



**NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE®**

Wings & Things Guest Lecture Series

Heroism at Lima Site 85

Career intelligence officer and author Dr. Timothy N. Castle discusses the findings contained in his book “One Day Too Long: Top Secret Site 85 and the Bombing of North Vietnam.”

Thank you, Jeff, very much for that gracious introduction. I also want to thank General and Mrs. Metcalf for their hospitality as well as all the other folks here. This is just an incredible museum, and it's been a delight to come in from Washington this morning and be allowed to tour the restoration facilities and the museum here. I certainly will tell my colleagues that if they have an opportunity to come to Wright-Patterson, that this is a place to come and learn a lot about the Air Force and about the extraordinary work of restoration and the work of the museum here.

What I'd like to do tonight is to talk to you about Site 85. As Jeff said, it is sort of a unique Air Force story, and I'm especially gratified that the story has come more into the public because I suspect that many of you – and I'll just ask, how many of you in here are veterans? So many of you. You know about service to your country, and you know about responsibility, and you know about obligation, and you know about secrecy and all the other things that those of us who have been in the military or still serve in the government, the responsibilities that we have in those areas. And as Jeff alluded to that was one of the most difficult things about Site 85, and that was that this was a program that was so highly classified that the Air Force personnel that went to serve at Pha Thi – Phou is a Lao word for mountain so it's often referred to as Phou Pha Thi – that went to Site 85 in the guise as civilians; they went there as employees of Lockheed Aircraft Corporation. They did that because for military people to be in Laos at that time was a violation of the 1962 Geneva Accords. So I'm not going to go into a lot of the historical background to the Accords or U.S. policy or that sort of thing. I'd be happy to take questions about that later.

Let me start by just kind of giving you a little background about why there was a Site 85, and again if you have any questions at all I'd be delighted to take them at the end of the presentation. I do have some photographs that I'd like to show you that I think will give you sort of a good understanding of what we're talking about.

This is actually a photograph of Site 85 after the site was built, and you can see the – I'm sorry, this was before the Site was built. So you see an incredible amount of vegetation here. You see these mountain ranges behind this area here, and the reason that Site 85 was so important was its geographic location from this point, and I'll talk about this more in just a moment. It's about 120

miles to downtown Hanoi, so the geographic importance of this area, but I put this photograph up to show the remoteness. If you drive this way about 60 nautical miles or so, it's about only 50 nautical miles to the North Vietnamese border, and if you kept going you would run into another place that's well known to us called Diem Vin Fu.

So I'm going to show you another map here that kind of gives a sense of where we're talking about here. Site 85 is right about here. This is Xam Neua province here and so Diem Vin Fu is right about there and so they're driving into Hanoi.

So the background on this is that in 1967 the United States Air Force had a very, very difficult problem, and that problem was Lyndon Baines Johnson, the president of the United States. *[laughter]* Many of us remember that, don't we? The president was very, very unhappy that the United States Air Force was not able to basically destroy the men and materiel that were flowing from Hanoi down through Laos and then into Cambodia or into South Vietnam. Politically at that point, the United States government, the Johnson administration, was not willing to use B-52 bombers. So for many of you who served over there, you know that one of the problems in flying in Southeast Asia is the weather is incredibly bad, there were very few navigation aids back then, a lot of these bombing missions had to take place either in bad weather or at night, and there were really only a couple airplanes at that point that could do that effectively, and one was the B-52 which we couldn't use. And so the decision was made – I put this picture in because it kind of shows, this is actually up on the Plain of Jars in central Laos, but it shows what B-52 strikes look like and tactical bombing. For every one of these little fish pond things that you see here, there's probably scores more that you don't see. This is the most heavily bombed place on the face of the earth, and we can talk about that more later too if you'd like, but this is the Plain of Jars, another indication of what it looks like.

