layers of chaff, and it'd go off on the chaff, and then they'd change the sensitivity and it was just continuous challenge every day. [After the gunnery range] I applied for B-52 flight training and went to Castle for training and got rewarded to go to Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota.

INT: Rewarded? Why do you say that?

ARLIE: Oh, after spending a nice time at Castle—it was such a beautiful spot. You know, I mean it was warm and lots of things to do and plenty of places to take the family and so forth. It was almost a year out there and then we went to Minot, and the family was young, I had 3 children. But it worked out pretty good because we were in a housing unit on base and all the people cooperated. If your driveway was snowed in, why somebody would help you shovel it out and so it was a lot of families cooperating to survive the snow.

INT: That must've been an adjustment just the winters up there.

ARLIE: But you just learned how to live with it and that was all you could do because you were gonna be there for awhile. It was a good B-52 base. The facilities were good. It was tough on the people that had to maintain the aircraft, you know, the winter was so severe—

INT: How long were you there at Minot?

ARLIE: I was there 5 years. And I got selected as a flight instructor out in the school at Castle. Stayed out there for 4 years, and the next award was to go to Kinchlow Air Force Base in Michigan, and stayed up there for 4 years, and then they closed. I was still a gunner at Kinchlow on H models. The H models had one where the gunner's up front and he had remote control from the station up front. You sat side by side with the EW. That's the kind of airplane we flew out of Minot. All the crew were stationed up front and that was a much better environment.

INT: Now much better than what?

ARLIE: Much better than flying in the tail. The flights in the tail were in the D model. Well, you can see a picture on the wall up there and you can see how far back the tail is it's 186 feet or something like that.

INT: Were you alone back there or something?

ARLIE: And if something happened, like if you lost pressure, lost electric, you had a little crawl space and you could crawl forward, but that meant that they'd have to take the aircraft down to 10,000 feet. Mostly it was a very efficient system back there, but once in awhile you'd have a little trouble. But there wasn't anybody that could help you if something really bad went wrong, so—

INT: Yeah. So Kinchlow, and then what?

ARLIE: When they closed Kinchlow I came down here and they gave me the flight school here at Carswell. They had a flight school that trained all B-52 specialties, and a lot of training for people who went over to Southeast Asia, and they'd bring 'em through here for a couple of weeks of ground training, and then a couple weeks of flying training and then send 'em back to Southeast Asia.

INT: Did you fly in Viet Nam?

ARLIE: Yes, I did. I spent; I think I had 60 missions over there, so—

INT: In the B-52?

ARLIE: Yes. The D model flying out of Odipau, and flying out of Guam and we'd go over for 90 days at a time and then you come back and then you stay awhile and when it came your turn for your crew to return, why then you'd go back again, so, everybody took their turn. It wasn't any favoritism going on. Everybody just took their lumps and went back over there.

INT: Now all you guys ended up over there?

ARLIE: Yeah.

INT: And then how did you—now you're back down here in Fort Worth?

ARLIE: I stayed here. There was a General Hughes that was our commander for a while, he was at Kinchlow, and he got promoted and assigned to the Air Division here and he called me up and asked me if I wanted to be his advisor. I had made chief as a result of the tour at the school and then I worked for him for about a year and a half, and then he left and then another General came in and I stayed. And I finished up my tour here at Carswell. I was the advisor, what they call the senior enlisted advisor.

INT: Okay.

ARLIE: Each General had a chief, and I got to be the General chief and it was a fantastic job. Got to help a lot of people, and it was mostly just a people job, and it was very enjoyable. My entire career in the Air Force, except for the extreme sometimes, I don't remember any time when I wasn't ready to get up and do what needed to be done for that day because each flight was a challenge. It was never the same and it was always working with excellent people.

INT: Yeah. And your crew at Minot was the top crew?

ARLIE: Yes, you just had to work your way through that maze and whenever there was a vacancy, somebody shipped out or somebody moved for some reason or other—they would reassign you based on what they thought your capabilities were, so I was probably the youngest guy, experience-wise, to go to the evaluation group.

