

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
RICHARD R. GALBRAITH  
Security Service, Air Force, Cold War.

2001

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**Galbraith, Richard R.**, (1937-). Oral History Interview, 2001.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 64 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 64 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 64 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Richard Galbraith, a Madison, Wisconsin resident, discusses his service as a Chinese language specialist with the Air Force during the Cold War. Galbraith talks about enlisting so he could choose his branch of service, basic training at Lackland Air Force Base (Texas), and Chinese language school at Yale University (Connecticut) where he and other servicemen underwent immersion training in military-oriented conversational Mandarin. Housed in the dorms, he says they spent nights and weekends like regular college students. After graduation from language school, he was stationed at the National Security Agency Base (Maryland) and comments on monitoring Chinese radio traffic and listening to tapes of military activity from the Chinese mainland. Galbraith details his transfer to Taipei (Taiwan) at a radio intercept station where he monitored, taped, and transcribed air and ground radio traffic into English. He mentions tactics used to find radar locations. He touches on living conditions, writing home, selling cigarettes on the black market, and spending his three-day breaks in Taipei clubs, hotels, and bars. Galbraith touches on spending time with the local girls and catching a sexually transmitted disease that was cured before he got home. He explains the food and brands of beer that were available. Stationed in Taiwan during the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis (1958), he talks about how it affected work at the base, being at the top of a list for evacuation, and the tension between Communist and Nationalist Chinese forces. He states, "Back then it was all fun and games," but looking back on it things were a little more serious than he realized. Galbraith speaks of being assigned to Truax Field (Wisconsin) as a clerk typist with the North American Air Defense Command. He reveals he met his wife during time off in Madison. After discharge, he touches on his civilian life: a career at the post office, using Mandarin while working with the public, listening to international broadcasts on a shortwave radio, coping after his wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease, and joining the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Galbraith (1937- ) served in the Air Force Security Service during the Cold War. Born in Nebraska, he grew up in South St. Paul (Minnesota) and enlisted in the Air Force after graduating from South St. Paul High School. A Chinese language specialist, he served at the Shulikou Air Station in Taiwan monitoring radio frequencies.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2001.  
Transcribed by Daniel Walker, 2010.  
Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010.

**Interview Transcript:**

Jim: Okay.

Richard: Alright.

Jim: Richard Galbraith. Are you related to the famous John?

Richard: No, not that I know of.

Jim: Oh, too bad, too bad.

Richard: Well, he's never called me and I've never called him. [both laugh]

Jim: It's a relationship waiting to happen.

Richard: Yeah, it might be, who knows, there might be some runners out there somewhere.

Jim: So, where were you born?

Richard: I was born down in Nebraska, back in north central Nebraska.

Jim: And when was that?

Richard: Back in November of '37. I guess it was towards the tail end of the Depression, I hear stories about dust storms and gunny sacks to keep out the dust and you know, and don't remember any of it.

Jim: And you finished high school?

Richard: Oh yeah, I ended up—folks ended up in Minnesota; I graduated from South St. Paul High, up in South St. Paul, Minnesota.

Jim: I see.

Richard: Back in '56, September of '56.

Jim: So did you pursue college, or—

Richard: No, I—at that time I went right—well I worked for a few months at a publishing firm and then enlisted in the Air Force to—I guess—basically avoid the draft and the Army, so—

Jim: So you were draft eligible?

- Richard: Well I was draft eligible—volunteered for four—
- Jim: I see, that was your alternative?
- Richard: Well, I didn't—you know, I didn't wait for the draft or anything; I just figured I'd go in, get it out of the way, get out of town, you know.
- Jim: Your primary interest in volunteering was because of your choice of service?
- Richard: Choice of service I guess, basically because I—
- Jim: You could do it where you wanted too—
- Richard: Yeah, right. At that time it was more or less inevitable; if you were eligible for the draft, barring medical or whatever, you were going to be chosen sooner or later.
- Jim: At that time, if you were drafted, that would have been a two year hitch?
- Richard: I don't know, I imagine it would have been, you know, two years; I don't think the Air Force—
- Jim: I think that's what everybody did.
- Richard: I believe it was. I don't think the Air Force was—were they drafting at the time, I don't know, but the Army and the Marines were, you know; I figured, "Well, this is not pure patriotism but I'll take four in the Air Force rather than two on the ground in the jungle somewhere," so that's what we did.
- Jim: So you went straight into the Air Force?
- Richard: Yeah. Well, like I said, except for that three months after High School. Straight into the Air Force—
- Jim: Where did they send you?
- Richard: Went down to Texas, down to San Antonio, Texas.
- Jim: That's where your basic was?
- Richard: Yeah, basic training at Lackland Air Force base.
- Jim: Lackland?

Richard: They sent everybody there I think.

Jim: What town is that near?

Richard: San Antonio, near San Antonio.

Jim: Ah yes, I know.

Richard: Never got off the base to see San Antonio—

Jim: There's a lot of military bases besides—

Richard: Oh yeah, sure, yeah. There was—well there was Kelly right next to the base—well right next door I guess; I mean it's just littered with bases down in Texas.

Jim: Yeah, there's a lot of military down in San Antonio.

Richard: But we did the basic—the regular basic, I guess, was six weeks or something like that; we were selected—or I was selected for a different type school—they kept us on for basically about three months.

Jim: What type of school is this?

Richard: Well, you know you go through your battery of qualification tests and aptitude tests. The Air Force called it an AFSC, the Air Force Specialty Corps—

Jim: Same as the other ones.

Richard: Same deal, yeah.

Jim: What did you qualify for?

Richard: Well, I had my choice being a photographic interpreter—photo interpreter—or they were offering linguist school—Chinese language school up there at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

Jim: And that's what you accepted?

Richard: That's what I took, yeah. [laughs]

Jim: How long was that class at Yale?

Richard: That was eight months, from January through late August of '57.

- Jim: Well I'm sure eight months wasn't long enough to learn the characters—
- Richard: Learned a few, studied a few—
- Jim: You learned Mandarin composition?
- Richard: Spoken, more; conversational but also military oriented.
- Jim: Mandarin?
- Richard: Mandarin, Chinese Mandarin; that's what we took—
- Jim: That's the standard Chinese as I understand—
- Richard: Well, I guess the Communists imposed Mandarin as the national language after they took over the mainland back in '49; I don't know when they imposed it, but that's the national language now; there's Cantonese and there's, I don't know, fifty or a hundred other dialects, but they made Mandarin the national language. So at any rate, that's what we were aiming for and we studied, like I said, eight months there, it was five days a week, about eight hours a day—
- Jim: [unintelligible]
- Richard: Oral, mainly, concentrated on the oral. Some people they would take off and try to teach the characters or written, and they would come back for another course later in their military career.
- Jim: Well I have no idea what type of—how that procedure—was it difficult?
- Richard: I didn't think so, I—
- Jim: Did you listen to tapes?
- Richard: Oh yeah, well we listened to tapes; we had Chinese instructors, they were not defectors, but they had fled from the mainland because of the Communist takeover in '49.
- Jim: They emphasized military terms and military—
- Richard: Well, basically we focused first on conversational, getting the basics understood, being able to converse; it was, I guess what they call now total immersion; once we got into class we couldn't speak anything but Chinese—
- Jim: Right from the get-go?

