

## *Sign Oral History Project*

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

B-52 Navigator, 5<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Wing,  
Minot AFB, ND, 24 October 1968

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Interviewer: James Klotz

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Thomas Tulien

*Sign Oral History Project*

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**PM: Patrick McCaslin**

**JK: Jim Klotz**

START RECORDING

[ dial tone and dialing - ringing]

PM Hello

JK Mr. McCaslin? This is Jim Klotz in Seattle. Do you have a few minutes to talk now?

PM Yeah, we're getting dinner ready but I have a few minutes. What's your connection with Brad [Bradford Runyan]?

JK Well, I got involved about five years ago as an investigator helping a fellow who's an ex-Minuteman launch officer out of Malmstrom AFB, and he had an incident that affected some of the missiles under his command at that time And together with some other fellows who are serious about trying to get the correct information about these sorts of

things, we've been looking at similar incidents. There are two incidents that are documented that occurred at Minot, one in August of '66 and the one that Bradford Runyan mentioned that you were apparently there for in October of '68.

PM Right.

JK Now, apparently Brad had been thinking about this for some time. One of the other fellows I'm working with has interviewed Bradford at his home on videotape in February of this year, Mr. Runyan made a report to the Center for UFO Studies in Chicago Illinois, and that's where the fellows that I work with heard of the incident.

PM Right.

JK Then we went and got the Blue Book file on it, which are over a hundred pages.

PM On that incident?

JK Yeah.

PM Heck, I never could find it. I looked at various times. I didn't make a real hard search trying to find it, but I've often wondered what happened to the report.

JK Well, I do have that material and I'd be glad to send you a copy if you're interested in it. After we talk about this, we'll also be glad to send you a copy of the taped interview with Bradford Runyan.

PM Yeah, sure. Hey, I'm going to run upstairs and get on the mobile [phone]. I'm down here, and I'm afraid that the TV's gonna feed back into the phone. It'll just take me a second.

JK OK, sure. [Break]

PM Ok, I'm on. I haven't seen [Brad] since not long after that incident. I cleaned out the garage this summer, and I have a picture of that whole crew. We were in STANEVAL—I don't know if you're familiar with what that is.

JK No.

PM STANEVAL are the people who—that's Standardization and Evaluation. Those are the people who evaluate the other crewmembers. They aren't necessarily trainers, although they can do that. They're the people that say whether somebody's qualified to fly the airplane or not, and give them their periodic evaluation.

JK Before we go any further I'd like to ask you something. Because I have certain questions I'm going to want to ask you based on what Mr. Runyan has said... but it's going to be

hard for me to take notes 'cause there's a fair amount of it, would you have any objection if I recorded this?

PM No, go ahead. I think all I can tell you is what I remember. I don't think I can get fired for that [laughs].

JK No, I reckon not. So go ahead, you were talking about Standard Evaluation—

PM No. I was just saying that crew that I had the picture of was the crew that was involved in this incident – we were on a training flight, and I went out there after I got home today from work and looked around and I couldn't find it in my first look around, I know it's out there somewhere, but I do have a picture of the crew.

JK That'd be very nice. I'm sure Mr. Runyan would like to see that.

PM He may have it.

JK Yeah he might. The fellow I'm working with—his name is Tom Tulien out of Minneapolis—did about an hour or a little longer tape with Brad and they went over in pretty good detail. Anyway, would you mind telling me how you came to be stationed at Minot?

PM I was a Navigator at the time—you know I came into the Air Force—

JK You were a Captain?

PM I was a Captain at that time. I had come in through Navigator training and it was my first operational assignment, and I got there I believe in '65, and ended up in STANEVAL and went from there to pilot training, and for the rest of my career I was a pilot.

JK Would that have been Castle for pilot training?

PM No. The pilot training I did at Laredo. That was right after this incident.

JK OK, so you'd been there a couple of years when this occurred.

PM Yeah, I'd been there about three years.

JK I'm trying to get a picture of this STANEVAL. Were you guys a crew that flew together all the time?

PM Yeah, sometimes you'd be called on to do an evaluation on a crew where you'd be the only one going. If there were a Navigator that was going, that needed to be evaluated, then I'd climb on the crew with him and evaluate him.

JK So this is like qualification stuff right?

PM Right. But, there were other times where we were evaluating a whole crew, for instance, to see if they...you know sometimes they'd put crews together, and they'd have to be evaluated as a crew to see if they were ready to go on the line, you know as a qualified crew, and in those cases we'd fly as a crew, evaluating the whole crew, and then we had our own training flights that we did.

JK OK, and that's what this was, that day?

PM I believe that was a training flight but we were training the pilots... there were some pilots up front that were training with our pilots. In other words, training or evaluating, my memory isn't real good on that.

JK Right, that agrees with what Mr. Runyan recalls, that there were I think three—?

PM Three pilots up front. I don't recall who the other one was but I believe that he had been the subject of some evaluation earlier in the mission, or perhaps while this was going on, I don't remember.

JK Oh, I have some names, but I'll bounce them off you after while.

PM OK. I remember the AC's name, I remember Brad, I remember my Radar Navigator, the other guy that was downstairs with me, and those are the only names I remember.

