

Sign Oral History Project

Oral History Interview with Lloyd Michael Isley, (USAF, A1C, ret.)

91st Missile Maintenance Squadron (MIMS),
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Thomas Tulien

Sign Oral History Project

MI **Lloyd “Michael” Isley**

TT **Tom Tulien**

JK **Jim Klotz**

[Tape Start]

MI —it looked like we might not have gone to see him the next day, according to some of those dates. He told us that Operation Blue Book, he had contacted or something, and they were thinking about sending a team down there. But then it sounded like maybe their team was like a guy and a secretary and a sergeant.

JK Colonel Quintanella who was the project manager—he’s the one talking in one of these telephone conversations we have a copy of and he says “we hardly ever go out on cases because it’s just me and a sergeant and a secretary.”

- MI: Yeah, I found that to be very interesting.
- TT You go by Mike?
- MI Yeah.
- TT Let's start with how you got into the services to where you ended up at Minot. Where are you from here originally?
- MI Well, I was from Tulsa and I went to school down at Okmulgee Tech [Oklahoma State University/Okmulgee Tech, Okmulgee, OK] and took heating and air conditioning. And when I got out of school why I'd actually gotten drafted so I joined the Air Force real quick to keep from going into the Army and took a Bypass Specialist—
- TT What year was that?
- MI That was in December of '67 when I was inducted into the Air Force and took a Bypass Specialist Test while I was in tech school, or in Basic Training to keep from going to tech school 'cause I'd already had training. I passed that so they sent me straight to Minot, North Dakota to the missile sites, and then missile maintenance as a heating air conditioning technician. We go out on sites and work on the environmental control systems on the missile sites and some of the stuff on the guidance system was cooled by a little chiller, but most of our work was not in the hole where the missile is, some of our equipment was in there but we worked a lot in the support building which was a few feet away from the silo. It was a "Soft Support Building" they called it, and it was just ten feet underground. It wasn't hardened. It had the chiller in it, the diesel generator and some electrical gear was in there.
- TT So it was just a box in the ground?
- MI Yeah, just concrete box.
- TT Was there a Navy hatch to get down into it?
- MI There was just a hatch with a padlock on it, like a metal door that you just raised up by hand if I remember, or probably—it could have been one of those spring loaded hatches, I don't remember, just a ladder going down to a steel floor. It seemed like that floor might have been on springs or something to give it a little bit of a shock-absorbing—I don't really remember, but that's where a lot of our work was, and if there was only going to be work done in that building then you could go out without the Air Policeman.
- TT Explain the procedure for getting into the building. When you go out, give us a sort of a day-by-day, what happens you get up in the morning and—?
- MI Well, at this particular time we were on standby when this event happened, and that means that after 5 in the evening, or somewhere about then, you were supposed to be

on call to go out and take care of any alarms that they might have had or anything that may need to be done.

TT After 5 p.m. in the evening?

MI Yeah, generally, but they could call you out in the middle of the day if they had something that needed to be done and didn't have anybody to send out, they'd call you in the middle of the day. You were basically on standby 24 hours a day for a week, but they generally saved you for nighttime.

TT Why would they be sending you out to do maintenance at night?

MI They'd get alarms and they just liked to—sometimes they were emergencies, but they had people on standby and they didn't like to think that they had been sleeping all day and were gonna sleep all night so they generally found something for you to do. They might have an alarm that had been there for several days and then they'd grab you and send you out, and in that situation, if you didn't have to penetrate where the missile was two of you could go out and penetrate the soft support building and you just took a key and a code. And if you had to penetrate the silo though, that took a different type of Air Force personnel to go out. In our shops there were missile maintenance people who were of a different training. They had to be the ones to penetrate where the missile was and they had to have a policeman with them, Air Police.

TT It took about six people then?

MI Well, I would say it would take at least three.

TT Explain the procedure for opening the missile silo.

MI: Well, they'd have a code—before they left base they would have the code and the keys that they would need.

TT So they'd meet up with you at the site?

MI Or we would ride with them depending on what the situation was.

TT They'd have a code and key, and you'd have a separate code?

MI No, if they were going to be there we wouldn't even need a code or a key, they would have that set up and the cop would have a separate code and a key so, no one person could—

TT —two codes and two keys.

MI Yeah. They might ride together, but they've got different codes and different keys and that's the way they would, you know, would eliminate anybody going out there and—

JK Now did one of those codes come from the Flight Security Controller at the LCF?