- Richard: Right from the get-go.
- Jim: [laughs] That was a tough couple of weeks?
- Richard: Well, steps at a time, but with the instructors we had the class sessions; we would listen to—we didn't have tapes at the time, we had a floppy, very thin vinyl disc or record that they classes recorded on, and we would study those during class time, during the day; do homework if you needed to at night or even go back to school for further study at night. For me it seemed to come pretty easy. I guess for some people it does, some people it doesn't.
- Jim: So your class then was how many?
- Richard: Oh my gosh, I think it was eighty or so, eighty some. I think there were about fifty four, fifty five that graduated; there were quite a few dropouts—
- Jim: So two thirds?
- Richard: I'm going to say about that, yeah. We got to book it home if it was written by the instructor, by the professor, head of the program.
- Jim: He was from China?
- Richard: Oh yeah, I didn't tell you the whole program, see we were on campus there, we wore our uniforms during the day but we were on college campus—
- Jim: You had the best of both worlds.
- Richard: Oh you bet, yeah. And we had—living on per diem—it wasn't barracks, we were put in dorms just like college students.
- Jim: Chase girls on the government's credit?
- Richard: Chase girls, eat pizza, drink beer—we'd drive up to Boston and down to New York and down to Virginia and—but we had a good time and we got to be quite good at—to be honest with you—the degree they give out—they give you a certificate, but the eight month course is the equivalent, basically, of a four year college course at any other university where you study it one or two hours a week or something; we studied it seven or eight hours a day for eight months.



- Jim: That's really a bad way of learning—I noticed that when I was—during the Second World War time I was in college before I went in service; and they hurried that, just three semesters one right after the other; in one twelve week period I took a year of Organic Chemistry. In twelve weeks. One semester is six weeks. Another semester is six weeks, just back to back.
- Richard: Well if you concentrate on that one subject and throw out the fluff—
- Jim: It was terrific because that's a memory course, and that's a perfect way to learn a memory course when you just have it every day.
- Richard: Well the program had just started a couple years before I got there, and that was in January of '57, but they started it back in '55 or so, maybe even before that; but they recognized the need for the Air Force and the military to have a Chinese language capability; they started screening out their applicants—the Air Force—down through Lackland. Most of the people there were Air Force, there were one or two Navy guys, maybe a Marine, and we had a priest in there, a missionary who was studying. After that of course, we had a little leave, took off—that was, what, August? Graduated late August, went down the same day I think, to a base near Suitland, Maryland; it was a support squadron, and we were assigned to another school at that time, which was run by the NSA, the National Security Agency.
- Jim: What were they teaching you?
- Richard: We were in warrant of radio—they had a radio reception, radio—not operation, we didn't transmit or anything, but it was—
- Jim: You didn't transmit, you just listened?
- Richard: We just listened—eavesdropped; of course back then it was classified as high as you can be; you couldn't talk about it to anybody.
- Jim: Sure.
- Richard: And for years and years after that, but I think they declassified it back in '96 or '97 or something. But we studied—we listened to actual tapes—intercepted tapes from the mainland—
- Jim: Now was that hard?
- Richard: Oh sure, you get a different terminology; the people speak a bit differently than the professors did. But you learn—there you focus more on the

military aspect of it, especially aviation—you know, air to air communications, air to ground, ground to air and things like that.

Jim: But you could recognize what they were talking about?

Richard: Oh yeah sure, well you had to understand it of course, when you got over in the field, sitting there in front of a tape recorder for seven or eight hours taking down stuff, jotting notes, sending that down for transcription, then it's transcribed; they translate it from Chinese into English, basically. That portion is then sent on to cryptologists.

Jim: You didn't do that?

Richard: I didn't do that, no. I was strictly in the reception, you know, the interception.

Jim: What did you—when you listened, what did you write down? You wrote it out, right?

Richard: Oh yeah, you didn't have much to write. You'd write down callsigns and basically the gist of the paragraph or the line; it was just conversation like we're having here; how much could you write down of that, you know? So you try to maintain the subject or stream so you can—the transcriber could follow the conversation, maybe pick up something from you; those guys were generally more experienced; after you spend some time intercepting, you develop the capability—your vocabulary is better, your ear might be better, you're getting moved down—some are anyway—to the transcription room to type this out and send it on up for—to higher echelons.

Jim: So how long did that school last?

Richard: In Washington it was three months; we studied there—there was an annex; I think it was a naval annex; they must have been training people there for years and years—

Jim: So that took you into 1957?

Richard: Late '57 we got through with that—

Jim: Now you're ready to do something.

Richard: Yeah. We were still there and it was—we were out of Fort Mead, Maryland; some old wooden barracks from World War One or Two, cold, draftier than hell. They just opened up the new—actually the first National Security Agency at that time; we were in there at the time that it opened

up in late '57. From there of course we had a little leave to go home—I was living—folks were living up in St. Paul, Minnesota at the time—or was it South St. Paul? Whatever. From there we went overseas; out to—flew out to California, flew over touched down at Wake, touched down at Hawaii, touched down at Guam I think it was, touched down at the Philippines for a day or two and then on up to Taiwan, up to Taipei.

Jim: To where?

Richard: Taipei; people call it Taipei or whatever, but it's Taipei. Tai is what—

Jim: Formosa—

Richard: Yeah, Formosa; the 'bei' is the north; that's the northernmost state.

Jim: What was there, an Air Force base?

Richard: You could call it that, it was just a little collection of huts up on the top of a hill; you know on a mountain, winding road up to the top.

Jim: All the spooks were on top of a hill?

Richard: Yeah we were up there—spooks [laughs]—and antenna fields and the barracks weren't that bad; by that time they were beyond the canvas and the—

Jim: Those radio towers, they were all—

Richard: They had an antenna field there, and the barracks were rudimentary, I guess; you know, no central heat or anything, but they did have some showers and stuff like that.

Jim: A potbelly stove?

Richard: Well, a couple of them; coal burning or fuel oil burning, but they used them to—

Jim: And how many people were on that base?

Richard: I don't know to be honest.

