

Sign Oral History Project

Oral History Interview with Patrick D. McCaslin (USAF, Colonel, ret.)

B-52 Navigator, 5th Bombardment Wing,
Minot AFB, ND, 24 October 1968

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Thomas Tulien

Sign Oral History Project

PATRICK: McCaslin

INT: Tulien

INT: To begin, if you talked a little bit about your background—educational background, getting into the military, your service up ‘til ’68, and then, what happens sometimes is if we talk up to there and then get into talking about the incident, we never have talked about your career beyond that. So just talk about your career up until—

PATRICK: Subsequent and after?

INT: Yeah. And then we’ll jump back.

PATRICK: Okay. Okay. I was born in 1941 in Elwood City, Pennsylvania and went to college in a town near there—Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Joe Namath’s hometown. And I graduated with a degree in pre-med and had

always wanted to fly, so I joined the Air Force on the promise that I would be a pilot, believing that lying recruiter. I came in actually to be a navigator so that I could immediately go to pilot training, which was not true, obviously.

INT: You had a four-year degree?

PATRICK: Yes. Right. Bachelor's in pre-med. And then I went to James Connelly Air Force Base in Waco after going through OTS down in San Antonio for three months. I went to James Connelly and got my navigator training. I got my navigator wings there. It took about a year. It's now 1965. Met my wife there. We were married at the same time I graduated, in February of 1965, and I went to Mather Air Force Base to get trained as a bombardier, and left Mather for Castle for crew training in B-52's.

INT: In sixty—?

PATRICK: I left there at about this time, February of '66, and proceeded to Minot Air Force Base. That was my first operational assignment. I went to Minot Air Force Base.

INT: Did you have a choice in your assignment?

PATRICK: There were several bases tacked up on a bullet—on a black board and you basically pick by class rank or, you know. And I had several choices remaining to me and I chose that one.

INT: Why Minot?

PATRICK: Because, believe it or not, it looked to me like the best choice of the ones that were remaining.

INT: So why not, huh?

PATRICK: So why not Minot! So we went to Minot—got there in February of '66, and we left there in '68 and I went to pilot training at Laredo Air Force Base. From the very—I drove down U.S. 83 from 15 miles or so from the Canadian border all the way to the Mexican border on U.S. 83, and went through pilot training, graduated from pilot training in late '69. I selected an OV-10 forward air control aircraft, went to transition training in Fort Walton Beach, Florida—left there in seventy. I went through water survival training at Homestead and then ended up in Southeast Asia in June of '71—or '70. And then I did my tour in Southeast Asia.

INT: What were you flying in?

PATRICK: OV-10's.

INT: What was the function of an OV-10?

PATRICK: Forward air control. We'd locate targets, put in strike aircraft—mark the target and put in strike aircraft.

INT: Okay, with the lasers, or no?

PATRICK: No, just mark it with a white phosphorous smoke rocket, normally, or sometimes, you know, you could just talk—the first choice was to just talk 'em into the target, say, "Do you see this do you see that?" and talk 'em in without firing anything. And then at the end of that tour, came back to the United States, was an instructor pilot in Arizona at William's Air Force Base until 1975, for four years, and then went to Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Went from there to be a squadron commander in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. I was in charge of a recruiting squadron for 3 years. Went to the Pentagon in 1979, and I was there in the programs directorate for 4 years. Went from there to Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania for a year. Left there and went to San Antonio where I was the director of programs in Headquarters Air Training Command for 2 years, and then I was assigned at Bergstrom in 12th Air Force Headquarters as director of programs for 2 years.

INT: You moved around quite a bit?

PATRICK: Quite a bit. When you make Colonel, they move you a lot. From that and General, I guess, they move a lot too. And I left there in 1989. Actually, in 1988 I went out to Monterey, California to learn Spanish, and prior to going to my assignment as the chief of the military assistance group in Lima, Peru, and I was there from ninety—summer of '89 until '91 when I came back here and retired at Bergstrom.

INT: I'm assuming there's an American Air Force Base in Peru?

PATRICK: No. I was assigned to the embassy there. My boss was our ambassador to Peru. I had 2 bosses, our ambassador to Peru, and South Con Commander of 4-Star in Panama. We were basically in charge of the military end of the drug war.

INT: Oh, okay.

PATRICK: Talk about a quixotic operation.

INT: Oh yeah, meaning?

PATRICK: Well, I just can't understand why anyone would think the military should be involved in a drug war. I can't imagine why you'd want a drug war, but that's beyond the scope of this. I mean it just seemed like such an idiotic thing to do.

INT: Mm-hmm.

PATRICK: Which is why I didn't make General.

INT: Why?

PATRICK: Well the ambassador had marching orders to prosecute a drug war, and I didn't think it was—here I am the guy in charge of the military end of it and I thought, this is not a logical thing to do.

INT: Yeah. But your superiors must've supported you? Right?

PATRICK: Well, not to the extent of promoting me.

INT: Oh, okay. I see. They figure you hopped off track there or something?

PATRICK: Ah, well, I think it would have been better had I just shut up and did what I was told to do.

INT: Yeah, okay.

PATRICK: I mean they do things like say—it all started when someone came down from the State Department and said, "If we give you 40 million dollars, what can you do with that in the way of prosecuting the drug war here?" And my answer was, you know, where they grow cocaine here is bigger than Vietnam. You remember how much that cost? And we didn't win it, so your question should be, "How much money would it take to win a drug war?" in that context, not, "What can you do with 40 million dollars?"

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: That's not the right answer.

INT: Yeah, it hasn't changed to this day.

PATRICK: No. Too many—when I left Peru there were 39 agencies that had their hand in the till for drug money—fighting the drug war. 39 separate agencies. It's a very profitable thing to do from a governmental point of view.

INT: Yeah. And I suppose you're supporting the people you want to support in that country to maintain a level of control?

PATRICK: Yeah, destabilize it.

INT: I mean that came up recently with the whole money going to Columbia, didn't it?

PATRICK: Right.

INT: Okay, so you're there in '66. What were your day-to-day duties when you started at Minot? What crew were you on to begin with?

PATRICK: Oh, I can't remember crew numbers, but I think the first crew was—I could be wrong here, but you initially—they were forming a crew, so they had—

INT: The way it's been described to me is that they were classified, so there's S, R, E and X.

PATRICK: N was non-ready.

INT: Okay.

PATRICK: And so the crew I was assigned to, if I remember correctly, was a non-ready crew. It had an experienced pilot or co-pilot who was becoming a pilot. I think a brand new co-pilot, a guy who was becoming a...who was new to the radar navigation business and me new to the navigation business, and then we had—I don't remember the EW of that crew, or the gunner, but we trained together as a crew under the supervision of the instructors there at the base, and when we got to the point that they felt we were ready for a check ride, we went through the certification process, flew the ride, briefed the mission to the commander and were certified an E crew, and then we just flew our training missions from then on.

INT: Okay. But eventually you worked yourself up to S-01? How did that transpire?

PATRICK: I think I changed crews one time before I became an S crew. I'm sure of that, and it was while I was on that crew that we flew what's called an ORI—Operational Readiness Inspection, and the—

INT: Was it a big deal?

PATRICK: It's a big deal. That's how the commander is rated. That's how everybody's rated. And my memory is that it happens once a year, but the ORI was one where I remember we had pretty bad problems with our radar. We couldn't see much in the way of—we had almost no returns from the radar, but we had developed some contingencies for operating like that, and we went ahead with the mission.

INT: What was causing the problem?

PATRICK: As I remember it, the radar tilt went down how many degrees, I'm not sure, but we were getting—instead of looking out here, the thing was point—it was like a flashlight. Instead of looking out here, you're looking down here and you can't see out.

INT: Seeing the horizon or something like that?

PATRICK: Well, you're not even seeing the horizon. Instead of looking out, instead of being able to see out, say, 50 miles, you're only seeing out 10 miles. So you had very little time to react to any returns you see. But we managed to go through the low-level route with the radar being in that condition, and ended up with some of the best scores in the ORI. Meanwhile, there was an S crew who went through the ORI and...and had a terrible mission. Had bad bombs and everything. The wing commander simply grabbed some of the people on my crew and shipped 'em up and took those guys and put 'em down, you know?

INT: Would that have been considered a demotion?

PATRICK: To go from an 'S' crew down? Yeah, it would've been considered a demotion. It was not uncommon. They were very performance oriented. If you could cut it, you've got the promotion to a higher-level crew. They wanted the best people doing the training and the evaluating.

INT: So they were pretty neutral about it? They just kept moving—

PATRICK: No, there was nothing personal in it. Very much like the mafia, you know. It's all business. And I can understand that. I mean you know, if you're in the defense business, you want the best people doing it. You don't want—

INT: Sure, especially front line, you know.

PATRICK: Yeah. You don't want people with poor judgment in charge of nuclear weapons, so. So that's how I came to be on an S crew.

INT: Okay, did you go right to S-01?

PATRICK: That's the only crew I was ever on. I mean if it was S-01—I'm not sure the number was S-01—you said that. I'm not sure what my crew number was, I don't remember.

INT: Well it had to be either 1 or 2, because in Standards and Evaluations—

PATRICK: Yeah.

INT: And Jack Partin was S-03, so it had to be either 1 or 2, and I've never heard anybody say it was 2. Everybody says it's 1.

PATRICK: Okay, whatever. I remember the names of most of the crewmembers, but I don't remember the designation. But that's the only crew I was in, in StanEval.

INT: So, with StanEval you just had additional duties, is that correct?

PATRICK: We did less of the day to day training missions that—we did some of those, but most of our time was spent either training and mostly evaluating people. There were squadron instructors who were not in StanEval who did instructing—got people ready for evaluations, and it was StanEval's job to evaluate those people when they were proposed, but we did some instructing also. We'd go along on missions as instructors, so that was pretty much the order. Evaluation, instruction, and then we did our own training missions too.

INT: How did the positions within your crew work? I mean who was sort of like top and who was bottom in that?

PATRICK: Oh, the Aircraft Commander was top. But beyond that, there was no real hierarchy as far as—I guess you'd say the Aircraft Commander was in charge regardless of his rank, and then because, what the heck, he's the guy in charge of the airplane. And beyond that, everybody was pretty much well, with the exception of the gunner who was enlisted. Well even that was true. It pretty much fell on rank order. If a Lieutenant Colonel was a radar navigator, then, you know, you gave him the courtesy he earned as a Lieutenant Colonel, if you were subordinate to him. If you were a Captain, you treated him like a Colonel.