JK Right. Like I said, there's over a hundred pages of stuff in the Blue Book file, and of course we have what Mr. Runyan has told us...some of the names are in the documents and he mentioned some others. I was not in the Air Force, but it sounds to me like SAC did things that way, they would assemble teams, and the teams would pretty much stay together.

PM Right

JK That's the way it worked with the missile guys too.

PM Right

JK So then you'd get together as a team, qualify as a team, and then whatever the missions were, you'd do that together. I'm still trying to understand is that true of several of these people on the plane that day?

PM That was true of everybody on the plane except the person being trained or evaluated.

JK —which was one of the pilots.

- PM Right. It was basically our normal crew—the STANEVAL crew, and we had this other person along—I think there was only one who was being evaluated to be a qualified B-52 pilot.
- JK That was the 23<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Squadron?
- PM Right.
- JK If you would, I'd like you to just tell me what you recall.
- PM OK, we had flown a mission and we were back at Minot, close to landing, and the pilots required some more training. We had to do several types of approaches and they did one coming in from the east toward Minot and then we did a low approach, didn't touch down as I remember it, but did a low approach, and while we were doing the low approach the tower called and said—asked us to keep our eyes open for anything strange.
- JK Could you hear the radio traffic?
- PM I didn't hear the call.
- JK OK, Brad said he was in the right seat and he handled the radios.
- PM Yeah stands to reason, that's what the co-pilots do. But I was downstairs as a Navigator, and I didn't hear the call as I remember it, I didn't hear any call—
- JK So you just had intercom, basically?
- PM Ah, yeah. But I did hear the pilot say something like “the missile guys are seeing things again.” Because it was kind of a standard thing that the missile guys reported stuff apparently on a fairly routine basis that looked strange. And, apparently the tower acknowledged that, yes, the missile guys had said that they'd seen something, and hence the call for us to keep our eyes open and see if we saw anything strange.
- JK That agrees with the documents.
- PM Ok, so we then proceeded west toward, I think it was either a VOR or VORTAC out west, a nav aid, and we climbed to some altitude, I wanna say 20-some thousand feet to do another approach coming in from the west using this particular nav aid. As we climbed out, I asked my radar Navigator to put the radar in station-keeping mode. It puts most of the radar energy within a short distance of the air. I want to say within 5 miles of the airplane, and it's the mode where we would use that for air refueling, to pick up the airplane, the other airplane coming in, the KC-135 that we would refuel from.
- JK In that mode it'll skin paint?

PM Right. So we could skin paint the 135 and then maneuver, and we would be able to pick it up out of sight before the pilots could see it, and then call for a turn or whatever needed to align the aircraft for refueling.

JK Now let me ask you, my understanding is that although that antenna is steerable somewhat, that it's in the front of the aircraft—

PM Right.

JK —and that it's area of detection is roughly 90 degrees from the nose in both directions.

PM No, it had a full scan.

JK Oh, went all the way around so you could see behind you as well?

PM Sure. I mean there was a dark spot as I remember it, right behind the aircraft, just behind the aircraft. Yeah, there was a shadow just from the fuselage. But you could see a lot more than 90 degrees. And it had a full scan, and a sector scan capability so you could full scan the thing, did a full 360 degree turn and then sector scan it, it scanned, I wanna say 30-40 degrees either side of—maybe 45 degrees either side of the center line.

JK I'm guessing that as you would approach a tanker you would go into that?

PM We, actually you go into sector scan, my memory is that it was a full scan, but the radar energy—the antenna was directed—instead of looking straight out, it was directed more downward, and it kind of focused the energy a little bit. That's what allowed you to be able skin paint. As I remember it, there was no knob to say, OK we're gonna put it at 20 degrees up-tilt, or 10 degrees up—tilt, I remember that. But we could go sector scan.

JK OK so it was a mode, and in that mode it might elevate the antenna.

PM I asked to go to sector scan...or to station keep because that was the mode that elevated—that put the most energy near the airplane, and we were climbing out toward the VOR, and I remember the Radar Navigator, the guy on my left, you know, we were back in the local area and it was late. It was—I forget what time—it was early in the morning I want to say one-two something like that, early, very early in the morning and he was kind of dozing off over there, and we're just kind of monitoring the approach and I had the approach plate out and was watching. It's not unusual, by the way, to put it in station keep in the local area when we're doing that because you can help watch for other aircraft in the area, and collision avoidance, things like that. But as we were climbing out and approaching the VOR, I remember I noticed off to the right on the radar a faint return about three miles out, which would have made it to the north—

JK OK, you were headed west.

PM We were headed west-northwest, I think, and then in the next sweep of the radar, it was a very bright return, and it was a big return, it was at least as big, maybe bigger than the return a KC-135 would make, which I'd seen many times. So I alert the pilots to that. I said, "Here's an aircraft or something off the right wing three miles." Well, they could see nothing and they told me to keep them advised of it. As we approached the VOR, they were going to have to turn right toward this thing, so I told them, you know, "I'll just keep an eye on it." And they turned right toward it and as we turned right toward the VOR it moved off to the north and maintained that three mile separation, so as we rolled out, it was at three miles off our left wing, and we were headed back toward the base now, starting the approach. I alerted the pilots to that, and they still couldn't see anything visually. We started the approach, and again it was out there at three miles off the left wing. At some point, I don't remember what altitude, the pilots were descending toward the base, but at some point this thing, from one sweep to the next it moved from three miles off our left wing to one mile off our left wing. Which means it was going at a really high rate of speed, and, basically stopped instantaneously. The sweep—the full scan sweep was maybe one second, I don't know. So I alerted the pilots to that and, of course, they got even more excited then and everybody was trying to find it. Nobody could see anything visually. At about the same time that happened, the Electronic Warfare Officer, and that's one of guys whose name escapes me, mentioned that he had things on his scope that he had never seen before.