Jim: About a hundred?

Richard: It had to be that many at least, between the Air Force groups that were there—

- Jim: Oh that's right; the other branches of the service were there—
- Richard: The Army had a post there; the Army Security Agency did the same thing we did, they were more focused on ground movement—ground communication. I think we had one or two Navy guys, but of course the Navy had the ships they had—if there were any Naval people over there they hid those Navy guys in the crypto shack in the—
- Jim: They could do that because they could move their stuff around—
- Richard: Yeah, but they would patrol the straits and so on—and of course there were airborne intercepts—we didn't have any airborne intercepts out of our base, but there were bases that ran from northern Japan, central Japan down to us—there were intercept bases down in the Philippines and I imagine even further south that I'm not aware of. So we ran airborne, ground-based—which we were concentrating on the Air Force—and listening in and typing it down and pissing off the Chinese—
- Jim: Would they send it by code or something?
- Richard: I don't know what they would do; we would, like I say, transcribe it into English and—
- Jim: Hand it to somebody else?
- Richard: Hand it to somebody else, and this information worked its way up through the Air Force command, through the NSA.
- Jim: That's the last you saw of it?
- Richard: That's the last we saw of it, you know.
- Jim: So this is about an eight hour a day job?
- Richard: About eight yeah, usually. We'd work different shifts—they were kind of screwed up at first, but we generally worked—it came down to working three day shifts—eight to five or something, and then we would work three afternoons and then three mid, from twelve or so until eight in the morning.
- Jim: So somebody was listening—
- Richard: Constantly. And then we'd have a three day break. Most of the time we'd head down to Taibei and bum around the various recreational sites—
- Jim: Get in trouble?

Richard: Got in trouble, you bet. [both laugh] It was fun, you know. Like I said, twenty-four seven—

Jim: Sounds like pretty good duty?

Richard: It was great duty; some of these other guys—I know there was this one place off Korea, just six or seven miles from the North Korean coast where they had a listening post, and that was probably no bigger than the square around Madison here, primitive facilities.

Jim: I can assure you, there's no place in Korea that would be—

Richard: Good? [laughs]

Jim: Terrible place.

Richard: Yeah. We did that—oh a lot of interesting stories, but most of them I probably better keep quiet. [laughs]

Jim: What kind of stories?

Richard: Oh just personal things you know, bumming around with the guys downtown.

Jim: Tell me one; oh, you mean this is going to your relatives?

Richard: No, there's nobody that this is going to—there's nobody to send it to. No, I don't really, because the kids aren't interested, the wife's gone, the family's gone in different states, they know all about it—

Jim: Your kids aren't interested in what you did?

Richard: No, they don't give a shit.

Jim: You sure?

Richard: I'm sure.

Jim: Positive?

Richard: Positive. They won't be listed here.

Jim: Well maybe their children would.

- Richard: Well the grandkids—my daughter had three but they don't give a shit either. I only see them once a year, usually at graduation; give them forty or fifty bucks and then I see them again the next year. I only got one graduation to go, so that ought to write it off. Well that's a whole different other history.
- Jim: Well I don't want to get into that.
- Richard: Yeah.
- Jim: But tell me what you would do on a leave down in Taipei.
- Richard: Oh, well we would—they had some nice clubs; they had an NCO club—
- Jim: By this time, you were a Staff Sergeant?
- Richard: No, I went over as an Airman Second and I came back as an Airman Second. Just towards the end of my tour, I think, there was some exam or something that I took—anyway, the results never got back or I didn't pass—whatever it was I didn't get promoted there and I just finished up here at Truax; got the same rank and got out after I did my four years.
- Jim: Your four years as an—
- Richard: Airman Second, yeah. I had, what, three years time and grade as an Airman Second, and I guess I was kind of young—
- Jim: Second—
- Richard: Second class, kind of low on the ladder. I was kind of young and pissed off at the time and I said, "I've had enough of this stuff." So here I am thirty-six or thirty-seven months and this is all I got? I'm leaving. Story—well, we'd go down and spend weekends; take drives around or rent a taxi, drive out along the coast up to the northern tip in Keelung Harbor.
- Jim: Was it pretty country?
- Richard: Oh pretty country, sure; ocean was nice and so on. Couldn't do much, weren't supposed to take any pictures; we took some—I took some of the radar installation that the CHINAT—Chinese Nationalists—there were the CHINATs and the CHICOMs—the Chinese Communists on the mainland.
- Jim: How did you differentiate between them?
- Richard: Well on the island we were CHINATS—Chinese Nationalists of course, it was just a different way of differentiating—

- Jim: You didn't monitor the Chinese Nationalist Army too, did you?
- Richard: We monitored everybody.
- Jim: I see.
- Richard: Even now; and for years and years, the US has been monitoring England, France, Canada, Brazil, you know, everybody. [garbled argument/conversation] Just because they're a friend doesn't mean we don't do any eavesdropping or anything.
- Jim: We're eavesdropping on everybody.
- Richard: You bet. We'd do that; we'd spend a few nights sometimes with some of the local girls at their hotels. [laughs]
- Jim: Did you catch any social diseases?
- Richard: I came in touch with one or two. [laughs]
- Jim: Well that's hard to avoid.
- Richard: Got cured, made it back.
- Jim: Treated that I'm sure.
- Richard: Oh yeah. But it was, I would say good duty; we had a lot of fun downtown—
- Jim: You palled around with what, about another six or seven guys?
- Richard: Oh it varied; usually two or three guys then switch on to another; we'd go down for a whole weekend and bum around and spend the time at a local house or something then come back to base. We would always go down to shop, you know and—being out in the clubs.
- Jim: Did you send stuff home for your folks?
- Richard: Not much.
- Jim: Were you single then?
- Richard: Oh yeah, sure I was about eighteen or nineteen. Too young, wasn't too smart. I sent back one pair of masks, they were kind of a wooden carved face mask, almost like a—I guess they were made by the aborigines up in

the mountains—they still had—I think they still have some aboriginal tribes in the mountains, but they're probably tamer now than they were then. I sent a couple of those back for Mother's Day presents. After I got back she gave them to me and I still have them hanging on the wall at home.

Jim: Did your mom write you regularly?

Richard: No more than I did her. [laughs]

Jim: So you were busy?

Richard: Yeah, for sure, yeah. Well she'd send stamps and the commander or sergeant would call me and say, "Write home," you know, something like this. We'd get in touch, I guess, but not much. When I got back it was—well like I say, you don't talk much about it; people ask what you did—you didn't tell many people at all.

Jim: "If I told you, I'd have to kill you?"

Richard: Well I don't know about that, but back then it was a lot more discrete or hidden than it is now.

Jim: Sure.