MI No, you authenticate to him when you get there. You authenticate your code to him and he's looking at what your code—well actually you've got a number, and you've got a code book and he's got a code book, and you get on the same page and authenticate your number which is a number that was only yours.

TT So on your way out you have to stop in at the launch control facility (LCF)?

MI You have to stop in at briefing and you pick up, it's actually was called "Keys and Codes" you stop in there and get your keys and codes, codebook. It was a lot less involved if you weren't going in, penetrating the silo where the missile was, if you were just going in the Soft Support Building you just opened the gate and went on site and opened the hatch down below, and went down and called, authenticated and then did your work. But if you were going where the missile was then there had to be Air Policeman there, and somebody else besides one of our shop personnel to go in and then once they opened up the site then you could do your work. But most of the time when we went out on standby—there were times, probably a lot of times, when we'd go out with a missile maintenance team and maybe go down where the missile was, and depending on what the problem was you may have to, you may not have to. And then if you were out—just say an electrician and a refrigeration guy out and you had to penetrate, they'd send a team over there to where you were and do it that way, so.

TT Why do they have cooling systems for the missile?

MI Well, it has to be kept at constant temperature.

TT For what purposes?

MI The equipment. Well, the guidance system was cooled by its own little chiller, just for the guidance system, but all the electronic equipment that monitored it and what would be the equivalent of a PC today (chuckles) or something, was in there and had to be kept cool. That's what the air conditioning system was for. And the missile itself was a solid propellant missile, and it's kinda like a stick of dynamite. You don't want to get it hot and you don't want to get it too cold. You keep it at a constant temperature; it can crack, so it's pretty cool—

TT So in the summer you kept it cool, and in the winter you kept it—

MI Well, being underground there was no such thing as heating, it was all air condition because the equipment put off heat, so you just kept it at a constant 72 degrees or so if I remember right.

TT And you were at Minot for two years?

MI Yeah, I believe so. I went there straight out of basic training.

TT What did you do after Minot?

- MI Went to the Philippines, and spent 15 months there, and then I went back to Vandenberg which was—
- TT Were you in air conditioning in the Philippines?
- MI Yeah.
- TT They must have loved you.
- MI Yeah, there was a lot of work over there. We didn't have any missiles thank goodness, it was all taking care of the base air conditioners and base housing and we built a school and a barracks. I was in on a couple of construction projects over there.
- TT And then how long were you in the Air Force?
- MI Four years. Then I came back and went to Vandenberg, which is a Minuteman, well it was more than Minuteman, but they had Minuteman there and I was in the Minuteman missile maintenance there for six months and then I got out.
- TT You'd had enough?
- MI Oh yeah (smiling) I had enough before I ever got in.
- TT You went to in to avoid Viet Nam?
- MI Pretty much. Didn't really see any good things about getting drafted into the Army so—
- TT Do we want to go now to that particular night? What impression did it have on you at the time?
- MI It was a unique event, but I've probably had a different impression of it at the time and now as to what it was. It probably differs from what O'Connor thinks happened, for sure.
- TT Why do you say that?
- MI He saw it different than I did at the time, you know, and that's something I've always, even in telling the story many times, which probably my family's tired of hearing about it. I've told them, you know, the difference in what he and I saw the situation. But it was an interesting night that's for sure.
- TT It's clear that O'Connor's recall is different from what you recall, which is odd because you guys were together the whole time.
- MI Exactly (chuckles).
- TT How do you account for that?