So what were we going after? We were going after large caves like this that were filled with incredible amounts of ammunition and food and medical supplies and all these kinds of things. Laos – what I'm trying to do is sort of give you an explanation of why were we bombing there? What were the Vietnamese moving through the country on the so called Ho Chi Minh Trail? Well, they were moving things like this, all these supplies that were coming into the country on the so-called highway, if you will, that the Ho Chi Minh Trail was. Again, for those of you that may not remember or fully get the idea of what the Ho Chi Minh Trail was – in some places, there were blacktop roads. In other places, they were as wide as the width of a bicycle tire, and quite frankly, the reason why it was so difficult for us, in my view anyway, ultimately it was impossible to stop the Vietnamese – it was because they put hundreds and hundreds of pounds of rice and food and ammunition or whatever on these bicycles, so you could bomb all day long, but as long as they had something the width of those bicycle tires, they could still push that stuff south, and they did. The other thing for the younger folks in the audience that may not remember the pre-microwave days and that is that we didn't always have smart bombs. You have all the

video games now where you go *[makes shooting noise]* and everything disappears. Well back in the mid-60s and the time were talking about here, all we had were dumb bombs. So these caves and places like this that today you'd take in a second with a laser-guided bomb, we were not able to do that back then. I'll talk a little more about that when I talk about the destruction of Site 85, but it was very, very difficult bombing target back then to hit these targets.

So these are F-105s just like you have here at the museum, and I put these up because the project at Site 85, the ground-directed radar that was used at Site 85, was only used with F-105s. There's been some misunderstanding through the years about that, some people think that B-52s were directed off of Site 85, not so. B-52s were directed by ground-directed radar from other sites in South Vietnam and from Thailand, most notably under a program called OPERATION NIAGARA which was in defense of Qu Son in 1968, so different program.

The radar that I'm talking about was called Combat Sky Spot so those of you who may have been involved in that program or heard about it. Combat Sky Spot was a program that had been around for a long time with the Strategic Air Command to use ground-directed radar to tell an airplanes, drive on this course, get in this position, and when I give you the signal, drop your bombs, so it was a very, very effective system for an aircraft that couldn't see its target, and that was the problem with bombing into North Vietnam. Now the issue with the MSQ-77, the Combat Sky Spot radar, was that you had to basically be within 150 nautical miles of your target, and again, if you go back to the geography of the countries we're talking about, to get within 150 miles of Hanoi and the railroad yards and the other places that LBJ wanted us to bomb, the only place that you could be was either out in the ocean in the Gulf of Tonkin or in Laos. They actually did a couple of tests on ships to see if they could place the radar out there, and the problem is, and I'm just a liberal arts kid from Honolulu so I'm not even going to try and tell you the math on this thing, but the fact is they couldn't position the ships systematically in a way to have the radar aboard those ships, so the only other place to put it was in Laos. So the President of the United States made the decision that the U.S. government would violate the 1962 accords and that we would create something called OPERATION HEAVY HOOK. HEAVY HOOK was the code name for the Air Force personnel who had all been Air Force technicians, nearly all of them combat veterans that had served combat tours in South Vietnam; these people were all recruited into this HEAVY GREEN program. They all signed top secret agreements that said that they understood that they were going into this program and at the conclusion of this program they would be brought back into the Air Force. With the exception of one spouse, all of their spouses were also brought into the program and signed the paper work. The one spouse that was not let into the program was actually a German national, and that's a longer story which I do talk about in the book but it's probably not necessary to talk about now. So all these people knew what they were doing. They all knew they were signing up for something. They all knew it would be pretty temporary because – and here's the key point, ladies and gentlemen – when I was talking to the survivors, when I was talking to the other people about this program, they all

believed, they all believed that they could make a difference by going there and working in this program, and that that would bring a conclusion to this war. They all believed that. You know, they weren't going to make a lot of money. There was going to be no glory, there was going to be no glory because in many organizations, we don't talk about what we do and nobody was ever going to talk about what was going on in Site 85, so they didn't go there for the glory. So after President Johnson agreed to set up Site 85, there was a decision made to create a smaller radar that could be placed in small boxes that could be placed on helicopters that could be hauled up to this very, very remote site, so they created something called a TSQ-77, so that was the technical name of the radar and I'm going to show that to you now.