Richard: Well we had instances; we could track people going over the mainland; they'd send Air Force—basically Chinese people flying B-25s or something over the mainland to trigger some radar sites—radio sites; then we'd home in on those sites—radio direction—

Jim: To see how they responded?

Richard: To see how they responded, yeah right.

Jim: You would copy down furiously what they said.

Richard: Yeah. It's just like those guys back in April when they got knocked down off Hainan. They were doing the same thing we were doing forty—

Jim: Sure.

Richard: Forty years earlier.

Jim: But now it's our airplane.



- Richard: Oh yeah, it's now more sophisticated of course; you got commercial—well not commercial, but you got data intelligence where it's little bits and streams and dots and dashes or numbers or whatever, you know, it's computer and there's radar signals.
- Jim: I'm sure it's a lot easier for those people nowadays to do what you did.
- Richard: Well they still have linguists; I imagine they still train them, I don't know—after we left Yale in '57 they went on there for two or three more years and then closed down the operation there and moved it out to Monterey in California where they still have—
- Jim: Is that still there?
- Richard: As far as I know of they still have the language school out there; I'm sure they do because I talked to an Air Force recruiter here a while back—last year or so. He mentioned that he had just signed up his first linguist, so I'm sure they're carrying on the program; they have to be—
- Jim: I've interviewed a linguist with the Navy, and they went to school in Colorado to learn Japanese.
- Richard: Yeah. Well they did Japanese at Yale; I think they did Korean also, and I think they did Vietnamese down in Indiana; I think they may have done something up in Michigan too. But again all these professors and teachers fled the mainland, came here, and the US put them to use, basically.
- Jim: So, your job there—how long were you in Formosa?
- Richard: It was a little over a year, fifteen months or so, something like that.
- Jim: Right.
- Richard: We were there for one of the crises or collapse they call it—the Taiwan Straits Crises that flared up. They had one before we were there, back in '55, ours—we were there—was August of '58 to about January '59.
- Jim: Describe that—how that affected you.
- Richard: Oh, more work, and restricted to the hill sometimes—not to leave the base, you know, basically sometimes because the people downtown would get mad at us for misbehaving too much.
- Jim: The danger there was that China may decide to move in and conquer—

- Richard: They actually thought they were going to invade. They had—the Chinese were massing troops on their—on the sea coast.
- Jim: Nobody knew—
- Richard: Nobody knew and at that time Quemoy and Matsu were being shelled and bombarded by the Chinese Communists; the Chinese Nationalists from Quemoy and Matsu were running guerilla raids or commando raids on the mainland and vice versa; the Communists would raid the two islands; there were quite a few—several months of air battles over the Straits where the CHINATS—
- Jim: The radio traffic that you were intercepting must have been heavy during those times. How many—you couldn't do it all yourself—
- Richard: No, well we ran—how many positions—we had, I think there were—they were short little trailers and we had six or seven positions in each one, three or four trailers, twenty-four hours a day.
- Jim: How did you know who you were listening to so everyone didn't listen at the same time?
- Richard: Well you can coordinate; you'd yell out a frequency or pass a note—
- Jim: Oh, by frequency.
- Richard: You could recognize the voices; recognize the callsigns and so on. Yeah, you'd coordinate so you wouldn't have double coverage, but even if you did, that would be distilled later on into drawing all the signals in together, if you have double coverage—
- Jim: Did you get to the point where you could—where your accuracy rate was up to 100 percent or close to 100 percent?
- Richard: Oh, I thought I did—
- Jim: Where you know every word—
- Richard: Oh yeah, pretty much so I think; some of them came fast and furious, others were slower—
- Jim: Did you keep lines, then?
- Richard: Oh certainly; you couldn't write everything down, but even when we were transcribing if we were unsure we would make a note or make an indication that it was—

- Jim: So you could indicate a space where it was unintelligible to you?
- Richard: Right. Or it could be a bit garbled and somebody else might take another listen to the tape later on.
- Jim: That was my next question: did you tape everything?
- Richard: Yeah, everything.
- Jim: So you could go over it again?
- Richard: Go over it again, go back to that tape—I don't think they kept them forever—but for a period of time—and if somebody higher up decided they wanted to re-listen or redo something, then they could, but they would recycle the tapes.
- Jim: When you were listening, you didn't write your stuff down live, right? You wrote your stuff down from a tape?
- Richard: Well as we were intercepting over the radio we wrote it live, then the tape and our notes would go to a transcriber, so he would put it together, and he would type it out in English to send it further up. Number groups which they still use—
- Jim: Did they ever do a check of your accuracy?
- Richard: Oh I'm sure they did.
- Jim: Every Monday morning they didn't have a session—
- Richard: No, no, it wasn't a little course or anything, because most of those guys—well we were the—I don't know; we were it. They couldn't correct us, not right on site, because they didn't know as much as we did. They weren't really trained linguists like we were, but further up—higher up—but I never had anything or anybody come back down on me.
- Jim: They can't give you bandages if you have the medicine. None of us reservists were physicians—we didn't care about the regular rules and regulations—we could go out of our way—we knew they didn't have any alternative—If I said, "This guy's not ready for duty," No matter how—I was just a lowly officer and the commander of the ship asked me and I said, "No, I don't think so." And I didn't have to say anymore. He had no way of challenging it.
- Richard: No recourse.

- Jim: Which was a position we really enjoyed.
- Richard: After that, you know it was—well where were we? They were thinking they were going to invade—there's some websites up now—people that were there had gotten some websites started on the internet and a lot of stuff has come out, you know—declassified whatever—actually they had missiles over there at the time, not ICBMs or anything, but 600 mile range stuff like that. Of course the US was furnishing the Chinese Air Force with F-86s, 86Ds and so on. The Chinese were flying back then 15s—MiG-15s and 17s, and—I seem to recall—even 21s from the traffic that I heard. But we could listen to them fly, we could listen to them being shot down, we could listen to them returning and stuff.
- Jim: Did you try to monitor the planes in flight?
- Richard: Oh yeah, we tried to monitor everything; ground, air, whatever—
- Jim: Well if there's ten planes up in the air—
- Richard: Oh yeah, sure.
- Jim: You might not have enough guys for ten planes.
- Richard: Well they may not all be on the same frequency—it could be the flight leader, or you could get individual pilots calling back or informing somebody. The flights would probably be on the same frequency, so you may have had more intercept capability than they had planes up. But still everybody—
- Jim: How did you find the frequencies?
- Richard: Searched.
- Jim: I was going to say, how did you search for them?
- Richard: Just turn your dial.
- Jim: Turn the dial until you run into something and then decide—
- Richard: Decide what it is. You don't know from whence it comes—you listen to it, tape it; that's where your analysts come in, of course you can tell the traffic, the air traffic would be talking about directions and headings and altitudes and so on; ground traffic would be what—we didn't get much ground, but you have all the Army base to ground troops—