JK Now that's interesting.

PM And about that time, we lost—I believe it was, and I may be wrong about this, we could hear the tower talking to us, but they could not hear us. We lost communications. Either we could hear them and they could not hear us, or they could hear—the other way around, they could hear us, we couldn't hear them. I'm pretty sure that it was that we could hear them and they could not hear us. So, we continued on the approach, this thing still a mile off our left wing, and not able apparently for the tower to hear us. We got to a lower altitude, I don't know exactly, I'd have to see the approach plate again but there are intermediate level-offs on the way to the runway. And it was fairly low, maybe 5000 feet or less. The pilots leveled off and we were within a mile or two of the runway, or I don't know, maybe a little further than that—but we were approaching the runway, and at a much lower altitude. And I noticed that in one sweep the thing was there, whatever it was, in the next sweep it was weak—there was a weak return similar to when I saw it in the first place, and then in the next sweep it was gone.

JK But it maintained the spacing?

PM Yeah, it was still a mile off the left wing. I noted the coordinates 'cause we had an analog read-out of the coordinates where we were, and I guess my memory is that's what I did, I noted the coordinates and we continued the approach, and at that point, we had communications both ways with the tower. Then we landed. I think we did a touch-and-go, it might have been a low approach, but the tower asked us to go around and take a look to see if we could see anything on the ground. The pilot was apparently reporting this to the tower. I was, frankly, hoping that he would decline that offer, but he decided

to do it and we went to pattern altitude, turned back north and then proceeded back toward the west, just north of the base, in a visual pattern. The pilot said that I'll do a visual pattern at whatever altitude—

JK Does that mean he's within sight of the ground?

PM Yeah, he's at 1000 feet, maybe 1500 feet, and he's using his own eyeballs to navigate the airplane. He's not using any electronic—

JK OK, so ground landmarks?

PM So, we were going west back toward where this thing had disappeared, and by this time the radar navigator was back with us and I suggested, or he suggested, I don't remember for sure, putting the crosshairs in the bombing mode. Putting the crosshairs of the nav system on the location of this thing where it disappeared. So we did that. Now there were no weapons on the aircraft.

JK Right, training mission.

PM Yeah. So, but the computer was capable of—once you put the crosshairs on this location, it would navigate the aircraft, the pilots could then navigate the aircraft as if it were a bomb run and fly right to that point. So we did that. We put the crosshairs on the point and allowed the computer to direct the aircraft, or to direct the pilots—all they had to do was follow what's called a PDI. I think its Position Deflection Indicator or something. They center that up and then there's a Time-To-Go indicator that indicates how far you're from it in seconds. And, at some point as we were counting down the time to where this thing had disappeared from the radar scope, I heard the pilot say something you know like: "Holy Shit look at this," or something like that. And they indicated there was something on the ground, they were talking back and forth about it, apparently we flew right over the thing. At one point, I think the Aircraft Commander [Cagle] said "Nav, come on up here," since I was the one that had picked it up initially I guess. Said, "Come on up here and take a look at this thing," and I indicated that I was not about to get out of a perfectly good ejection seat, and climb upstairs with no parachute to look at whatever this was. I don't wanna say that all this went through my mind, but it occurred to me either then or later that if I were someone in a strange place investigating things and this huge aircraft flew over me at a very low altitude, I'm not sure what I'd have done. But I wanted to make sure that I had something that would get me out of the airplane if, in fact, they took umbrage at that. So we flew over it, and I declined the offer to go up, they did a visual turn back to the south and lined up with the runway and flew back what would have been east and landed. And then when we landed, we went into the Ops Building, people came out and confiscated the film.

JK So let me ask you now this was a B-52H?

PM H model, right.

JK So the gunner is not in the tail in that model?

PM No, he's right beside the Electronic Warfare Officer.

JK OK, is there a camera in the tail or is there a weapon?

PM There's a radar in the tail, I don't believe—

JK That's gun radar?

PM Yeah, gun radar. I don't believe there's any camera back there.

JK OK, but there are cameras in the Bombay.

PM Not to my knowledge.

JK Oh, I thought that there might be something, you know, for bomb damage assessment.

PM No, not that I remember. If there was, I certainly never used it.

JK OK, so it wasn't a control that was on your panel.

PM Not that I'm aware of.

JK If there had been, somebody would have had to commanded the Bombay doors to open?

PM Right.

JK And who has control of that?

PM My memory is that it was done automatically at a certain point in the—

JK OK, so that's computer stuff?

PM Yeah. But I think there was a manual—boy, this been a while—but the Radar Navigator could open 'em manually from his position to my left.