INT: Okay. So it was pretty democratic amongst the crew?

PATRICK: Yeah. Outside of the military, you know when you have other folks around and it's a formal occasion, or there's an inspection going on or a wing commander's around, it's Colonel this and Captain that, but when

you're flying missions and planning it was pretty much on a name basis with everybody on the crew.

INT: You guys were just dependent on each other.

PATRICK: You have to be tight, yeah, or it's not a crew.

INT: Yeah. So, and you flew this crew for how long prior to '68 say—

PATRICK: Boy I, you know, I don't remember exactly.

INT: More or less than a year?

PATRICK: Yeah, I think it was less than a year.

INT: Oh, okay. And, just give us a brief overview of your position in the plane.

PATRICK: Okay. The B-52 was set up with the AC. If the nose of the airplane is this direction, the AC sat over here upstairs [left seat], the co-pilot sat here [right seat].

INT: Right.

PATRICK: And also upstairs and behind them you had the EW facing this direction [backwards], the Gunner here facing this direction [backwards].

INT: Okay. Same level.

PATRICK: Same level. Below, roughly, maybe slightly forward of the EW and Gunner, but on the deck below, you had the navigator on this side—the same side as the co-pilot, and a radar navigator on the left side. There were 2 ejection seats. And there was just space for one person to go in-between the seats, get in his seat, and the next per—you couldn't—there wasn't enough for both people. Unless you were really thin, I don't know how you'd get through there. And I wasn't.

INT: So, would you go down a ladder?

PATRICK: Yeah.

INT: Okay. So down in the back of that hallway there was a ladder going down, or steps into—

PATRICK: There was a hatch, like a trap door. It was halfway between the location of the pilot's and the EW and the Gunner and see, there was a ladder that

went to—you'd pick up that grating and then you'd pick that up and just walk down the ladder and into your position.

INT: Okay. But you were within shouting distance of everybody on board? Was it open?

PATRICK: There were banks of electronic gear behind us, and I think there was a urinal. Yeah, there was a urinal on the back wall, but we're talking about a distance of maybe 5-6 feet, as I remember. Not far.

INT: Oh, you guys were really crammed in.

PATRICK: Yeah, for a big airplane, but not much room. Now when you say shouting distance—it was noisy in there, so you were within shouting distance. I don't think any 2 crew members were separated by much more in straight line distance than you and I are right now.

INT: Oh. They were 5 feet?

PATRICK: Yeah. When I say straight line distance, maybe the pilot was more than that from me, but it wasn't very far. But it was noisy and if I took off my mask and screamed as loud as I could, I'm not sure anybody would've heard that.

INT: From the engines?

PATRICK: Yeah. And the equipment running in there and everything.

INT: Right. I'm just trying to sort of set it up and get some stuff beforehand. I guess we can talk about that flight on October 24th. I mean, do you remember that flight specifically? You were flying constantly, so I would think it would be really hard to remember one flight.

PATRICK: I remember what happened during the flight—a lot of what happened during the flight, but my memory of the flight itself is that it was a—I mentioned that there were 3 kinds of flights. I shouldn't say what it was. It could have been an evaluation for the pilot. It could have been that our pilots, the StanEval pilots, were evaluating and that sometimes happens, where a crew was being formed you had a new crewmember show up at Minot and he needed to be evaluated to be combat ready. That may have been what was happening. I'm not for positive, but I know you couldn't fly a B-52 with just pilots onboard. So you had to have at least 1 navigator downstairs.

INT: Well, let me ask you this about the guy you were evaluating, which obviously was the pilot. Up until that time he had 13 years experience as a

pilot, he was 37 at the time. Our guess is you were just checking him out on landing approach and so forth. That's what he tends to remember too. Does that make any sense?

PATRICK: That could be. I mean, I don't know. He may have come from another B-52 squadron. I don't know. And just needed local area familiarization. Sometimes we got people from other aircraft, like the old B-47 was phasing out, and the B-58 Hustler was phasing out around that time, and sometimes we get people from other systems like that who came to—or from other models, and sometimes, even within the B-52 community, the difference between an H model, which they had at Minot, and, say, an E model or an F model was quite a bit different, so it looked the same pretty much outwardly, but the equipment—

INT: You were flying all H's there, though weren't you?

PATRICK: All H's, but he may have come from an F model or something like the D model unit. So it could've been a local area checkout and I don't know this for a fact not being a pilot at that time, but I would think that the checkout on the airplane would have come at Castle or at one of the crew prep—and that this would've been a local area familiarization, you know, approaches at Minot and things like that. But that's just my conjecture. I probably knew very well at the time what it is, but my 59 year-old head doesn't remember right now.

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: I know that our crew was intact. We had all of our crewmembers on that aircraft, plus the AC who was being evaluated or trained or whatever was going on.

INT: And again, his name is James Partin—Jack Partin, you guys called him?

PATRICK: Right.

INT: You remember Jack Partin?

PATRICK: I remember the name Jack Partin. I can't put a face with it right now.

INT: Nice guy. I like Jack. Doesn't remember a lot. I don't think he wanted to retain a lot of that, and it wasn't his crew either. You know, it wasn't his normal crew, so it was like, and he didn't go to the briefings and so forth.

PATRICK: But he was in the position to see it.

INT: Exactly. And he does collaborate Runyon's visual.

PATRICK: Yeah, he was in the seat.

INT: Yeah. Well, his perspective was he was in the other seat—or, he was in the left hand seat.

PATRICK: He was in the AC seat. As I remember it.

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: I couldn't see that. I was downstairs.

INT: Well, we can talk about this later. There's some confusion about how they over flew it. How it was over flown. Okay, so let's just kind of walk through it then.

PATRICK: Okay.

INT: It was pretty early in the morning—

PATRICK: Yeah, my memory is that it was 2-3:00 in the morning. We had...boy, I probably shouldn't even conjecture. I don't know. We had done some things prior to that. I want to say we'd been over to Grand Forks and shot some approaches there. I don't think we had done a lot of navigation-type things, like low-level routes or high-level bombing, or any of that stuff. I think we had...it was mostly a pilot's type mission. But at some point around...my memory is about 3:00 in the morning...we showed up at Minot, and we flew...we were coming from—and the reason I think we were coming from Grand Forks, my memory is that we were coming from the east to the west and flew an approach of some kind into the runway, did a low approach, as I remember it. Could' a been a touch and go, but I'm pretty sure it was a low approach.

INT: You put your wheels down?

PATRICK: He actually touched down, and then pour the coal to it and take off again. In a low approach, you, at some point prior to touching the runway, you add power and take off again. He had requested—one of the pilots had requested a VORTAC—tack and approach, which was VOR approach. I think it's a VORTAC northwest of Minot.

INT: Is that combining V-O-R—

PATRICK: V-O-R and TACAN.

INT: Can you explain those terms—V-O-R, TACAN.

PATRICK: V-O-R is a directional navigational device. It tells you where you are in degrees. Let's say you're south of the V-O-R, then—directly south. Then your readout in the airplane would say you're on the 1-8-0 radial from the transmitter. The TACAN gives a distance from the transmitter, so there are TACAN's, and there are V-O-R's. Today, I'm not sure. There are...simply directional would be a V-O-R. Simply distance would be a TACAN.

INT: So VORTAC is a combination of the two?

PATRICK: Right, and you can navigate by either the V-O-R or the TACAN by plotting. If you're on the 1-8-0 radial from one and the 2-7-0—you cross those and that's where you are. D-M-E [Distance Measuring Equipment]— same thing. If you're 30 miles from this one and 20 miles from this one, you draw circles and you're where they intersect properly.

INT: And that's what you were doing?

PATRICK: That's what the navigator does. Although we didn't use VORTAC's we used other things. That was more for the pilot, but we didn't even have those read outs downstairs.

INT: Oh, okay. Those were quick references.

PATRICK: Yeah. They're constant references. They always have one dialed in, and they're navigating from 1 or 2 of those all the time. The navigators would use celestial navigation and radar navigation using returns we'd see on the ground from the radar and things like that.

INT: Well, the pilots could look out and probably see the city lights and—

PATRICK: Sure. Oh sure. Well, there were places in North Dakota where you didn't see many lights.

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: So we did our low approach, having received clearance to go out to that nav aid, and we were climbing out, and my memory is that at some point the tower called us and asked us to keep our eyes open for strange things.

INT: Were you hearing that on the intercom? Another question—do you guys hear all on radio communications?

PATRICK: No.

INT: But you all have intercom systems?

PATRICK: We have intercom systems, so that was relayed to the pilots. My memory is that that was relayed to the pilots, and that I heard the pilot ask the tower if the missile guys had been seeing strange things again, which I guess had happened in the past. I don't know. But they confirmed that. I'm not sure I heard that transmission, but I think how it happened is the AC told us, you know, said, "Hey, let's keep our eyes out. The tower wants us to." So I asked—Chuck Ritchey was my radar navigator sitting over here on the left, and Chuck was kind of dozing. And the navigator had the job of flight following the approaches anyway. You know, making sure we didn't get below a—it was just a redundancy for safety reasons. I had the approach plate, and I would follow the—

INT: Can we pause one second? I'm gonna switch the tape and then start on that again. Okay. [Switches tapes]. Could you kind of clarify the difference between the navigator and the radar navigator?

PATRICK: The navigator was in charge of keeping track of the position of the aircraft all the time. He was in charge of the Hound Dog missiles, which were a missile at the time that was used by Strategic Air Command—similar to a Cruise missile—carried under the wing of the B-52. He was in charge of those. The radar navigator was in charge of acquiring the target and, you know, with the bombing system, and he was in charge of acquiring it and—with the help of the navigator, but he was in charge of actually aiming at the target and making sure the weapons release was correct and all that stuff.

INT: Who was responsible for lining up the KC-135's?

PATRICK: We'd work on that together, but primarily the navigator. I was the one that was calling the pilot and my memory is that I'd do that. Maybe I was relaying that to the radar, but that's my memory. Now he had control of the radar, so if...if we switched modes from station keep to sector scan to full scan, he had to do that.

INT: Would you clarify those terms, please?