- Jim: Could you pinpoint where in the sky it was?
- Richard: Not at—at least I wasn't; I suppose they could theoretically if they had enough DF antennas or enough DF—
- Jim: To triangulate.
- Richard: To triangulate them, they could tell. But you'd know where your planes were—where they went up, and of course it wasn't that long ago; they had radar and so on, and could track with that. We'd listen to them one day and read about it in the newspaper the next day. They were bringing in stuff from the States; I remember they even flew in some 104s; they flew them into Clark Air Force Base in big C-124 Globemasters, disassembled, wings off and stuff like that, and then they flew them up—I think they were flying them out of Clark, but I'm sure I recall they were flying them out of Taiwan as well during the time this crisis was going on. They had us—some of us anyway—I guess some of the people they thought were more skilled or adept or whatever scheduled for evacuation in case they did invade.
- Jim: That was another thing I was going to ask; what was plan B?
- Richard: Well some of the guys who are on the websites—
- Jim: AKA, or—
- Richard: No, they told us; they scheduled—I don't know—some of us for evacuation to the Pescadores; it's a chain—small island chain of three or four islands.
- Jim: And you had to be prepared to leave?
- Richard: Well, we would have had to grab everything and go. They'd just say, "Get your ass somewhere." They told us we'd be off before the generals and the general's wife and things like that, which may not have been, but—Some of the guys were cryptanalysts; deciphering and deciding what things were, and some of them were—one of them in particular on the website, said one of their officers came in and told them, "Don't worry guys, if they invade, we'll make sure you're never captured." Now I don't know what—[both laugh] If we were—if they were going to waste him or if he was embellishing a little bit or whatever, but they had some of us scheduled for evacuation.
- Jim: There's a code breaker up in Merrill, Wisconsin who's a regular in the Air Force; He went to Vietnam, and he also decided that—he had to fix

equipment—they were shooting at him, and he asked the guy, “If they shoot us down, then what?” And he said, “You don’t want to know.”

Richard: Yeah, “You’re first and we’re next.”

Jim: Guys like you with code things in your heads; they simply can’t afford to let you go off. So he understood that if there was trouble, he was a goner. The sergeant next to him had instructions to off him.

Richard: I don’t know if we had that or not, or if we came that close, but back then it was all fun and games; looking back on it, you know, might have been a little more serious than I took it. They continued there, the base opened up somewhere around ’56, ’57 or ’55 and continued right up to the mid ’70’s, ’77 or something like that.

Jim: Up there at the same place?

Richard: At the same point I was. Instead of little Quonset hut type barracks then they had three story cinder block with air conditioning and roads and pavement and everything. But I had more fun than they did—well I don’t know about that, I guess the city would have been more fun.

Jim: They probably don’t have that base there anymore?

Richard: Not there, no. I’m sure they have others, or they’re remote or it’s all satellite or stuff like that; or the Navy flying their planes like they did last April. They were flying—all services, I’m sure the Navy still has—and the Army, Air Force of course, they were doing the same thing all the way up through the Vietnamese War; in Vietnam monitoring Vietnamese, mainland Chinese, Russian of course; they were big on Russian too, there was a whole string of bases along that—Pacific Rim you might say; they even had one in England with the antennas and so on, so they could pick it up anywhere. They schooled a lot of people in Russian and they were also in the Far East. There were several shot down, spotted planes, people lost at sea, never acknowledged.

Jim: They had plane trouble?

Richard: Well not plane trouble, they were shot down, there were shoot downs; there was a shoot down back in Turkey in eighty-something. This one in Turkey they made a navigational error—a miscalculation actually—straight over the border and the Soviets came up and shot them down; they were flying a C-130 I believe. It’s been the subject of a documentary, too, on television; a woman trying to find her brother’s body—I think she was from Wisconsin. At any rate, there’s a site—the NSA has a site and through that there’s links to other sites about the NSA memorial—the

have a cryptologic hall or cryptologic museum and the internet site has some pictures of the plane being shot down; the pictures were released by the Russians; they were in black and white but they computerized them and enhanced them into color and that was over Turkey, I forget, eighty something, maybe seventies; there were a lot of people lost up toward the Russian and down—

Jim: The Russians were xenophobic—one of my high school classmates was a B-25 bombardier and they were bombing Japan—this is World War Two—trying to get back to their base in Alaska; they had trouble with the airplane and so they landed near Vladivostok, Russia. They were kept in Siberia for a year and a half. They weren't mistreated, but they weren't allowed to go home.

Richard: Yeah, yeah.

Jim: Our allies, the Russians.

Richard: Yeah, our allies.

Jim: After a year and a half, they allowed them to immigrate—to sneak into Iran, and then they got to the embassy in Iran then got home. They were there for a year and a half; the Russians were very nice about it—

Richard: Well that was one case; they never explained what happened to the POWs from Korea that were sent to Russia; it's terrible, it's pitiful.

Jim: It's in their nature.

Richard: Well, that was forty, fifty years ago; here we are cozying up to them again; of course after they fell down, after the Soviet Union collapsed, shall we say; we were flying plane loads of money over there—billions of dollars to get them—I can't understand it at all, I guess what goes around comes around or who knows. It's just weird. But where were we, anyways?  
[laughs]

Jim: The job wasn't hard then?

Richard: Oh no, it wasn't hard.

Jim: It became boring after a while?

Richard: Oh, I wouldn't say boring, it was interesting.

Jim: Except for the crazy excitement [unintelligible]

- Richard: Back then I was probably too dumb to know any better.
- Jim: But it was exciting?
- Richard: Yeah, for sure. Lived through a typhoon or two; I think there was one typhoon that came through.
- Jim: Did it take down anything?
- Richard: It knocked down some antennas, some towers; I had to rebuild them and get them back up again.
- Jim: Tell me, how was the food?
- Richard: It was a regular chow hall.
- Jim: Food supply was good?
- Richard: The food was—you know, powdered eggs, powdered milk, stuff like that; once in a while they'd throw a steak at you; some Chinese stuff—
- Jim: The steak was good.
- Richard: Yeah, I swear it was water buffalo steak; I don't know where they'd get the rest of it except fly it in from the states. Then there was downtown, you could get a lot of Chinese food—
- Jim: That must have tasted pretty good.
- Richard: Oh yeah.
- Jim: That was the other thing I was going to ask you; most of the time, the natives treated you nicely?
- Richard: Yeah.
- Jim: Happy that you were there?
- Richard: Oh I don't know about happy or not—well even then, back then it was—I think more Taiwanese natives than there were Chinese, because the Chinese had just come over a few years earlier. It was still under martial law, basically, with Chiang Kai-Shek in charge; the military was the police under martial law, and they didn't really tolerate any dissent by the natives, shall we say. Any, I won't say opposition, but books were—some books were banned, some papers weren't allowed, I guess; things like that—



