

**A CONVERSATION  
WITH  
DENNIS LOWDEN**

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**WAKE ISLAND 1973-1975**

**U.S. WEATHER SERVICE  
AND THE  
EVACUATION FROM VIET NAM**

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## Introduction

Dennis Lowden, born in 1940 in Philadelphia, entered the Weather Service partly as the result of training in the U.S. Air Force, and partly out of dire economic necessity. After military service and a varied college career, Dennis Lowden in 1973 landed on Wake Island on a two-year contract with the U. S. Weather Service. Retreat from the Island was limited to semiannual leave and emergencies, so Lowden found himself in close proximity to his 180 fellow residents. In addition to his Weather Service colleagues, the population on Wake Island included a contingent of the Royal Air Force, the U.S. Air Force, Department of Defense contractors, and a relatively large Filipino work force. The advent of non-stop trans-Pacific jet travel meant that Wake Island was no longer a mandatory fueling point for commercial and military traffic. What was once a travel and communications hub had become, at the time of Lowdens’s arrival, a Pacific backwater.

Lowden’s principal task with the Weather Service was to make an hour by hour record of weather observations, punctuated by twice daily filling and releases of hydrogen balloons for high elevation observations. The ease of weather observations in such a benign climate, coupled with Lowden’s natural creativity and sociability (and boredom and loneliness) led him to a number of other pursuits during his stay on the Island. He was the very irreverent editor of the island newspaper, the *Wake Observer*, he hosted radio concerts on KEAD, 1490 AM under the name Martin Heidegger (an impenetrable German philosopher) and, built up his camera equipment with great deals directly from Japan.

In April 1975, with little warning, the quiet dissipated as Vietnamese nationals began arriving on the Island, evacuated from Viet Nam as the war cascaded to a close. Quick to identify an antidote to his malaise, Lowden, a trained photographer, began to document the scene: Vietnamese, up to 8,000 at a time, brought to Wake for personal and medical screening before they were sent to some very untropical relocation centers in the mainland United States. In all, Lowden produced some 2,000 black and white images, capturing every element of the process, from landing on the Island to the trash left behind after the last contingent of Vietnamese left Wake five months later.

In this interview Lowden discusses

- His background, training in weather work, and circuitous route to Wake Island

- Weather work on Wake Island, including hydrogen generation
- The newspaper, radio station, social life and personalities, and
- The Vietnamese evacuees.

Lowden provided electronic copies of 200 of his images of Wake Island, the majority of which depict the Vietnamese operation, copies of several issues of the *Wake Observer*, printed under his editorship, and miscellaneous memorabilia. This interview is striking in its breadth, which clearly reflects Lowden's intellect, introspection, and observation skills. This is a portrait of Wake Island that is unusual if not unique, and very valuable for interpreting the important events of 1975. . *Some of Mr. Lowden's comments have been removed from this portion of the transcript. Deletions are noted with the following: (...). The full contents of the narrative have been retained in the original manuscript.*

*Clinton Blount, Santa Cruz, California April 10, 2001*

## **Background**

*CB: We are at Blue River Community College in Independence, Missouri, with Dennis Lowden. We are talking about Wake Island. I always like to back up a bit. If you could just give us a synopsis of where you were born—when and where, schooling, interests and we will progress toward Wake Island.*

*DL: Sure. Happy to do that. I was born in November 1940 in Philadelphia. My father was a Methodist minister and my full name is John Dennis Lowden. My mother always wanted a son of hers named John and my father didn't particularly like that name. He had a common first name, William, which he never went by. He went by his middle name, Gordon. So, my parents had a compromise, where I would be given the name John which my mother loved, but I would be called by my middle name which would be a less common name, Dennis and that was the compromise. They didn't really want to call me Dennis, but they didn't really have a name for me, but it turned out my father was preaching in a place called South Dennis, so I was named after a hick town in Cape May County New Jersey. I carry that name proudly.*

*I grew up as a son of a minister and my father was a minister. My mother was a farm girl from rural New Jersey. I grew up in New Jersey most of my life. I have two younger brothers. The closest in age to me, Bill, is still in New Jersey. A lot of the Lowdens are, I guess, sort of provincial. They stayed in New Jersey most of their lives. My youngest brother and myself have gone lots of different places and he has lived in California and now lives in Utah. I have lived in California, so I am one of the wandering Lowdens as opposed to one of the homesteading Lowdens. I was a music major because I came from a musical family, but I found out when I went to school, first, that while I was talented in music, I was not talented in practicing and it turns out that if you want to be a musician you need to do a lot of practicing. I practiced on the pin ball machine a lot and found that virtuosity of that instrument was not necessarily rewarded in school and so after two years of school, the school asked me not to return. That is another way of saying I flunked out, but they tried to put it as kindly as possible.*

## *College*

*CB: Where were you in school?*

*DL:* A place called Union College in Kentucky. They had a small music conservatory but a very good one attached to the college. So when I left school it was summer of 1961 and at that time the Berlin wall had just gone up and we were certain World War III was going to break out in Europe. It seemed like it was only a matter of time. Khrushchev was telling the world lots of bellicose stuff, and we had our own bellicose people on our side of the aisle that were trying to match him, threat for threat. There was a lot of fear that WWII was going to break out. I was 20 ½, signed up for the draft.

If you get drafted, you get in the Army, you go to Berlin and Ivan is going to shoot your butt off so I was looking for option B. Option B turned out to be the Air Force. So I joined the Air Force in November of 1961.

## *US Air Force*

It was a good choice. I joined the Air Force because I was a good writer. I wanted to sign up for the information service. Well, I thought that I would be able to choose my career field because that was what my recruiter told me. My first great naïve disillusionment is that recruiters lie to you, and so I was assigned as a weather observer and that was how my long and speckled career began with going to Weather Observer School at Chanute AFB in Illinois with the Air Force and then staying on for extra schools.

I decided once I was going to be doing that, that the best thing I could probably do was to go to as many schools as I could while I was in the military. First of all, it was easy duty and the second thing is it would probably always last me and when I got out of the military, I would still have to do something. So as it turned out, when I got out of the military, I was able to do some midlevel, meteorological jobs, which is essentially how I got to Wake Island because those kinds of midlevel jobs were what they were looking for at that island.

I spent a lot of time in the next few years doing mainly weather work after I got out of the military in 65.

*CB: Where were you stationed?*

*DK:* Mainly Tinker AFB in Oklahoma City. I was attached to a squadron there called 6th Weather Squadron which was a mobile squadron which sent its people sometimes around the world, sometimes the US, on various kinds of weather missions. The kinds of things we did and this will connect with the hydrogen generator problem that we will talk about, and trained for was what was called upper air observation. This is where you send a balloon up with an instrument attached and as the instrument goes up it radios back information and it gets printed out on a strip chart and we analyze it and plot it. When it gets up to about 100,000 feet the balloon bursts, the instrument comes down. We seldom used them, reused

them, but sometimes you do. That is what I have done most of my life. Early on, upper air observations were done four times a day, every six hours GMT. For financial reasons it now down to just every 12 hours at 00 and 1200 GMT. Balloons all over the world go off carrying these instruments aloft. That was a skill I learned in Air Force and that is what our squadron in the Air Force did. We supported different kinds of projects with upper air weather information. I went to Hartford, Conn., for two months. Someone was studying Spring storms in New England and they got Air Force support so we went and sent balloons up every x number of hours. I worked on a lot of nozzle tests for the Air Force during their defoliant for Vietnam. They were testing different kinds of nozzle configurations at Eglin AFB in the panhandle of Florida and they needed weather information, just wind information for about the lower 1,000 feet, so we under-inflated balloons, sent them up very slowly, tracked them with field lights and makes logs of where they were at a given second and then we can plot the winds, the vertical winds.

*CB: So that when they released the defoliants—*

*DL: Right. They would know, pretty well, what the wind patterns would have done to move the defoliant one place or another, so when they are testing the nozzle, they have to take the variability of wind currents into account. Then they all these little glass plates out there on a grid that the defoliants hit. We didn't collect the glass plates, some other contractor did, came in and analyzed the pattern and that kind of stuff. All we did was the weather.*

So those were the kinds of things I did—whatever the Air Force wanted.

### *Rocketsonde*

One thing I volunteered for was a school called Rocketsonde. They were experimenting at the time with sending these instrument packages aloft, the same kind we are doing with balloons now, to measure temperature, humidity and air pressure and that is really the only thing you can measure. You can infer height through pressure and stuff like that, so there are ways of knowing where things are. They thought wouldn't it be great to have a rocket, send it up to maybe a couple of hundred thousand feet and sort of catch it on the way down and have it parachute down slowly, the idea being that since balloons have sort of an inherent limitation on how big they are going to get before they explode, unless you are going to fill them up, have enormous balloons with enormous amounts of either helium or hydrogen which would then make it pretty difficult or expensive to send them. They thought, why don't we do it the other way: Send the package up with a rocket and let it float down.

So I went to Rocketsonde school at Cape Kennedy. Sonde is a suffix to lots of different words in weather having to do with sending instruments up. Sonde is French for sounding, but they called this kind of releasing of instruments sounding. Where you are taking a sounding of the atmosphere. The ones we did on Wake and the ones we mainly did with balloons are often called radiosonde. That is sort of the name of the instrument is a radiosonde and rocketsonde is different because it is sent aloft by rocket, but the same general idea. There were instruments to send back information about temperature, pressure,

humidity. We had a rocketsonde outfit at Tinker AFB. One of the problems we had with rocketsonde, which maybe eventually doomed it. There is no way to protect the public from falling rockets. Falling balloons are really not that bad because they are all kind of limp and fluffy, and even the instrument as it floats down on a little paper parachute really wouldn't hurt you too much.

The rockets we used were probably about 8' tall and metal and there is really almost no way to prevent that from coming back down and hitting somebody, so the only places you could do it were maybe in middle of the ocean or thing like that. That limited its usefulness. So rocketsonde never took off, but again it gave me about a year and half to two years of easy duty in the Air Force. Once I got into the rocketsonde outfit, all we did was sit around and do dry runs in the middle of Oklahoma and we never sent anything off, we just sort of played around in the cow pasture and pretended we had a rocket here and could compute winds and all kinds of stuff.

### *Weather School*

So, I got out in '65 and went back to New Jersey. My father was preaching at Red Bank, New Jersey and near Red Bank is Ft Monmouth, an Army post, where they had the Army weather school. So, luckily, because I have the gift of gab and am not afraid to talk to people, I became a teacher of weather. I joined as a GS5, I think, weather teacher and that school moved to Oklahoma. In the interim I had married a woman from Oklahoma. I don't like Oklahoma and she and I didn't remain married very long, but she didn't like New Jersey and I didn't like Oklahoma. The school I was teaching in said to move to Oklahoma or you are fired. So like a fool I got fired and then I moved to Oklahoma because she wanted to go back to Oklahoma.