So this is what it looks like up there flying around, and again as Jeff said, I didn't fly in Northern Laos during the war. I flew mostly over Central Laos during the war, but after the war, I did end up flying a lot up into Laos, and I only wish that at that point I was flying with Air America pilots and not some of the Lao pilots that I was having to go with, pretty sporty some days.
[laughter]

So again, the significance of Lima Site 85 is that it's the largest single Air Force ground loss of the entire Vietnam War. It occurred on 11 March 1968. There were at that point 11 people unaccounted for, 150 tons of equipment that was up there at the time. The key fact here, and the reason I go through it this way, I did many years I worked on investigating American losses all over Southeast Asia, and in this case it was completely different, because there was so much there, there were so many people involved, and the Communists overran this place on the 11th of March 1968 and they're still there. When we're investigating losses in other places, in these other parts of either Laos, Vietnam or Cambodia, it would be a couple of people maybe in a two-person aircraft or one-person aircraft, multi-engine sometimes or multi-crew, but never this kind of equipment, never these kinds of clues as to what should have happened. I'm going to show you some pictures and talk to you about it. None of this stuff is up there anymore, so where did it go?

It is a major theme in the People's Army of Vietnam history. If you go through museums throughout Vietnam, you'll see all kinds of discussions about the great victory that the Vietnamese people had over the destruction of Site 85. It's very interesting though – the destruction and the pictures that they show are when they claimed that they destroyed the site in January of 1968 in an air attack, and again, later if we have time, I can talk about that, but just briefly, in January of 1968 in the only known case that this ever occurred, the North Vietnamese sent four biplanes, and to quote "biplanes," to attack Site 85 by bombing them from the air. Two of them it turned out used good sense and didn't join in the attack, but the two that did, flew over the top of the site, tried to carry out a bombing run. An Air America Huey helicopter that was working nearby, chased down one and shot down one and the other one ran into a mountain as it was trying to get away, and at headquarters, we actually have a painting that depicts the shoot

down of the only time a rotary wing aircraft has shot down a fixed wing aircraft, so that's pretty cool. We also have some pieces of it too up at headquarters. The other thing that is important from the Air Force standpoint obviously is Chief Master Sgt. Dick Etchberger. Chief Master Sgt. Etchberger's story I will talk to you about here shortly, but he did receive a posthumous Air Force Cross, and the Secretary of the Air Force has recommended to the Secretary of Defense that it be upgraded to the Medal of Honor, so we're still waiting for that right now.

So here are some pictures of the construction, and again, this is actually a photograph that was taken when I was up there with the first group of Americans to go back to Site 85 in 1994. You can see when I talk about the cliffs later on, this drops off about 2,000 feet here. The radar equipment was located all along the cliff line here. There are some of the people on the recovery team here. This is where the CIA operations area was at, and I'll be talking about that in a little bit. This is actually a squirrel helicopter, and this is actually how we got up there. At that time, we were flying in soviet Mi-8 helicopters, but the Lao pilots were so bad and it's good that they decided not to try it. They wouldn't even try to land up here, so we actually landed on another mountain a little bit further away and jumped on these smaller helicopters that were actually flown mostly by New Zealand pilots. That's how we got back and forth.

This is what the site actually looked like, and again, I'm going back and forth here because I want to give you sort of a mental picture of what we're going to be talking about. This is actually the radar site once it was built, so these are living quarters back through here, these are some diesel generators, this is actually the operations area – that's the radar dish there. When the attack occurred that I'm going to talk about, the attackers actually came up along here, surrounded the area here, sealed it off. The rescue that I'm going to talk about occurred in the rocky area right about here. Again the CIA area is even further down here, so when I talk about that rescue someone, I'll be talking about somebody coming up through the jungle that way. This is about 5,400 feet in elevation, so again as a helicopter guy and for those of you that are aviators, just think about what it's like with all the air currents trying to hold a hover over a 2,000-foot drop off into a valley and the thing goes down another 3,000 feet, and the weather was absolutely incredible, just absolutely incredible.

So this is again what it looks like. Along that ridge right there, and that's the drop off, and that's the highest point that goes up to about 5,600 feet. This is the western cliff of Pha Thi. Again, this just shows some of the cloud deck, and again how difficult, if you can imagine these Air Force technicians being flown in here, dropped off to work there for usually between two and three weeks in these very isolated conditions. There's nothing around here, obviously, but other mountains and lots of North Vietnamese.