- Jim: But they treated you guys ok?
- Richard: Oh yeah, sure. Well, we ran with the people who worked at the clubs and the bars downtown—the girls—we'd go out and we'd have fun—we just barged in, which always got me; I figured—years later I don't think I saw it again, but looking back, here you've got these sixty or eighty or two hundred people you know; they're all white, they're all six feet and they're all speaking Chinese and running around, why didn't somebody from the mainland grab our asses up and take us over there? [laughs]
- Jim: You would have been a valuable—
- Richard: We had open secrets, you know; we would talk about—
- Jim: Everyone knew what you were doing?
- Richard: Well, I imagine so. It would surprise some of the natives when you would speak to them in their own tongue, [laughs] that was fun; most of it was fun. You'd meet some people—
- Jim: Well, it helped getting girls, too.
- Richard: They were cheap, as well. You didn't really get any—
- Jim: You didn't really learn anything from them?
- Richard: Oh, I learned some things from them. [laughs] Not in the way of language.
- Jim: Nothing you're writing home to mother.
- Richard: No, for sure. I don't think the local respectable population wanted their girls and people to mingle or hang around with the Americans.
- Jim: So they were pretty standoffish as far as you could tell?
- Richard: Oh, I wouldn't say that, they were friendly, you know; they would talk and we were friendly, but as far as getting in tight with them—
- Jim: Nobody invited you home for dinner?
- Richard: No, not really. Again, we were—we weren't cruising the museums and trying to soak up culture, we were soaking up San Miguel beer and everything else we could get our hands on.
- Jim: What kind of beer was that?

- Richard: San Miguel.
- Jim: Where was that from?
- Richard: Out of the Philippines. I guess it was one of Macarthur's nest eggs. I guess he started or ran the brewery when he was in the Philippines. Word was that San Miguel was Macarthur's brewery.
- Jim: Wherever I've been, I haven't been everywhere, but the local beer is always good. I always used to think that beer had to come from Germany or someplace, but that's not true. Some of the best beer I've ever had is Japanese. And if you go to Mexico, terrific beer. You don't have to look very hard for good beer.
- Richard: With the clubs—there were several clubs downtown; they would fly in stuff from the States or where ever, but we had Heineken's, you know, your regular stuff; your Bud and other American brands too. Plus you could always get a good price on a bottle of booze; the clubs were nice, you could get a nice dinner, steak and shrimp cocktail.
- Jim: A couple of bucks?
- Richard: Oh, I imagine so, I forget now, but they had dance entertainers, mostly at—I guess they were from the Philippines, but you know they were Asians anyway; they played mostly big band music, sang the standards, it was a real nice atmosphere, real nice—
- Jim: Cigarettes?
- Richard: Oh, cheaper than hell. I didn't smoke—I never did smoke, I used them to barter for the black market basically; get about a four to one return on that, if you—say, what for—I don't know, ten bucks for a carton of cigarettes, for example you'd—at the PX, or I forget, it's just an arbitrary figure, but you take them out and sell them on the black market for about four times what you paid.
- Jim: That's what I meant; you could sell them on the street for four times—
- Richard: Yeah. Then use the local money to, you know—or if you want, they'd take American; they wanted American dollars.
- Jim: That's another thing I was going to ask; when you were on the street, did you use American money?
- Richard: Well, you could—

- Jim: Did you have scrip?
- Richard: We didn't have scrip, they paid us in US dollars; you were supposed to change it at a club or something like this, but the money changers on the street would give you a better—
- Jim: Deal for the public.
- Richard: Yeah.
- Jim: So everybody had American dollars on the street?
- Richard: I believe so. I know we had scrip at the PI—Philippines—when we stayed at Clark for a couple days or a short term where we had to convert it to scrip and then convert it back to US when we left—when we flew back in. I don't know, not much else going on there to say. Came back—
- Jim: Did they have a medical facility there too?
- Richard: Oh yeah, they had a small, basic thing—dispensary up on the top of the hill for Penicillin—if not a doc, a medic anyway.
- Jim: So you didn't have a physician there?
- Richard: Not up on the hill. We were, I don't know, fifteen or so miles outside of Taibei—
- Jim: At the regular base they would have a—
- Richard: They had a—yeah they had—I imagine they had a hospital; I never made it into it. We were up on top—hill, I don't know, mountain or hill, but it was, you know, one of these winding mountain roads to get up, to get down we'd go down on six bys—those little six by flatbed trucks, the plate steel, or a bus, sometimes a bus—we'd go down and take a bus up. Catch a different ride back up—usually you're half drunk and asleep on the way back up in the six by or the bus, or spend the weekend—the three day break, you come back on the bus, which was a little more comfortable. After that, well, I left there, came back, that was about it.
- Jim: Did you leave the service when your four years were up?
- Richard: No, I only had—
- Jim: I was about to say—

- Richard: I only had a little over two years then, I think; when I got back—well I got sent back; spent some time at home up in St. Paul again, and my next assignment or duty station was here in Madison at Truax Field.
- Jim: Oh my.
- Richard: When did I get there, May or so of '59.
- Jim: Monitoring the Chinese traffic at the University?
- Richard: No, then it kind of slipped on me, I kind of let it all slide. I cross-trained into an administrative clerk; there was one other kid that came back from the Far East, he was Korean; not him but he spoke Korean, did the same thing—[tape cuts out] **[End of Tape 1, Side A]** With the security clearance we had when we came back, we were up in the Sage building at that time, the blockhouse out at Truax, and that was where they—we were part of NORAD, the North American Air Defense Command, operating DEW line, Distant Early Warning radar.
- Jim: So what were you, just a clerk typist, then?
- Richard: Basically a clerk typist; did, what—it was still classified documents, but it was all internal—
- Jim: Now it got really boring.
- Richard: Yeah, it did, really. They'd send me to typing school here, they'd send me to do this, do that, they were going to make me the General's chauffer; by that time, you know—
- Jim: It was a lot of talk.
- Richard: Yeah. I don't know if it was or not, but that was right close to the end of my tour, and by that time I was doing a lot of this goof-off stuff, typing up telephone directories, or shit like that, and running around town here. So it was basically that year and a half or so there, it would have been '59, then, probably about fifteen months again, because it was '59 when I came back, I got out in '60; it was about a year or so, or fifteen—
- Jim: So you were discharged from Truax?
- Richard: Yeah, I got discharged from Truax and stuck around; same old story then; you meet a girl, get married, a couple kids, and you work.
- Jim: When you were on Truax is when you found your bride?