- MI I don't know.
- TT I mean do you think it was a function of memory?
- MI No, well, I mean, unless our memories changed in like 24 hours or something you know.
- TT So you knew 24 hours later you guys had really different accounts.
- MI Yeah, right, exactly. Not real different, I mean it was basically that he probably saw, apparently saw more of the object than I saw.
- TT He more interested in looking at it at the time?
- MI No, we were both pretty much wide-eyed and a little bit, you know, a little bit frightened by being out in the middle of nowhere like that. I mean, if they'd said over the—and I can't remember who we were talking to, over the radio, I know we talked to Transportation Control and Base Operations—but if either one of them said “No, that's a this or that,” or whatever, why we might not have even watched it any more.
- JK: The radio in that truck, “six pack” you call it, or a pickup, there's a speaker not earphones you both could hear—?
- MI Yeah, you had a mike and then they came back over a speaker, anybody standing within, you know, so many feet of the truck would hear what they were saying to us.
- TT So you were patched through to Base Ops?
- MI Well, yeah exactly.
- TT And you had a sort of open line with them so you were hearing all the—?
- MI No, we were just hearing what they said to us. And then we could hear if I remember right, we could hear other [conversations] just like probably the, maybe the camper team on that other site, Oscar-6 or wherever they were. Anybody else in that area, we would have probably heard their checking in, because I know like the Camper Team would have to check in every 30 minutes or so.
- TT Oh, really? Now is that a function of being on the same frequency or a function of this phone patch?
- MI No, probably just being on the same frequency. There was no problem with radio communications. You could hear everything that was going on, but just seemed like I remember conversations from other people, not necessarily—and it could have been concerning the object that we saw, but just people checking in and saying—because you had to, that was a big deal, you had to check in every so often and let them know where you were and what you were doing and everything.

TT Where were you guys headed at the time and—?

MI We were heading to a missile site, and even though I was, you know, looked at that piece of paper a few minutes ago, it's never been something I remembered as to what site we were, there's like 150 missile sites up there. I think I might have told you that we were in November Flight which is about the best I can do. We were heading to a missile site, and we were heading south on a gravel road. Well, we were driving down a gravel road, which was pretty far out in the middle of nowhere with no other inhabitants around there other than maybe a farmhouse here and there, and not very many of those. We may have stopped at the Launch Control Facility or may not have, didn't necessarily have to.

TT You could check in with them by radio on the way in or something?

MI Well, to go to a site, you didn't have to go to the Launch Control Facility. If it was on the way you might stop, they probably didn't even want you there though, but we may have stopped there, I don't know. But we were on our way to this missile site and I don't remember who was driving, I just remember seeing a light off to our left. We were driving south, and there was a light off to our left that would have been to the east that I noticed for, and if memory serves me, I noticed it or we could have even noticed it at the same time—but I remember noticing it for a while and wondering, you know, first I thought it was a farmer's light, but it seemed to be staying with us more than what a farmer's light would have. Probably at the height that a farmer's light would be if you were just maybe an eighth of a mile from it or less, you know, like if there was a farmhouse on that road, and he had a light, that, you know, I really couldn't see a farmhouse.

JK Would it be fair to say it was in a field or you couldn't tell anything like that?

MI If it was up there that's probably about all it would've been was in a field (laughs).

TT Could you see anything behind it?

MI I really couldn't see anything if I remember right, I really couldn't really tell, you know, anything other than a light. I've seemed to have thought all these years that it was a clear night, but in reading some of the reports they say it wasn't such a clear night which could be that it wasn't—

TT There was a haze way up but the ground was actually clear.

MI Yeah, I think it was pretty clear for the most part, and so I guess after we had noticed this light for a while, one of us called Transportation Control, or Job Control, I'm not sure. Both of those would be back at the base and you could get either one of them on the radio, they monitored all the radio communications and we probably called Transportation Control and asked them if there was a helicopter out in that area, which was very seldom, and I don't know if they ever flew helicopters at night. They probably did, but it wasn't very often because we had thought it would've been strange, but we thought maybe it was a helicopter. So he said, "No, there's no helicopters out

there, why?" And we said, "Oh, there's a light right out here that seems to be following us," or staying with us, or whatever—

TT So you were driving 30 miles an hour cruising down a gravel road and this thing is what, pacing you along the side?

MI Yeah, it's just staying off to the side, it seemed like that it—

TT Let me ask you this, you've got trees up there?

MI There could've been some trees, but for the most part there are no trees up there.

TT You're saying it was pacing you would it have been up above the horizon line?

MI Yeah, it would've been up above the horizon line, now whether we could see— probably there was nothing to really, it was hard at all times to determine how far away, you know, for whatever reasons, there wasn't ever a good fix in my mind as to how far this thing was from us. So you know, it just seemed to stay with us, and at times, at that time seemed pretty close to us, close enough that it would have been following us and nothing else, you know. For whatever reason, it seemed to be staying with us, so—

TT And then again, what gave you the impression that it was following you? Would you say pacing you?

MI Well, it wasn't really behind, it was off to the side of us and it just seemed to be staying at the same speed we were.

TT For how long did that happen?

MI It probably couldn't have been too far down that road to that site so, maybe you know, 10 or 15 minutes, and at this point in time that's a wild guess.