### *California: Acting and Photography*

Moved to Oklahoma, had no job, but I was doing a lot of photography at the time and I applied for admission to an art school in LA called the Art Center College of Design and they only admit you by portfolio and they liked my portfolio. They admitted me. We moved to LA. I went to the Art Center College for about a semester until my wife divorced me and I went into a state college, Cal-State Dominguez Hills and that is where I first discovered philosophy. This is around 1971 and did a lot of acting. In 1973, I came to the end of my senior year but I was acting almost full time in college productions. It turned out that was something I did reasonably well. I took all incompletes the last semester. I could have gotten a degree, right then and there, but no, I listened to my ego rather than my mind and took all incompletes. It was the quarter system. Spring 1973. I also fall in love with a lovely Chinese-American woman, Sonya, was living with her, having a great time, but I had no job. I had no money, no means of support and she was very sweet about it, but she also would like for me to get a job. I tried to get a job in the summer of '73. I was bottoming out professionally So that whole summer I was kind of living this sort of dream life but with no money.

So I started looking for work. When I moved to LA I put in about six months of work at the LA forecast office. One of the great things about weather, I found out that it is this little narrow career field but there is usually a job for you somewhere in the national weather service. The government can always find a place to stick you. I was a map plotter in '70 when we moved to LA and it was just a very menial GS4 kind of job but it paid the bills. Map plotting has gone the way of automation and hand plotters of maps just didn't exist, so while I was there talking with my old friends I used to work with, I looked through this book of vacancy announcements with the Western Region and the Pacific Region which is Hawaii and all the far flung areas. I thought I would look in there because it is always a dream that you are going to work at Hilo or Kailua.

They had openings at two places in the Pacific, Wake Island and Johnston Island. I looked at both of them and Johnston—the word nerve gas sort of leaped out at me and I thought that is not where I want to go. Ironically, you may be able to tell me now that just as bad of things happening but at that point, it did not look as if Wake was anywhere as dangerous to my existence as Johnston. Both of them were open. I thought there must be 50 people waiting in line because I had a good resume and a lot of experience as to what they are looking for and I was sure I wasn't going to get anything so I sent my paper work off to Honolulu. It was quick. Something like 2-3 weeks after I sent it off I got a phone call from personnel saying “when can you report to Wake Island?” This was a shock so I set time aside to visit my parents and tried to break it to Sonya and she was not happy. Mainly because the restrictions for Wake Island were at the time that no one could visit you and I couldn't get off the island except every six months. So there would be no less than six months separation every year. So I decided to spend my year working in weather which was about the only game in town and to get in the “system” is to take Wake Island, then use that as a lever into someplace else in the “system”.

*CB: When you got that phone call did you start to wake up to the notion that maybe 50 people hadn't applied for the job?*

## **Wake Island**

*DL: Yes. When that quick call came, I really was astounded. I thought they wouldn't reject me by a phone call, transpacific, so that did make me wonder what it was about Wake Island...you know 19 degrees north latitude, trade winds, warm temperatures, palm trees, you know...what could be bad about this. This sounds wonderful. They mentioned the restrictions...no dependents, spouses, limited ability to leave the island, but this is a possibility. So in September 1973, I flew out of LA to Honolulu, landed on Wake Island.*

As it turns out, when I landed on Wake Island, some guy I knew in the Air Force, a sergeant, was the electronics technician for the base, for the weather station, Lee Hall. He was a nice guy. I liked him.

*CB: What did you think when you got off that plane on Wake Island? What was that first impression?*



### *First Impressions*

DL: Well there it fairly positive to begin with. The closer I looked, the more negative it was. It was warm, delightful, palm trees, wasn't much of anything else. In one sense I thought this really is going to be a nice place. But what I didn't realize was there isn't much of a beach, no surfing, no soil, nothing really grew there that was worth growing. It was just, you might say, environmentally speaking, it was very much a monotonous island.

Monotonous in the sense that there really is no genuine soil, no nice beach of any sort that you could enjoy. So it was, in that sense, disappointing. First off the airplane, it was pretty nice, hot and humid, but I didn't mind that and the fact that Lee Hall was there was an interesting thing in itself. I liked Lee and Lee liked me and we were different kinds of people but we got along well and for the whole time I was on Wake, we got along well. It was nice to have that kind of a resource, someone from your past that you can have contact with. He made it easy for me to kind of slide into the life of the island.

### *Weather Station Staff*

I met the people at Weather Station. They were a real mixed bag of people. Bill McDonald was the head man. I have pictures of him. I did not make any of him for you. (...) One thing that I find that everybody on Wake Island had a story and it had a little bit to do with some sort of social rejection or some sort of unfit for human habitation kind of thing and it may have been something like my story. Because there were other people just like it. Greg Manuel, my best friend on the island (another weather guy) was a young black man who just had a hard time finding a job and this was his chance. So he and I had the same thing and we would always commiserate with each other saying that as soon as we got off there the better we will like it.

So there was a certain level of self-reinforcing around people who saw themselves as temporary. But there were people who saw themselves as I will stay here for a long time because it keeps me away from the world that I am not really too suited for anyway. Bill McDonald was one of those. I think Jackie Harding was one of those who just didn't find a place in the social world, but somehow found that they could tolerate this kind of a world, and so they did.

Back to your question—first impression as I got off the plane was pretty much positive because all I was seeing was the superficiality. It was initially positive, I would say, not thrilling but positive. There is always this feeling when you are going into a new venture, especially where you sign up for a year, that this had better not be a real ugly story because I got a year to tolerate. With Lee Hall there, that helped. It was such a small group of people and at that time there were about 150 people on the island. This was during the time that FMC, Facilities Management Corporation, was the island contractor who ran things and there had been a slow decline in the time and amount of money the Air Force would spend on the island and the next step down to Kentron, knocked out quite a few jobs and really

reduced the services. But I guess that was in keeping with what the Air Force saw as the end of the importance of Wake Island for them, either as having to do with the Vietnam war, which was ending any way, or for some other reason.

At that point our only use was as an emergency stop. If people flamed out over the Pacific, they could try to make for Wake Island. A few planes would have in-flight emergencies and would land there, Air Force planes, but that was about the only thing we did.

### *Royal Air Force Attachment*

There was an RAF attachment and they were fun. They had no more than about three people. They always had an officer and a mechanic. What happened, periodically, the RAF would have some sort of round-the-world flights of their aging bombers that really had no real military use, but they were kind of showing the flag in different places so they had an RAF detachment at Wake and they would fly to Australia, New Zealand, the Commonwealth. So about every two months the next plane would come in—a Vulcan aircraft would fly in. The crew would stay for a couple days and bring maybe a couple good bottles of gin rather than the stuff they had to drink at the Drifter's Reef, the island's only bar.

Occasionally the RAAF, the Australians, would fly in and they would bring a lot of Fosters in and that would be their ticket of admission to Wake Island. The RAF did not do much of anything. It was interesting duty for them.

### *Coast Guard Station*

The Coast Guard was there with a Loran Station on Peale Island and I think the Coasties had it worse than any group on the island, other than the Filipinos, because it was all people just out of boot camp. There were something like 10-12 people on this Loran navigational station, one officer, one petty officer and a lot of young seaman. To have a one year tour of duty on this island, a 20-21 year old male with no women at all...that was terrible. These were guys also that were attracted to the Drifter's Reef in droves and fist fights thereafter. I was sort of a sad time for time, I guess. I always had a great deal of empathy for them because I was in my mid thirties, but at that time I had a little bit of a philosophical glance at life and I could probably tolerate that kind of stuff where they are in their prime and suddenly to be abandoned by the fates on this island that could have been everything—but instead it was nothing.

I'll tell you what it was—Jackie Harding was the only unattached female. Jackie Harding, tall, skinny, tan, looked like a reject from the Roller Derby, not really an attractive woman. She was, however, a popular woman. That may be one of the reasons that she never left Wake Island. I have no idea. I stayed well clear of her social life. She was a colleague in that we worked weather together, and I like her as a person. She would always invite me over to have a drink in her apartment. She stayed on the island a long time. They said she was a recovering alcoholic. She always had alcohol in her apartment, but I never saw her drink, so I think she was staying off the bottle. I later learned, after leaving Wake, that she

fell off the wagon really hard and had some troubles and eventually had to leave the island and ended up in South Carolina, which is her state of nativehood.

The Coasties had it real bad but maybe the Filipinos had it worse though. Although maybe I just seeing it with American eyes and maybe some one would say if you were a Filipino maybe you would happy as hell to have this job and have this money and have the kind of situation you have. That may well be true, but sometimes it is hard to be able to make that kind of a judgement. To me it seemed like they were treated as second class citizens and that has never been something that has attracted me.

### *Filipino Workers*

*CB: What were the Filipinos doing?*

*DL: They were the workers. When FMC or Kentron had a contract, they had to hire workers to do such things as keeping the power generators going, to keep the water supply going, to do all essential services on the island. They had to have workers. Typically they would have Anglo supervisors and the Filipino workers. They did all the work and FMC or Kentron would hire supervisors from the States or from Hawaii, almost always Americans to run the water system, to run the power plan, to run the flight line, to run what ever else it might have been. But the actual workers were the Filipinos. They typically had been doing this for years, maybe even decades. They were Wake Island people. They had a contract where they would work for nine months on Wake Island, Air Manila would fly a plane in and pick them up, drop off their replacements for three months. There would be a three month replacement and nine months for the permanent people. The permanent people would fly back to the Philippines for three months to be with their families, spend money, and then they would come back for the nine months. Then the three month people would go back.*

*CB: So everyone coming in had to bring in their booze.*

*DL: Pretty much. Obviously there was plenty of booze you could buy at the island store or get at the Drifter's Reef, but if you wanted something other that kind of stuff, you had to bring in your own. I was just a cheap wino so I didn't have to deal with anything.*

### **Weather Station**

*CB: What about your job? What were you doing there.*

*DL: The Weather Station there was pretty much an observational station. All we did was observe. We didn't do any interpretation, didn't do any briefing of pilots or stuff like that. It was strictly data gathering. While there were obviously weather briefings to give pilots, the arrangement was that it would all be done through Hickam AFB. So they would telephone Hickam to get a weather briefing for Wake Island to Subic Bay. We didn't do anything but gather data. We were completely divorced from any connection with the island other than living there. We weren't under the island contractor. He had no power to do anything. We*

weren't under the Air Force. They had no power to tell us to do anything, at least, concerning our job. We were strictly an independent entity of the National Weather Service.

*CB: Where were they?*

DL: They were Department of Commerce and NOAA. It used to be called ESSA, Environmental Science Service Administration...the old name for NOAA. The Weather Service was open 24 hours a day because we had to take observations. Every hour we would have to take a surface observation which was surface conditions, visibility, temperature, humidity, stuff like that.

In addition, if certain conditions warrant, you take that whenever that happens. If visibility drops to a certain point, you have to take a special observation to note the dropping of the visibility or a ceiling dropping to a certain level that a flight needs to know. You take a special observation, transmit it on teletype, so that anybody who is making a flight plan which would include Wake, which is nobody in the world, would know that the conditions at Wake Island are different.