JK OK. Now he's got, he's got the main radarscope and you've got a slave?

PM Yeah, that's right, so he had control, when I wanted to go to station keep I had to ask him to do it.

JK OK, so he's got the actual controls of the [radar] equipment?

PM Right, and the reason we had film of it, at that point where I saw something out there, I asked him to turn on the cameras.

- JK OK, now this is the [radar]scope camera—
- PM Yeah, right, it was taking pictures of what was on the scope.
- JK —and that’s a sequence of stills?
- PM I’m not—I guess it is, yeah I saw the film at one point.
- JK Oh, you did? And this is the film that they took from you on landing?
- PM Right. They did show us that. My memory is that they allowed us—the targeting people called us in one day and allowed us to see it.
- JK OK this was later, not at a debriefing?
- PM No, this was after the debriefing, and after we had debriefed the next day with the Division Commander, a two-star general.
- JK Yeah, I’m interested in that, so let’s get to that when it comes.
- PM OK. Now that was it for that night, we did our debriefing—
- JK OK, now you land, you deplane, you go to the Operations Building.
- PM Right, the Ops, yeah. And my memory is that they took the film, there were people there for the film right then as soon as we landed.
- JK Do you recall who those people were?
- PM No. I would assume it was Intelligence people, but I have no idea. And then we debriefed and we—you know, my memory again is that we debriefed what we saw, and then we went home. And, I remember the AC was saying, you know, “I’m not going to be here tomorrow,” he was scheduled to, he had an interview with Delta Airlines, and he didn’t want to jeopardize that.
- JK Do you remember that person’s name?
- PM Don Cagle.
- JK Now that agrees perfectly with what Brad said, he made some remark about having that interview the next day.
- PM Right. I think they mentioned that we would probably have to talk to the Division Commander or something—they alerted to us that night but he already had tickets. I

think that Delta had him fly to Atlanta or somewhere for an interview. He was going to leave the Air Force and become an—

JK Airline pilot, right.

PM So, I don't think Don was there the next day, I think he went ahead and went on his trip, at least that's my memory. But the rest of us showed up to see the Division Commander, and I don't remember his name.

JK OK, he was a two-star general?

PM Right, I remember he went on to be an Air Materiel Center Commander, I think down in Atlanta, I believe, but I don't remember his name right now. And that's where we learned from him that there had been alarms at some of the missile sites, or at least one of the missile sites that evening. And apparently there were two Air Policemen who were responding to the missile people reporting something, and they went out in a truck, a pickup, to do that and were apparently somewhere north of the base and this thing was hovering over them. And again, I'm pretty sure it was in that debriefing with the Division Commander that we learned that they saw our airplane in its initial approach to the airport, saw it take off toward the west and then reported that this thing went dark and took off in the same direction our aircraft was going. The assumption I made was that, you know, shortly after that is when I picked this thing up on the radar. I mean that is somewhat a leap of logic, but when they told us that, I thought well, makes sense, you know, if that's what they said, that it was going that direction, then it would have been just about right, you know, by the time we were halfway up to the altitude to do the approach. It would have made sense radar-wise too, a weak return would be something descending into the radar energy, or climbing through, or out through the top of it.

JK OK, so on the end of this radar contact with this thing, as you were approaching the runway the return went weak and then it was gone.

PM Right, one sweep, and then it was gone the next sweep. My assumption is that it descended out of the radar energy and was, again, right on or over the ground, which is what the pilots reported that it was either on the ground or hovering just over the ground when they flew over it.

JK When you went around again and saw it on the ground. Yeah, there's a point here that I'm curious about because, Mr. Runyan said that this thing broke off as you were approaching and descended. I'm wondering, 'cause he doesn't say that he ever saw it, and I can't, you know, other than what you've said about the radar, you don't really have a height finder function.

PM No. All I do is can say that it was co-eq—I could report because of the way the radar energy was painting it that it was more or less co-altitude with us, and then it was either— when it disappeared—I could only say that it was either climbing out of the

radar energy or descending out of it. Since it was spotted on the ground a few minutes later, I would have to assume that it descended out of it.

JK Well, there are in the Blue Book documents a number of statements from the different missile crews. In fact, 14 of them saw the object, an object let's say, your B-52, or both the object and your B-52 at the same time.

PM Wow. I didn't know that.

JK Yeah, and from what I can read in the documents, the tower was aware through whatever communications channel the missile folks had, that they were sighting, and they actually used that information to give you guys a direction.

PM That's why they gave us the heads-up, huh?

JK Yeah.

PM Well, I don't remember the missile, the tower giving us directions toward one of these whatever this was, we just continued on.

JK I mean the last time around for the visual.

PM Oh, no. Well, I disagree on this point, only that point about them directing us toward it.

JK Because you had recorded the coordinate.

PM Yeah! We bombed the location and that is my remembrance of how we found it, is that we had, when we lost contact I made a note of the coordinates, and we basically just did a little approach and turned around, put those crosshairs on that position and then flew to it. But I don't remember any, now the pilots may have heard conversation with the tower that I didn't. I remember pretty clearly that they were following the directions of the computer, you know, as if it were a bomb run and we were counting down the TI, the time to go, or the TG meter and they were following the steering commands of the PDI.