INT: How old were you at that time and could you explain Tech Sergeant?

ARLIE: Late twenties—you have the stripe system. In the Air Force you get one stripe as the Airman, and Airman 2nd class was 2 stripes. That was the old system that I came through, and then 3 stripes was Airman 1st class, then you made Staff Sergeant, and that was the 3 stripes with the little rocker underneath, and then the Tech Sergeant is the next grade, and that was 2 stripes, and then Master Sergeant would be the next grade. Then they had a grade of Senior Master Sergeant, and then they had Chief. Only 2% of the people in the military would be allowed to hold that grade, and it was very competitive. And the promotions we got as flying people were highly competitive, because everybody was pretty good and intelligent, and for the most part knew exactly what needed to be done and had their flight experience, and it was a specialty. It was very special and I was always honored to be on a flight crew and I was very proud of that job, and my children were always glad to say that their dad was on a B-52 crew.

INT: You bet—front line defense. Were you promoted beyond Tech Sergeant?

ARLIE: Yes, I made Master Sergeant—promoted to Master Sergeant. I made Senior Master Sergeant. The further you went, the more competitive it got and having the flights in Viet Nam—I had some special flights that worked out pretty good. I was in radar maintenance, so when something would go wrong inside the airplane, there was usually some things I could do to fix it, and so I got some recognition in those areas. I was able to do a lot of work in the simulators and enhance the simulator to where it was more directly related to the flights and flights profiles and things like that.

INT: You're talking about sort of refining the equipment?

ARLIE: Yes. Right. Yeah, we could get it down to where the mission was more relative to a standard mission, or a mission that was like in Viet Nam. There was a lot of things that could be done with the simulator that they just weren't talking advantage of—of some of the capabilities, and we got a pretty good mission profile out of that. And so I got endorsements on performance reports, and then I got to the place where you had to take a test—a performance test, and they call it 'Promotion Fitness Test', and they got down to where they break it in tenths of points for promotion and the guys I was in competition with, most everybody had their performance

report signed by a General, and if you didn't have a two-star or a three-star endorsement on there, why you were not competitive, really. And so you really had to stay sharp and you just always had to walk on thin ice. You couldn't screw up. If you did, why, you'd just go to the back of the pack someplace. I mean that's my own personal opinion. I was proud to be associated with that group.

INT: When you arrived at Minot, where did you start out?

ARLIE: I started on an R crew. When you graduated from school out there, all you had to do was take an exam, a ground test and then you had to take a flight test, and within 3 or 4 flights, where you're considered ready we got put on a ready crew, that was where you started. Now there were non-ready crews too.

INT: But you had plenty of experience coming there?

ARLIE: Well, when I got there they needed crews so bad that they didn't have the luxury [of placing] people on what they call a 'non-ready' crew. They needed to fill all their crew slots, so we—

INT: What year did you come there?

ARLIE: '65. So anyway, we were on a ready crew, and most of the folks are new, and the pilot was a captain. And I had lieutenants and a co-pilot lieutenant EW and a lieutenant navigator, and then I think we had a captain in radar.

INT: In the first crew?

ARLIE: On a first crew, yes. It was a young crew—young experience-wise and young people-wise. But it was a great start because everything from there, why you knew you were moving up the chain, 'cause we just kept getting better.

INT: You started out with a good crew [inaudible].

ARLIE: Yeah, I started out with a good crew, but, you know, B-52 crews—I don't know why, but they were special. In order to fly a B-52—in a B-52 environment, you just had to be because you had to pull alert. You had to go the 7 days of alert, they'd bring you off alert and you'd go fly a couple, three times, and then they'd put you back on alert for 7 more days and—

INT: And define alert—what would that require?

ARLIE: You would pull—stay at the—they call it an alert facility, for 7 days at a time, and you were confined to some degree. You had to stay right there.

The aircraft was loaded with 8 nuclear weapons, and they were live. They were ready-to-go nuclear weapons.

INT: At Minot Air Force Base?

ARLIE: At Minot Air Force Base, and so if anything happened, such as a missile attack, they could get those aircraft off the ground before the missiles would strike.