- Richard: Yeah. We were downtown—of course we were raising hell on State Street all the time, then, so—
- Jim: She was a coed?
- Richard: No, she had moved in town from Beaver Dam; she was just working here.
- Jim: Well that's nice.
- Richard: That's all I was doing too, was putting in time. So I got out of the service, signed on—went in, took an exam for the post office; started at the post office a week after I got out of the military, and stayed with the post office for—
- Jim: Well, you've been feeding at the trough for a long time!
- Richard: Thirty-two years, yeah. That's what they say; you ought to try it sometime. Sucking dust for thirty years at the post office.
- Jim: What did you do at the post office?
- Richard: Oh, all kinds of shit. Basically a clerk, distributing mail, I moved up to—well not moved up—different jobs inside; office work—
- Jim: Did you enjoy working at the post office?
- Richard: Oh, not most of the time; it was just a job, something to put in, something to do; the hours and the time, and the attitudes, was—still is I guess a lousy place to work. I did some public—what—contact, worked the window, I worked the passport application window for five or six years, handling passports; moved on to a stamp supply clerk, basically filling stamp orders—
- Jim: Nobody wants to use all your Chinese experience?
- Richard: No, I would speak it with some of the people who came in—
- Jim: Open their eyes?
- Richard: Yeah, some of them—you know the Chinese are pretty nice about, you know—they were pleased that somebody would say something; a word or two, and I tried—there were one or two guys I ran across that had gone through—not the same thing I did, I remember one kid came in and he had taken Chinese and he interviewed with the CIA to work for them; of course they were recruiting too. Back then they were—the CIA and the NSA and the other military—they would draw upon this pool of ex-

linguists who came back, you know, to employ them at the NSA or move them over to the CIA, stuff like that. So this one kid and I got to talking, you know, a few minutes, it was kind of interesting, there were a couple teachers, professors, I don't know—a couple ladies from the University—they were in Chinese studies—I threw a few words at them and they looked at me, I could overhear them afterwards, in Chinese they would say, “Yeah, he probably only knows one or two words,” and I thought, “Oh, you arrogant bitch.” [laughs] I wasn't about to give her anymore satisfaction; I could have sworn at her or something.

Jim: Did you ever entertain the—talk to the CIA people or ever figure out a career?

Richard: Oh, I wrote them a letter once and talked to an interviewer here in town who came up to talk to me, but at that time, I don't know; the post office was paying more, of course, and I had two kids at that time, a wife—to leave this and move out to Washington, the cost of living would have been extravagant or exorbitant. I didn't do it—he didn't really make the offer, all he said all they could offer was fifteen or sixteen grand a year, tearing up all the roots of the family here—maybe I should have in retrospect, I don't know. I still keep into it, I still have my books; I haven't looked at them for a long time, I do once and a while, I can listen to them on shortwave, I have a shortwave around that I tune in—

Jim: Oh really, what shortwave?

Richard: A shortwave radio.

Jim: Do you have one?

Richard: Oh yeah, sure. I've had one just about forever, I guess.

Jim: So you can pick up stuff from China?

Richard: Oh yeah, sure. You can pick up stuff from anywhere in the world if you want—BBC, radio Moscow, you can get radio Vietnam, I pick up radio Taipei International, you can pick up the mainland—radio Beijing I suppose.

Jim: And the reception's good?

Richard: Oh, it varies of course, like shortwave does; it's all over the air, subject to nature interferences, weather and so on. But a lot of them are broadcast on the internet now, of course, on the web, so you can listen to them on the web, which I do once and a while too. You can tune in BBC—

- Jim: Well that's off of satellite, so that should be better quality stuff.
- Richard: But a lot of it's not live, it's programmed and you tap into their computer—their archives or whatever, and listen. I met one guy here in town; I do some exercise—I have exercise class coming up, actually—one guy I met, he's a Chinese fella and his wife; he's—he's not a refugee, but he fled the mainland back in '49, and he and I got talking; we say a few words in the morning, 'good afternoon' and everything and his wife, other people in the class look at us like—I guess they don't understand what's going on. But it was interesting because some of the people that—the professors, the teachers that taught at Yale where I was—it was the Institute of Far Eastern Languages at Yale University. Some of the Chinese professors or teachers there—he knew some of these professors or teachers—he came to the states, I think he ended up in Michigan, maybe he ended up here in Wisconsin, too, I don't know, but it's interesting. My one little claim to fame that nobody knows. [laughs]
- Jim: So you said you have two children?
- Richard: Yeah, a couple kids.
- Jim: And then obviously your marriage fell apart?
- Richard: Well, in probably the ultimate way after I retired back in October of '92, the postal service was trying to cut down some of the staff, so they offered an early out, kind of a sweetener deal, which I took advantage of. I was right on the edge; I was just short of fifty-five, which was the minimum age—normally—to retire with no penalty—no reduction. So I had one month at two percent—you know, it's nothing, didn't affect the retirement; I had more than enough time, I had thirty six years plus from the military. So I retired October two, first week in November after spending that month home with the wife, I took her down to the geriatric clinic at Dean; she was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's.
- Jim: Oh, Lord. When was this, now?
- Richard: That was November of '92. From that, going through the different stages of the disease, the placement, the caring for it—
- Jim: Quite a burden.
- Richard: That took just about five years, a little over five years for her to die; she died back in '97, but I had her at home for '94. I think I had to put her in to a rest home, they call them the CBRF—Community Based Residential Facility—not a full-fledged nursing home, that came later, but there were day care centers while she was still at home, then there was this CBRF,

and then there was the, uh—the nursing home where she was for, I don't know, a year or so, I guess, until she passed away. During that time it was pretty much a solo flight. So I was in charge of all that; I took care of all the decisions, made all the decisions, nobody offered any opinions or help, and I told them to kiss my ass if they did.

Jim: You mean nobody in your family?

Richard: Nobody.

Jim: So not your kids?

Richard: Yeah, nobody in the family.

Jim: Well I was going to say, what about brothers or sisters?

Richard: Well, they were sympathetic and shit like that; her brothers and sisters, I wrote them a letter telling them about it all; didn't hear a thing from them.

Jim: They didn't make one move?

Richard: Nobody called or came or wrote or anything like that.

Jim: Never saw her?

Richard: I think her sister, her brother, his sister—her sister-in-law came down once, and that was shortly after I'd put her in, mid or late '94; visited for a half hour or so, and that was it until she passed away, and I was debating—I was tempted—sorely tempted—not to even tell them that she had died, not to put an obit in the paper, you know. But I did that, they came down, I figured, “Well shit, you know, if you hold up all this bitterness and anger inside you it's just going to eat you away.” I haven't seen or heard from them since, either.