JK Well in one of the reports, as you approached, when you lost radar contact with this thing one of the Air Policemen at one of the missile sites, or two of them, you know they're teams of two in a truck, the strike teams, they call it the Security Alert Teams. They saw this thing break away and descend.

PM You know what's weird to me is that the pilots never saw it in the air; they never did see it in the air.

JK Well in the documents it says that one of the pilots did have a visual on an orange light.

PM News to me. The first time I was aware that the pilots saw anything was as we approached it you know, after that low approach, when we came back and were basically

bombing the position, and when they—there was an expletive from the top, and they started describing this thing and asking if I wanted to come up and see it.

JK Well, according to Mr. Runyan, it was quite a sight.

PM Yes, after the fact when we were talking in the debriefing, and, you know, as we were taxiing in and all that, everybody agreed it was pretty spectacular.

JK Did he describe it to you?

PM The description to me, and I don't remember if it was Brad or one of the other pilots. The description to me was this: that it was an elliptically shape—elliptical shape, kind of a cough drop-shaped thing, glowing orange with a boomerang exhaust, or boomerang shaped exhaust or whatever, an fluorescence off one end the same color, and that's all I remember of the description.

JK Well, that agrees pretty darn close with what Mr. Runyan said. Well, if I can, let me bounce some names off you.

PM OK.

JK I have James Partin P-a-r-t-i-n

PM Partin—don't remember him.

JK OK, he was one of the pilots. Now he may have the guy been undergoing... undergoing... [evaluation]

PM Could be.

JK Don Cagle?

PM Don was my AC [Aircraft Commander].

JK I have a Captain Ritchie.

PM My memory is that he was a Major then, but maybe not. Chuck Ritchey was his name and Chuck was the Radar Navigator.

JK OK, I have you, I have Tom [struggling with pronunciation] Guidutta...? It's spelled phonetically, because I've just heard it spoken...[Thomas Goduto].

PM Yeah, it's a strange name, and I know that's one of those names I couldn't remember. Tom was the Electronic Warfare Officer, and I believe he was a Captain too. Tom—god! you don't have a good spelling on that?

- JK No. I need to flip that tape over if you'll hang on one second please
- PM Sure.
- JK One of the fellows who is in our group contacted a B-52 pilot. Now I don't know who this guy is or when he flew, but he said, in his opinion, it would be normal to have the electronic warfare equipment off at that stage of a training mission. But yet, you know, you just said that the EW guy was seeing things on his equipment.
- PM Well, that's what he reported to us. It could be that he had some of the equipment off, but, not being an Electronic Warfare Officer, I know they shut certain things down and there were certain things that were never turned on except in a wartime situation.
- JK Well, that makes sense.
- PM But there were certain things they'd shut off, but I think some of the other stuff stayed on throughout the mission, but you'd have to talk to an EW to really.
- JK Yeah, I sure wish I could come up with that name...
- PM It's a damn shame because that's a clear memory for me, and he could clear that up, and he's the only one who really could. The other one is the Gunner.
- JK Is that Arlie Judd?
- PM Arlie Judd. And Arlie would be able to probably confirm that 'cause he was sitting right beside the EW.
- JK OK, so he sits alongside—you got two Nav's, right and left—
- PM Yeah, sitting down below sitting facing forward, and right above us and slightly behind us on the same level with the pilots, but slightly behind where the Nav's sit, and facing rear, would be the EW on the co-pilot's side and
- JK Right side?
- PM Yeah, the right side as you're facing forward. Then the gunner would be on the left side as you're facing forward. Yeah, Arlie should be able to confirm that. Have you spoken to Arlie?
- JK No, not yet.
- PM Now you know, I don't have a good feel for the time frame, but it was fairly close to when this happened, because I went to pilot training in December of that year.
- JK OK, so that's like a month and a half later—five weeks later.

PM Yeah, it wasn't long after. So, uh there was a Blue Book bunch came down to investigate. As I remember—I mean, I think that's the way they were introduced to us, they said: "people from Washington," now maybe—

JK OK, now Blue Book was Wright-Patterson [Dayton. Ohio].

PM Wright-Patterson, I don't know, they may have said Washington. My memory is that it was people from Washington. But I remember when these guys showed up and interviewed us; I asked them "can I talk to this, about this to anybody?" Because I'd been keeping it quiet, I, you know, military training.

JK Now they didn't ask you to sign a non-disclosure or tell you not to talk about it at the debriefing?

PM No. They told us "Fine, go ahead."

JK I'll be darned.

PM That's what I remember. They just said: "Yeah, you know, go ahead we don't care."

JK Now, like I say, that one incident that occurred in August of '66 also at Minot ...had a lot of similarities, except it wasn't as dramatic as yours. That was written up—

PM I was there then, but I don't remember that.

JK Yeah, there was an object and it was on radar and it was at 100,000 feet and they lost communication. It was down over the missile sites again, and they lost communications between some of the Launch Control Facilities and the Command Post. That was, you know, that would make a SAC officer nervous. Yeah, there are three generals mentioned in the documentation, but I don't have those names right in front of me, or I'd run those names by you.