INT: So how fast do you get a B-52 off the ground?

ARLIE: I believe we could get it off at 8-10 minutes—something like that.

INT: About the time they could launch the missiles.

ARLIE: When they would see the missile launch on NORAD and if we would get the message to launch—immediate launch and before the missiles—I think we had a 12-minute envelope. We'd get out of there in 12 minutes that was what we strived for—to keep it underneath 12 minutes. And then we'd fly airborne alert, which was about a 26-hour flight. We'd take off with the same weapons and we'd orbit way up north towards the North Pole, in that area up there and stay on this big, elliptical orbit for, oh, probably 18 hours.

INT: Boy, that must be boring.

ARLIE: That was. There'd be 3 people flying and 3 people sleeping at all times. So it was just one of them things that had to be done, like alert. They maintained that for years and years, and they kept airborne command post in the air at all times. That was a tremendous amount of energy involved in keeping that airborne command post up at all times and keeping maybe 6 or 8 bombers cocked in the spring-loaded position there at all times.

INT: So they were just air refueling constantly?

ARLIE: Yes. I think they were up for about 20 hours, or maybe 22 hours—something like that. But we would refuel twice, or maybe 3 times, and we would get relieved, and the next aircraft would come, so—

INT: Okay. Getting up to this incident. It was October 24, 1968, and you guys were out on a training flight. Do you remember that particular flight?

ARLIE: Yes, I do. I remember that flight.

INT: Do you remember what your responsibilities were on that mission?

ARLIE: We were on the evaluation flight and there was a gunner that was on there for re-qualification, and he only had to re-qualify in a couple of areas, and he got finished with his re-qualification, and I took the gunners seat and it was just a standard mission. It was an evaluation mission. You had to do certain things on an evaluation. You had to have a navigation leg and you had to refuel and you had to drop high bombs and low bombs and be scored and then come back and do a lot of pilot work. So the co-pilot had to qualify the pilot and that took a lot of penetrations and approaches and touch and go's.

INT: Yeah. So you remember evaluating a gunner on that flight?

ARLIE: If I'm not mistaken.

INT: I'll correct you because that's—Jack Partin was being evaluated.

ARLIE: Yes he was. Yes.

INT: Do you remember that?

ARLIE: Yes. Well maybe I'm thinking about another flight, so that could be. We used to do about 3 of 'em a week, and that's probably what it was.

INT: You must've flown a hundred of 'em, you know? So walk us through the event that occurred, I mean—

ARLIE: When we came back into the local area where we'd get passed from Minneapolis Center to Minot Approach Control, and we would start a penetration and start towards the base and get passed off to Radar Approach Control, and they would tell you what altitudes and what headings to maintain to get you down to do a touch and go on the runway.

INT: So you're between the control tower and the co-pilot and—

ARLIE: And the pilot, right. And the navigators would help keep you lined up and at the altitudes and so forth, so it was kind of a crew project. But then there was some words from the tower that UFO's had been reported in the area, and they asked us if we'd ask the crew to watch out for strange lights and—

INT: Were you hearing radio traffic?

ARLIE: I heard all the radio traffic. Yes.

INT: Okay. So you guys were all connected?

ARLIE: Yes, the crew was all connected.

INT: And you're getting both radios?

ARLIE: Yes. You could get it all and all crew position would get all. You could cut 'em off if you didn't want to listen to 'em, but most everybody likes to stay up with the airplane—that's what I call that. Find out, you know, make sure we knew where we were and what we were on.

INT: At that point in the mission, you'd be coming in? I mean you're responsibilities would have probably been over with at that point, right?

ARLIE: Well, unless they call and said they've got traffic in the area, that radar would show 160° aft—

INT: Your radar sets on the whole time until you land?

ARLIE: Yes, it normally stays on.

INT: Is that the regulation?

ARLIE: Yes, the regulation. Sometimes when you refueled, it had to be shut down.

INT: Why when you refueled would it need to be shut down?