JK In one of the forms [Form 117] it says something about stopping the vehicle and turning the lights out, and then turning the lights back on and then proceeding, do you recall anything like that?

MI I don't recall that at all but that's very possible that we did that, and it seemed like—I don't remember when they patched us into Base Operations, whether it was after we got to the missile site, because it seemed like they talked to us—Transportation Control, talked to us for a short time, and I think they had called Base Operations to see if there might be an aircraft in the area. Base Operations apparently was real interested in it 'cause I do remember having some conversation with Transportation Control for a while because finally he said "Well, I'm gonna patch you in, Base Operations wants to talk with you directly, and I'm gonna patch you in with them," and that was probably about the time we got to the site, which would, I'm pretty sure we stayed outside the site for a while, just at the gate maybe for a while and watched the thing and then—

- JK So that faces south doesn't it and you could see it in front of you at that time?
- MI No, I think the site was off to the side. That would have been, what we were on was undoubtedly a farmer's road, and the site, if I remember right, was off to the right side of us and we eventually went on the site I know, and one of us went down and authenticated with the LCF, although I don't really remember doing that, and then I guess at that point we watched it for quite some time and it seemed to stay in the general vicinity of the site off to the, probably to the south of us, and to the east of us and at least once, maybe more, it passed, seemed like it was passing pretty close overhead, and it was at one of these times that I heard just maybe some air noise or something that an aircraft might make, definitely didn't hear any—I don't remember hearing any jet engines it was just more of something moving through the—just an air noise I guess.
- TT You mean more like a helicopter would make perhaps?
- MI No just maybe something... maybe what a plane would make going through the air without its engines on—just the air movement across the wings or whatever.
- TT You're sitting there watching this thing for over a period of time, and what you're telling us is it moved, seemed to be in the south and southeast, and you said at one point it seemed to go overhead?
- MI Yeah it, it came pretty close overhead.
- TT You're seeing a light?
- MI Right.
- TT So when it was overhead the light was big?
- MI No, it wasn't any bigger I don't believe, and I don't really remember what—it seemed like after we got to the site, it didn't seem, if I remember, the light didn't seem as bright after we got to the site, that it may have even been hard to see part of the time.
- JK Was the security light at the site on?
- MI Yeah, I'm sure it was, which probably—
- JK Today, that's a single floodlight on a pole?
- MI Yeah, that's what it was at the time too. Yeah the light would have been on at the site.
- TT Those lights must always be on?
- MI Well, I'm not sure, I don't think they are. I think that's one thing you did when you got there, the LCF turned it on for you. I think it is, because they (chuckles) would flash it

if you didn't check in, once in a while they would flash it to get your attention because your only communication with the capsule crew was telephone.

JK In the support building?

MI Yeah the phone was in the support building and one in the silo, but we, of course we didn't have access to the silo so, but I was—

[Switches tape]

MI —about that time he said “there's going to be a strike team there in just a minute” and about that time, why the strike team pulled up, they'd been, I guess over an hour he'd been trying to get me up—they finally sent the strike team out there to see what had happened to this—I remember it always being two people on the strike team. I couldn't argue it either way probably, but it seemed like it was only two people because there was always one cop at the LCF that was awake at all times. They were out there for three days at a time and they had enough for one cop to be at the desk, and two on the strike team. Course, they could probably wake up the other, however many they had, two, there's probably two teams out there at all times. They could probably wake up the other ones at any time.

JK Yeah, we've talked to that were the Flight Security Controllers, who would be a Sergeant rather than an Airman and they were at the dispatch desk when they were on duty.

MI Yeah.

TT So let's jump back to you were standing outside the Launch Facility and you're watching the object, for a period of time—?

MI Seemed like a long time—

TT A half-hour? Less?

MI I'd say we were out there—it seemed like for a couple hours and that could be totally off base.

TT In your documents it says that you first sighted the object at 12:30 [a.m. CDT].

MI Yeah, and I couldn't tell you whether it was, it was pretty late.

TT O'Connor says you first saw the object at 2:30 [CDT].

MI Nah, I don't think so.

TT So what was the total duration of the time that you saw that object?

MI Probably a couple of hours, at least.