This shows down in the valley a runway and Hmong village; this is looking down from Site 85, down into the valley floor.

This is another good picture of what the site looks like, again the drop off there, and when I talk about those sappers climbing, this is the way they came up. It's pretty incredible.

Now, this is actually a schematic that I did for the book so people could understand what I just showed you visually. These are the areas where the people worked, the living quarters, those generators, there was a 12.7 gun that was set up – after those dummies in two colts came in January, they put a gun up there – and then there's a TACAN, a tactical air navigation system that was sitting right there, and then this is that western cliff that I was talking about.

President Johnson says go ahead and build this thing. They create this new radar system that they can actually put in boxes, and so they use the Chinook helicopters to come up to Site 85, and they brought this thing in there and an Air Force crew hauled this stuff in there and started putting it together. Now one of the things I talked about with some of the folks from here at lunch is one of the benefits, I guess it's a benefit, of writing a very interesting but very secret story is that you hope you got everything. Well, after the book came out, all these pictures started showing up, and it's one of these things that, you know, at the time it would have been nice because I would have loved to have had these pictures to put in the book to illustrate – what better way to show what happened? In any case, all those people who told me they didn't have cameras because that was against the rules and there were no pictures, lots of pictures showed up later on. I'm happy to share them with you now.

This shows the CIA operations area here, and this is what was called the lower helipad. Now when the final assault on Site 85 begins in March of '68, on the night of the 10th, this place is under incredible bombardment, and there are three Americans down here: two CIA officers and one Air Force forward air guy, so when I talk about the lower helipad, this is what I'm talking about here. This is where a lot of the Air America helicopters came into and actually my squadron – this was earlier than when I flew with them – but the Jollies and the special operations, 21st, landed in here to take out both indigenous people and the CIA officers and the Air Force guy that was down here.

Again, just more indications ... when I say 150 tons of equipment, I'm not kidding. This was a huge operation. The other thing as you can imagine is this is an incredibly remote area in the middle of nowhere on the side of this mountain, and when the justification went forward, that was one of the things the Air Force said, that this is so remote that nobody is going to know what's going on here. So then you fly for months, helicopters in and out every day, dropping this stuff off. When the engineers came in they said, "We need to flatten out the area," so they dynamited off part of the western cliff, so it didn't take a rocket scientist long to figure out there was something going on here. What happens is the Vietnamese begin to send patrols into the

area, they start trying to figure out what's going on, and I'm going to get to that part of the story in a second, but it's clearly not a secret.

Now it was pretty rough ... they're actually climbing with this stuff, and this is very typical of Laos and that part of Vietnam, this parse-like, very jagged rock formations that are all over the place and lots and lots of caves, so these guys are hauling this stuff up there and it is very, very difficult work and again you just see them just in civilian clothes. Now these people were not really part of the HEAVY GREEN program because they were the ones who actually put the site together. Then to protect the security, the HEAVY GREEN people that were going to run the program, flew up, actually went into a tent, and were sort of isolated. These guys then went down to the helicopters and left, and then the other people came out and went up to the site so they actually never saw each other. It's one of these very interesting things where later on people realized what had happened, but again it was a security issue.

Again, just an idea of how difficult it was to put these things together. These are very, very heavy girders that are all part of putting this radar dish together and so forth. The reason these are very interesting is a lot of this is still up there. When we got there in 1994, a lot of this was still there. We thought that we had bombed the site sufficiently to destroy all of it, not so. And again, this gives you an idea ... right along here is where that cliff is at, so they're standing 10 or 15 yards from a drop off of about 2,000 feet there.

This picture is instructive because what we see here is this is a little Hmong girl, and there were also some indigenous security people that were up there. Again, in terms of security, lots of people knew there were Americans up there, lots of people knew what was going on. That's the TACAN right there, by the way, you can see that pretty clearly in this picture.

The other I would say is that in terms of security, the plan was that if the site looked like it could not be defended any longer, there were explosives that were actually pre-located into the equipment, and the plan was that the site would just be blown up, and these guys would fly to another mountain top and they would start up somewhere else. It didn't turn out that way.