ARLIE: Because of maybe some sparks. All unnecessary equipment had to be shut down for air refueling just for safety reasons. And they'd fire back up after air refueling. But it was a good radar to tell you what kind of traffic you had. If they called passing traffic, then you could confirm that the traffic is already passed. You could see the traffic out.

INT: Okay. And what sort of a sector could you—

ARLIE: It covered a 160° aft, had 2 antennas, and one looked left and one looked right but also their pattern crossed over. They looked totally aft. The bomb nav radar went completely around in 360° circles, so it would show a shadow. The gunner radar looked 60° down, and then also looked 60° up, so. It was on the very back of the airplane.

INT: Okay, where were we in the—

ARLIE: Well, we were making approaches, and they had talked about UFO's and the crew made some humorous comments about that, but then either the pilot or co-pilot talked about an orange light that they had seen, and then

when the radar reported on his scope that he had seen—he was making some contact with something, and—

INT: Do you remember that point in the whole incident very well? What do you remember, for example, what the captain said over the intercom?

ARLIE: He said, 'Pilot, I've got a—I can see a target.' And if I remember correctly, when the pilot said that they seen the light, it was a light out there, then shortly thereafter I believe he said he seen something on his radar. It was showing up as a blip on the radar, but in that process, he said that it's going away. I don't remember if he said it was changing elevation or what, but he said that—but I seen it on the fire control radar very clearly. It was totally independent. It picked up at about a thousand yards, a huge target comparable to a KC-135. Whenever the KC-135 would roll out behind us I would always be able to see that in his position, but this target looked that big, and then it showed once that a thou—

INT: As big as?

ARLIE: As big as a KC-135 as far as the reflectivity. I couldn't tell the size, but just the strength of the reflectivity would show a much brighter.

INT: Do you have the ability to determine a distance as well?

ARLIE: Yes, the scope was aligned with scribe marks on it, so it would show every 1,000 yards had a scribe mark on it. And so that showed up at 1,000 yards, and the next time I seen it, it was at 12,000 yards, and then it disappeared.

INT: Let's stop there a second. [Switches tape]. So at the same time the captain saw this, you saw it?

ARLIE: No. After it disa—he said, 'It's going away.' He talked about not seeing it on his scope at a short period time. He said, 'I think it's changing in elevation.'

INT: How long did the captain have this on his system?

ARLIE: I would say in seconds it was, you know, like maybe 30 seconds or so, if that long. Something like that, perhaps.

INT: Now, just to help your memory and all, in the documents and from past discussions it stayed with you for quite awhile. You were about 35 miles when it came up behind you, and I think it stayed with you for about 25 miles?

ARLIE: Right.

INT: But it was actually with you quite awhile. When it appeared on your scope was that a normal appearance? Did it look, you know?

ARLIE: It was a normal refle—it worked—radar works off of reflectivity, so it was a normal reflection of a target. It was not distorted. It was a clean, clear target but my amazement was that it moved from 1,000 yards to 12,000 yards in such a short period of time. He was at that—first time I seen him on the scope, he was 1,000 yards aft, and the next time I seen him he was 12,000 yards away. He was going away, but I only painted him twice, and so—

INT: Oh, he moved that in 3 seconds?

ARLIE: He moved that in a period of 3 seconds or so.

INT: So each sweep is 3 seconds on your scope?

ARLIE: Well it sweeps back and forth every half-second and you got 2 radars that sweep back and forth, and he was in the coverage of both radars. When he painted he was at 1,000 yards, and the next time I seen him he was at 12, and it was—

INT: So he moved in half-seconds?

ARLIE: In half seconds, or maybe in one second he was at 12,000 yards.

INT: And so when you say both were painted, so he was dead behind you?

ARLIE: He was probably 30° to the right, which would've been off to the left wing, perhaps, but the speed of the B-52 was going forward, and he's going aft, so take that into consideration, but also the fact that the rapid movement. I've never seen anything move that fast before.

INT: Yeah, Pat made the same comment; he'd never seen anything move that—On his scope, he watched it moved from 3 miles off, to one mile in one sweep. So somewhere under 3 seconds it moved 2 miles.

ARLIE: Yeah.