- TT So it's wrong in your documents, it's 2:30 when you first—
- MI When we first saw it, it was 2:30?
- TT That's what O'Connor says.
- MI Nah, I'd bet money it was earlier than that because if we saw it at 2:30 it would've started to get light before too long.
- JK The discrepancy between the two forms, the one you filled out and the one O'Connor filled out is noted in the documents, they said "no explanation," for them, but the other timelines seem to indicate that a start time of 02:30 is more likely.
- MI Really? That could be, that very well could be, but it didn't seem like that. By 4:30 I would have thought that there would be some light,¹ and that could be that there was—I really don't have any memory of driving back to base, and just from what I've talked to you that O'Connor must have seen things that I didn't see driving back to base (laughs).
- JK He has things that he said that occurred during that trip but you don't recall driving back in the light?
- MI No, but it could have been that we did. And undoubtedly, even with my timeline it would have probably starting to get light. It's very possible that it was 2:30 in the morning. It'd be interesting to know why we were out that late unless they had called us out late to start with, and they might not have called us out' till 11:30 or 12:30 and that would put us out that late, 'cause I don't remember being extremely tired or anything which would have probably been if we had gotten out earlier than that.
- TT If they did send you out so early in the morning it must have been something of an urgent need?
- MI Oh, not necessarily. If they get an alarm, a temperature alarm, and I don't know whether it was me going out there or whether it was, he was an electrician, I don't recall doing anything, so—
- JK Was that the standard pairing an electrician and cooling guy together?
- MI It would be that more than not, because it could have been they had a power production guy that was on standby who took care of the diesel generator, and a hydraulics, or pneudraulics² I think they called them, guy who could go out too, but it was usually they seemed to like to put an electrician with the air conditioning guy when they'd go out.
- TT In case there was an electrical issue involved with the air conditioning?

¹ U.S. Naval Observatory data shows morning first twilight was at 6:37 a.m. Central Daylight Time.

² Pneudraulics is the combination of pneumatics and hydraulics in a system.

MI Well, no, not really, they didn't touch anything. You had a particular set of parameters that you were qualified to work on stuff, and you didn't work on anything that wasn't in your—you might, but they sure didn't send you out to—it was mainly just the two trades. We probably had more calls than anybody else, so the electricians, and the air-conditioning guys they would generally send you out together. They might have a call for him and a call for you, and they might be fairly close together so you'd hit both sites while you were out. But he and I went out a lot together, we were on standby at the same time a lot of times I guess, so seemed like he and I went out a lot together. Wrecked a truck one time together.

TT Oh yeah? Were you driving?

MI He was driving. He came over an overpass, which was just like that (gestures arc up and down) and we came across the top of it and there was a truck down at the bottom of it, a semi, that was trying to get traction to get up the—he hit the brakes and we started sliding, and we went off and rolled it over. That was a bad thing to wreck a truck when you're in the Air Force (laughs).

TT They don't take it out of your pay did they?

MI Well, this Second Lieutenant, or might have been a First Lieutenant, I don't remember, that gave us a ride back, this is how big a deal this was—they sent the colonel out there, it was a full Bird Colonel and it was late at night and I don't know how many officers come out there just to look at the truck laying in the snow, and they were slipping and sliding about to fall down crossing the highway, and then on the way back we drove back with a couple officers, and one of them said the Colonel was going to court-martial us. It was like a Article 15, it was a letter that told what you did and they would take away a stripe, but it was just something you didn't want on your records because if you had one you could forget about ever getting another stripe and they could take away some pay or whatever. He said, "You don't want to sign that because it's obvious that that wasn't you guys' fault. This is just between you and me, I'll deny it if you repeat it," he said, "but don't sign that whatever you do." Turned out that behind the truck was a Master Sergeant from base and he told them that the truck was definitely over on our side of the highway a little bit and that there was no way our fault that we weren't speeding or anything so turned out that it was no big deal.

TT Eventually you went in and did some maintenance to the site I would assume?

MI I think we must have right before we left, and I don't remember if it was me. It must have been something real simple and it may have been that we just needed to put some Freon in the chiller, and we weren't there very long at any rate after, we were there a long time with that but as far as doing any type of work, we weren't there very long before we headed back to base if I remember right.

TT Had the object disappeared at that time?

MI Yes, we watched it and were describing where it was to Base Operations and what it was doing and it seemed like a long time, it seemed like an hour or two. And then he

said, and the way I remember it he said that a B-52 was taking off and it was going to come directly over us and that we would be seeing it in a short time, and then pretty soon we saw him and heard him coming and at that point I don't really remember whether it was—I would guess that we quit seeing that right before we saw the B-52 coming. And the B-52 flew over and we definitely heard it and saw it when it came over, and then we didn't ever see the light again or the object again, and I kinda remember the Strike Team showing up in the middle of all of it, but I—

TT Jablonski and Adams is that right?