PM The other thing, as I said, the Targeting people, the Target Studies Officers, I remember, ran this film by us. As I remember it, and that's where I found that they had computed a closure rate on this thing, when it closed from three miles to one mile, and they didn't have any qualms about letting us see it. But I'd love to have a copy of that baby.

JK Yeah. Now in the Blue Book documents, there are a number of scope photographs... however, it's copied onto microfilm, copied onto paper, and you can't see anything on the scope.

PM Boy, you could sure see it that night! It was shining like a diamond in a goat's ass. It was big, and bright, and it was clear on the film. In my memory, but [sighs] who knows what happened to it, I mean, I don't even know if the film is extant.

JK Well, a lot of stuff, of course, is gone—

PM Yeah.

JK —that many years ago. But what I was talking about... what I was going to say about the two incidents at Minot, both of those were reported in full to Project Blue Book, and that was AFR 200-2. And there is a specific reporting format, and in the records there are transcripts or at least memoranda of telephone conversations between people at Minot, you know officers at Minot and people at Blue Book, because there were three general officers that had expressed interest in this incident. Now the missile shutdown incident that happened in the Spring of '67 at Malmstrom, was not reported to Blue Book, and I'm trying to figure out what the difference is. This is from, Bradford's interview, I have a transcript in front of me.

PM Yeah.

JK And he says... let's see, [reads:]

[BR:] “Right. I really can't remember whether we had just been in the area or whether we had gathered to come back from a bomb run someplace or whatever, but yeah, we had been out for 10 hours and well, we came in—I was at 20,000 feet and me and the co-pilot—I handled the radios, so I requested permission to make a penetration to land and so when I did this the controllers came back and said that they would like me to check on something if I wouldn't mind. I said, 'Well, I've been flying for 10 hours, but if it's important I'll go check on it.' And they said, 'Well, we think it's important,' so I said, 'All right, give me a vector,' and so they pointed me in a certain direction. We started flying out through there and I got to thinking, pilot, what am I looking for? So I called and I said 'What is it that I'm looking for?' and they said 'Well, you'll know it if you find it.' That sort of got our curiosity up. So anyway a few minutes later my navigator said, 'We have something coming towards us and it's coming fast.' and then the radar navigator said it's coming so fast that it can't avoid us and we were all ready for impact. Anyway, his voice came up real high and we thought we were going to be hit. And of course he's filming his radarscope at this time and well, the next day they checked his film and with the clocks and everything around the scope they determined the object was coming at roughly 3,000 miles per hour and then it just stopped dead off a right wing or off the tail.

INT: You didn't see it out of your windshield?

BR: No. All I could see was a real heavy haze right where the thing should have been. But I thought it came from our right rear and so it was approaching us from behind and from the right. Well, so the navigator said it's stopped right there just off our tail, off the right side of the airplane and I'm looking around trying to find it 'cause all I can see is just a haze right there and I couldn't see anything visually at that time. But then our radios went out that time and we couldn't talk to

the ground or anything, so it just stayed there for a few minutes, few seconds. We're just flying along, same heading."

JK They asked him some other questions. They wanted to know if it stopped dead or decelerated. And he said it stopped dead. Now he said: [reading]

[BR:] "—It scared him to death. I mean they were getting ready to eject."

PM Yeah, I don't remember any of that, but I was downstairs so I don't know what the pilots were talking about.

JK Right, but he's remembering that you or the Radar Nav were concerned about this thing to the point of fear.

PM My memory is what I gave you, I remember alerting them, you know, it was off the right wing. I remember it moving in very rapidly, at that point, I probably did say something like: "Hey, this thing moved in really fast." But by the time I saw it at a mile off the wing it was already stopped. My memory is not that we were in imminent collision, although, certainly the capability was there if this thing could maneuver like that.

JK Right, and also the size that it apparently was.

PM Yeah well, I didn't see it—they saw it visually, all I saw was the radar return, but the radar return was one that would have been at least as big as a KC-135, which was the largest return I'd ever seen.

JK Cagle, the guy that had the interview the next day—he was in the left seat, normally?

PM Would have been in the left seat normally, right.

JK OK, now this other guy James Partin, they guy whose name you don't recall. He is listed as an Instructor Pilot.

PM Could be.

JK So there was three pilot rated guys somewhere up front there.

PM It's possible they were checking him out as an IP, giving him some kind of an upgrade check. That could have been what was going on, I just don't remember. He could have been a pilot upgrading to IP or an IP getting a periodic evaluation, or something like that.

JK Oh, OK. Well, there's a memory from Runyan, that when it became clear what they were looking for that Cagle did something unusual.

PM OK, now I'm gonna say something, and this is really dredging back in the memory, but my memory is that at some point, and I don't know when it was, Don said something like: "I don't want to see this thing" or something like that, "because I don't want to have to show up at the debrief," something like that.

JK It's not too healthy to an aircraft pilot's career to have sightings like that.

PM Yeah. I don't know if that was on his mind, I can't read his mind, but I do know from what he said that he was concerned about his airline pilot career, and, as far as I knew, he had that interview the next day. So he didn't want to do anything to jeopardize him being able to go for that. My memory is that he said or did something that would, you know, put him in a position of not being able to add anything to what was seen, so he'd be clear to go.

JK What I have in the transcript is that he got up and went back to the cot.