These are just some tanks that they were using up there for fuel and for water. The buildings began to take shape up there, and again all this had to be hauled up there on helicopters. It was just a massive undertaking.

This is a great picture because it actually shows them right up against that cliff and dropping down into that valley, and on a clear day like this, it's just absolutely spectacular. When the first engineers, like me on a clear day when I was up there, it was beautiful, it was just beautiful. If there wasn't a war going on, we could sell real estate up there, but it was really, really pretty.

Like many people in this audience, a lot of very, very dedicated, loyal Americans went up there and took great risks and put this site together, and again you see a lot of indigenous folks. This kind of reminds me of public works in Alabama, there's 12 people standing around looking at a hole, diggers and fillers kind of thing, [laughter] See, if I said that about Hawaii, I'd get in trouble but I can say it about Alabama. Same thing in Hawaii. So they're having a little meal here at their lean-to, and people are getting ready to go home. You've got to have your facilities, no running water.

This is a good picture of what the radar site looked like as it was being finished. This is actually the living quarters down here, and these are the radar operations areas here. Again, when the Vietnamese came up, they came around from behind, circled this area, and carried out the attack that way.

This again just shows the radar there.

Okay, so the Communist attack. There had been the air attack in January 1968, which was unsuccessful, so then they actually put more people into the attack. At some point there are thousands, perhaps as many as 10,000, Vietnamese forces that are converging on Site 85. They're actually building roads to get to this place. The reason why we know that is because our people were up there on the mountain watching. Now, you might ask, why didn't we leave at that point? Well, because what happened is the people at Site 85 that were directing those F-105 bombers against targets in North Vietnam, what's happening now is the North Vietnamese were massing forces, so we had incredible new – what we call today – target decks. We had lots of good targets out there. Basically, the decision was made that as long as we can continue to kill lots of North Vietnamese, that a good thing, and we've got the resources to do it. So as they continued to get closer to Site 85, we basically just stepped up the bombing against them, and that's why the site stayed open. There is a lot of documentation that's in the book that talks about the decisions that were made. As they got closer and closer, the CIA became very nervous about this. The CIA station chief actually recommended that the site be closed, and the decision went to the ambassador. Ambassador Sullivan deferred to the Air Force, and the Air Force came back and said, no, this is really important; this is the only capability that we have, and we need to continue to keep the site open, and they actually sent more technicians to Site 85 so that they could do 24-hour-a-day bombing.

Now, having said that, I would also tell you that they also increased the plans on how to get people out, and what I would tell you is anybody that has ever been there, anybody that has ever looked at this area, and I've talked to not only Vietnamese, but Lao and U.S. military people that know the art of war, no one ever imagined except those Vietnamese that anybody would ever be able to climb that western cliff. When the Vietnamese began to put pressure on the bottom of the mountain, and they were firing the artillery and the rockets and assaulting the mountain, no one

ever thought that the attack would come from any other place other than from the eastern side, which was well defended and that there would be enough time to remove the technicians, and everybody felt that way, even the technicians. That's not what happened though.

What did happen is, beginning in the afternoon, late afternoon before, and then into the darkness, a group of about 20 sappers, Vietnamese commandos, actually climbed up the side of the mountain, came around here, and by about 2:00 in the morning on 11 March 1968, they sealed off Site 85. Now there are 16 Americans here, and there are three Americans at the CIA area. They sealed it off, they begin to fire rocket-propelled grenades, AK-47s, into this area. We know that some of the technicians escaped down to this area here, and I'll talk about that in just a moment. We know that some of them went down to an area here, but quite frankly we don't know where everybody went, and I go into some exhausted detail about that in trying to figure out based on what we know and what we don't know. When this happened, it was in the middle of the night. Obviously, it was a terrifying situation for everybody. To give you an idea, there were people inside the vans that were working at the time, there were some people that were outside the vans, there is a little bit of a path that goes down to this area here, and this is where Chief Master Sgt. Etchberger, Staff Sgt. John Daniel, Capt. Stan Sliz were at. There had been two other HEAVY GREEN people that were on that ledge earlier, and both of them, according to eye witnesses, were killed and fell off at that point. Their remains were blown off. Those are really the only two people, in my view anyway, that we are absolutely certain, because they were American eye witnesses that saw them perish. So this is where Chief Master Sgt. Etchberger was at. Let me go back to this one so you can understand a little bit more.