PATRICK: Full scan was let's say—and he had control of the range, too. So let's say he had a 100-mile range. I don't know if we even had that anymore, but let's say he had a 100-mile range selected. The radar would look out 100 miles and would sweep, I think about every 3 seconds, full sc—you'd see the thing go all the way around, 360 degrees. Sector scan would be a back and forth scan like this of, I don't remember how big the sector was, 20-30 degrees maybe. And then station keep was where all the radar energy was

placed under the air—very close to the aircraft. Maybe 5 miles, and that's what you'd be in when you were doing air refueling.

INT: Right. What was that process? Could you just walk through that—what the process was in locating the KC-135 and lining the aircraft up?

PATRICK: Initially, if I remember correctly the conversation—you'd know where you had to meet them in the sky over a geographic point, and you'd have a time for the rendezvous. You'd go there—contact would be established with...between the pilots, so you'd have radio contact, and we'd establish positions relative to one another that way. We'd start to search on the radar, try to acquire them on radar.

INT: So—getting back to your previous point of talking about each side of the return knowing distance—that's sort of of interest to us here. Could you explain why you can make that statement?

PATRICK: Well because at a point, and I don't remember exactly where, we would be in station keep mode so that we could accurately—the idea was to bring—the KC-135 would come toward us, we would come slightly offset toward the KC-135, and he would be slightly higher than we were. And it was the nav's job to watch this aircraft coming toward us—acquire it and watch it coming toward us, and then at some point we'd go to station keep to get even more energy on the aircraft. When it got to—and there was a certain art to this, that when it got a certain off to our left—if he was making a left turn—we would call and ask him to start his turn, and he would turn—he would begin a turn in front of us that would bring him out, hopefully, right in front of us and slightly ahead of us. And so the most accurate way to do that was in station keep mode, and having done that a number of times I knew what size of return a 135 or a B-52—when you'd be in a formation with B-52's, you could tell what size they were, and roughly the same on a radar return.

INT: Right. Okay. So, but at 1,000 yards, you knew—you could tell how far—

PATRICK: No. The size of the blip would be pretty much the same, but you could tell from the ranging rings on the radar how far it was.

INT: OK.

PATRICK: There were rings printed on the scope.

INT: In what increments?

- INT:** In station keep, they'd be a mile. [The intervals are one-half nm, with brightened rings at .75, 1.75, 3.75 nm.]
- INT:** Okay. So it went 1 mile, 2 miles, 3 miles—
- PATRICK:** Yeah.
- INT:** —all the way out to whatever you were set for?
- PATRICK:** Yeah, I think station keep was 5 [nautical] miles, no more than 10. Very close to the aircraft.
- INT:** And Sector scan was?
- PATRICK:** Yeah, sector scan was—the radar antenna would instead of going around and around, would go back and forth in a narrow sweep, concentrating the energy in just that area.
- INT:** Okay. Let's pop back to where were you—
- PATRICK:** Okay, we're on the approach, but we're climbing out to do this approach, and had established that, you know, we were asked to keep our eyes open for anything strange. No one had said anything like UFO or anything like that. It was just, "Keep your eyes open for anything." And at that point, since I was flight-following the approach anyway, I asked Chuck to put it in station keep mode, 'cause I figured if there is anything in the area, my best chance to see it would be in station keep—more energy, closer. And he did that for me. As we climbed out, I monitored the direction we were heading and monitored the altitude, and I watched the scope. At some point during our climb out, and I don't remember what the altitude was, but—and I don't even remember what altitude the approach began at, but that could be established by looking at the approach plate for that time. At some point on the way out to the VOR, or to the nav aid, I saw a weak—off to our right, maybe 3 miles out, I saw a weak return, one scan. The next scan, there was a very strong return at that location, about 3 miles off our right wing, which meant to me that something had either climbed into the radar energy, which was why it would be weak as it entered it, and then was about co-altitude in the next sweep, or it descended into the—could've descended into it. Don't know which. But it was clear that something was out there, and it was large. It was as big or bigger than a KC-135. My impression was it was a larger return than the KC-135 gave me. So I called the pilots and said, "There's traffic off our right wing at 3:00." Looks like co-altitude and nobody saw anything. So I kept watching this thing. The pilot's basically said, "Keep us advised," and I think I may have called them a time or two and said, "It's still out there." And then—

INT: Had you been asked to look for the object? The pilots had been asked by the control tower?

PATRICK: I don't remember if the pilot's asked us to keep an eye on radar or not. I just don't remember. I know at some point I asked Chuck to go to station keep.

INT: So it was your initiative to do that?

PATRICK: It may well have been. I was a real go-getter, I guess. I think I did it on my own initiative, but I can't be sure of that. It just seemed like a logical thing to do, to me. I mean if that's one of the things they're asking you to do, that's the optimum configuration you'd be in to do that.

INT: Yeah. How long did that last? I mean, when you picked up the first return—I guess we're talking a larger period of time. How long did you have that on your radar set, I guess?

PATRICK: Oh, 15 minutes.

INT: Yeah. So it stayed with you—

PATRICK: Well, I don't know. I'd say 10 to 15 minutes. Yeah, oh yeah, it was there.

INT: Okay. And...and again, when it approached, it was one dim, and all of a sudden, "Boom" it was—

PATRICK: Yeah, one dim and then very bright.

INT: And then it stayed at that brightness?

PATRICK: Stayed bright. And I advised the pilots that it was still out there, and as we approached the VOR, my memory is that we were gonna make a right turn into the VOR, if the VOR's here, we were gonna come in like this, do a turn, go into the VOR and then start our descent over the VOR headed back toward the base on a heading of, I don't know, 120? Something like that. Southeast. East, southeast. And that was of some concern to me because we were turning into this thing.

INT: Oh, it was off your right side?

PATRICK: Yeah, and I may have—I think—I can't believe that I would not have advised the pilots, 'you know, we're gonna be making a right turn in the direction of this thing,' and it was, you know, 'Keep us advised.' So they started their turn back to the VOR, and my clear memory is that as we

turned back to the VOR, this return moved out at the same rate we were turning in—it moved out to the northeast—and by the time we rolled back out headed southeast to start the approach, it was 3 miles off our left wing, and I advised the pilots of that.

INT: So it moved relative to you? How many miles?

PATRICK: Well, it would've had to—if it was 3 miles off our right wing and we—I can't remember the turn rates of a B-52 anymore—but relative to a track over the ground, it must've moved 6, 7, 8 miles to the northeast, to accommodate the turn we made.

INT: And why do you make the statement—I mean, you're implying that the thing maintained a relative distance at all times, relative to your turn, so you're implying an intelligence there, aren't you?

PATRICK: Yeah, I guess I am.

INT: Was that what you were thinking about at the time? What did you think at the time this thing was?

PATRICK: I really didn't—I don't know that I thought it was anything. I mean my first concern was that it was an aircraft of some kind. I was worried about hitting an aircraft.

INT: Did you at anytime think it was an incoming missile or something?

PATRICK: No. Because there was no—because it didn't—I didn't see it come in from the side. When you see an airplane coming at you on radar, you see it moving—here it's at 4, here it's at 3, here it's at 2, here it's at 1. This was at 3 miles when it appeared and it stayed at 3 miles. And then as we turned into it, it moved off so that it maintained the three-mile distance, except now we—it allowed us to turn inside of it, and then it was 3 miles off our left wing when we started our approach. Then, as we descended on the approach, it stayed as bright as it had been, which for a navigator means, or a radar navigator, it is stay—it is remaining co-altitude. In other words, it's descending at the same rate we are.

INT: The return would've changed as it moved away.

PATRICK: It would've become weaker. It would've flown—we would've descended until it was out of our radar energy, or it would have descended out—whatever, but...

- INT:** Jumping back a second—when it appeared first on your radar set could it have come from behind, or could it have dropped down, or could it have come up from below?
- PATRICK:** Could not have come from behind. Well, what it did before I saw it on the radar, I have no idea. All I know is, that it was directly off our right wing when the first weak return appeared.
- INT:** Oh, it was there already.
- PATRICK:** It appeared weak—the first scan, right off our right—3 miles off our right wing.
- INT:** And then 3 seconds later it was a full—
- PATRICK:** It was a strong return, and stayed strong until it disappeared.
- INT:** What did they use to estimate the approach speed of that object? I mean they obviously came up with a very high rate of approach—
- PATRICK:** Well, there was a point later where it closed on us. It closed from one scan to the next from 3 miles down to 1 mile during the descent. So I think that's where they estimated the closure speed. Not where it appeared.
- INT:** —had more data at that point?
- PATRICK:** Yeah, you could tell that if the scan was 3 seconds and this thing moved from 3 miles to 1 mile in 3 seconds, then how much is that in miles per hour, you know, that kind of thing. I think that's what they did. At any rate, we're now in the descent and this thing's apparently descending with us. I advised the pilots of that. It seemed to me that the pilots were getting a lot more interested in it. There seemed to be a lot of talk on the intercom about, "Do you see it? I still don't see it," that kind of thing. It's clear now that whatever this is is staying with us, and that's cause for concern, since no one—I think there were calls to the tower about, "Do you have traffic," and, although I may not have heard those, I think there were calls to the tower about, "Do you have traffic?"—and no one was owning up to any traffic in the area.
- INT:** Would FAA have had it in their systems?
- PATRICK:** Yeah, I mean, if there's anything out there—and I don't know if the tower checked with them.
- INT:** That would've been FAA Omaha? Or Minneapolis?

PATRICK: I don't know. Probably Minneapolis.

INT: Another question. ADC was there they had—

PATRICK: Yeah, we had F-106's there [F-106 Delta Darts assigned to the Air Defense Command, 5th Fighter Interceptor Squadron stationed at Minot AFB].

INT: They should've seen it too.

PATRICK: Yeah, there were numerous radars that should've painted—numerous air traffic control that should've had it.

INT: Now apparently in the documents weather radar did have it.

PATRICK: I don't know. Could be.

INT: Yeah, well it says that in the documents.

PATRICK: Okay. I find it difficult to believe that something would not have painted this thing. So at some point in the descent, with this thing still shining out there, I saw it at 3 miles on the left, and then the next scan it was at 1 mile. I mean it was just—there was no sense of it closing. There was no time for that. It was at 3 miles at one point, and the next scan it was 1 mile off our left wing.