### *Weather Balloons*

Then twice a day we would take the balloon observations that are the big jobs and it takes two people to do that. It only takes one person for the surface observation. For the balloon observation we had to prep the instrument. We had to blow up the balloon which means you had to generate the hydrogen by shoveling all the crap together in the big generator. Then the balloon blows up, you tie it off and after the instrument has been calibrated, send it off. There is an antenna that follows it and follows and tracks it automatically.

*CB: What was the instrument?*

DL: It was a little plastic box, with the transmitting portion hanging down from it. The instrument itself, the little box was the modulator which actually contains the pressure sensor and most of the electronics and then the transmitter which hung below it actually transmitted the signal back. There was a little arm that came out which had a temperature element which would sense the temperature and then under one of the covers of this was a carbon element that sensed the humidity.

*CB: You were measuring temperature, pressure and humidity?*

DL: Yes.

*CB: How high would they get?*

DL: About 100,000 feet. That is when the balloon would typically burst. 100,000 feet gets us up into the stratosphere, well above any likely airplane. A lot of it was, I think, from what I understand, this information is very useful for research. This is a stockpile of

temperature, pressure and humidity profiles of parts of the atmosphere that really had no meteorological use but to have that kind of a profile is useful.

*CB: Was there ever any U2 or SR71 or did you hear about any high altitude aircraft?*

DL: We knew about them. When I was in the Air Force I knew about them. Patrick AFB was attached to Cape Kennedy. They had U2s flying in there fairly often. I used to see them. They would take off almost vertically. A fabulous plane. I never saw a Blackbird, never saw the SR71. I don't know if any of them ever landed on Wake. While I was there I don't think that happened.

So...I was talking about balloons. The balloon goes up, expands, bursts at about 100,000 feet. This kind of job over land area, the instrument, once the balloon bursts is going to head right down over land areas and they have a very cheap sort of a waxed paper parachute that opens up and then floats down slowly and actually there are instrument reconditioning plants in a couple places in the country, where if you find it you can return it. Usually there is a bag inside that has a prepaid mailer. Mail the instrument back and they will recondition it and reuse it. No pay, just doing your duty. But over the ocean, we didn't put a parachute on because we didn't figure it would ever be picked up. We did that twice a day

*CB: What was the usual trajectory of the balloon?*

DL: It would follow the winds. Of course, we would track it and we would know what the winds were based on where it was.

*CB: Where would it end up?*

DL: It would depend entirely on the ambient winds. Of course, we are in the middle of the trade winds there which were easterly, so it would end up going pretty far west, but I don't if any—no matter how far west it went it never got to Japan the Philippines or anything like that because a typical flight would last about two hours. It would take two hours to get to 100,000 feet. So even if it had 100 knot winds blowing it would only go about 200 miles out, so there was really no way it would go very far. Everything would have just dropped into the ocean and never noticed again.

We did this twice a day—2 people to do it. We had sort of a real time strip chart with a pen painting the temperature and humidity. You could interpret pressure from that strip chart and you can also actually get readings of temperature and humidity. So all you really got that you wanted was on that strip chart and then the tracking of the balloon or tracking of the instrument plot was how you would determine the wind speed. It would be inflated to an exact amount and based on that exact amount, we knew how quickly it would ascend. We had an ascension rate of something like about 300 meters a minute, average ascension rate. So we would know that at x number of minutes out, the balloon should be, we infer, at this point, so we know that if the winds at 10,000 feet for instance, we could tell you what they were by just sort of almost interpolating that from assuming a certain ascension rate, triangulating out. Essentially solving for right triangles. We know that the hypotenuse is

going to be the slope of that. While we don't know what the slope was, we do know through the elevation angle of the tracking equipment what the side opposite is going to be. We can solve two of the sides so we will be OK. We will have an elevation angle and the side opposite will be because of the ascension rate. We know what the height is going to be at a given moment.

CB: *You would have C and A.*

DL: Right. So from that we can infer the distance out from the angle and we can solve the whole thing. Of course, it isn't that simple because we always have to call in the earth curvature correction for the bottom side. It was an easy job. It took about two hours for a flight. It took about a half hour before the flight to prep the instrument and blow up the balloon and then it would take maybe a ½ hour to an hour after the flight to finish up the last of computing the winds, etc., and send it off. It was a nice break in the day.

CB: *How many people were in the unit?*

#### *Weather Station Personnel*

DL: Let me name them off:

Bill McDonald, OIC (Office in Charge), would occasionally do shifts if he had to if we were short of people. He was a Weather Service person and he was as qualified as any of us. We were all qualified to do the two basic jobs so he could fill in on any thing just about and he would. He was a good weather man in the sense that he knew the job really well.

Lee Hall was strictly electronics. He didn't know squat about weather, but he know how to keep the machines running. (teletype, tracking machine for the radiosonde called a GMD—ground meteorological device—an old military thing) As far as the hydrogen generator, there were hardly any moving parts to it. It was just strictly a drum in which ghastly chemical reactions take place and then a dump chute. So he didn't have to do much of anything like that except make sure he ordered all the caustic soda and the aluminum chips for it.

The rest of us were all sort of equal in that we all had the same status and did all the same work interchangeably.

Leloyd Acosta and Valentino Tauufasuuusau: two Samoan guys.

Jackie Harding

Greg Manuel and Myself

That is seven of us. That sounds right.

The Samoan guys were really interesting. They were as competent as any of us in the meteorological stuff. Leloyd spent a lot of time in San Francisco. He was just really a good

guy and he was my apartment mate. We shared an apartment with another person where we would share the bathroom and the living room and separate bedrooms. It was air conditioned and we had service that came in a cleaned up for us. Leloyd was the one who broke me into the duty itself. He showed me the ropes of the Wake Island weather office.

Valentino Tauufasusau was the other Samoan. He apparently was the son of a Samoan chief who lived in Honolulu and for that Val was able to pull a lot of political strings. When he wanted to get off the island, he called "Dad" and he gets off the island. He had it pretty well. He could get something shipped in to him. A very young guy, very interesting guy.

### *Daily Shifts*

*CB: How did the shifts work? What was the pattern?*

DL: Typically for the service observation shift, it would be 7-3, 3-11, 11-7. That is the typical Weather Service one and we worked them rotating. I would be that one person always had one shift, which meant that your sleep was always messed with. You would work about a week to a week and a half of 7-3, then 3-11 and then 11-7 and you would go back and forth. This was the surface observation shift. Then the upper air shift you would work sort of four on four off during the day. You would come in to the early morning sounding and then come in for the evening sounding and you would have off between.

*CB: Was the person doing the soundings not doing the surface observation?*

DL: Right. The person doing the surface observation would be the helper during the sounding. He would help with the balloon, help doing some of the winds, stuff like that. You had to have two people doing some things, so you would have the sounding person having the main responsibility for getting the instrument ready, getting the balloon inflated. But, you would need to have somebody starting to do a little bit of work on the winds or else you would never get it done, so the surface person would help out but the surface person's main job would be observation.

One of the things we had was rain gauges because it rained there fairly often. Rain gauges were made more sophisticated in the 1970. There was a tipping bucket rain gauge. Before that you would stick a measuring stick in this rain gauge and how wet it was showed you how much rain you had and then you would dump it out. What they had then was a rain gauge with a divided little chamber at the bottom of this funnel and the chamber would be open to one side or the other. What would happen would be that it would fill up this chamber to a point where it would weight this little thimble-like and it would drop it over and dump it into this thing. When it would drop over, it would hit some sort of an electrical relay that would make a big click sound and that would indicate that you had 1/100<sup>th</sup> of an inch of rain. Every 1/100<sup>th</sup> inch of rain would dump this little thing and you would get a big click sound inside.

The gauge was outside and every time you would get a 1/100<sup>th</sup> inch of rain which in a rapid storm would happen. In a thunder storm you get 1/100<sup>th</sup> inch of rain in five seconds.

Usually it takes a while. What that did with us was when you were working at three in the morning and you have to do a job every hour, you have something like 55 minutes of snooze time, but if it starts raining you have to take a special observation because that is an important meteorological event. But most of us, once the night shift comes, we set an alarm clock to wake us up 10 minutes before the hour to make sure we go out to check stuff like that and meantime we are just dozing away. The worst thing that would happen would be suddenly you would hear this loud click and you would realize that it started to rain while we were asleep which means we would have to back date, saying that we were awake about two minutes ago because the click comes with a timer and it is timed on this strip chart saying this is when this happened. So you have to back date it.

### *Hydrogen Generator*

*CB: Let's talk about the hydrogen generator. As you know, we are keen on any thing that would have altered or affected the landscape. Where was the Weather Station?*

*DL: It was in the Base Operations building or if you have the picture—Over there was an anchorage where occasionally ships came in to off load stuff, between Wilkes and Wake, there is just a bit of an anchorage there. We were in the Base Ops building and the hydrogen generator was off to the south east across the road, almost by the beach if you call that a beach. It was in an old WWII bunker there with an opening at one end, the west end. The generator was probably there as long as the Weather Station because it is a very old thing. Almost no place in the Weather Service at that time was still using that old generator. There have been attempts to make other types of hydrogen generators maybe through separating hydrogen out of water. That hasn't worked very well, so helium was being used almost every place. This is the only place—at this point, I had been involved in weather 12-15 years. I had never used a hydrogen filled balloon and everywhere we had been we always used helium. Helium in tanks. We had a few helium bottles on Wake but they used hydrogen from that old generator. I think those generators dated, certainly, pre-WWII. I think probably the technology is WWI. Really bad.*

How did they work? The process was you would get caustic soda, Sodium Hydroxide, that was the nasty stuff and we had big 55 gallon drums of caustic soda that got delivered regularly to us and aluminum chips which are little tiny discs of aluminum, probably ½ inch in diameter and we had big drums of them delivered. We would roll them out to the bunker and then we had metal scoops and we had a formula as to how many scoops of caustic soda and how many of aluminum chips to put in this oven—this drum. The drum was maybe 3' in diameter or something of that sort. Again, I do have some pictures of this. It really went 10' I would guess. You would put all these things in there and you would sort of lock it in and then you have a valve that lets water in. Water starts the process going.