INT: And how long did you observe it on your scope?

ARLIE: It was just a matter of seconds. Like, in a 5 second period, or maybe 10 second period, but I seen it once, and I seen it again, and I never seen it again. I really paid attention to the scope from then on, but a target that bright was really a definite, definite target. And, you know, sometimes

you get clutter and so if I read in your report about plasma and about all the other terminology that they use, but that was a good, hard target that was there, and then it moved to 12,000 yards and—

INT: And, plasma I mean, has that ever come up in your career as—

ARLIE: No. No. Never. Or they mentioned Northern Lights and Northern Lights are just definite Northern Lights. Once you see 'em they look the same. And they have St. Elmo's Fire in the aircraft, and when it gets static electricity so bad that it glows in side the plastic, the windows and it's just a phenomena, but it's just static electricity, but there's nothing—on the simulator they could generate these real hard targets, and it always was brighter than anything else you'd ever seen on the simulator, and then when the tanker would roll out behind, that was a good, hard, reflective target, and that showed bright, and this was in relationship to the tanker, 'cause that tanker had so much reflectivity at that range, and this one had the same reflectivity, but the reflectivity at 12,000 yards was still bright.

INT: So you can determine size, or is that just from experience that you know the relative size based on distance?

ARLIE: Well, when they're that close behind you, the size—the radar set is supposed to control that down through a clipper network to where all targets should be the same at 1,000 yards. But when they build the radar strength up, and when it gets farther out, then it builds up the strength to maintain a consistent target size so that you can lock on and track it. The signal strength to track is important at that time, but when that tanker would roll out behind you, sometimes the reflectivity—say it may just a few hundred yards, it would string that target all the way across the bottom of the scope at the first. I mean, it couldn't handle all that reflectivity, and then as soon as it got to maybe 500 yards or a little further out, then it would come down to the normal target size.

INT: Okay. So it was a pretty sensitive system?

ARLIE: Yes, it was very sensitive.

INT: Could you put it into a station keeping or how did that function? Could you limit the radiation?

ARLIE: You could, yeah. If you hit a control on the control handle, it would stop that antenna from the search cycle, and it would start what they call nodding up and down and it was looking for—what it was doing is when you found the target, you wanted to look directly at that target, and when it and it would show that target. When it centered that radar energy right on the target, that was what would trigger your lock on process, and once you

locked on to it, then it would automatically control the signal strength, and it would lock on and track the target, and it even had what they call a leading edge tracking capability. If they'd a launched a missile from the target, it would, they said—I never done it, but I mean they said it would track the leading edge. It would actually track the missile rather than the aircraft, so it would pick up the leading edge coming towards you.

INT: Yeah. Oh, interesting.

ARLIE: It was very sensitive I know that.

INT: But I mean, so, as a gunner, that's all you needed to direct your firer power? That's giving you all the information you need to know exactly where that object is off the B-52?

ARLIE: It would tell you the range and azimuth of the target and the elevation. The scope face was scribed so that you know exactly the range and the azimuth in degrees, and you didn't know what the elevation was unless there was a way to tell the elevation, but most people wouldn't fool with that. If you knew what your antenna was doing when it scanned up and when it scanned down, it would make a slight movement of the radar beam, and if you knew what the beam was doing, you'd know what the antenna was doing when it moved to the left it was looking down, and when it moved up, the scan would move to the right just a little bit and you could tell whether your target was above or below, and that was pretty damn important.

INT: Well that's interesting. So you really knew how to read that?

ARLIE: Yes.

INT: Where were you [located in the aircraft]?

ARLIE: Okay, in the aircraft as you come up on the upper deck—you had a lower deck and an upper deck, and you come up to the upper deck, and the pilot's would have to turn to the left and the EW and gunner would turn to the right and their seats sit side by side, and you're looking at the bulkhead—

INT: So you're back-to-back to the pilot, essentially?

ARLIE: Yes. The EW and the gunner were about this far apart looking aft. All of his equipment was set up—his scope was set up to position just like mine was.

INT: And then, so there's a hallway where you could see the window up front?