PM I wasn't up there, so I have no way to know. I know he was very concerned about not having to stay and debrief this thing, and then putting his job in jeopardy, you know what I mean?

JK Right. Let me jump back to the debriefing. Mr. Runyan talked about being told about these two Air Policemen and this object coming down above them. There were also some details that he gave about some things that occurred at the missile silo they were at or near.

PM Ok, I, and again, you'd like to see if I could corroborate that? OK, all I can tell you is that my memory is that there were two alarm systems, and if my memory serves, the outer alarm is one that goes off when the fencing around the silo is violated somehow, and that will go off sometimes when there is a heavy rain or a rabbit runs into it or something; it's not an unusual occurrence. The inner alarm, if my memory serves, is one where the silo doors themselves have moved, or something, you know I'm not a missile guy, but my memory is the silo doors have been violated somehow. There had been an outer alarm, and shortly thereafter, an inner alarm at one of the remote sites. In other words, one that wasn't connected to the command site where the guys are located and is capable of firing missiles at remote sites where there are no people. My memory is that it happened at one of the remote sites. And the inner alarm is a fairly—the way it was explained, and at the time it was explained my memory is that it was a fairly serious thing, had to be reported I believe, to SAC Headquarters because it was a fairly firm indication that somebody was messing with those doors.

JK Right. In your memory is that connected with these two Air Policeman that had the close encounter?

PM Well, those incidents were all reported during the same debriefing, I don't know what the chronology was, I don't know if they were responding to that alarm or if that alarm

occurred simultaneously with the—if they were responding to something else when this happened, I don't know what the chronology was.

JK Yeah, it's in the documents that they were, in fact, responding to an intrusion alarm. Now the details I was fishing for was that there was damage to the top of the truck—

PM Now if I knew it, I don't remember it.

JK —as in blistered paint and one other much more dramatic thing: a silo blast door being off.

PM OK, well that would go with the inner alarm, but again, I don't remember that, I don't remember somebody telling me that.

JK Right. That's like 20 tons of concrete.

PM Yeah, right. I do remember, I don't remember who it was that said it, my memory was that it was during the debriefing—but in connection with explaining an inner alarm, I remember hearing someone talk about how heavy these doors were, and how moving those doors would take, you know, a dedicated effort. It wasn't something that just happened like a rabbit running into a wire fence, so I remember that discussion, but I can't say that somebody said that the blast door was off.

JK OK, but I do want to make sure that I understand what you're saying is that as far as you recall that the inner security alarm had to do with the blast door and not the man access hatch.

PM No. Blast doors.

JK Blast doors, OK. Yeah, 'cause there is a two-tiered, you know, human access deal at those sites. There's a hatch, looks like a Navy hatch, it's got a padlock, you go inside that and then there's a combination lock inside that for actual access.

PM You know more than I do.

JK Well, see, I've been talking to missile guys from Malmstrom for five years [chuckles].

PM I don't know a whole lot about it, in fact, I've given you just about all I know about it—it's been years.

JK et me see here, it's interesting, you know you've cleared up a couple of... this B-52 pilot these guys found was saying that well, you know, that Runyan's memory wasn't very good because you'd had to have had the radar in station keeping mode to see that.

JK Right. Now this is a TELEX to a Colonel Pullen, SSO SAC, and I don't know where that is, whether he's at Headquarters or...

PM I have no idea... I don't know what SSO stands for.

JK Yeah... I don't know [either]... it's from AFSSO Foreign Technology Division, Wright-Patterson AFB, which is where Blue Book was at to SSO SAC, and it's from Lt Col Quintanilla who was the head of the Project Blue Book at that time. And it says: [reading from TELEX]

“Reference our TELECON with regards to Minot AFB UFO's. It is my feelings, after reviewing preliminary information submitted by Monot [sic], that UFO painted by B-52 on radar and also observed visually by IP and personnel on ground is most probably a plasma of the ball-lightning class. Plasmas of this type will paint on radar and affect some electronic equipment at certain frequencies. Plasmas are not uncommon.”

But then they go on to say that even though the reports are very clear that, you know, fourteen different missile security guys were watching you fly around and seeing you, some of them saw you and the object at the same time.

PM Well, I was told that the Air Police did too.

JK Right, their handwritten reports are in this stuff. It says they're reporting that they see the B-52 and the object, and they see this object descend, and they can see a glow from the ground at the position that you guys flew over, so these guys at one of the missile silos, they'd been sent out to a missile silo or seen a glow just over the horizon, and it's the same position you guys flew over, and then they're looking at Venus.

PM Well, after the debriefing, I can remember comments of some of the other crewmembers, there was always an explanation that it was something other than what we thought we saw, you know, and I remember commenting, “Boy, I'd like to see them explain this one because there was just so many independent sightings of this thing all at the same time,” and I can't wait to see what they say. You've got radar, visuals from the same aircraft, AP's and Missileers all at the same time watching this thing, and that's why until you called, I hadn't thought about it in years and years, but initially I thought: “boy this is going to be quite a story” because I don't know how you can explain it, and it just kinda went away, I mean, nothing ever happened.