The gaseous product is almost pure hydrogen and that gets siphoned into the balloon through a hose. Then everything else is sludge, toxic, nasty, caustic sludge that will burn you like you have never been burned before. We had to use rubber gloves. We had a recipe to follow to fill balloon X or balloon Y. I have remembered on seeing these pictures, I remember why I took them. The hydrogen generator is nothing I wanted to remember because I hated using



it, we all hated the damn thing. Now I realize on looking at these pictures, something came back. We realized the generator was leaking enormous amounts of hydrogen into the atmosphere we were breathing. We didn't know if it was going to affect us in any negative way, but we noticed that because the recipe that we were using just wasn't filling the balloons. We realized that we weren't getting all the hydrogen we thought we were because we filled the recipe up and the balloon would just—Ok, it's almost up there—so we would have to remix. To remix, we would have to dump all the sludge, hose the whole thing inside because you don't want to keep throwing caustic soda and aluminum in there because it would immediately start doing stuff and then that would make our balloon go off late and we had to send a special message of why we were late and a special message of why the balloon is going off late. So what we did was, we saw that this thing was leaking hydrogen. We told Bill McDonald, "Why don't you tell the Pacific Region to send somebody out here to fix this". We asked Lee Hall, who was the electronics man and he said he couldn't fix this, it is old and falling apart.

But McDonald would never report the leaking generator. He wouldn't do it. We had some problems with anything getting changed there. A lot had to do with him not making any kind of a change. Eventually we enlisted Jackie's help. We all hated to blow up these balloons in this generator. We asked Jackie to make an official request to come from Honolulu to check our generator out. What I got here is a couple pictures of the guy Honolulu, Bobby Uchida, who came in to look at the generator. We fired it up for him and there is a joint there and you got gas just spewing out of it a mile a minute which should be going up into the hose and into the balloon. At least we showed him what was happening and he recognized it. I don't know if anything was done other than some disassembling and retighten, maybe a new something there, but as far as not doing hydrogen anymore, generally speaking the hydrogen generator would go on forever. We used helium a little bit. We always had emergency helium standing by, but we would told to use that only in real emergencies because it was expensive and it was a lot cheaper to ship out caustic soda and aluminum chips. When you were through you had this caustic mess that got dumped down into a grate in the floor of the thing and it would drain out and we would hose it out into the land or wherever it was being hosed to. I think the grate just led out to the beach. There certainly was no plumbing, let's say. There was plumbing at the Base Ops, but that place out there was nothing but just let it run, wherever it is going to run.

### *Residue from the Hydrogen Generator*

CB: *So you did this each time, twice a day. How much of this residue was there?*

DL: I would just have to make a guess on the weight or volume of it. In volume, there would have to be at least a good size bucket, five gallon or so every time.

CB: *You said it was really caustic.*

DL: Oh, yes. Smelly. Occasional people would get burned. If there was a slit in the glove you didn't know about or something like that. Because the caustic soda was still active. I was respectful of it. I never had any thing happen. The typical thing at the end

would be was you would hose out the inside of the generator and you would hose pushing the sludge out the door and where it went from there was up to the gods of the beach.

*CB: Could you see it on the beach?*

## **Beaches and Recreation**

DL: Actually, that part of the beach nobody actually went to anyway. There was no reason to unless—almost nobody—it really wasn't much of a beach. Wake Island did not have much of a beach. By talking about going to the beach, it is at best a metaphor. There was a beautiful beach but it was inside along the lagoon. Here is the really good beach, where PanAm had their stuff. PanAm had their little ramp where they would winch in the sea plane, the Clippers, when they would land. They would land here because the winds are coming essentially here so they would come in that way to have a good headwind so they can land here and they would come up to here and then this really was a lovely beach. Obviously I am not old enough to have been there but we got stories and pictures that were there at the time. They would come up to here and this was a lovely beach. We had what was called the Wake Island Yacht Club. If you were going to spend time having a good time, this is where we would go. Out to Peale to the Yacht Club as it was called. The base had about two Sunfish and about three trimarans and I learned to sail at the Lagoon at Wake Island. The water here is about 80, 82 degrees all the time and it was shallow. In feet it is 10 feet out here, eight feet here, 13 feet. You couldn't drown in that lagoon unless you wanted. The more trouble you would have would be the very sharp coral heads that would come up. You might run your little sail boat into a coral head in the middle of the lagoon, and it got much worse when you got here because it really was more swampy than a lagoon. We would sail, sit on the shore and drink beer.

## **Photography On Wake**

I took a lot of pictures while I was at Wake Island because one of the things I found. This is a little side bar on my photography because photography is an important part of what you are going to wind up taking with you whether you use much of it or not is a different thing. When I went to Wake Island I had no place to spend all the money I was making. We didn't have to spend money on food, room, maid service. Shorts and tee shirts—so we didn't need clothes. There was a Bank of Hawaii there so when six months came up we had big piles of money in the bank. It was fabulous. I wanted a Nikon and I found out I could write to the Nikon company in Tokyo and because I could get it for cheap, I ended up with a lot of Nikons and never regretted it. \*

## **Social Life**

*CB: You mentioned the Yacht Club. What was the social life like? What things did people do and the other part is maybe the undercurrent that maybe you saw and maybe other people didn't see.*

DL: There was a bowling alley that actually worked. They kept the pin setters running. There were about 6-8 lanes. That was running, even when they booted the Chaplain off the Island to save money. (Most of the Filipinos were Roman Catholic and they like to have Mass) There was a library of sorts. There were some books there, periodicals 8-9 years old. The library was not much of a social place. They had bowling leagues. The Weather Service had a team. I was a member. We would bowl against the plumbers and the electricians and people like that or the Air Force and the Coasties. I would have to say that the Yacht Club was, at least for the Anglos, the social focus, particularly on Monday. Monday was our day off. The reason Monday was our day off was we were just across the date line. So that was equal to Sunday in the States and so if we were going to call home and talk to people, Sunday would be the time we would want to talk to them, so it was Monday in our time. So Monday was our day of rest. We would go to the Yacht Club, sail, sit under the shade, drink beer and just talk with one another.

### *Great Hermit Crab Races*

One of the set of pictures I had was a Wake Island tradition on Memorial Day. Because Memorial Day is the day of the Indianapolis 500, we Americans decided we had to have some kind of race on Memorial Day also. What we had were the Great Hermit Crab Races. Hermit crabs will make a home in almost anything that is concave. About two weeks before the Great Race, we would find some crab that looked like it was going to be a mean, fast moving crab and then we would save it, feed it, paint its shell racing colors and stuff like that and then we had this piece of plywood that was probably about five feet and we would have racing lanes with dowels for maybe about eight different hermit crabs and then we had bets and we had beer and we would be all crazy and we had the race to see which crab got to the end first. People used some strange ways of enticing the hermit crabs. One guy had a propane torch and he would aim it at the crab and encouraged the crab to move forward. We had all kinds of different things. It was really a lot of fun, especially after two or three beers.

One of the things that happened at the Yacht Club...there were almost never Filipinos there and I don't know that it was necessarily overt prejudice, at the same time, the Filipinos must have felt some belief that they weren't welcome there. That was pretty much an Anglo hangout. The Filipino guys had beach houses on Peale Island and the beach houses would be farther down here on Peale and occasionally there would be some beach houses down on this general area of Wake, facing the basin of the Lagoon. They were nice beaches and I occasionally would visit the beach houses. They were sort of an open barracks, un-air conditioned and the guys would sit around playing guitar, playing Philippine songs, stuff like that. Just being nostalgic for their life and their home. In the sense, it was a segregated community. So on the Yacht club it was mainly Anglos and we were not stopped from going to a beach house. The guys would ask us to come by if we wanted to. It was in some sense two separate communities.

### *Fishing*

The RAF were at the Yacht Club. There will always be an England especially if there is a body of water near by and a beer. The RAF were central to the Yacht club. Jackie Harding

was central to the Yacht club. She saw herself as sort of the official or unofficial hospitality queen of the island and so when someone would come on the Island, she would greet him or her and she would make them feel welcome and comfortable. If there was time, she would go out to the Yacht Club, go sailing with them. Occasionally, those kinds of things would happen. I guess it made her feel good to be sort of hospitable to people. That was sort of her turf. She like the Yacht Club. The Yacht Club was really the nicest piece of the beach in Wake Island. We all loved going there. There was fishing at the Yacht Club but you weren't to eat the fish caught within the coral because the coral was poisonous and the fish was felt to maybe be poisonous. There were two fishing boats that were anchored at the anchorage. One was about 20 feet, motorboat, and often on Monday some of the guys would go out fishing in the deep sea and usually catching nothing. But occasionally they would snag a big tuna, 6-7 foot tuna, and then we would have good eating for a day.

There were some smaller fish that the Filipinos called Ono. I have no idea what it is. They were smaller and they liked to smoke them and they would have smoked, dried Ono. As far as fishing, that is about it. There would be sharks out there on occasion and stories would come back from the fishing jaunts of sharks longer than the boat, sort of cruising by, checking us out. It was deep water once you got out past the limit. There were a couple times we had privately owned boats set in. Some country, maybe Denmark, had something like a four-masted sailboat that was sailing around the world that set in for a couple days and took on supplies or did something. Occasionally pleasure boats would drop by for one reason or another. In the lagoon and in around the reef there were a lot of moray eels. If you can call a moray eel a fish, the moray was the island fish. There were numerous moray eels. Almost as numerous as the hermit crabs, not quite, and they were worthy of your respect. They had big mouths and needle-sharp teeth and some of them were big, extremely large. They weren't aggressive in the sense they would come after you, but if you got in one of their coral heads, they would protect it. 2-3 times a year there would be a moray eel bite that would have to be taken care by the island doc. They did keep an island doc. They fired the nurse when they went down from about 250 to 180, one of the people that got sent away was the nurse.

I was going to ask you—Do you know who the last person murdered on Wake Island was? I think I know. I think I have the story. It is a great story anyway. I think the last person murdered on Wake Island was Lem Butler. Lem Butler was the island manager for Kentron-Hawaii. He came to Wake in 1974. As best I understand it. He was murdered by a Filipino man over his wife. Lem Butler's wife, Mei Li a Chinese woman, was surpassingly beautiful and she was there on the island with him and she was also an unregenerate flirt. Apparently some Filipino guy took her flirting seriously and got the feeling that only Lem Butler was standing in the way between him and Mei Li, so he murdered the guy—murdered the island manager. I have a picture of Mei Li, which you may have a chance to see. [note from editing this interview for posting in 2018: this previous story may be apocryphal.]

*CB: How about movies—that kind of thing.*

*Movies*

DL: We had two open air movie theaters, no closed air theaters. One was completely open air except for the projection booth which was covered and it was pretty large and the whole island population could see movies there. That wasn't used much when I was there because there was a smaller one in which the seats were covered from the rain, the screen in out in the open and the projector is covered and it is all open air. We would have movies there provided by Hickam AFB. There were two planes a week that would fly in so we had mail twice a week and movies and fresh produce, etc. One way the Air Force cut expenses was to cut back eventually to one air plane every two weeks. At the end of my time there, that is what it was, one plane every two weeks. Two times a month to send letters and two times a month to receive letters. We had very little fresh produce. If we were going to get lettuce, it only came twice a month. The movie theatre didn't play every night. It had to be run by Clyde Chappell who was the master sergeant when I was there who was sort of the NCO, OIC of the island and an Air Force guy. He was also the projectionist. We probably had two movies at a time that would run and we would wait for the next shipment. They were fairly recent. For instance, in '73, I think the year it came out, I saw American Graffiti at Wake Island. We had movies, bowling, and an island radio station.