MI Yeah. And I don't remember if they saw it at the same time we saw it, at the same place we saw it, I don't remember standing there with them saying, you know "there it is" and all that.

TT Do you remember them showing up?

MI I remember them showing up and talking to them, you know, but I don't remember if we were seeing it, standing there together seeing it or not, I just don't recall that at all.

JK According to the documents, they had been seeing it back at November-1.

MI Yeah. It seemed like while we were driving there, we didn't have any trouble seeing it, I mean you know, it was right there the whole time, and then after we got there, and I don't know that we had any trouble seeing it, but I don't think it was quite as pronounced once we got there. At some point in time after we were there, it wasn't quite as pronounced, it was a little bit more difficult to follow, although, you know, we did see it for quite some time. And if I remember right it was staying in that general vicinity (gestures above, in front and to the right of himself), but I would have to admit that, especially at that time it was really hard to tell how close it was, other than maybe once when it felt like it came pretty close.

JK There's a remark in the documents about "approached to within about a half a mile," and I don't know whether that's a guess or—

MI Yeah, that was probably a guess at that, and I couldn't tell you now whether I said that or thought that at the time or what, all I ever saw was a light. I never saw any more than a light.

TT A white light?

MI Yeah. Fairly bright. But from reading the report from what the scientists thought it was, it looked like a landing light on an airplane, I mean I thought that at the time, and what I told people then and what I've told people through the years is if I thought it had to be something, that it would be my guess that it was an aircraft that the Air Force was flying around out there. And if they argued with me that it was that, what some of the things I remember reading in that report you sent me was that they thought it could've been the B-52 that we were seeing the whole time and—you know, B-52s generally—it

seemed closer than something that would have been clear back to the base, and I think it would've made a lot more noise if it would have been a B-52 flying around out there.

JK There were B-52s in the air around the base on a regular basis. Would that have been a common sight to you?

MI When the one did come over? They didn't seem to linger in that area if I remember right, you very seldom ever saw them out in the field like that. On base you'd see them landing and taking off, and maybe they did touch-and-gos, but I'd have to say that I didn't think they did a lot of touch-and-gos, but they could have. If they say they did a lot of flying in the area maybe they did but B-52s always caught my attention and I would say I'd have to remember them—any time I saw them landing or taking off on base I watched them, and I just don't remember them flying over the missile sites that much.

JK Now when this one did come over was it lower than—

MI Than what the object had been?

JK —you might have seen another one pass before.

MI Yeah, probably so, I mean, like I say, I don't recall ever being out on a missile site and seeing them fly over, now there may have been some sites—

TT Where their landing pattern would be—?

MI Yeah, their landing pattern for the most part didn't bring them over any sites on the east side of the base, because there weren't any missile sites out on that side, now on the west side you might have seen them fly over but I don't recall ever seeing them fly over anything.

TT Any other Air Force planes that would fly over the missile sites?

MI No, just helicopters mainly there was some interceptors up there and I don't really recall seeing them fly over low or anything.

JK You mean that night or ever?

MI —Ever see them taking off and landing at base. But I don't remember ever seeing them flying over missile sites.

JK You don't recall interceptors coming over that night either?

MI No. I could almost guarantee that there wasn't any. I think I would've noticed that and I don't ever remember that happening that night.

TT And the helicopters that you would see over those sites were they ferrying crew?