ARLIE: Yeah, you could look back over your shoulder and you could see the window out front. That's true.

INT: You could see what, the pilots shoulders?

ARLIE: Right, probably about 10-12 feet of room between where our positions were and the pilots positions.

INT: Now, so then the navigators go down the hatch, and they're right underneath you?

ARLIE: No, they were underneath the pilots. They were forward. And then the area behind the navigator's was where they had a lot of equipment.

INT: **T**hey were really in the dark.

ARLIE: They were totally, yes. After they got the infrared systems on there, they had an ability to see. The TV scope would allow them to see what was out in front of 'em, but until then, they were just as blind as we were upstairs. You know, there were no windows.

INT: Does it get claustrophobic flying on—?

ARLIE: Well, I never did have that problem, but you can get up and move around. I mean you weren't chained to your seat or anything.

INT: We were talking about your radarscope—how was your radar system designated.

ARLIE: Yeah, the ASG-21.

INT: Now, so the radar navigator, their system was ASQ—

ARLIE: ASQ, that's right. 'Q' was for bombing and navigation, and 'G' was a gunnery system and the EW system was ALT, which were transmitters.

INT: So you had 3 radar systems on board?

ARLIE: No, we had 2. Bomb nav and a gunnery, and the ECM system was receivers and transmitters, but he could pick up signals and he could see what kind of signal it was and he could evaluate it and then know what to do to jam it. But his sy—you know, what he was seeing was just radar energy striking the aircraft, we would project radar energy and get the return back and process it.

INT: Right. Okay. Oh, 'cause he was doing the opposite of what you were doing?

ARLIE: Yes, right. That's true.

INT: You only remember this on your system for a very short time…

ARLIE: Yes.

INT: —McCaslin had it on his for quite awhile—10 minutes.

ARLIE: Right. If he was off the wing, which I understood that's where they were, then I wouldn't be able to see, because that system would only look like 160° from the end of the tail system, from that area, so I wouldn't see anything until it got aft of the aircraft.

INT: This was what really blew McCaslin's mind, is when you guys started your approach descent, the thing maintained it's distance, moved over to the other side of the airplane. McCaslin was a little concerned at that point. He thought, 'we're turning into this thing? So when they did, the thing backed out, and it maintained a perfect distance—

ARLIE: Yes.

INT: …and then moved back over to this side of the plane. So he was like, 'Wait a second here somebody's making a decision to maintain a distance here.' Do you remember that?

ARLIE: I remember all the talk that was going on about that and it was just amazing. You know, I was beginning to—when he was starting to talk about they'd seen a light but then he'd start talking about seeing the radar returns on his radarscope, I was beginning to become a believer at that time, that there was something with us, that was going with us and it was just—it wasn't fear, it was just amazement that, you know, that there—I didn't, you know, for some reason I just never was in fear of it, I was just amazed. Because I always had heard, you know, that there was such a thing, but I never did have any evidence and now it appeared that the evidence was there.

INT: At that point, apparently this thing dropped down on the ground as you guys came down and hit your flight level for your approach. This thing just kept going down to the ground, then the captain saw it as a flight return next sweep faint return next sweep, nothing. So he interpreted that as a descent, I guess. And at that point, your radios came back. Do you remember the radios being out?

ARLIE: Yeah. I remember that they were trying to talk to the control tower and they couldn't—they weren't trans—they weren't getting through.

INT: Do you remember at what point that radio system went out?

ARLIE: Sometime on the approach, and I'm not sure when it was, but I know that they had trouble talking to the tower and talking to approach control.

INT: But you don't remember it for that entire period of time?

ARLIE: No.

INT: All right. And then what happened after that on your low approach? Do you have a recall?

ARLIE: I remember that they were still talking about having an object out there someplace.

INT: Well, apparently at that point, there was, you know, and Brad's memory is, is that a General Officer was patched into the control tower radio, and the pilots were ordered to fly back around. They didn't really want to do it they just wanted to get on the ground at that point.

ARLIE: I remember that they didn't want to make the go—they wanted to land, that's what they want—that's what their intention was, to land, and that we had to make another go around.