Jim: Well that's a shame.

Richard: Nobody—I figured that nobody cared or concerned to volunteer or to cover for me, or take care of her while she was home, I wasn't going to give them the opportunity to make any decisions or have any—

Jim: What about your kids, how old are they?

Richard: Well, that's—well they're forty and thirty-eight or thirty-nine now—

Jim: Did they stay around, or did they leave? Are they in Madison?



Richard: They're around, they're around, but—

Jim: Didn't they help you?

Richard: [quietly] No, no.

Jim: It was their mother?!

Richard: They were just—

Jim: Did you ask them to do anything?

Richard: They had to—if they had to be asked, they didn't deserve to come in and be involved. They would come by and visit for five or ten minutes and that would be about it—you know, as much as they could take. My daughter was more sensitive to it; my son would come around and he'd visit for a while, then—when he'd leave it was always be a touch up for a twenty or a fifty or something like that, which was the main reason for the visit.

Jim: I would respond poorly to that.

Richard: I did. I did respond poorly.

Jim: That's a double whammy, you know. They don't have interest—

Richard: Well at least—the way I looked at it, at least I didn't have to consult anybody else, I was in charge, and they could all do whatever they wanted. But anyway, since then it's been, you know, alone, haven't found anybody else yet, don't know if I want to or not.

Jim: Your wife's been gone now for?

Richard: Almost four years. Physically dead, you might say she's been totally or actually since '92 or '93, something like that.

Jim: You should find somebody—

Richard: It just took a real long funeral, that's all. Well I get out and do a few things, but I don't have anybody to hang out with, go to bed with, or anything like that.

Jim: That's too bad, you should.

Richard: We can cut this portion of the interview out, I guess. [laughs]

Jim: Sorry, I shouldn't have pushed you.

- Richard: No, that's alright. Nobody asked about it anyways, so what the hell.
- Jim: You're now in your retirement—your service retirement, and your post office retirement—
- Richard: Well, no service retirement, not enough time there, but I had—that service retirement counted toward my total government time.
- Jim: I see.
- Richard: So with my civil service retirement system, that's all I have—I don't have Social Security or anything like that; nothing but the civil service.
- Jim: Well you will have Social Security—
- Richard: No I won't—
- Jim: Oh really?
- Richard: I didn't contribute enough or have enough quarters to be eligible for Social Security retirement. Back in '83 they rolled all the federal employees in and they made us all contribute one and a half percent a month to bail out Social Security, basically; because of that I'll be eligible for Medicare when I reach sixty-five. I don't really want to get involved with Medicare, to be honest with you.
- Jim: You don't what?
- Richard: I don't really want to get involved with Medicare; I still carry my—
- Jim: You don't have to have it.
- Richard: That's what they tell me; I would just as soon decline it. [laughs] Because I still have my federal employee's health benefits plan, and I'm eligible for a couple—
- Jim: You can have both, can't you?
- Richard: Well I can—
- Jim: Medical costs are so horrendous now—
- Richard: It's well worth my—I have Dean care now and it's—you know, it covers everything I have, all the illnesses, the operations the wife had.

- Jim: So far.
- Richard: Yeah. When Medicare—like I said—it comes automatically, they used to publish in the brochures that we get every year, but you do not have to accept Medicare if you do not want to. I notice in this year's brochure, that statement is not in there—
- Jim: Well, the services don't have to do anything—
- Richard: Yeah, they—it's automatically; I just—it's just that all the times I've—all the agencies I've dealt with in the government, in my years at the post office; the fewer people—the fewer fingers in the pie, the better off you are.
- Jim: Medicare's pretty good, though.
- Richard: Like I say, it doesn't cost anything for Part A—
- Jim: It might mean an enormous difference to you some day.
- Richard: And the Part B, the hospital, I guess that's forty or fifty bucks a month, but the true—the Part A and the local—my health plan through Dean, through the federal employee's plan and retiree's plan, I guess I don't have to carry the Part B; actually they recommend not taking it.
- Jim: Sure. That's the thing to do.
- Richard: So there we are.
- Jim: OK, well did you join any veterans' organizations?
- Richard: Oh, the local VFW's about it—I didn't, you know, really get involved—I joined the fish fries on Friday nights. [laughs] That's about it, you know—and once in a while, sit around the bar and tell some old war stories for the guys.
- Jim: And what about all these guys on the hill? Where are they?
- Richard: All over the world, all over the country.
- Jim: Did you stay in contact with them?
- Richard: I got in touch with a couple of them. I hadn't been in touch for years and years, and I finally bought a computer last December. Bought a used one, I wasn't going to spend 1500 bucks for a new one, all I wanted to do was get on and nose around the internet and see if I could find them. After I

got hooked up I found some guys, and that's where I found all those other websites, you know, relating to my old base, and to the old school we went to; you'd be surprised, there's a lot of stories out there.

Jim: Well maybe someone wants you to teach Chinese or something—

Richard: [laughs]

Jim: You might find something on a website, someone looking for—

Richard: No, they're all well beyond that, I don't think so. [laughs] I've got to decide—I've been throwing shit out around the house, you know, I haven't got hardly anything left there, I'm down basically—I got my Chinese text books left and a few of the military things; I don't know what to do with the textbooks; they're of no value, nobody wants them, I'd hate to just throw them away. I kept thinking, maybe someday one of the kids will ask, "What about this?" I've finally given up on that.

Jim: Where do your children live?

Richard: They're in the area here; one's in Madison, one's up in Portage I guess.

Jim: What do they do?

Richard: Oh, I don't know.

Jim: And the girl, she's a housewife?

Richard: Oh no, well she was; she's divorced, she works at a waitress, bartender, whatever in the resort area up there. My son is a driver for one of the meat supply companies in the area here, driving a straight truck I guess, covering a lot of the state, half the state anyway. I don't know for sure what he's doing, because I haven't seen him since February; that was the last hundred dollars—

Jim: You haven't seen him since February?

Richard: Before that for a year, so—

Jim: That's a shame.

Richard: I assume he's still around, anyway. I don't know, he moved and left no address, no phone number, so I guess I shouldn't have asked him for my money back, that was the—

Jim: Did you?

Richard: Oh yeah.

Jim: Good. That doesn't soothe any relationship.

Richard: No [laughs] No it doesn't. Are we about done or not? I've got to go the bathroom and on to another class—or on to that exercise class, so—

Jim: Just follow me— [muffled conversation continues until end of recording]

**[End of Interview]**