- MI Yeah, they would be, they'd take us out by helicopter sometimes. Not very often, but if they had no way to get you out there and they wanted to get you out there fast, they—I went out a few times on the helicopter, quite a few times, but most of the time if you went out it was because they had another reason to go out there too. I remember going out there on a helicopter a lot more times than I ever remember coming back on a helicopter 'cause they were quick to get you out there but they didn't necessarily want to get you back on a helicopter (laughs).
- JK So if the weather was bad they would fly crews out?
- MI Well the missile crews if the weather was good they almost always went by helicopter especially to the further sites. Everybody else went by truck most all the time.
- JK Would I be wrong if I said that there was a difference in how those Combat Crews were treated along with police and—?
- MI Oh yeah that'd be pretty common knowledge. Officers are, that's the way they're supposed to be, I mean, they were supposed to be treated better (laughs) that's why they were officers and we weren't.
- JK So you drive back to base and you recall an uneventful drive back.
- MI Right.
- JK OK, at some point you filled out a form.
- MI Yeah and I would've said that it was the next morning, but at some point I was called by my NCOIC, the non-commissioned officer in charge of my shop I think called me and woke me up, and said, "you gotta go down to Base Operations and see a Colonel somebody about this deal that you saw."
- TT You don't remember the Colonel's name?
- MI No not at all. I can kind of remember what he looked like.
- TT Wasn't somebody you knew anyway.
- MI No, that was totally unrelated to our—they were aircraft; they had nothing to do with missiles so to speak.
- JK Now Werlich was 862nd Combat Support Group.
- MI Yeah we went over there and I don't know if O'Connor and I went at the same time, I don't really remember. I remember talking to the Colonel, and I think I talked to him before I filled out the form, and it could've been after I filled out the form, I think it was before. I think I remember him handing me the form, it was a, you know, we called them "unidentified flying objects," but their form said, "Unidentified Flying Phenomena," if I remember right, which stuck in my memory for all these years that it

was a phenomena. But at that time that's when he told us that the B-52 had picked something up on radar, and that was basically all he told us, the B-52 had picked something up on radar and it stayed with them a while, or maybe disappeared immediately or whatever, but that's when it kinda got more interesting to me. I remember him saying that he had either called the Wright-Patterson or Operation Blue Book and had talked to somebody there and they were maybe going to send a team out, or he was going to call them to see if they wanted to send a team out, something to that effect. And that was the last conversation I remember having with anybody other than people in the squadron about it.

[Break in recording]

TT OK, we were talking about filling out the Form 117. That was just a morning thing, they brought you in the office, just give you the form and put you in a corner and tell you to fill it out?

MI Yeah, if I remember right and it seemed like he probably asked us, you know, what we saw and all that, although I don't recall him asking us that many questions, he might just have had us fill it out and give it to him. The only thing I remember him saying, and I'm sure there was more of a conversation, but the only thing I remember him saying was about the B-52 picked something up on radar and I don't recall him saying, I don't remember whether he said they saw it or not. I definitely remember him saying that they picked it up on radar but I don't remember him saying whether they saw it or not. And that you know, there was a lot of conversation about it, in fact, I think O'Connor and I had to go out either the next night or the night after that, probably the next night, and I remember going to Job Control which is where we would go in when we were on standby, we went in to get our work order to go out, I remember going down to Job Control and them asking us about it 'cause it was the same guys that had been on that night before and they had heard all the conversation about it over the radio. I don't know that O'Connor and I talked that much about it, just, you know, "yeah, we saw this and that." Well, you know, we saw little bit different things. He felt like he saw the object and I don't feel that I ever saw anything but a light.

JK What was the general tenor of the conversation around the shop about it? There was conversation about it?

MI Yeah, and I think up there it was, you know, being out in the vast (laughs) nowhere, you know you could see the northern lights up there, it was a little bit of a phenomena to me. It wasn't that strange that you would see something, not that a lot of people did, but it seemed like it was more strange that you didn't see a lot of things up in the sky being up there, you know, and if I remember right, there was instances where other people had seen things but for just a second or whatever. I don't know, was this an isolated thing?

TT Pretty much.

MI There wasn't a lot of it?

- TT There was but years to years, not, —I mean in 1966 there was another very interesting incident at Minot, in 1967 there was an incident at Malmstrom. In the 1970s there were some incidents over the whole northern tier, from Loring, Wurtsmith across to Minot, all the way across—intrusions into the weapons facilities with these strange objects. So there has been fairly consistent type of phenomena around the northern tier facilities.
- MI Yeah.
- JK About filling the form out, you do not recall anybody sitting with you and showing you angles or talking about anything like that?
- MI That's a real possibility that he may have. In no way did he coach us or anything, but maybe helping us to decide how far it might have been at what angle or what, but I don't really remember that, he didn't really, you know. I remember him not being just kinda matter-of-factly, he wasn't acting like we were crazy and he wasn't acting like we had seen a spaceship or anything.
- JK Was he an older man?
- MI Yeah he was if I remember right, well I mean, I was only 22 or 23 so he probably was my age (laughs) now, or not even.
- JK Well there was a debriefing that morning that the B-52 crew attended, and their debriefing was the next morning.
- MI Mine could've been. You know, I say 'woke me up the next morning,' they could've woke me up the next evening or next afternoon actually, because I would've been sleeping most all day—I probably wouldn't even have answered the phone till late in the day, so I could've gone in that evening and done it. I don't remember.
- JK O'Connor recalls meeting a couple of the pilots when he went in—
- MI No if we—he went in a different time than I did then, and I don't know
- JK You don't recall being with O'Connor then?
- MI I don't recall that, but if he said he was with me, then I'd say yeah, that was probably right, but I didn't meet anybody except than the Colonel—other than if O'Connor was there, I could've been there at the same time O'Connor, but I did not see any of the air crew there.
- JK In his report when you got to the Launch Facility this thing was hovering “in back of the Launch Facility” and that it was changing color?
- MI Never, don't remember that.
- JK You recall it being white.