### *Radio Stations*

We had two stations, AM and FM. KEAD AM and KEAD FM the Armed Forces Radio and Television Services (AFRTS). The FM was strictly taped music. We had a big reel-to-reel tape machine in the studio and would run on the slowest possible speed with maximum tape hiss, of course, and when it got to the end we would push the reverse button and reverse back again. For a whole month we would hear the same music. These were big 10" reels, so running at slow speed, it probably run maybe 12 hours on a side and then go back and forth again. It was sort of elevator music.

AM was different. AM was live and in color. One thing we were encouraged to do as Anglos, at least, was to participate in the life of the island in ways other than collecting a paycheck. So, I became editor of the island newspaper for a while, a weekly paper. I also was a DJ on KEAD AM in the evening. During the day, they had an Air Force guy who would spin platters and stuff like that or they would have something happening so that we didn't have to do anything, but at night, they would ask different people. There was a Filipino guy who would play Filipino music for his guys one night a week. My buddy, Greg, played jazz. I had a jazz program as well as a classical music program and so I did two nights a week, Greg did one night a week.

One of the base commanders was a very religious guy and he had Garner Ted Armstrong on tape. Garner Ted Armstrong is a California evangelist, so the commander had sort of a commander's corner where he would play a Garner Ted Armstrong tape and then give a few words of his own of inspiration to the island and then that would be somewhere between six and seven and then at seven o'clock would be when we would start the regular evening shows where I would do one, Greg would do one, Danny the Filipino would do one. We could always do recorded music.

The great thing was that since this was part of the AFRTS, they would send us a lot of free music, records. I owned very little in this world at this time, but I brought my books on philosophy and a lot, probably 200-300 LPs and they became pretty much my show. I had both jazz and classical. They didn't have much other than a record library at the station. I started doing this about '74 but there was a guy earlier who played nothing but polka music, German music. Oom-pah-pah...Man.

Occasionally when meteorological conditions were right, KEAD-AM could be heard in Australia and could be heard elsewhere. We got letters occasionally addressed to KEAD Radio Station, Wake Island and would say, we heard your program on Duke Ellington. I remember Duke Ellington died when I was the island and so I did a Duke Ellington memorial program of a bunch of stuff that I had and two months later, I get this letter from somebody in Australia who heard the Duke Ellington show and thought it was wonderful.

This was a very low power transmitter, but I guess it just got carried away on just the right kind of meteorological conditions. We would regularly, by regularly I mean 3-4 times a year, a letter would come into the radio station from some far-flung place that heard our weak signal and wondered who we were and where we were and what we were doing in the air space. That was one of the things we did to make the island a little more interesting.

We had just about no interference from the Air Force. I could say almost anything as seditious as I wanted to say on the air and at least the first commander, the guy who liked Garner Ted Armstrong, was a little harder nosed, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> guy, Bruce Hoon, recognized this was not the typical military base. He recognized that most of his people on the island were not military and it didn't need to be seen as primarily a military establishment, but an establishment that had military people on it and those people probably had to do their thing but don't expect the whole base to be run by the book. As a result, I think it was a happier time with him as base commander than it had been in the previous time.

*CB: Communications with the main land, like letters*

*DL: Telephone. There was telephone and it could cost money. Occasionally, I would call Sonya when I was really feeling down.*

For instance, let me make a bit of a back track here. There was a doctor, Dr. Dennis A. Rike. Dr. Rike, we called him Dr. Wrong, a young guy, he just didn't seem to know jack. Every time I went to him, all I ever got was a Fleet's enema. Sort of "Try this. This will make you feel better". Maybe he got a bonus for giving away Fleet's Enema. We had a saying on Wake Island. First of all, we could only get off every six months. That was excessive. The Weather Service paid for these two trips. One trip they would fly us to Honolulu and then we were on our own and they would fly us back from Honolulu. Another trip would fly us to our home of record every year. So one year we would get to Honolulu and then to wherever our home of record is. The one to Honolulu was—go to Honolulu, do what young males really want to do in Honolulu for a few days and get the next plane back and that is usually what people did. But, there were also those of us who felt that this once a year was not

enough for that kind of thing, not that I availed myself of any of the women for hire on Hotel Street...but it turns out you can go to the Doc and say “there is something wrong with my eyes and need to have my eyes checked”.

Having your eyes checked was the magic words. Dr. Rike signs this thing. Man needs his eyes checked, put him on the next plane back to Honolulu. So you get a free flight to Honolulu to get your eyes checked. Now, you got to go to an optometrist and bring back a piece of paper to Dr. Rike, but of course what happens is you get three days between the planes. Plane flies in and you have three days to do what you want to do. You might even get your eyes checked while you were there and then you flew back. The last time I was there you had two weeks. That was a vacation which meant annual leave if you had it, so—there was a metaphor called “getting your eyes checked” which meant anything but your eyes checked.

...So I had my teeth checked on a trip to Honolulu. So I had two weeks in Honolulu. I quickly get on the phone to Sonya and say can you anyway take some time off from work and fly to Honolulu. I will be there for two weeks. I did have my tooth fixed. But, there were ways to get off the island without paying for it. If it was thought of as a medical condition that the doctor couldn't deal with. Getting off the island was one of the scams we tried and I guess most of knew not to tax it, not to go over the edge, go once a year maybe, an extra vacation—so I didn't tax it. Val, the chief's son could do it. He could get on a plane anytime he wanted to.

### *The Wake Observer*

The Wake Observer which was the weekly newspaper—not a newspaper, just a mimeograph kind of thing and I was editor. Editor means you write everything. I got tired of writing everything. I did it for about six months. Coming up with something new every week on an island where nothing happens is really hard to do. I resorted to strange contests that nobody every entered and crossword puzzles...strange things. It was a free paper. The Air Force subsidized it. They provided the paper, ink and machines. They gave me an office. I had my own office and my own phone so I call Sonya in privacy rather than standing in line at a pay phone.

*CB: What about news coming in? These were tumultuous times—lots going on in the world.*

*DL: Yes. Radio transmissions came into Base Operations. There was no TV of course. I don't know that there was a TV on the island, actual “set” on the island. If there had been, it would have to have a VCR attached because there was nothing to receive. I remember Nixon's resignation. We had heard something was going to happen. I happened to be in the Base Ops, mid morning I recall—I was there during Watergate. We heard damn little. Newspapers coming into the island were few and far between and occasionally we would get a Honolulu Advertiser. But we didn't have newspapers. I was really at a loss without news. But we heard something was going to happen with Nixon so we just got fragmentary reports*

about the whole thing. It really wasn't until I got back and read the Woodward-Bernstein thing that I really saw what had been happening.

We got radio transmissions—very fragmentary. We got them through AFRTS and I would have to say it must have been sanitized to some extent because the level—when we heard something was going to happen I went upstairs to Base Ops where it was coming in and heard that Nixon resigned and there was a buddy of mine who was one of the air traffic controllers there. (You know air traffic control on Wake Island is really not a stress job, but they had to have someone with that job description. The FAA required it.) Walt Koch, was the guy. Walt was also very much an anti-Nixon person. I remember when we heard this we were standing next to each other and we embraced and gave the old dooper handshake and the base commander was standing next to us and he read us, not really the riot act, but said something about this is the President of the United States. You need to show respect. I said, “He isn't the President anymore, pal”, not quite that way but he was very unhappy that we were celebrating the resignation of a man that I thought never should have been elected in the first place.

The level of news we got was very fragmentary and came in through the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service which is to say it was not “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth” and it certainly didn't allow for a whole lot of alternative view points. So that what we got was I think sort of sanitized.

The same thing for the records we got to play. For instance—Judy Collins. I liked Judy Collins back in those days so we played some Judy Collins “from her latest Album—“ or Joan Baez. Even the AFRTS was big hearted enough to have some Joan Baez from a particular album. What they would do was to select only inoffensive bands from any given album and send them off. So I would realize that Judy Collins had a song on this one album about Che and revolution in Central America. That, of course, never made it into the AFRTS. It got selected out. There was a lot of censorship and in the same sense it probably is not something to be unexpected.

I missed a whole lot of American History. I missed the fuel crisis, the lines at the pumps. I am very glad I did. I missed most of Watergate. When I left in '73 we knew a lot about it but it really hadn't opened up. So we were just getting hints about it in the summer of '73. I missed a lot of the obsession about it. Good or bad...I prefer to be informed rather than not informed. But we had no real source of information on the island other than what the Air Force gave us and occasional newspapers coming in.

*CB: Good Morning, Vietnam. Robin Williams—*

*DL: There was no Robin Williams on that island, but in a sense, we could say what we wanted to, do what we wanted to, just about on that station. Especially after Major Hoon was commander. He didn't agree with us a lot, but he didn't think that he had the right even on an Air Force Island with the Air Force facilities to tell civilians what to say and what not to say and what to think or not think. The more I think about that now, in retrospect, that was a*



very enlightened point of view. I have become more and more appreciative of him as years go past and I look back. He didn't have to do that. He would have been well within his prerogative to have an iron grip on all the island and he didn't.

*CB: Let's move in a little bit to the Vietnamese. I would like to talk about just your impressions, and move on to a narrative about your photographs tomorrow. Also, could you tell a little about your photography.*

*Were you aware that the Vietnamese were going to show up?*

## **Vietnamese Evacuation**

### *Getting Wake Island Ready*

DL: About two weeks before, we became aware. Sometime in the middle of April 1975. Suddenly, a bunch of planes started arriving and they started arriving with field hospitals. That was the first thing we noticed. They started putting up big tents, field hospitals on the barren ground that was Wake Island and by that time the base commander knew and started talking to us. This was Bruce Hoon again. He said that it looked like we were going to be used as a processing area for...they weren't calling them refugees. Even then political correctness was becoming rampant. Evacuees. Evacuees was the word they used and they had an Operation "something". I can't remember what they called it. [Operation New Life]

It was all set and they started setting up field hospitals and processing places and bringing people in to do the processing. We knew about two weeks ahead of time that this was going to happen. They gave us a number of how many people were going to come through there but that didn't mean anything to us until all of a sudden they hit and they came in. Again, I need to backtrack just slightly. In Wake's prime back in the '50s and '60s before it became possible for planes to fly across the Pacific without refueling, Wake was really important then. That was where you would stop to refuel and there were a lot of big fuel tanks out there. Enormous, industrial strength, fuel tanks. They were probably empty, like a tank farm on the island and so this was an important island.