INT: Now when you saw that, what was your—

PATRICK: I was on the intercom immediately and called the pilots and said, "Hey, this thing's 1 mile off our left wing now," and, well I knew whatever it was, in my own mind at that point, I knew that there was something there that I'd never seen on radar. The ability to close 2 miles and stop instantaneously was—although I wasn't a pilot yet, I subsequently became a pilot. Well, I went to pilot training 2 months after that and I did a lot of flying after that, and I don't know of anything—been a lot of R and D since I got out, but certainly at that time, and during the career when I was flying as a pilot I didn't know of anything that could go laterally in 3 seconds, 2 miles, and just stop. I mean I—

INT: And maintain your airspeed.

PATRICK: Right. It was maintaining our descent rate, and then just laterally into one mile, perfect formation. So the pilot's were looking you know, that was clear. They were telling me they were looking. They still didn't see anything. No one claimed to see anything at that point. And it was about that time that the tower, and I don't remember exactly how the loss

happened, but the tower either lost our transmission to them, or we lost contact with the tower, but we did not have two-way communications with the tower anymore.

INT: And at what point did you realize that was the case?

PATRICK: That happened as soon as I called up—right about the time I called up and said, “This thing’s a mile off our left wing.”

INT: A ways into—this things chasing you behind for—

PATRICK: It’s staying right with us as we descend.

INT: —for a period of time, but when you start to do your descent for approach, that’s when your radio’s go down?

PATRICK: No. We started the descent; it stayed 3 miles off our left wing. At some point during the descent it moved into a mile. And just from one scan to the next—and at that point, we lost two-way communications with the tower.

INT: Okay.

PATRICK: I can’t remember exactly whether we could not hear them, or we could hear them and they couldn’t hear us, but we did not have two-way communication. That continued—

INT: You could hear them they couldn’t hear you. That’s the way it was.

PATRICK: Okay.

INT: And also they—everybody made this comment, ‘cause they’d never heard this before, and I think they’d had an accident a couple weeks earlier having to do with some radio problems, so they were interested in this, but they said, the first time they’d ever heard, or it was really strange for them to hear your transmission would break off in mid-word, so it wasn’t like static. The thing would just cut, you know?

PATRICK: Yeah. Now I think Tom Goduto, the EW—my memory is, and I don’t know whether it was at this time during the flight or subsequently, when we were doing the debriefing, but Tom mentioned that he got some strange readings on his gear at about the time these transmission problems were developing with the tower. But I remember something about Tom coming up with some strange stuff on his gear at about the same time.

INT: And saying something to you at the time, or—

PATRICK: That's what I don't remember. I don't remember if Tom said that at the time, or whether he mentioned it to us after, you know, that at the time, during the debriefing—whether he said that he had seen strange stuff at the time that we lost transmissions with the tower. But I remember him saying something about that.

INT: Mm-hmm.

PATRICK: That situation persisted until—and my memory is that we were about to level off either at the final approach altitude, where you just go from that altitude down to a landing, or that it was an immediate altitude but very near now to landing, or to being at the base.

INT: And would you have been coming in on a GCA approach?

PATRICK: No, we were doing this VOR, or the VORTAC approach, following instruments in our aircraft. You know, based on a transmitter out to the northwest. And as we leveled off, as they saw this point where we're supposed to level at 2,000 feet, or whatever it was, they started to level off. As we started this level off, my memory is that I—just a reverse of what happened when I first picked it up. Strong return a mile off our left wing—next faint return—next sweep nothing.

INT: That's why I wonder, when this thing appeared on your radar, maybe it came up from the ground the way it dropped away—

PATRICK: Certainly a possibility and could've happened you know, it either went up or it went down, when it disappeared. Same thing. But now this is my memory of it—I noted the position knowing, you know, I knew something very different was going on, so I noted the position of the counters that showed our position right down to the minute on the display there. And I made note of those and I may have—I can't remember if at that point I asked Chuck to put the crosshairs—he can push a button, and stop the crosshairs right at that point and then the airplane flies ring around the crosshairs. See what I mean?

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: The crosshairs are what you aim with and he can control that with his stick downstairs.

INT: When you're gonna drop a bomb, he can do it from there?

PATRICK: Right, so I have a memory that at some point we either put those crosshairs on the numbers I jotted down, or I just said, “Fix the crosshairs here.” (I hear Sandhill cranes going over).

INT: (Yeah, I can hear something too).

PATRICK: And if that’s what happened then, at that point we could fly back to that point simply by making a bomb run. You know, have the aircraft turn, fly to where those crosshairs are, and basically bomb that point, and you fly right back to the point.

INT: And again, you had onboard computer that would do that.

PATRICK: Yeah, right. Analog computer, an old computer, but—

INT: But, meaning he would you give you a waypoint to get back to there?

PATRICK: No waypoints, it would be like putting a thumbtack in a board—that’s the crosshairs, and you have a string attached to it, and you just fly around that string. Wherever you are, you can turn and fly down the string, you know. And my memory is that the tower asked us to go take a visual look at what was out there.

INT: Let’s talk about that a little bit. You remember the tower saying that—you heard that over your intercom?

PATRICK: What I heard, I heard the pilot saying things to the tower that made it clear to me that that’s what they wanted, and that he wasn’t too keen to do it.

INT: Now why do you say that? That was an impression you had at the time?

PATRICK: He said something like, “Okay, look, I’ll go, I’ll do one visual pattern, and then I’m putting this thing on the ground.”

INT: Okay. Now when you say pilot—pilot or co-pilot?

PATRICK: Don’t know which one it was. It was whoever up front was responding to that call.

INT: Who normally operated radio?

PATRICK: Normally the co-pilot would op—would change the radios, and would make radio calls. But in a situation like this, I’m not sure who made that call, but I know one of them said something like that, “Okay, I’m gonna make—okay, I’ll do it, I’ll make one visual pass,” words to that effect, “but then I’m putting this thing on the ground.” And we flew a visual

pattern, which is just basically a box pattern—you're flying down the runway, you make a left, you make another left and you are flying downwind, and my memory is that we told the AC—the Aircraft Commander at that time—we've got the position where this thing disappeared on our—we got the crosshairs on it, just sending your PDI and the TG meter will tell you how far it is. The TG meter tells you how many seconds to go, or minutes to go to a bomb release. The PDI is a Position Directional Indicator. But you center it—they have an instrument on the dash at the pilot's position, and when they have that needle centered, they're flying toward the crosshairs.

INT: Okay.

PATRICK: So my memory is that we instructed them that if they just did that, they'd fly to that position where this thing disappeared. And as the TG meter was counting down, we also had the PDI and the TG meter downstairs, I heard, one of the pilot's said, "Jeez...Jesus, look at that"—something to that effect, and at some point, because I had been so involved in tracking this thing and everything, somebody upstairs, I don't remember which one it was, said, "Hey nav, you've gotta come up and see this," and I basically said, "Screw you, I'm in a perfectly good ejection seat and I'm not gonna leave it to go up there and look at whatever that is," because, I was convinced by then, that this was nothing—this was beyond anything I'd seen or heard of, and I tried to put myself in the position of whatever this thing was, and now you're gonna have an 8-engine bomber fly over you at a very low altitude, I'm just not comfortable with un—I mean these guys that were asking me to come up and take a look were in ejection seats. The act of getting out of my ejection seat and going up there would mean I would have had no parachute, no nothing. I mean even if they blew the airplane away from me, I would've had no parachute to open. So, my mother raised—

INT: But you were scared?

PATRICK: Let's say prudent. Now I don't remember—I've been scared. I've been very afraid in airplanes, and I don't remember being afraid. I guess I'd call it apprehensive. I knew there was something going on that wasn't normal, and I knew that in situations like that, you want to be—gonna give yourself every chance to survive in it, and I wasn't gonna unstrap from that seat. You know, in retrospect, I kinda wish I'd seen the thing visually.

INT: Now there wasn't anything stopping you from doing that, right?

PATRICK: No, no. I was being invited up to take a look, which as we recall, I would've had to unstrap, climb up the stairs, go up front, stand there

between the pilots, completely unstrapped to anything, no parachute, no nothing. It just didn't seem like a prudent and, to quote our former 41st President, "Didn't seem prudent." So I stayed where I was. But the pilots talked about seeing something down there, and my impression was that we over flew it.

INT: Did they describe it over the intercom at the time?

PATRICK: No. Not in my memory. We turned around and landed, or we turned downwind or yeah, downwind—

INT: So when you came down and over flew the object do you know what direction you were in relation to the object? Were you directly over it? Did you turn over it?

PATRICK: My impression was that we flew right over it. From the discussion I heard up front, it seemed like we flew—and if they were centered on the PDI they would have to have flown right over it. The PDI takes into account wind and everything, so you're gonna fly right over it.

INT: Right.

PATRICK: And I would assume, having flown right over it, and if he did what he said he was gonna do, at the point it disappeared under the nose, which would've been, maybe—if we're at a thousand feet or 1500 feet altitude, it would disappear under the nose at about 1500 feet ground distance. He'd start his turn there, so basically turn right over it, and he'd turn base leg and then final. We would've been headed northwest, turn base leg, and then turn final and head back southeast and we landed, at which point we were met by folks who confiscated our film—our radar film, which was not unusual. I mean—

INT: Can we stop there and switch tapes?

PATRICK: Sure.

INT: Okay [switching tapes]. Let's see. I can't remember where we were.

PATRICK: We just landed.

INT: Okay. Let me ask this, so you felt that the thing dropped away?

PATRICK: It could have been either way, but my impression was that it climbed into the radar energy, and that when it disappeared, it dropped out of the radar energy—descended from the radar energy. That's my impression.

- INT:** Okay so, then you land.
- PATRICK:** Right. And normally what you do is you go into base ops, you debrief the mission...uh...and at that point, what was unusual was being met by people from the wing who wanted film. Normally you just carry the film packets in, as I remember it, and turn them over to the targeting people who would develop it for training purposes and so forth. But this time we were met and the film was taken right at that point, which I guess is understandable.
- INT:** So they were well aware that you had—
- PATRICK:** Oh yeah. Word was out that we'd had an unusual in—circumstance. And I don't remember much about the debriefing in base ops.
- INT:** The mechanical debriefing?
- PATRICK:** Yeah, it was that kind of a thing where normally, where you—because we didn't have that kind of a mission where you talk about the bomb drops or anything or simulated bomb drops.
- INT:** Now you're talking about right after you land—before you've gone home, there was a debriefing.
- PATRICK:** Yeah. Right. You go in and you have a coke, do what we're doing now, talk about the mission and you know, answer questions, talk to the maintenance people and tell them about any problems you had and I know we did that. I just don't have a clear memory of that. I think that's where some of the things may have come out, like Tom Goduto may have said to the rest of the crew, "Hey, that's where I picked up something strange on my gear"—the electronic warfare gear.
- INT:** But this is a mechanical debriefing, essentially?
- PATRICK:** Yeah, it's essentially—
- INT:** So these guys aren't going to be asking about the UFO event, right?
- PATRICK:** Not necessarily. And they may have. There may have been people in there asking us. I just don't remember.
- INT:** But I mean they'd probably heard about it while you guys were coming in.
- PATRICK:** May have.
- INT:** 'Cause they knew you were coming in, they had to be out.