MI Yeah.

TT With no other colors associated?

MI I don't remember seeing any other lights and maybe I did see it as a, you know, if I said I saw a different color light it wouldn't have been green or red or anything I don't think. And it might have been, and I don't remember seeing it fade or, maybe bright or dim from time to time, but I don't remember that even. But if I said at that time that I saw it, then I probably saw it but I don't remember it now.

TT Let's talk about that discrepancy again. Your report says the sighting began to occur at 12:30 and lasted until 4:30. Does that make sense that it lasted for four and a half hours?

MI No, no, that doesn't make sense.

TT How long did that whole incident where you observed the object last?

MI It seemed like four hours but it might have only been two hours.

TT OK.

MI I put three and a half to four hours. If I said that at the time, then I'd have to believe that. I can't imagine why I said I saw it at 0030 [GMT] if it was 02:30 [CDT].

TT O'Connor's got 2:30.

MI If that's the case we saw it till way after daylight and that doesn't make sense at all, because I remember the B-52 going over and it was still dark because all we could see on the B-52 was a light coming for a long time, or, not a long time but we saw a light, and then it got brighter, and then we could hear it and it goes flying over and it was still dark then.

TT If you watched the thing for somewhere between two and four hours was that all you were interested in, was watching the object that whole time?

MI Oh yeah.

TT Because during the whole time were you reporting back to the base your observations?

MI Yeah, we were talking to the base the whole time if I remember right, and it might have been lapses of minutes between conversation, but I remember them saying that a B-52 was taking off and was going to fly over and I had wondered why they didn't, you know, scramble something else.

TT But who is it that mentioned that they did see the 106s fly over?

JK O'Connor said, "they came blasting right over the site." [LF N-7].

TT He's saying that 106's did over fly you do you recall that?

MI No.

JK You guys no longer saw it after about 03:45. Do you recall the Air Police staying there until you left?

MI They were probably there until that B-52 flew over.

JK Yeah because it says here in this one sequence of events that Adams and Jablonski had stopped seeing it at 05:18, which is considerably after you and O'Connor lost sight of it.

MI Yeah. I would almost bet money that we didn't see it after the B-52 flew over, at whatever time that was, I don't think we saw it after that. And seemed like the route he came over us was off to the west a little bit, heading north but either directly overhead or off to our west just a little bit.

TT You saw the B-52 coming in penetrating the Minot area?

MI Well, no, we saw him coming from the base area, we saw the light come in to view and come over us, or to the west of us a little bit (gesturing the position [N-7] and the path of the B-52).

TT So he was coming from the base towards you?

MI Yeah, the last, the only time we saw him he came over from base. He probably, I mean, from the direction he came in I would take it that he took off took off in a westerly direction and turned right and came over our area from there. I don't ever remember them taking off to the east, seemed like I always, and, and I could be wrong, they might have but, seemed like they always took off to the west, but it probably had to do with which way the wind was blowing—the prevailing wind was either north or south so the base, if, if I remember the runway right, was east and west, and the most I remember them taking off would be into the northwest, but undoubtedly they took off according to which way the wind blew. One thing that they didn't indicate to us or to me, the Colonel didn't, that they saw something specific. All I remember him really saying is that they picked something up on radar and he could've said that they saw something, that one of—I don't recall that, but he definitely did say that they picked something up on radar.

TT Have you ever had any other experiences in your life?

MI No.

TT Well, thanks for taking the time to talk to us, we appreciate it.

[Transcription end.]