They had a one time the maximum people there had been about 4-5,000 and they had a school, a hospital, dependents. It was a small city. When you look at the island on the map in '73-'75, everyone lived in this one area. Everyone was within a half mile of everyone else on Wake Island. Even the Coasties whose Loran Station was there, didn't live there. They lived in here with us. But before then, you can see all these buildings here. These are houses, residences, three bedroom, two bath houses, a school, hospital, stores and all these other kinds of things. Just a lovely community there that had lived, mainly civilians, but also some military particularly during the '50s and '60s when it really was a vital place for planes to stop and refuel. During the Korean War it was very important apparently for that purpose and at the beginning of the Vietnam War it was important as well. But as it became possible for airplanes to over-fly from Honolulu to say Manila, Wake was no longer necessary and they started cutting back.

But all these houses were still there, just boarded up. The school was boarded up. They used the school for vaccinations. They opened up the school again and used it mainly for medical processing and things like that. There were a lot of facilities that were already there and I think they decided eventually they wouldn't open up much of the housing area to the evacuees. Again, a bit of backtrack but I think it is reasonably important. To me this is one of the most important aspects of the whole thing. Maybe these pictures would not have occurred had it not been for the fact, though this was a military operation and there were a lot of people who outranked the Major who was the base commander, it remained a very casual, as far as security went, a casual operation.

### *Fraternization*

There were rules that were posted and we were told that there would be no fraternization, don't ever try to take a woman up to your room. Let the Vietnamese be where they are going to be. You do your job and don't interfere, don't let them hook a ride in your car or anything like that and yet none of these were ever enforced. We all ignored them from day one and nobody got into any kind of trouble. There were some Air Police that were on the island for the refugee program. But, everybody had the run of everything, just about. The refugees wouldn't poach into our area. There were very few that would come uninvited to our room and say, "Hey, can I come in?" That never happened. They were very docile is one way to say it, but a lot of us just wandered and go there and they would invite us in. We didn't barge in.

I made myself available and the kids would run up to you and talk to you and try to learn English from you. That is what I ended up doing. I would try to teach English on the beach when the whole thing started. But the great thing was, that there were a lot of signs saying, "Do not—Do not enter—Only—whatever" in both Vietnamese and English, and everyone ignored it. It was ok. I loved it because that made it possible for us to hang out with people on the beach or hang out with people anywhere we wanted to and it would have been a lot worse if they tried to enforce the kind of rules that they had as a defacto way of putting them there. But it was great. When they arrived, as far as my photography goes, I never liked posed shots and occasionally I just gave in and did posed shots because these kids would pose themselves. I was acting as a fool in these pictures and the kids were acting as fools too. In this picture of these girls, I was just playing peek-a-boo with this girl behind here and we spoke very little English but we could do a whole lot in body language and smiles and grimaces and stuff like that. That is the kind of stuff I would do.

*CB: Did you have a sense of why these people, in particular, were coming?*

*DL: The early ones I knew. You could tell because a lot of them came in with Anglo people. When I show you the pictures I can show you a few people who clearly were attached to some official who had got special permission—you know, got over the fence because they knew somebody.*

*CB: Someone's assistance—?*

DL: Right. This family for instance may have known somebody. [the Hoang family, who will be referred to incessantly hereafter] These are three sisters and you will see them ad nauseam throughout my pictures because I just felt attached to this family completely. The two fathers, brothers, came out. Both of them had been very wealthy in Saigon. One came out with a lot of money strapped to his body, gold bars. The other one came out with just the clothes on his back. These are girls of the one with “the clothes on his back” brother of the two. They were worried because they thought that once they got to the US, the other brother would desert them and set up his family real well with all the money and gold he had and they would be living like paupers. I followed them. They ended up in Evansville, Indiana. I visited them. The rich brother shared with the poorer brother and they were all sort of on the same playing field. But there was some tension when they first arrived because of the money and they were afraid that would drive a wedge into the family and it didn’t.

CB: *What did they do? You mentioned earlier that it was about three weeks or so. What was the routine?*

### *Daily Routine*

DL: Their routine. If you had a skill or something you could do, you would help on the island. For instance. I got to know two sisters, Helen and Jeannie, who worked in the island laundry and they weren’t professional laundresses, but that was something they could do.

CB: *They were put to work.*

DL: Yes. I don’t know that it was demanded of them or not. That is something I am not sure of, because I know there were a lot of people who didn’t work. It was encouraged that they help out because they are producing an enormous drain on the facilities of the island and so they did that. I got a picture of them in the laundry with some of their cohorts. The laundry was run by the Filipinos so there would be a mixture of Filipino and Vietnamese in the Laundry, working at any given time. Some of the would work. The kids, of course would just play.

You see that I have pictures mainly of girls. The interesting thing I found was that boys were much more stand-offish and aloof. Particularly once they got to puberty and older, there was something. They just didn’t want to associate with us and they would stay off to themselves and they would not, with their body language or any other language they had, or very seldom would they invite us to be a part of their world. There might be a part of it that is a feeling that we betrayed them by not backing them to the very end in the war and those of them who were old enough to have fought in the war or whatever it may be, there was resentment. It could also be because there was a big, macho, male thing in that particular culture and I noticed it to a certain extent in the Japanese culture when I was in Japan. This didn’t happen with the girls so they were much more willing to just sit and talk. All I wanted was just to interact with somebody, a kid or a girl, just real human contact. What they did, I guess, to a certain extent was a matter of choice.

### *Biographical and Medical Processing*

They went through some sort of biographical processing to find out who these people were, what connection they had. If they had connections they would have already let the processors know who they were and what they expected. Medical processing was the main thing. Medical processing to the extent that they had labs there that did blood work, etc., to see what kind of diseases you were coming in with and all those other sorts of things. For instance, Annie, Lam My Le is her Vietnamese name, found out just before she left that she was pregnant. Certainly not something she wanted to hear from her CIA boyfriend in Saigon, who apparently she never saw again. But she didn't find that out until she had a physical. So the physical, at least the blood work, was thorough enough to pick up things like that. Then immunization. Also some corrective work.

They brought a dentist in and they had a Vietnamese guy who had been a dentist in Vietnam working as his assistant and when teeth needed fixing in the Vietnamese he was there to do that. If you need work done, it could be done quickly. When a family finally got its papers in order, then they would ship them out. They had, from what I understand, I think there were four camps they would go to in the US, one of 4. Camp Pendleton in California, Eglin AFB in Florida, Ft Chafee in Arkansas and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania was the one in the east. There were the four resettlement camps where you would go in for some more processing.

### *Sponsorship*

Mainly what they would decide in these stateside camps, was what location you would be sent to in the US. You didn't really have much choice unless you got sponsored by somebody. The whole idea of sponsoring was if you would be willing as a person or as an organization to underwrite the expenses of support and resettlement of a group of people, then that is where they would go.

I had a strange offer. On the island there were several Vietnamese prostitutes. There was a group of two women who always traveled together who had quite a few Amerasian children in tow. We were talking one time and one of them said, "Would you please, would you like to sponsor us when we go to the US. We will go wherever you go." They wanted somebody who would set them up in business and underwrite their first few months of life and live with them and maybe share whatever their commodities they were selling to others. I did turn them down.

The whole idea was that people were actively looking for sponsors because that was a way to sort of jump to the front of the line, going with someone you know and maybe have a better chance than the roll of the dice, because eventually you had to have a sponsor before release into the community. Often churches would do this and often individuals as well.

Another thing that happened was with a family named Hoang. They were so important to me. Here they are in a picture in Ft. Chaffee, Arkansas. Right before they left Wake Island

in late May, Tam, the oldest daughter, took me to the mother. I had only met the mother and father once or twice. They stayed in their barracks and I didn't intrude. She spoke very, very poor English, just a little bit. She wanted to talk with me directly. She didn't want to go through any of her daughters. She wanted to know when I was going to be leaving Wake Island to go back, definitely when my year was up in September '75 and she said she wanted to know if it were impossible (they had a big family, these three daughters, couple more daughters and a couple sons—like 7-8 kids in the family and they were the poor ones)...She was afraid her family was going to be split up.

She had heard this was what happened and she didn't want this to happen. If you had too big a family they would only sponsor maybe a four person family but not an eight person family. If this was true, I don't know, but she had heard this. She said, "I know you love my children. Would you take some of my children and sort of be their stepfather. If they have to break up my family, would you take a couple of my daughters?" This was the strangest conversation I ever had with anyone. I made sure that that was what she meant. Poor Tam, tears rolling down her cheeks, said yes, this is what she means. And would you take TiTi and maybe one of the others if the family had to be split up. So, I said yes, of course. It never happened of course. Being a father myself and being away from my son, I knew how wrenching it can be to be away from your children and not knowing how they are being cared for and not knowing what the situation is and so if she trusts me this much, certainly, I would never betray her. It never happened. It was probably just a rumor. Camps like this are just a hot-bed of rumors that never happen.

*CB: Did you get a sense of, aside from that grisly prospect, what they were hoping for...what they were anticipating? Did they talk about what they expected?*

DL: I mainly talked with the kids who have much more of a resilient and optimistic look and they were excited. Hanh wanted me to give her an American name so when she got to America, she would have an American name. I felt sort of uncomfortable. Her older sister, Tam, had already taken an American name, Joanne. She probably doesn't use it now, [actually, she does. It is Karen. Around 2004 or so, one of the Hoang brothers discovered my Wake Island web site and told Hanh and the rest of the family. Within a year I met her and Ti in Orange County, California, where they had settled down.] but the idea was that this will get you quicker into society. This will make it easier to have an entrance into American society.

*CB: Was there any discussion of going back to Vietnam.*

DL: I think there were some that expected to go back. But these were the older people, maybe 30 or so. I think that people in their teens, they had already figured that they were going to be Americans. It was going to be great. But I think there were a lot who thought this would be for a while, but eventually, the communists will leave and we can go back. I think there were some who thought this would be a temporary thing, that their minds and their hearts are still going to be back there. When I get contact now from something I have put on the Web, in contact they have—visit Vietnamese web sites—there is a whole lot of this homesickness to go back. I think there is still a sense that we are still outsiders here.

Our home country is still that home country and have some sort of hopeful wish to go back.. Jeannie and Helen, two sisters, the ones who worked in the Laundry. I got to know them quite well. Jeannie and I became boyfriend/girlfriend a year after Wake Island. She had a mother who was in Vietnam. Her mother could not get out. I tried through the Canadian Red Cross because at that time US institutions would not have any contact with the Vietnamese government so we tried to go through international and Canadian sources and it was really impossible to get someone out. So she wanted to go back. She decided she would take whatever it took to go to a resettlement camp there, in Canada, just like she had been to resettlement camps here, just to be with her mother. I lost contact with her around 1977.