PATRICK: They were in the same operation—the same building where the tower was. But I don't remember much of anything about that except that they picked up the film. The film was picked up there. And all of us were tired. We were beat. We'd been at it all...all day and we were ready to go home and the next thing I remember is going home and telling my wife that—waking her up—Sammy, she still tells me this—I woke her up and said, “You're never gonna believe what I saw tonight,” and I told her all about it—what I remembered of it and then I went to sleep. I was bushed, and she was up the rest of the night looking out, wondering what's out there and everything. And we'd just had our son a couple weeks before that, so I don't know. She was pretty tense the rest of the night.

INT: Oh yeah.

PATRICK: But then we were summoned to the Division Commander's office.

INT: At what point did they summon you?

PATRICK: I'm thinking the next day.

INT: Oh, they gave you a call on the phone?

PATRICK: Yeah, well I think I was probably called by the AC. I don't remember the mechanics of it, but the whole crew was asked to meet with the Division Commander, and I think it was the next day. The Division Commander—I couldn't remember his name at the time, but I've since been told that it was Bull Thompson?

INT: Well that's what Goduto remembers.

PATRICK: Well, no. Maybe that's not correct then. Holland. That was his name.

INT: Holland?

PATRICK: Holland. Ralph Holland. That's his name.

INT: I believe that's right 'cause he was a Colonel at that time.

PATRICK: No, he was a Brigadier.

INT: He became a Brigadier [General]. He was a Colonel at the time of the incident and they promoted him shortly after.

PATRICK: The Division Commander's position was a Brigadier position.

INT: That's what's odd about Holland. Actually when he started there he was a Colonel—

PATRICK: Well, it has to do with dates and rank and everything. Might've brought him in just short prior to his pin-on date.

INT: Let me ask you this—so you had sort of regular contact with Holland?

PATRICK: No. Never saw the man before.

INT: 'Cause he was Division Commander?

PATRICK: Right. That would've been just short of God. You know, a demi-god.

INT: Yeah. But, do you recall that that's who it was that gave the debriefing, and was he alone?

PATRICK: Was General Holland alone when we talked?

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: I can't remember if there was any other staff in the room, but I remember it being a fairly informal discussion. He invited us in, put us all at ease—

INT: How many of you?

PATRICK: The whole crew was there except for, well, here I go again. I was there, Goduto was there, Runyon was there, Cagle was not there. Don Cagle was our aircraft commander. He was not there.

INT: Why wasn't he there? Do you know?

PATRICK: Well, the discussion at the time was that he had an interview with Delta Airlines the next morning, and he refused to look at this thing during the flight.

INT: Do you remember that at that time? That that's what happened? He would've been in the jump seat.

PATRICK: Yeah. I don't remember. I mean, I'm downstairs, but there was some discussion about him during the over flight not wanting to see this thing, probably at the point where they were inviting me up to take a look. He didn't want to see it, because he did not want to have to stick around the next day to discuss what he saw.

INT: —at a debriefing?

PATRICK: Right. At that point, you know, none of the pilots—at least they’d not told me that they’d seen anything visually during the flight, even though I was reporting this thing 3 miles, 1 mile—they didn’t see it while they’re airborne—I mean, except for the over flight. And at the point where somebody spotted it, or just prior to that when we were gonna over fly it, he—and I don’t remember the words, I don’t remember the context, but he excused himself from that and did not want to be part of it because then he would’ve had to give testimony or a debriefing about what he saw. If he didn’t see anything, then he didn’t have to say he saw anything.

INT: But he was making an assumption that there would have to be a debriefing the next day? Is that it?

PATRICK: I would guess so. I mean I’m not even—at that point I wasn’t sure anybody was gonna call us up and tell us that we had to debrief anybody, but maybe he was a little wiser than I was, you know?

INT: He didn’t want to take any chances?

PATRICK: That may have come up in the debriefing after we landed, but it was clear to me that I knew why Don Cagle wasn’t in there with Holland the next day. He was interviewing with Delta Airlines. He had an airplane ticket to go interview with them. He was starting his new career and he didn’t want to have that jeopardized. Don’t get me wrong I like Don Cagle. I liked him at the time, but he—

INT: He was moving on in his career?

PATRICK: But he was moving on, and that was a threat to it at that point.

INT: I mean, at that time, all those pilots probably looked at doing commercial flying, right?

PATRICK: Not all of ‘em, but a lot of ‘em did.

INT: Money was good.

PATRICK: Sure. That was a good time to move to the airlines, and a lot of the guys were doing it.

INT: You didn’t have to live on an Air Force Base.

PATRICK: Right. Well, you had a whole future. I mean good money—long future. I mean, you don’t have to turn the airplane upside down or have people shoot at you, and, you know, a little better deal. More money.

INT: Let's see. Where'd we jump off there?

PATRICK: Okay, we were at General Holland's office, and that is where I learned about the missile crews, that's where I learned about the security policemen. I had no idea this thing was being seen by other people.

INT: And who told you that?

PATRICK: General Holland did.

INT: So he just laid everything out for you?

PATRICK: I don't think he gave us a great bunch of detail. I mean he talked in terms of, "Well, a couple of security policemen were...had this thing hovering right over 'em." Scared 'em to death. A couple of young guys.

INT: Hovering right over 'em? Over their vehicle?

PATRICK: Over their vehicle, and that—my memory is that it's at that briefing where I learned that, you know, when they saw that thing leave them, they—my memory is that he said that it went dark—it was hovering over them—that it went dark and lifted up. Descended away from 'em. And that at the same time, they saw our airplane making that initial approach, and that it took off in the same direction our airplane was going. So it started—in my mind, then it all started to come together. But that was the first time that I'd had that laid out. And I also heard—although, you know, the communication from the tower was that there'd been missile crews seeing things, that was the first time that I'd had it confirmed that there'd been missile crews actually seeing things. Didn't say exactly what it was, but I think it was General Holland that told us that there'd been an outer alarm go off, which was not unusual—and I wasn't a missileer, so I'm not privy to all this, but the outer alarm was the perimeter fence and sometimes rabbits would set it off. So that wasn't all that unusual, but a few seconds after that, or a minute after that or whatever, they had an inner alarm go off, and that's serious business. That means some—

INT: Somebody's tampering with the...

PATRICK: Yeah, with the blast doors or, you know, it's pretty serious business. Requires an investigation by SAC Headquarters and all this stuff, as I understand it.

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: So, it was at that briefing that he wanted to know what we saw. And we told him as frankly as we could what we'd seen. That's, I think, where I learned—I may have heard at the initial debriefing in Base Ops what the pilots thought—their impression of what this thing looked like. But certainly by the time of that briefing and at that briefing it was described as an orangish, elliptically-shaped object—not perfectly circular, but elliptically-shaped, with kind of a halo—a boomerang-shaped exhaust, if you will, of the same color, slightly separated from the elliptical shape. I didn't see it, so I just go with what the pilot said, but that's what I was told. And that's my memory of what General Holland was told.

INT: Did they talk about the size of the object?

PATRICK: Don't remember. Don't remember what they described for size.

INT: How big do you think the object was?

PATRICK: I think it had to have been the size of a B-52, or a KC-135, or I wouldn't have seen the returns.

INT: Or bigger?

PATRICK: Or bigger. Yeah. The return was as big or bigger than a KC-135 return. Which I understand can be done, you know, that can happen as a result of features on a surface. It can accentuate the amount of energy coming back, but still, it was big.

INT: What was the exchange in the debriefing? Was it casual?

PATRICK: Casual. I mean nobody was standing at attention. Everybody was seated like we are now. General Holland was very informal. I'm just giving my impression. I have no idea what his intent was, but if he wanted to find out exactly what people think—what people thought at the time, he handled it about as well as you could have. He put us at ease and made it clear to us that he just wanted us to tell exactly what we saw, and there was no undue pressure on anybody to do other than that. Nobody was forced to stand at attention and give their debriefing or any of that salute. None of that. You sat there and told him what you thought.

INT: Did he express his particular interest?

PATRICK: He gave me the clear impression he was interested. He didn't say, "Boy, I'm really fired up about this," or anything like that. I had the impression he was very interested in finding out exactly what went on.

INT: Why?

- PATRICK:** Because he asked a lot of very, you know, very insightful questions. He listened very intently, and I don't think if he was disinterested he would've done that.
- INT:** Yeah. Now, did he at any point mention any similar incidents that had occurred?
- PATRICK:** No. Not to my memory. He may have. I don't want to say he didn't, but I can't remember.
- INT:** Let me throw this in there—Brad remembered this after the fact—he seemed to remember that they were told that there had been an incident a week or two previously, at another facility? And Brad's memory's kind of messy on this, but he said it was 600 miles from Minot at White Sands, which doesn't make sense, but that's his recall. Do you remember anything like that?
- PATRICK:** I don't.
- INT:** Okay. Just checking.
- PATRICK:** I'm not saying Brad's wrong about that, but I just don't remember it. He may be right. I haven't seen Brad since I left the crew, but Brad was a very sharp guy. I don't want to say anything to get Brad mad at me, but at the risk of that, Brad was so straight, I mean, he was the kind of guy that was gonna do his job and he was gonna do it the best he could and it really doesn't matter, you know, he was Dudley Do-right. I mean, he was a sharp, straight guy and—
- INT:** Tom [Goduto] says the same thing.
- PATRICK:** Yeah, and he would have told what he saw without regard to political implications or job. I don't think Brad had—I mean, he wanted to do as well as he could, but he wanted to do it for the right reasons. Just the kind you'd want to be in the position he was in. So I wouldn't dispute anything Brad said. I mean if he said he heard that I wouldn't say he didn't. I just don't have a memory of it myself.
- INT:** Okay. How long did the briefing—debriefing last?
- PATRICK:** Oh, I'd say we were in there about an hour.
- INT:** And where did it occur? Do you remember the office?
- PATRICK:** In his office—General Holland's office.