Well, you know, years after this happened, and again it's come up in my memory from time to time, but less so as the years went on. I was at the Pentagon, and ran into my Radar Navigator after years of never seeing him, Chuck Ritchie. He was on his way to be the DO at a Wing out in California, and subsequently became a Commander down in San Antonio.

JK That's Lackland?

PM Yeah, I think he was at Lackland. But, I ran into Chuck going through the Pentagon, and we were close, very close. The night my son was born, my son who's laying here on the floor here in front of me, the night my son was born, which was right about this time, I went to see my wife, and Chuck's house was the first one I stopped at—I stopped at his house before I went home, and this was real late at night, and he and his wife and I had a scotch and toasted my new son. We were very close, and I saw Chuck at the Pentagon and I said he owed me, in fact, at Minot I'd loaned him a jacket, a field jacket, and he brought it to me all those years later and I saw him and I said: "c'mon, let me buy you lunch" and we went down to one of the cafeterias. While we were there I brought up the incident and said, you know we were just reminiscing, and I said "well, do you remember the incident with the whatever the hell it was," you know, and he proclaimed not to know what I was talking about. He said "I have no memory of it," and he seemed to be sincere, and that has kinda shaken me, because Chuck was a bright guy, not the kind of guy that would forget something like that.

JK I've talked to about 30 different people in this Malmstrom thing I've been working on. Talked to the base Historian for one, and he said when he approached people to get information for the Wing History that he not only got silence, he got a 'get out of my face' type responses, and time and time again the ex, or the retired officers we speak with say, 'well, you know it wasn't so much orders but that it was an atmosphere, partly training and partly the atmosphere that you were in that you knew instinctively that this was the kind of thing you didn't talk about, that it wasn't healthy for your career if you did so.

PM Right, there certainly was that. Yeah, I'd agree with that. There was no overt: "don't talk about it," but there certainly were a lot of stories around about guys who were considered a little bit flaky when they said they saw things. But hell, I'm past caring, I retired as a full Colonel and I got my pension coming in and I'm too old to worry about it now so I have no reason not to say.

JK You mentioned an 'approach plate' what is that? Is that like an overlay showing the movement of the aircraft?

PM They have a book that pilots use to navigate near the airport and it shows different approaches—schematics of different approaches.

JK OK, I have a document here that I'm looking at, let's see what is this? [leafing through papers] This is a Memorandum for the record, October '68, between Blue Book personnel and Col. Werlich, and he said:

"I'm sending RAPCON tapes, photos, and an overlay showing the movement of the aircraft, description of the aircraft movement prior to VFR. Aircraft was going through maneuvers and it would be most impossible to track it perfectly cause he was doing steep turns, "S" turns, etc. Now time and duration of the sighting was, in my message. Speed of the B-52 was in the TWX. I only stated one radar in the

message because there was only one radar set. The ECM equipment hadn't been used."

JK Electronic Warfare?

PM Yeah, when I've repeated this story, and it hasn't been very often but I told my family about it, meaning my mother and father, some time later, and then my wife has heard it, my kids have heard it, but it's never varied and I don't think I've missing anything. One variance between Brad and I is that I remember picking it up earlier than he apparently remembers it. He remembers it coming into the V, you know after they turned back toward the VOR, and I remember it coming out, as we approached the VOR and then it was off our right wing and turning into it, and off our left wing as we went back toward the base.

JK Well, there's sequences in the documents, which confirm things, but it doesn't say that you guys were asked to go around again and asked to overfly it, but it does say that the object was sighted on the ground or near the ground, so—

PM That was by our pilots. Yeah, I can remember that conversation, you know they wanted us to go around and do a visual to see if—and our pilot, whichever one was talking at the time was reluctant to do that, but he reluctantly agreed to go around and take a look. That to me was the most tense part of it, was we were going over this thing at low altitude, basically on a search mission at a low altitude and I remember that being a pretty tense time. But, I even remember him saying "We'll go around one time, and then we're putting this thing on the ground" because everybody had had about enough of it.

JK Well, there was something special about the request to go around that last time, which Runyan mentions, could you hear that radio traffic at that time?

PM I remember a conversation, one that I just relayed, where there was a request for us to go around one more time visually, and see if we could see something. I don't remember the exact words, but the pilots were not keen to do that, but agreed to do it on the condition that they were going to come around one time visually and then they were putting it on the ground, and full stop.

JK Right, right... well what Brad said was that you'd had this radar occurrence, and were approaching for a landing, and he said he doesn't recall whether you did a low level approach or a touch-and-go, but that the intention was to land.

PM Right, when we were coming in from the west that was going to be our full stop.

JK —and then Brad said that a General Officer was patched through to the radio and ordered them to go around.

PM Now, see I'd have no way of knowing that downstairs who they were talking to. All I remember is a conversation where they were asked to go take a look, and I remember the

pilots being reluctant to do that, but agreeing to do it on the condition that this was going to be a full stop after this. But I don't know who they were talking to, I mean if Brad knew it was a General Officer, then that may be a good recollection. But I can't confirm that from my knowledge, and I don't remember ever knowing that there was a general officer on the radio.

JK OK well, I'm sure there's a few other questions.

PM Well, you know how to get ahold of me.

JK OK, I'll be in touch, sir.

PM OK, thanks, James.

JK Thank you for your time, I appreciate it very much.

[Transcript end]