*CB: I guess it is easier to go back now.*

*DL: I am sure it is. I think there were some who really expected to go back and this was to be just a temporary set-back. The kids that I talked with were enthusiastic about going to America. They really were. They wanted to learn English. That is what I would do. The pretense in which I got together with any of these kids was that we would sit under a palm tree and we would talk. I will show you what English is. The easy thing would be colors. six different things were green. Green—green—green. Then they would show me something green. Then red. And so on. Just like you do with your children. We would just hang out in general.*

*CB: This starts on April—*

*DL: April 26<sup>th</sup>. It went full force as far as packed in about 8,000 through probably early July then it started backing off and by September I don't think there was anybody left. So it really lasted May, June, July. 4-5 months. I would say five months maximum and it was all over and they packed up their tents and moved out and we were left with an empty island again. It was almost like it was a mirage. By the end of September—did it really happen? I left in October. My contract was up in September but they couldn't find a replacement.*

*CB: You said that you thought the average stay was about three weeks?*

*DL: Yes. I am guessing from the groups of people I knew, the families I knew, from when I first met them maybe a day or two after they came in, although many of them I saw them the day they got off the plane and I certainly knew them when they got on the plane because of teary farewells and that kind of stuff. It seemed like three weeks was a good average. Some took a lot longer because some people did have some kind of problems. Some hung around a long time and some jet propelled through the system. The ones who had contacts were jet propelled through.*

Near the end of the last refugees that were there, I got a picture of the last baby born on the island. They were lying there in bed, baby in arms. I would like to find that child, that person. I also have a picture of the previous last child born on the island who was Heather Wake Beatty. She is in her 40's now. She was born on Wake Island in 1960. She had said that she was the last person born on Wake Island when I knew her. So apparently, around '60, they were closing down some of the facilities and were not, for instance, obstetric stuff

was not going to be done. For birth you were flown to Honolulu. So probably as early as that the island was being sort of dropped down in importance.

### *Accommodations*

*CB: What was the camp like that the Vietnamese lived in?*

*DL: They lived in barracks. The barracks were already there. They did pack them in though, mainly on cots. A whole lot of wooden cots were shipped in and but they also had some beds and some mattresses, because I have pictures of them. They pretty well packed them in the open bay barracks and there will be a few pictures in there of that kind of stuff. I didn't get invited to that many. There were also, sort of divided bay barracks, maybe a space 20x20 and the barracks itself would be 20x100 and would be made into five 20x20 spaces. So maybe a family in each of those. Mostly they lived in barracks that had been boarded up. People came in a cleaned them up. I guess they had to redo the plumbing or something of that sort.*

### *Water Supply*

Fresh water is always a problem on Wake. There is no supply of fresh water on Wake except rain. That is where all the water comes from. So there were always restrictions on water usage in normal times. In the dry season you only flush every 3<sup>rd</sup> time or something of that sort, very short showers and maybe not as often as you would like to. In the pictures you will see catch basins which were strictly for rain. They would pump down and it would be kept in tanks. These are the fuel tanks and these are the water tanks here. They just pumped the water during the rainy season, hold it in tanks and then we would use it in the dry season. With 180 people, we still had to ration water. 8,000 people—they shipped it in. We had boats that came in. I have a picture of at least one freighter than came in. They do have a deep water anchorage, I guess it has been dredged out so you can get in. There is a way to get in here and then anchor up and off load, no super tankers but big freighters can move in there and can anchor. So we had to have water shipped in and they had big water trucks, big tanker trucks that would go in the neighborhood and would fill up different places. I have a picture of a girl washing her hair with a 7-up can which she opened up and used it to dip water out of the bucket and the bucket she filled up at the truck they drove down the street. That is what she used to shampoo with. Water was a problem but they shipped it in.

*CB: What about food? Was there a mess hall?*

### *Food*

*DL: They had a mess hall. I guess they cooked Vietnamese food—I am guessing that. We had a mess hall also. We didn't cook either. We had a mess hall and we had to eat whatever they offered us. It was a real military mess hall and I am sure the Vietnamese had their own military mess hall.*

*CB: They weren't cooking in the barracks?*

DL: No.

*CB: They are hanging around with you, learning a little English. Were there other social things that developed?*

*Contacts: Wake Island Personnel and Vietnamese Evacuees*

DL: I think at one time, I think it was 4<sup>th</sup> of July. There were two outdoor movie theaters. The one we normally used was the smaller of the 2, because we didn't need that many seats. Our small outdoor theater was in here. We had the big outdoor movie theater somewhere around there and this is also where they had the tents for the hospital. Even with everything happening, everything still stayed around this general area. There was a big outdoor movie theater and I think they had some kind of a show where everyone got to go to that one thing. I think it was 4<sup>th</sup> of July and I don't know what it was. I guess it was imminently forgettable, maybe it was some super patriotic thing. I have never been much of a super patriot so as a result I usually tend to dismiss those things as shameless propaganda, but I do recall there was a certain amount of fraternization in that.

And as I said, fraternization, while it was in a defacto way discouraged, the discouragement was never enforced. So that there was never a problem, even though there were these signs saying "Do not enter", there was never a problem with me going through those lines. There was no body guarding those lines. There was one girl I would meet, Dua. We would walk all the way down the beach to the old housing area. We would start here and we would walk and talk all the way to the main housing area and then we would go wandering around the main housing area, look at different things and talk. We never did anything romantic, just hang out, walk around and look at stuff. These were meant to be off-limits, but we would go there anytime we wanted to in broad daylight. I guess at night maybe it was different. I never tried to do anything with them at night and maybe the night was kind of hang with the family kind of stuff. I never saw any of the kids at night that much. Whether there was a curfew, maybe there was, that could have been it. Or maybe just go with your family for a while.

*CB: Were there other Americans talking this way?*

DL: Sure. I would say, yes, it was probably more unusual to note the Americans that didn't. If I think of the weather people. Greg and I were out there all the time. He was just a wonderful gregarious sort of guy, great sense of humor and he loves people and he and I just had a great old time. Bill McDonald would not have a thing to do with them. Lee Hall was much more gregarious. He didn't make a point of it but he was a good guy. The Samoans stayed to themselves. Jackie had no part with them. I don't know what it was. She hung out with the RAF all the time. The RAF didn't really mess with them all that much either. So, to me it was much more, maybe a prejudice of mine, you almost had to explain why you didn't want to hang out with these people. After being deprived of women and children and social contact and laughter and all that stuff for a year or more, and then to say I don't want a part of that, you have to explain that to me. I don't understand that at all.



*CB: Maybe it goes back to your assessment of the selection of Wake types.*

DL: I think that Wake selects and people select Wake. I think there is a dual selection that goes on there in some sense. Wake selects in the sense that “the tired, the poor, the huddled masses” yearning for a new job or something, in one sense that happens. Wake selected me because I was down and out. But I think people selected Wake because they wanted to get away from or stay away social meaningful social contact. So, I think there is a selection process that happens on both sides there. I think that those people who didn’t throw themselves into the refugee thing were the ones who selected Wake. I think that for most of us who were selected by Wake and saw it only as a temporary solution to what we hope is also a temporary problem were the ones who said, “Wow” and we just ran towards them like crazy, so that I found it difficult to understand because I was so full of saying that I want to embrace everybody that walks down these gangplanks because this is another human being that is going to add to my shabby existence here and to see someone say, “God, more of them” and walk away to the Yacht Club makes me say “I am sorry about you, but there is more to life than the damn Yacht Club”.

They couldn’t go to the Yacht Club. At Peale Island, there was a bridge. The bridge was a great gathering point. I have several pictures on the bridge but there was a guard at Peale Island and you don’t go into Peale if you were Vietnamese. I could go to Peale any time I wanted to. That was pretty strict and that was about as strict as it got. All we are talking about as far as a guard was some coast guard with a Billy club and nobody ever tried to so, if Jackie wanted to go in here and play at the Yacht Club, which she did, She was certain never to see any of those people.

### *Camp Structure*

*CB: Where were these 8,000 Vietnamese people?*

DL: They were mainly living in this general area. At the outer end of Wake. And this is where most of the housing was. We lived in little dash here. This was the Drifter’s Reef is here. This is a chow hall and then this stuff over here is the chow hall that the Vietnamese used. This stuff around here was barracks. There were small individual single residence here that some of the people used. Some of the contract supervisors, instead of living in some of the barracks, they had little tiny bungalows in this general year like the Director of base operations had his own bungalow. Head of maybe the utilities would have his own bungalow.

*CB: Who were the people that were doing the processing?*

DL: They were almost all military.

*CB: Were they island people?*

DL: No. All people brought in. We only had that one island doctor and I guess they were smart enough to keep his hands off the people. I don't think he did very much. In fact, he hung out with Jackie a lot, frankly. Good for both of them. Almost all military, but not all military. There was one guy I got to know a little bit. He was from Catholic Charities. He was part of the processing. There were very few civilian processors, shall we say. Most of them were military—Air Force doctors, dentists, medics, etc. But there were a few non-military including this doctor from Catholic Charities and then of course we had the other kinds of processing, no military, but just sort of a clerk kind of thing. Often people who were Vietnamese who were good in English or had some clerical plus English background would be put to work in the offices doing some of the paper work for the processing. One of the women I got to know, whose English was real good, became an interpreter for the doctors. She would sit when someone was coming in for an examination. She would do the translating and she was a very nice woman. The word I want to use was almost stately. She had an elegance about her, a distinction about her that was very nice. I liked her.

CB: *Were you picking up class distinctions?*

### *Class Distinctions Among the Vietnamese Evacuees*

DL: I was picking up some distinctions. First of all, there were among the males that came in, there were rumors of gangs that of some kind that had come in together. You would see occasionally young males, maybe 10-12 in one particular area and they had been doing martial arts stuff or they may have been sitting around smoking or I don't know what they were doing. Occasionally one of the people would say they were a gang, one of the Vietnamese kids would say something like that. As far as thinking more social or economic class distinctions, I think there probably were but I think they probably more subtle than I could pick out. Because, in one sense the refugee camp was leveled to the same low position, but I think within the camp itself, people knew who was who. These were distinctions I was never to understand very well.

Because I concentrated fundamentally on kids and young people, I didn't really get to see as much of a dynamic among adults as other people might have seen. In some sense, I didn't get a whole lot of idea that even among children there was a great deal of class distinction. Only when these kids, who got to know me real well, shared with me their fear that their uncle was going to cut them adrift when they got to the US because he had money and didn't want to share it. Other than that, I didn't see much of anything, and mainly because I wasn't looking for that. I guess I had sort of self centered reasons and those self-centered reasons had to do with I wanted to be a real person again. I saw kids as the route to that.

[March 15, 2001, Blue Springs Community College  
Continuation of Interview with Dennis Lowden]

### **The Wake Observer**

DL: The Wake Observer that was put out strictly through volunteer efforts. Prior to my doing it somebody from FMC had done it. When FMC lost the island contract, it was open

for any kind of editorship. It went kind of blank for a while and I said I would do it. I did it for about six months or so. I saved a few of the copies which give us sort of an idea of some of the other things that were happening on the island. I found it was really difficult to fill a lot of space here. I ended up stealing cartoons and photocopying them and putting them in. If any of the cartoonists ever found out they could sue the Air Force because it was totally illegal to just steal peoples cartoons, but maybe three people in the world read this so—it didn't matter. Here we have the KEAD AM schedule of events.