The attack has occurred. The CIA is trying to get people up there. The Air Force is trying to get people up there. Air America had been the in-country rescue force for the U.S. military and for Air America personnel from the early '60s. For many, many years before the Air Force ever had a rescue capability, Air America was already there, and if you think of Air America as just a bunch of – an aerial network of people just running from place to place dropping off folks, picking up folks, picking up rice, moving rice, “hard rice” which is a euphemism for ammunition. That's what they were doing all day long is flying in helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. Well, that morning an Air America Huey helicopter heard that there was something going on at Site 85, a radio call, and actually flew to this location and found Chief Master Sgt. Etchberger, John Daniel and Stan Sliz, went into a hover. Again, for those of you who have an aviation background, you understand this, but for those of you that don't, a Huey helicopter is – in this case – unarmed, defenseless, holding in a hover in those currents. Even as I stand here, every time I tell this, I can't believe that they did it, but they held that hover, they dropped the hoist down and they brought the people up, and Chief Master Sgt. Etchberger was the last person that was going to get on the hoist to come up. At that point, Willie Husband, who had been hiding somewhere up here, came running down. Together they jumped on the hoist and up the helicopter went. Sadly, at that point, as the helicopter was pulling away, the Vietnamese fired

into the helicopter, and a round came up through the bottom of the helicopter. It split the rifle butt of the crew chief on the Air America helicopter and then struck Chief Master Sgt. Etchberger. Chief Etchberger died; he bled out by the time they got him to a hospital. John Daniel, Stan Sliz and Willie Husband survived. I'll come back to that later if you have any questions.

At the same time, there was also another Site 85 survivor who was located further over here. A Jolly Green Giant helicopter came in. Now a Jolly, of course, is armored; it does have the capability to fire back but it didn't. It too came into to a hover and it lowered a pararescueman on a hoist to an area where they had spotted a number of bodies, and that pararescueman's name was JJ Rogers. I met him later; I actually brought him down to Maxwell. JJ Rogers has an incredible sense – in your display here, I thought about him today. JJ Rogers was also on the Son Tay Raid so he participated in two of these major events. It's absolutely incredible. Anyway, JJ went down on the hoist, and as he was crabbing along on the side of that mountain looking down at these bodies trying to see if anybody was still alive, his Kar-15 – basically a shortened version of the M-16 – slipped off his arm. So he decided I'm not going to go after it; I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing. Well, that becomes important because in a moment one of the survivors reaches out -- Jack Starling – and grabs JJ's foot, and he says that if he had had his weapon, he probably would have shot the guy. As it was, he grabs a hold of Starling – now you saw what that looks like. At this point, he said let's go, and so they're both on that hoist. The helicopter pulls off – and you saw the valley. The helicopter swings out over the valley with those two guys hanging on the end of it. Then the other pararescueman pulled them up inside the Jolly and they pulled off. Sadly, those were the only HEAVY GREEN survivors, so there were 11 HEAVY GREEN Air Force technicians, who were then technically civilians working for Lockheed, who did not make it off Site 85.

Now, down in the CIA operations area at daybreak – again, there were two CIA officers down there, and as part of the program we just did in Dallas a few weeks ago, the agency has now publicly acknowledged the names of both of the officers involved there. Howard Freeman was the senior case officer. He actually took a shotgun and a group of Hmong guards with him. He worked his way up from that lower helipad, got up into this area here where he came under fire by the North Vietnamese attackers, and Howard was actually shot in the leg. He returned fire and actually threw a grenade I think at one point but had to be evacuated down with the wound in his leg. Howard Freeman went up there by himself basically, searching and never realized – the timeline suggests that as Howard was up here trading fire, those people were still over here; they hadn't been rescued yet, but Howard had no way of knowing that. So he was evacuated back down to the lower helipad, and later he and Woody Spence, the other CIA officer that was down there. Woody suffered permanent hearing damage as a result, there was a tremendous artillery and rocket barrage going on through this entire thing because that's what the Americans thought was the primary assault force coming from the eastern side, not realizing that these sappers had

actually climbed the mountain. So that's the other rescue attempt that was made, the Jolly Green rescue attempt that was made over in this area, but 11 HEAVY GREEN Air Force personnel that were lost at that point.