- INT:** And this guy would be Strategic Missile Wing? Is that correct?
- PATRICK:** No. The Missile Wing and the Bomb Wing were both under the Air Division. He was the boss of both the Missile Wing Commander and the—
- INT:** Oh, this was the guy—
- PATRICK:** Yeah, went Brigadier General. The Missile Wing Commander, I presume, was a Colonel. I don't remember. But the Bomb Wing Commander was a Colonel, and then these two guys would report to him.
- INT:** Okay.
- PATRICK:** And presumably the helicopters that supported the Missile Wing and, you know, virtually everything on that base belonged to him.
- INT:** Well, I wanted to keep plugging you for memories of that debriefing. Do you remember other topics of discussion?
- PATRICK:** No, not really. I remember he volunteered the information about the Air Policemen. He volunteered the information about the missile alarms going off. I'm sure he talked about other things, I just don't remember. I just—those are the things that stick in my mind.
- INT:** Now, you have this recall of the object apparently coming down over the top of the security vehicle, right?
- PATRICK:** Yeah. I'll just give you, you know, just the way I remember it. My memory is that General Holland said that there were two—and he, you know, he was saying it like he was very sympathetic toward these two Air Policemen. You know, like, imagine being in this position—that at the time, our aircraft did the low approach, he said there were two poor Air Policemen out there with this thing hovering, or something hovering over their—directly over their pickup truck. I think he said they were responding to one of the missiles—the alerts that had gone on in the missile—
- INT:** Alarms?
- PATRICK:** Yeah. And there may have been more that responded, but they were either the team—the Air Policemen responding, or one of the crews of Air Policemen responding and that this thing was directly over their vehicle.
- INT:** Did it damage the vehicle in any way?

PATRICK: Don't know. If he told us that, I don't know. The only memory I have is that it was lit in some fashion when it was over top of 'em, and my impression is that it was very close to their vehicle, and that they were scared to death. And that at the point they saw—these Air Policemen saw our aircraft taking off or doing a low approach—they didn't know which, at the base, my impression is it was off to their left, that this thing went dark and began to climb in the direction of our aircraft.

INT: Almost as if it saw you coming and changed its point of interest?

PATRICK: Right.

INT: How else do you interpret that?

PATRICK: “Got these guys under control—let's take these ones that are moving.”

INT: Yeah, ‘We scared the hell out of them, let's go scare the hell out of them.’

PATRICK: Right. ‘There's a navigator there half asleep. Let's go wake him up.’

INT: Yeah. And that's all you remember about that security incident?

PATRICK: Yeah. I don't remember any more about that. Just the inner alarm and outer alarm thing, and I knew it was a big deal, you know?

INT: Let me try and throw this out and see if this rings any bells—did he mention anything about any damage to the missile site--out there that they located a—?

PATRICK: Not to my memory. May have but I just don't remember.

INT: Okay.

PATRICK: I wish the investigators had been as thorough in their investigation as—I wish they'd asked some of the same questions you're asking and gotten it recorded at the time.

INT: Well, let's talk about Werlich, because Colonel Werlich was the UFO Project officer at the time. The Air Force was under Air Force Regulation 80-17, which meant they had to have an Air Force officer [who] did the investigations on-site and reported back to the UFO Project at Wright-Pat. Werlich had never done a UFO investigation. This was the first for him so he wasn't quite sure what to do. Now, in the documents he talked about getting you to go back out to the landing site. They never did them?

PATRICK: No. Would've been a good idea.

INT: I mean an overlay? They should've re-plotted your flight path, they should've coordinated all the security sightings and so forth. As far as you know that never happened?

PATRICK: No. Would've been a great thing to do that's what needed to be done. When you have, you know, three different sources, basically—the aircraft, the Air Policemen, and the missileers—to try to coordinate all their memories and the times of these various memories to see if they could come up with some commonalities there. Positions, times and so forth from the three sources. Never done. Why? I don't know. I'll just give you an impression. I know that within a year or so after that incident, Project Blue Book was shut down.

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: And I've been around, you know, you heard my career. I've been around the Air Force long enough to know that you don't just get a phone call one day and say, "This is the end of your mission," or "The base is closing." You know that's coming for some time.

INT: Oh, you bet.

PATRICK: So I'm not—and again, this is just my opinion—

INT: These guys knew it was coming for about 20 years—

PATRICK: There were people, I'm sure, in that position—there were people in that business who knew this was—I'm sure at that point they were not interested in anything that would lengthen the day that that project had to stay around any longer. So I'm not sure that there was any great urgency to investigate this thing for—

INT: Well they wouldn't do it at that point in time, they weren't doing any field investigations. The UFO Project officer was responsible for supplying them with the data. They'd do an analysis—FTD—they'd sit there at their desk and do an analysis and they'd ship the answer back and that'd be the end of it.

PATRICK: Yeah.

INT: That's what happened—plasma, or the star Sirius, you know?

PATRICK: I did see that and the star, is, I think, Vega or Sirius or—that's ridiculous.

- INT:** And then to account for the direction, they needed about 2 or 3 of them.
- PATRICK:** Yeah. That's ridiculous. I mean, when you see something on the ground, I mean—pilot's are, you know, they're trained observers. I mean they know the difference between a star and an object on the ground, and the object if it was the size that we think it was, it certainly would not be confused with any stars. Perhaps the moon.
- INT:** Well at that point it's a ball of plasma.
- PATRICK:** Okay, well, plasma's a—I teach science now for living, but plasma's are the most common form of matter in the universe, but not on the earth. They're the most common form because that's what the sun is and all the stars and so—but certainly they're the most common form by volume of any matter in the universe, but not here. It takes an extraordinary amount of energy to create a plasma here. Now, there are stories about plasmas that, you know, appear and hit buildings and so forth, but, you know, there's lots of stories about lots of things—Loch Ness monsters and all kinds of things, and it just seems strange to me that that would be—they are so rare on earth, how could you say that this is a plasma? I mean, you'd almost have to—it'd be almost simpler to say it was a UFO.
- INT:** Yeah.
- PATRICK:** I mean plasmas are—plasmas are not a common item. So, it's not—especially one that travels around with you for 10 minutes in an intelligent way.
- INT:** —orange, you know?
- PATRICK:** Yeah. Well, plasmas may be orange, I don't know, but to follow an aircraft around for 10 minutes, 15 minutes doesn't make a lot of sense to me.
- INT:** I figure that's the reason they grabbed that one because your radios went out and they had to account for that somehow.
- PATRICK:** There's other ways to account for that, too.
- INT:** Two radios going out?
- PATRICK:** Jamming would account for that.
- INT:** Oh, right. If your radios were jammed how would they respond?
- PATRICK:** Well, Tom would be the guy to ask that question to.

INT: Oh. Well that's a good one.

PATRICK: You've talked with Tom?

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: Yeah, that's his bailiwick. I'm not a jamming expert, but that was his stock in trade, and he'd be the guy to answer that.

INT: Following the incident and following the debriefing, I mean, was it a topic of discussion?

PATRICK: To answer your question directly—I was in—not the Division Commander's Headquarters, but our squadron Headquarters at some point after this—very close proximity to that day, but within a day or two probably, or a week, but certainly within a week of this. They brought in people from Washington.

INT: Oh, they did?

PATRICK: You know, somebody from a higher Headquarters. Nobody identified them as Project Blue Book, but there were people that were brought in supposedly to investigate what was going on, and I remember—I was allowed to see the actual film. They brought us in and they showed us—and this was on like a microfiche viewer, you know. You turn the crank and—

INT: Oh, just go scope photo to scope photo—

PATRICK: Yeah, right. They're showing us these things.

INT: How many photos were on—

PATRICK: Oh, there was a bunch. I mean 10-15 minutes worth of stuff. And it's that that they used to calculate the speed. That's where I found out what the speed was during that session. They said, "We figured the speed was—," and I forget. It was a phenomenal amount—it was a phenomenal speed. And what's important about that is not the speed, but the fact that they could instantaneously go from one speed to the next, and then instantaneously resume the prior speed. That was more impressive to me than the actual speed, although that was impressive enough. And after viewing the film, there I remember there was a full Colonel and he had his blues on. Very casual. I think he had his blues unbuttoned. And I remember asking him—my impression being that he was one of these people from Washington or from higher that was investigating these

things. And I said, I had not been—you know, I told the wife that I'd seen something pretty unusual that night, but I hadn't been talking to anybody outside of the crew or General Holland or anybody, 'cause no one had said anything, but I didn't know, I thought the prudent thing was not to discuss it. So I asked this guy, 'Can I talk to people about this—am I at liberty to discuss this with anybody or not?' And he said, "Sure. I don't care. Go ahead." So it was no big deal to him, unless, all I can figure is, the fix was already in, but, you know, they had their explanation, because he made it clear to me that I could talk to anybody I wanted to about it.

INT: And this happened how far after—

PATRICK: Ah, I'd say within the week of the incident. Yeah. Maybe within 2 or 3 days, but within a week, I'd say.

INT: Okay.

PATRICK: And it just kinda from that point it just kinda fizzled. I mean it just [makes gesture]. It was no more.

INT: You guys were onto other things?

PATRICK: Well, I left in two months. I was gone to pilot training and the other guys, you know, I lost touch with most of them. I saw Chuck Ritchie in the Pentagon in the early '80's.

INT: Oh yeah?

PATRICK: 1980, I saw him.

INT: While you were there?

PATRICK: Yeah. He was about to be a Base Commander, I believe, down here in Lackland, and Chuck had borrowed a field jacket from me when we were on the crew together, and I said—I kept bugging him. I guess I had talked to him a couple times over the years, and I said, "When am I gonna get my field jacket back?" I kept asking him before I left the base and all that stuff. He never gave it to me. So when I saw him at the Pentagon, I said, "Chuck, where's my field jacket?" and he actually had the field jacket. He got it to me.

INT: Oh yeah?

PATRICK: But we had lunch at one of the Pentagon cafeteria's, and I said, "Boy, do you remember that incident with the UFO?" and he said, "No." I said, "What? You don't remember anything about that?" "Naw. I don't know

what you're talking about." And to this day, I'm just bemused by that. I mean the guy was sitting right beside me. He was there the whole time. I have to admit, he was dozing and everything but he couldn't escape what was happening, you know, as we landed and all that stuff.