INT: Do you remember doing that go around?

ARLIE: I remember that they were supposed to be looking to see if there was anything out there on the go around and—but I don't remember very much about that.

INT: They actually did see the object below the airplane. Do you remember their comments at that time?

ARLIE: It seemed like Brad Runyon had made some comments about it and but can't recall exactly what was—

INT: You guys didn't want to go take a look?

ARLIE: [Laughs]. I don't remember that part of it.

INT: So then you guys just turned your base leg, and landed. Do you remember what happens after that?

ARLIE: Well after we land, you go to debriefing, and—

INT: Do you have stuff you have to turn in?

ARLIE: Yes, you had paperwork—every crew position had papers that would go to maintenance and tell 'em if there was any repair work needed to be done to the system.

INT: So you went into your maintenance debriefing?

ARLIE: Maintenance debriefing—and you'd have the maintenance guy there that was responsible for your particular system and he would take your piece of paper, but then he'd also take down notes of any oral trans—anything that you'd have to pass back and forth that would clarify what you'd written down, if needed.

INT: Okay. Now are there any other film capabilities on that plane besides the radar, you know, besides the navigator's camera on the scope? Did you have a camera?

ARLIE: No I did not, and the only other camera is a bomb camera, and it's back just aft of the bomb bay and I think it was called the O-16 or something, but it had these great big doors that opened up and it had a window about this wide and they could take, I think they call it the damage assessment capability and they can take pictures of the bomb as it went off, or whatever damage took place.

INT: Who was responsible for that camera?

ARLIE: A navigator. The radar or the navigator had the controls to that camera.

INT: You just hit a button?

ARLIE: Hit a button and the doors open and the set…and a film was set up to take an exposure every so many seconds. That would've—

INT: So from 20,000 feet you could—

ARLIE: Oh yeah, pretty good resolution, it would've been good to use.

INT: 'Cause you drop a bomb from what, 20—

ARLIE: Or 30 or 35 or higher, yeah. And it would take pictures of—

INT: Would that camera work at 1200 feet?

ARLIE: Yeah, it would. Yeah, I got a picture—we all laid down on the ramp one time, all laid down on the ramp in a circle and the navigator took our pictures laying on the ramp, and it was a good picture.

INT: Do you remember that camera being used that night? Would that have been used on a training mission?

ARLIE: They didn't use it very much. They exercise it at some point in the mission to make sure it worked, but I don't think anybody was thinking about that at that time.

INT: Is it the sort of thing that's always loaded and ready to go?

ARLIE: You had to exercise it every so often, but it had to be a special mission when they needed to take pictures.

INT: The only reason I ask is Brad remembers the GO saying, 'Over fly the thing and film it. Maybe the General Officer didn't know you weren't capable of doing that. Maybe he was referring to the radarscope.

ARLIE: I'm sure he was referring to the radarscope pictures.

INT: At that point the object's down on the ground, so why would you film radar to the ground?

ARLIE: I don't know if it would a shown up. Your gro—radar picks up all that ground clutter. That radar paints a pretty good definition of what the ground looks like.

INT: You get relief and whatever?

ARLIE: Yeah, you'll get the relief on it, and it paints things like power lines, and especially they would use for their bombing offsets, a lot of times they use tank farms—fuel storage areas or grainery's and things like that where they get a lot of reflectivity from it, and you get a good ground picture. You get like a stream or a river showed up real bright, so that would've been good if they could a taken a picture that way. I would've thought that if it would've been highly reflective and below us, that would've shown. Yeah. There was a function on that, they had to go to ground map or something. It tilted the antenna to where it got better reflectivity from the ground, called 'ground map low' or something like that. And it was designed to pick up more accurate returns from the ground.

INT: Do you remember talking to the maintenance guys about this incident?

ARLIE: There was some talk about it, yeah.

INT: 'What did you guys see up there?' and that kind of thing?

ARLIE: Yeah, it was just, you know, chatter back and forth with nothing specific, really.

INT: Um, so apparently then you guys went home. Now at some point you were ordered back.