Now the reason why I put an asterisk on the slide earlier is because in subsequent trips – not on the visit that I made in 1994 – we did not recover any remains, but after that, the joint casualty – it's been called a number of different names but it's now called JPAC, back then it was called JPRC I think, anyway, the recovery folks, the military people, not intelligence people like me, but other people that do that stuff, went up there and actually recovered remains. So there are only 10 unaccounted for from Site 85, as well as an A-1E pilot, Maj. Westerbrook, who died when his A-1 actually hit the side of a mountain as they were attacking the site later on in the day.

That's the other thing I should point out, is that once these people were recovered, Ambassador Sullivan was asked to destroy the site, to destroy the evidence. At that point, and again there's a lot of conjecture about this, and I try and go through it as best I can. A decision was made to destroy the site, and it's very clear when we got there in '94 that actually that didn't happen. In fact, in the Vietnamese archives, we found photographs that the Vietnamese took of the buildings almost completely intact. So we know the Vietnamese got up there and had a lot of time to recover materials and so forth. The reason why I bring that up is because the Vietnamese position on this still is that they don't know what happened, they don't know what happened to the equipment. They have said that their people got up there and didn't take anything and threw all the bodies over the cliff. Well, I don't believe that that's what happened.

The rescues by the Air America and Jolly Green crews, the rescue attempt by CIA officer Howard Freeman – as I said, Howard Freeman was later awarded the intelligence star by the CIA, which is one of our highest awards that can be given for valor. Howard Freeman is still alive and kicking today. He's quite a person. One of the things that's interesting about doing things like this is – and I don't think I've ever shared this with anybody actually, now that I think about this – his son came up to me after the presentation in Dallas. I didn't know he was in the audience; it was amazing. He walked up and said you know, that was my dad you were talking about.

Here's a photograph of Mrs. Etchberger receiving the Air Force Cross in a top secret ceremony in the Pentagon. It was the best the Air Force could do, and the Air Force didn't declassify the HEAVY GREEN program for more than another 20 years after she received the Air Force Cross. This remained a very, very hidden program for many, many years. Just to finish that part of the story – once all of the HEAVY GREEN people, both the people that were missing and the survivors, were sort of determined what had happened to everybody, then the Air Force brought almost all of them back into the military and their ranks were restored. Part of the issue with the

widows was they then were eligible for both workman's compensation because they were civilian employees – so they got some insurance benefits but not a lot really – workman's compensation and also survivor benefits from the Air Force once they were restored to the Air Force service. That was actually one of the reasons that many of the wives were told if you ever talk about this, you'll lose your benefits, so it was another issue there.

I think that's pretty much what I've got. The one thing I would end on there is I had the great honor a month or so ago to pay an office call with General Schwartz, and he was good enough to put this book on the Air Force reading list, so I was invited to come and talk to him about Chief Etchberger, and of course he has a special ops background as well. One of the things that we talked about was how extraordinary it is that the Air Force today could put a book like that on the reading list and say people in the Air Force should read this. I can tell you that when I finished writing this book – I was a professor at the Air War College so it wasn't like they were going to take me out and shoot me – but I was really nervous because I do criticize the Air Force pretty, pretty thoroughly where I thought it was necessary, and it was the former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Fogelman, who actually, and the Air Force parliaments, who gave me top cover I believe. General Fogelman, like me, had taught at the Air Force Academy at one time in the history department – he's quite a historian – and he only asked my one real question. I mean, he went through the book very thoroughly, and he said did you give General Momyer, who was then the commander of 7th Air Force, a chance to sort of refute some of the comments that you make, and I said yes, sir, I did, and he said okay, go forward. I didn't lose my job; that's not why I work for the CIA today. *[laughter]* Well, thank you all very, very much.