INT: And he was at the debriefings.

PATRICK: Yeah. And he walked out that day professing that he didn't have any memory of any of that.

INT: Oh, had he moved into some administrative positions?

PATRICK: He was gonna be a Base Commander, which—he was gonna be the first navigator in the history of the Air Force to be a Wing Commander. He was gonna be a Wing Commander.

INT: He was concerned about his career?

PATRICK: Oh, I'd say. Could be. I hate to ascribe motives to anybody, but there was some reason that Chuck didn't remember a thing about it, and I couldn't believe that there'd be anyway he could've forgotten that.

INT: Yeah. This tape's at the end. Do you want to go one more half hour? Is that alright?

PATRICK: That's fine. I don't know what else I can add, but—

INT: I've got a list of questions...[tape turned over]. You've got those 13 scope photos, right?

PATRICK: Yeah.

INT: Are you able to read—

PATRICK: Distances and stuff? Somewhat. I think I can, depending on the quality.

INT: Here's a list of questions from Jim. Oh, did you look at the Blue Book records of the incident?

PATRICK: He sent 'em to me, and I looked through 'em very briefly.

INT: Did you try and find them some years ago or something?

PATRICK: Yeah. I had asked if there was any report of it and one time I got on a web site while we lived here, and tried to find Project Blue Book and all that stuff. Never saw any reference to the incident—

- INT:** All the old Air Force Blue Book files are at the National Archives on microfilm.
- PATRICK:** Yeah, I know that. It wasn't anything I pursued real strongly, you know, but yeah, he sent it to me. And I've been so busy since all this started, that I haven't had time to sit there and analyze every page, but I did flip through it real quick. I don't even remember if I saw my name in there. I don't think I did, but it may have been in there somewhere. But I flipped through it real quick and I do remember seeing the scope photos, and I do remember—I saw Werlich's name. I don't remember that I knew exactly what his job was at the time, but I saw the approach plate—I saw a picture of the approach plate. I saw some reference to the sky cops. I saw some reference to the missileers. You know, debriefing. I didn't go through their debriefing stuff, but I saw that it was in there, and I saw the scope photos and I did look at those and I knew that I could—I think I told Jim that in a e-mail or maybe a phone conversation—that I saw the blip and I think he said he hadn't seen it, or he couldn't see it but I knew where it was. I could see it.
- INT:** Our copies of the scope photos are really bad. [This was prior to discovering the original 35mm photographic prints that were the source for the poor-quality microfilm reproductions in the Blue Book documents].
- PATRICK:** Yeah.
- INT:** We're actually trying to find the original to get some good, clean copies. When we do that we'll send them to you, but we'd love to get your interpretation of those.
- PATRICK:** Sure.
- INT:** You can verify that was the stuff you shot that night?
- PATRICK:** I mean the stuff I looked—the stuff I saw was just scope photos. I mean it didn't say 'From B-52 such and such' I don't think. It had a time clock up there which corresponded—it was in Zulu time, Greenwich mean time, but it looked like it corresponded to the time frame we were flying. And the headings were correct. It was in station keep, which was correct. The blip I saw would have been when we first picked it up.
- INT:** Okay.
- PATRICK:** It was on the outbound leg. And the scope photos I saw had none of the stuff from inbound. None. All that's missing.

INT: When you say ‘inbound’, at what—

PATRICK: After we turned from the—or after we turned and started our descent.

INT: Okay, you don’t see anything.

PATRICK: All the stuff that I saw on that package was outbound.

[The quality of the reproductions was so bad that the heading marker was not visible in the photos. McCaslin mistook the frame advance indication (at about 285 degrees) as the heading marker. The actual heading was 132 degrees].

INT: Okay, from the beginning of the incident?

PATRICK: Could’ve been slightly prior.

INT: Oh, okay.

PATRICK: But it was hard to tell because of the quality. I could tell from the heading that we were outbound. I saw one blip, maybe two that were what I think is the return, and it was in the right position and all that stuff—three miles out off the right wing.

INT: Oh, let’s talk a little bit about the radar type. I mean what types of systems were you running? ASQ-38?

PATRICK: ASQ-something—it’s a type of radar.

INT: Okay. That was being used at the time?

PATRICK: In B-52’s, yeah. I’m not sure if it was 38 but it was ASQ. Sounds right.

INT: How did the antennas operate on that system?

PATRICK: They’re under the chin of the B-52. The radar’s under the chin of the B-52 and it’s capable of rotating 360 degrees—

INT: Oh, underneath?

PATRICK: Yeah. And then it’s capable of being—sector scan, and it’s capable of being elevated and tilted like this. There was a dead spot at the rear of the aircraft by the fuselage and tail, yeah.

- INT:** Was that the only radar system on board? Did the gunner have a separate radar system?
- PATRICK:** Yeah, the gunner has his. The EW may have had—I don't know if he had radar per say. I think the gunner had—on a H-model he did. He used radar acquisition for his.
- INT:** And his radar—what type of a system would that have been? Would that have been—wasn't tied into this ASQ system, right? It was separate?
- PATRICK:** It was a separate system but I don't remember where it was located on the airplane.
- INT:** And he would've been concerned about looking backwards?
- PATRICK:** Yeah, right.
- INT:** So ASQ-38 that's just some technical name for that type of—
- PATRICK:** Yeah, I'm not sure what it stands for.
- INT:** Okay, I'll just read this one. He says he asked the radar nav to put radar in station keeping mode. Oh, how sure are you that Chuck Ritchie was the radar nav. Not a man named Jim Brough [sp?].
- PATRICK:** Jim Brough was the guy that we replaced. He was the guy that had been in StanEval, was moved down, and we were moved up.
- INT:** Oh, okay. He wants to know when this thing moved up to within one mile of the airplane are you sure that it maneuvered?
- PATRICK:** Maneuvered? Well, it's difficult to know. I mean, all I can do is tell you that at one scan it was bright—co-altitude. You would think it would be co-altitude when it was that bright. It was 3 miles off our left wing, and the next scan 3 seconds later it was 1 mile off our left wing.
- INT:** Yeah. That's all you know?
- PATRICK:** I mean that's all I know. It moved the same direction we did, descending, and then moved laterally within 3 seconds to one mile off our left wing.
- INT:** Okay. Now, there's a disagreement in your memories. Goduto doesn't remember having any odd returns on his EW equipment. He had, I think he said about a dozen returns, but he said after he thought about it they seemed all normal.

PATRICK: Okay, well could be. I mean, at some point Tom said something to us about having some strange stuff on his scope—stuff he'd never seen before. Maybe he reflected on it later and thought it seemed normal, but I do remember that being—

INT: Oh, here's a sort of a problematic aspect. I mean you remember the thing going off scope about 1 or 2 miles away from the runway, and at 5,000 feet? Does that—

PATRICK: I don't know. I can't remember what our altitude was. I mean, if I said we were at 5,000 feet I was guessing. The only way you'd know exactly where we were, well, the altitude we were at—I remember we were leveling off prior to our final descent to the runway, and whatever altitude that was would be determined by the approach plate at that time. It'd tell you on there, you know, where that was and what—

INT: Right. You remember it dropping away from you about 1 or 2 miles away from the runway, does that make sense?

PATRICK: I'm assum—when I say 1 or 2 miles, I'm assuming that's about how far out we were. I mean it could've been 3 or 4.

INT: Could it have been 10 or 16?

PATRICK: I suppose. I mean again, I'd have to go back and look at the approach plate, but normally having gone on to be a pilot, well, it would depend on the approach. It would depend on—some approaches you level off at an altitude, fly in for quite awhile, and then do your final descent. But I'd have to look at the approach plate. Maybe 1 or 2 miles was wrong, I don't—

INT: Well, I think the documents say 16, but you know it looks more like 10 miles out.

PATRICK: Could be. I mean, I don't even know how far the VOR—or the nav aid was to the northwest.

INT: Well, the reason Jim's asking this is because if it was only a mile out why would they send the B-52 back over it? Why not just send out a—

PATRICK: Send out a crew. Yeah, that's true.

INT: Yeah. He says, do you remember the tower asking you to go around for a visual pass, but he said you didn't have the radio traffic in your ear, so you heard that from the pilot?

PATRICK: Probably.

INT: Yeah. You talked about that. And then again, do you remember either Partin or Runyon asking if you'd want to come up to look at the object?

PATRICK: Right.

INT: And, you know, this is interesting because Jack Partin says that at that point, he remembers everyone wanted—his words are, “Everyone tried to get up in my lap.”

PATRICK: That could be.

INT: Everybody wanted to come forward.

PATRICK: Now Tom and everybody might've wanted to do that, but I don't remember Ritchie and I—we were the only ones with downward ejection seats, and I don't remember Ritchie wanting to get up there, and I certainly didn't. I didn't want to go up there. I mean I may have wanted to, but—

INT: We already talked about this—the scope photos. I mean would you say that they had been confiscated from you? Were they taken by people that you normally hand your film over to?

PATRICK: My memory is that they were taken by the same people that would ordinarily come out.

INT: Yeah. Well they'd have to process it.

PATRICK: Some wing official, yeah. But ordinarily they'd just wait for us to hand them in at the debriefing or whatever. We were met when we walked into the building by people wanting the film.

INT: Oh, okay. They were waiting for you?

PATRICK: In fact...yeah. That part of it was unusual.

INT: But the point being these were just the normal guys you'd see. These weren't like people from SAC or—

PATRICK: My impression was these were—they wouldn't have had time to get people there, unless they were already on the base. But my impression was these were just the same people that would ordinarily be out there. They would just you know, they weren't waiting for us to come to them in this case.

INT: Okay. Yeah. I mean Colonel Werlich says in a memo—I can show you a memo for the record—in November '68, he says he didn't take scope photos at first, until the pilot said, "Why don't you take some photos?" This was towards the end.

PATRICK: Well clearly, I can show you on the photos you have that they're early in this incident. [Because of the poor quality McCaslin was misinterpreting the info in the NARA versions. The photos were actually taken near the end of the radar encounter.]

INT: Yeah. And did the pilot instruct you to take the photos?

PATRICK: My memory is that he did not. My memory is that based on the request from the tower, from what I heard about it, that just seemed like the smart thing to do—put it in station keep. And I asked Chuck to put it in station keep. Now the photos, you know, that's a separate—you have to turn the camera on.

INT: Hit a button? Hit a switch?