ARLIE: Yes. It was another gathering, but I can't remember exactly how that went. It was the next day—

INT: Do you remember where it was?

ARLIE: I thought it was in the squadron area up there.

INT: So in your normal area?

ARLIE: Yes. They had briefing rooms and conference rooms and so forth, and it seemed like to me it was in a conference room.

INT: I mean, do you have a visual of that meeting? Who was there, was it a big room, small room?

ARLIE: Yeah, I think it was a small room and there was an officer that we weren't acquainted with—

INT: Do you remember who your Division Commander was?

ARLIE: No.

INT: Does Ralph Holland ring a bell?

ARLIE: Yes. I knew of him. I knew he was the Division Commander, and I had seen him on some occasions.

INT: Was he the man that debriefed you?

ARLIE: No. As far as I know I don't think it was. I would remember the Division Commander.

INT: Could it have been some of the Strategic Missile Wing guys that debriefed you?

ARLIE: It might've been. Yeah.

INT: So you don't have any visual of that guys face or who he was?

ARLIE: No, I don't really.

INT: Was he a General?

ARLIE: I don't think so, because that would've really impressed me and I would've remembered that.

INT: What wouldn't have impressed you, a Colonel?

ARLIE: Well yeah. I mean we associated with the staff and there were a lot of Colonels on the staff, and…and they were amongst us. I mean, they were part of the—

INT: Was he there with an aide, was he there alone debriefing you guys?

ARLIE: I believe there was someone with him if I'm not mistaken; there were 2 people there.

INT: And what was the tenor of the meeting? It wasn't normal for you guys to do this, right?

ARLIE: No. No, it was not. If I remember correctly, what the crew got out of it when we left was that, is this really necessary? From those guys, is this—were not really too concerned about it. I mean it wasn't a concern that they were having.

INT: Which is odd because why the hell do a debriefing then if they weren't really asking you guys concrete questions? Did they ask you about your radar returns?

ARLIE: I mentioned my radar returns. That was my confirmation of what somebody else had seen. I said, 'Well it was also on my radar.' But there wasn't any follow through, very much follow through there far as I can remember, but it was to me, and what the crew always called stuff like that was cover your ass type stuff, you know, in case somebody happened to ask them, 'yes, we've debriefed the crew' and 'we've taken care of our stuff' and that's what it appeared to me to be.

INT: At Minot did you know Colonel Werlich?

ARLIE: Yes. Yes, I did know him. He was part of the staff and I don't remember exactly what his position was, but Werlich is a name that I remember quite well.

INT: He was the UFO project officer at Minot; he was the one responsible for the investigation.

ARLIE: It was what they call additional duty. That's how that they took care of things like.

INT: Now do you remember him talking to you guys after the fact?

ARLIE: I don't have any recall of that.

INT: He never contacted you as far as you know?

ARLIE: Not personally. I don't remember getting back together as a group again as a complete group again.

INT: Now, Pat remembers also a third meeting where they invited the navigator and the radar nav in, and they showed them the images that he shot.

ARLIE: I think they were still covering, you know making sure that they had covered all their bases of things they thought they were supposed to do.

INT: Have you ever had any other incidents?

ARLIE: No. Never had. That was the only time we had anything like that happen.

INT: What was your impression of that?

ARLIE: My impression was that they were talking about the images that they were getting on their scope, and then all of a sudden there was some movement, they were talking about movement, and there it was on my scope and I seen it and it was abs—

INT: At the point that it's moving, you pick it up?

ARLIE: Yes, and I picked it up when they were talking about movement, and then I picked it up on my scope and it was such a brilliant target and the thing is, as you get down below a certain altitude, you start picking up ground returns from low altitude—I call it ground clutter.

INT: I would think around Minot you're not going to pick up much ground clutter.

ARLIE: That's true. There's not that much clutter, but how this target was it—all of a sudden it was just there and it was bright and there wasn't any—it just definitely no, there was no doubt in my mind, it was so definite, that I was

impressed by the target. By the brilliance of it and it wasn't anything else around it. I was just that—that was it.

[Transcript end]