PATRICK: Yeah. Downstairs. The radar does that.

INT: Oh, the radar nav? So Chuck Ritchie has to do that?

PATRICK: He did that. You'll see it when you see the scope photos.

INT: Well I'm just curious. I mean is that something you would normally do? Just automatically hit the camera button?

PATRICK: No, you have to turn it on. I mean you have to want to turn it on.

INT: So were you guys ordered to film this thing?

PATRICK: Not my impression. I mean at some point I think we—probably me, said, "Let's get this thing on film."

INT: Well, Runyon's recall is they got a call from a GO who was patched into the control tower. The GO said, "We want you to over fly that thing and film it."

PATRICK: Oh.

INT: But see, to me that doesn't make sense. Why would you over fly something to film it on radar film?

PATRICK: Chances are, at the point we over—if it was near or on the ground we wouldn't have seen anything on radar anyway.

INT: That's what I'm talking about.

PATRICK: We were just in ground clutter. What's a GO?

INT: General Officer.

PATRICK: Oh. Yeah, well General Officers aren't the brightest guys in the world either on all things. I mean he may not—

INT: Well, maybe he just thought you had a camera on board, a bomb camera or something you could film with that.

PATRICK: I'm not aware of any camera where we could've taken a picture of it, unless it would've been a handheld. The radar would not have done you any good, because it would've been lost in the ground clutter if it was on or near the ground.

INT: Yeah, in the debriefing, did you ever get any hint of a nuclear incident associated with that silo.

PATRICK: No.

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: Not I didn't.

INT: We've answered a lot of these, but I'll just re-phrase them here. Alright, you never saw the object but you have a description of it which matches Runyon's?

PATRICK: Yeah.

INT: How did you know that? At what point did you learn that?

PATRICK: Well, I talked earlier—I believe it was Brad or one of the pilots either discussed it in the debriefing right after the flight—or I heard it when they debriefed General Holland the next day, but it was either one of those.

INT: Now let's talk about that last group of people that came out. When you say group of people, how many people came out.

PATRICK: Came out?

INT: Well, there was a group of people that came out from Washington, right? Which was about a week after the—within a week, right?

PATRICK: Yeah.

INT: Because, the head of Project Blue Book at the time, Quintanilla, says that nobody from Blue Book went to Minot.

PATRICK: That could be. I mean, the way it was—I think the reason I was in the—oh I can't remember what they called this guy, this shop. It's where they took all the film and analyzed it to see how you did on your bomb—Bomb Study or the Targeting Studies bunch, or whatever. Anyway, I should know that because we dealt with those guys all the time.

INT: I think you talk about it in your first interview, yeah.

PATRICK: And I forget the exact name, but there was usually a navigator in charge of that bunch, a senior navigator and he was in charge of reviewing all the flights. He'd go in there and he'd see how you did on your bomb run. We were called in there to see these films, and we were told—my impression is, I was told that the reason we were coming in was because there was a team from Washington looking at the incident, and no one said 'Blue Book' to my knowledge, and my impression is from Washington. And there was this individual I described, this Colonel—older gentleman, very casual. My impression was he was in blues, that he had his coat was open, he was sitting there talking to me. Chuck—I don't remember if Chuck was with me. My impression is that I was there with people other than myself from the crew. Maybe Brad was there. But they ran the film, discussed the closure speed. It was there that I asked this man, this Colonel if I could discuss this with other people, and he said, "Sure, go ahead," and that's the only person that I remember from anywhere outside the base that was—

INT: Their interest was in clarifying the scope photo evidence? That this thing moved that fast? What was their primary concern?

PATRICK: Well, I don't know what their primary concern was. That's—

INT: Well why were you there?

PATRICK: You know my impression is that they just wanted to let us see the film. Now they may have—I don't remember them asking me a whole lot of questions about it. It was like, he may have asked some questions about the incident, but it was almost like, "C'mon in" and, "there's this guy here from Washington and we're gonna let you see your scope photos and you

can—” It didn’t seem like it was much of an investigation. Now I could be wrong, but I don’t remember a whole lot of questions in that—

INT: And you looked at them on microfilm?

PATRICK: Well, on whatever kind of film that was that was produced by our camera on the airplane. But it was a big screen, the size of that you know?

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: And it, you know, roll of film here, roll of film here, roll—

INT: 16 millimeter viewer? [Actually, 35 mm].

PATRICK: ‘Bout that wide.

INT: You called them Target Studies Officers?

PATRICK: Something like that, yeah.

INT: Did you know if the tail gunner’s radar was engaged at the time?

PATRICK: Don’t know. Did you talk to Arlie?

INT: Not yet.

PATRICK: Tell him I said, ‘Hi.’

INT: I will.

PATRICK: He was a good man.

INT: Okay, I got a few here. This is out of all the telexes, but they make re—I just focused on where you were referenced in here, so I’m just gonna throw these at you. *“Radar scope was very sharp and irregular, and at times rectangular.”*

PATRICK: Not my impression. The only person looking at the radarscope was me, and maybe Chuck from time to time, but I don’t remember any rectangular radar.

INT: Well it says, *“shape was described by visual sighting that is just about round, a little oblong, if anything. The shape on an airborne B-52. Radar scope was very sharp and irregular, and at times rectangular. Visual sighting compared object size to be equal to the sun—very large, too big*

for an aircraft. Radar sighting describes the size on the scope to be larger than that of a KC-135 during aerial refueling.”

PATRICK: Right.

INT: *“The airborne radar sighting was a single return on the scope...Air Electronics, ASQ-38 in station keeping mode. No optical aids used. Radar echo accompanied aircraft to approximately 14 nautical miles, 29 south radial, approximately 9,000 feet MSL.”* That make sense?

PATRICK: It could be. I mean, well again, and I could be wrong about the distance, but the only way to verify that distance is to—because, remember, I’m sitting in the bottom of a black hole there, and it could have been—30 years ago or so, it could have been that far. I just would have to look at an approach plate and see where, you know, where we would normally be at that point.

INT: And they call you a very reliable witness here, so—

PATRICK: I’d like to think so.

INT: So, and in here they’re saying...they’re going through what you were up to: *“The air craft initially arrived in the area on a 50 nautical mile radius clearance with a block altitude of flight level 210 to flight level 230 and began various instrument practice maneuvers including a vertical S-pattern.”* Do you remember that?

PATRICK: We may have. I don’t know what a verti—even as a pilot, I don’t know what they’re talking about when they talk about a vertical S-pattern.

INT: *“This took place at almost the same time as the first ground sighting. After a VOR penetration, low approach and missed approach to runway 29 at Minot Air Force Base.”* So everything collaborates with what you guys remember. *“The aircraft climbed to flight level 200 on a heading of 292 after rolling out of a right turn around to the TACAN initial approach fix, a bright echo suddenly appeared 3 miles abeam and to the left of the aircraft. The echo rapidly closed on the aircraft and remained at about 1 mile.”*

PATRICK: Okay, that’s at variance with what I say because I saw it on the way out.

INT: Yeah. *“The radar echo continued with the aircraft during its TACAN penetration for about 20 miles. During this time, radarscope photographs were taken that clearly shows a radar echo.”* And that’s all that’s relative to you. I guess that’s about it.

PATRICK: Did you say you have the scope photos?

INT: Yeah, I do. Right here. We have some photos—that's all you guys.

PATRICK: That's us. Yeah I sent that. That looks like a B-52 scope photo.

INT: There should be 13 in there. Those are probably the best copies we've got, right there.

PATRICK: Okay, see, I can't even tell the—hard to tell the time even.

INT: Yeah, I know. They're hard to read.

PATRICK: But you can see we're outbound. There's the heading indicator right there, the track.

INT: Okay, that's the direction you're going—

PATRICK: And we're headed northwest.

INT: Are these the TACAN numbers?

PATRICK: No, that's the heading. Yeah. So we were headed. Yeah, they're degrees. This is 280. So you're headed northwest right here.

INT: Okay.

PATRICK: I don't see anything there. There's the return right there.

INT: That's it? Right there?

PATRICK: That's it. This would be the 5-mile, so that would be about 3.

INT: Oh, okay. That first ring is 5 miles?

PATRICK: And you can see this is on the 280, 285, yeah. We're outbound. That could not be the inbound return. So this was on the way out.

INT: Okay.

PATRICK: Now here I don't know, you'd have to analyze somehow this clock. I don't know what order these are in. I don't see anything here—the quality sucks. There it is again.

INT: Yeah.

PATRICK: And here it's closer. It looks like it's closer to the 5-ring, if that is the 5-ring, but that is a return there.

INT: So you remember that's where the return was on your scope at—

PATRICK: Oh yeah. Off the right wing. Here it is again. 3 miles.

INT: Okay.

PATRICK: And still on that northwest heading. We're headed out toward the TACAN. That's him. There it is again. Staying at 3 miles.

INT: What's this up here?

PATRICK: Can't tell what that is.

INT: You didn't have a dial or anything up there?

PATRICK: No. I don't know what that is.

INT: We'll get some better quality photos.

PATRICK: There's one. Every once in awhile, this thing would skip, and you know, that's blank there, now here you can see the rings. This looks like 1, 2, 3, 4—I'd say that's about 5 mile but these are all I've found.

INT: Okay, what else do I have here. Have you seen Brad's report?

PATRICK: No. I probably would not have wanted to see it prior to the interview.

INT: Yeah, well, you might be interested in—

PATRICK: [Reading]. Now see, he says that it's approaching from the right rear of the airplane and I never told Brad I thought a collision was imminent.

INT: You didn't?

PATRICK: Nah.

INT: Could it be that he's making that interpretation from your—when it first approached, your voice went up?

PATRICK: Could be.

INT: I get the impression you guys are real sensitive with each other's sort of voice levels and the way you communicate.

PATRICK: Oh yeah, crews are. You can almost read each other's minds at the time. He says within 10 miles of the base where it set down on the ground. That's okay. I'd buy that from Brad. He says a 20-ton concrete lid had been removed? Now that could be. You know, General Holland may have told us that. I just don't have a memory of it.

INT: But you would think if one of those silo covers had been moved that that would be something you would remember?

PATRICK: Yeah, you'd think so.

INT: That's like, you need a big 20-ton crane or you got to blow those things off—

PATRICK: Yeah. Well beyond that, my impression is that if the inner door alarm goes off, that's what has to have happened. Now, removed is one thing, but moved—

[Transcript end.]