CB: *“Commander’s Corner”*

DL: Yes. The base commander would always have something on the front page. It would talk about either recent events of the week or whatever. I think that week we had a plane land on emergency and while it was being fixed, the pilots just made nuisances of themselves on base. For them I guess it was fun to be away from everything for a while..

CB: *This was sponsored by the Air Force?*

DL: Yes. The Air Force underwrote it in the sense that they provided facilities and they provided ink, they provided masters. They gave me an office. I had an IBM electric which was about one of the three or four electric typewriters on the island. So, I was pretty lucky to get that. I would end up retyping a lot of this stuff to have this all pretty much the same quality, if you can call this quality. One problem was that we had real difficulties with the printing machine. It was old and we just always had a lot of trouble keeping good print quality up, and we would have to keep reordering stuff from Hickam and Hickam was really slow to resupply. The mast head was required to always be on there and after that—go for it. I would either make up or steal everything that is in here. Nothing was happening here. This was not exactly the busiest island in the world so it would be difficult to fill ½ a page if we just put down what actually was happening. It was just sort of a lot of fun. I used it as sort of a release in a way.

CB: *“Movie ratings”—“G” the hero gets the girl, “R” the villain gets the girl, “X” everybody gets the girl*

DL: One of the things, as a bi-product of the Wake Observer—I started doing the Wake Observer about a month before my contract was up. I was going to back to Sonya and live forever in her sweet arms, etc. I started doing the Wake Observer and this was really a great level of fulfillment for me to the extent that this suddenly made being on the island fun and in a moment of weakness or rashness, I signed up for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Then I told Sonya about it and she resigned from signing up for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year with me. We still remained very, very close and she would visit Honolulu once or twice but as an item, that was pretty much it. I liked what I did. We had fun putting it out. We had all kinds of silly stuff and re-looking at it I was able to see some of the names of the people, a couple of the RAF people whose names I had forgotten are in there. Occasionally the RAF would submit a little column of newsiness. I came a real enjoyable thing for me, but the price I paid was really not having anyone to back to when a year came out. At the same time, when the refugee operation began, I also had something else to occupy my time and occupy what I wanted to do.

Apparently, there were some people who really enjoyed reading this kind of “tripe” and I was happy to do so. I was always putting in beggings and pleadings for other people on the island to submit material for the paper, because as much as I could fill the paper with my own junk, there were just a whole lot of people who were being left out. If they wanted to make submissions or show their side of the island life, whatever it would be, they weren’t doing it very much. I would much rather have had a lot more help with it, a lot more people making contributions to it. I put a lot of poetry in it that I happened to like. I don’t think anybody else on the island liked the kind of stuff that I liked and whatever my sense of humor is. It can be an open question exactly what that is, there may have been three other people on the island that shared it.

## **Beehives**

One thing that I should have mentioned. Did you know that there was a very thriving bee-keeping activity? Wake honey was considered to be extraordinarily good and you could buy it in big Clorox bottles to take home or send it home.

*CB: Who was doing that?*

*DL: Louis E. Hitchcock. Lou Hitchcock was an Air Traffic type in the building. He may have been a controller, or whatever, but as I said, those people didn’t have much to do and he had a hive or two of bees and somehow they were able to make up enough—the bees had no place to go. They didn’t migrate like the birds did. They were stuck on the island the whole time. As a result, we had honey all the time and also, bee pollen. He would sell the pollen as well as a separate thing for health food people. I had some friends in LA, Hungarian mother and daughter, who would buy bee pollen from me, demand that I bring it back for them every time I left Wake Island. For them, bee pollen was a health food kind of thing.*

*CB: Where did he keep the hives?*

*DL: He kept the hives close to the Base Operations area, but more on toward the housing area. It wasn’t where we were living, but the old boarded up housing area. There was still a lot of shrubbery and underbrush and stuff like that there. There were flowering plants that had been there when the families had been there. No much in the way of flowering plants, because the soil was lousy, but apparently there was enough there to support at least a hive. A 2<sup>nd</sup> thing that Lou did. I guess he may have been one of the few people that got something out of the island other than a hangover every morning. He started a hydroponics operation. No real successful, unless he ate it all, because nobody ever saw very much of it, but it was interesting. At least he was making an attempt at something that most other people hadn’t even thought of making an attempt at.*

## **Wildlife and Domestic Animals**

*CB: Since we are on the topic of unusual things, the hermit crabs.*

### *Hermit Crabs*

DL: The hermit crabs were ubiquitous. You could almost not walk this external beach which is not really much of a beach because it was all just pieces of coral that had washed ashore from the reef and they were just everywhere. Various sizes, from the little tiny things. I had a picture that I have lost now of a hermit crab that had made a home in the bottle cap of a dish detergent, a little tiny thing, bright yellow plastic thing with a crab claw coming out. He had made his home there. I just thought it was the silliest thing. We got a lot of flotsam and jetsam that would wash up from various places and it may have been just washing away from what we had thrown away, more than likely, so that the hermit crabs would make a home in anything they wanted to. They were just enormous in number. They were everywhere. I don't know if anybody ever ate any of them. Maybe they did, maybe they didn't. Maybe the Filipino guys did. I didn't ever hear of anybody ever eating a hermit crab but they were everywhere. They were numerous.

CB: *What about rats?*

### *Rats*

DL: I didn't see any rats and I didn't really even hear of any rats. Though, probably it would be difficult with what seems to be rather lax sanitary conditions and everything else, there must have been. But I don't know of any. I'll tell you what was there. Dogs.

### *Dogs*

The Filipinos had dogs and I guess had brought them over. Maybe at one time, because they had families on that island, they also had pets and when the families left, they may well have been they abandoned a lot of their dogs. So there are now a lot of free roaming, feral dogs. Not a lot of them, because I have been to Bali. That is where there are a lot of free roaming, feral dogs, but there were enough of them. They were sort of taken in by the Filipino guys for pets. On occasionally you would see them wandering around Peale Island and they would come across the bridge. They were sort of half wild. I don't think that they were dangerous but they were just unpredictable. They weren't golden retrievers that would come up and nuzzle you. They were just weird look too. If I were a veterinarian I could study that just for birth defects amount dogs. I would just have a field day of inbreeding.

### *Birds*

As far as animals, the birds owned the island. It was truly "bird island". In fact, Wilkes Island is called "Bird Island" sometimes. Wilkes Island, except for the navigational stuff there at that end of the run way, that is all birds. When we would go out there during mating season, during working season for raising their young, those birds got a little aggressive. You didn't get too close to their eggs, or too close to those little pin feather things. There were some good-sized birds. The Boobies were a good-sized bird. They had bigger birds called the Frigate which had an enormous wing span. The wing span was, I know, more than six feet. Just a big, big bird and I remember I was hiding in the bushes one time, taking

pictures of birds when some Boobies were sitting on some eggs. I was from here to those mail slots and periodically, one of the Boobies would come and sort of dive bomb me and try to hit me with droppings. He would just be coming after me. I was under the bushes and around trees enough that he really couldn't get in physical to touch me, but he probably would have liked to have. I guess the next best thing was to give a little present.

The birds owned Wilkes Island. There was an area called Flipper Point on the map which was where most of the Terns would go for their breeding. Wilkes Island was for the bigger birds. The Terns were mainly on Flipper Point and it would be like this picture. You almost couldn't walk through there for getting buzzed and snapped at and also for not stepping on eggs or birds. It was that thick. Thick with birds, thick with eggs. It got to the point where you would have to be crazy to walk in there because I don't think anybody would want to squash an egg or a bird unless you were pathological, but I don't know if even the worst of them would want to do that. Also, you didn't want to get pecked to death. We had seen the Hitchcock movie. We knew what it was like.

There were different kinds of birds, maybe 10-12 kinds. The plover would come in and they were really great to watch on the shore. A tern called the fairy tern which was pure white with black eyes and it was probably the tamest of all terns. It would live much closer to us than the regular terns. At the same time, they had an eerie look. (There is a golf course on the island, so called. The golf course is interesting. I think it was about three holes and when I was a golfer, I was pretty good golfer. I played on the college golf team, however, Wake Island's course went one step beyond sand greens. It had concrete greens. Literally, this is not an exaggeration. Concrete over which had been stretched cheap Astroturf and a hole was dug in it and that was a green. So, not knowing it, I brought a wedge and a putter with me for some reason. I heard there were some golf facilities. I made a nice wedge with a lot of back spin on it and it goes up and hits the green and bounces up like a super ball and it would go miles. So—I played that course about twice.) Both times I played golf one or two fairy terns would fly near me, about 6 feet from my head. It was as if they were escorting me around as if I were not to be trusted there alone. Flipper point was where most of the terns did their stuff and people did come out here. Walt Koch would come out here a lot especially when the terns were not there. They were migratory. They would leave and he liked it out there a lot because it was sort of a lot of solitude fairly close by and of course, Wilkes out here, birds, birds, nothing but birds. Lou Hitchcock and his honey operation was somewhere in this general area. Here was the old housing area but I think he had some hives over here as well.

*CB: So, on the west side.*

*DL: Yes. This was sort of maintenance and storage and supply and stuff like that and there was another guy. He built an experimental airplane on the island. He tried to fly it. It wouldn't fly. It had a motor and everything, but it was a good size one. One of those things that John Denver got killed in. He put it together and it was going to be a big send off and he was going to fly and he was somewhere around here and I don't think he even taxied very far. I had pictures of it that are now gone. Interesting events.*

CB: *What about cats?*

DL: I didn't see any cats while I was on the island. Whether they were in hiding because of the dogs, I don't know. You would think with all the birds out there, cats would be...

CB: *The reason I asked was that I heard a biologist speak last year in Hawaii and they are trying to do restoration and they said that cats are now a terrible problem. Cats and rats. Those populations change. In two years you could have a million rats.*

DL: I don't recall cats, honestly. But again, that doesn't mean there weren't any. In my recollection, I do not remember seeing any.

CB: *They are said to be ubiquitous now, so if there were, you would have seen them. Were there any attempts while you were there to control the dogs or were they—*

DL: This maybe more a sarcastic guess than anything, but those are the only guesses I usually have. My guess is that Filipino culinary habits had some sort of correcting device on the population of the dogs.

CB: *I didn't want to ask that directly, but—*

DL: That is something that was only rumored, although none of the Filipino guys took any pains to dispel those rumors. The dogs, while there were a lot of them, they were free breeding, but we didn't all of a sudden have this boom of dog population. We had a good steady dog population, robust and ugly and strange and none of the dogs seemed to be in any kind of good physical shape. They were not just crooked legged and snarly mouthed, but sores and all kinds of stuff wrong with them

## **Wake Island Golf Course**

CB: *Where was your golf course?*

DL: The golf course would be up here somewhere.

CB: *Right at the upper end of Wake.*

DL: Along the golf course there were bushes and trees and I remember once when I first saw a fairy tern. I hit the ball and I was walking along by myself and I suddenly had this eerie feeling that I was not alone and I couldn't quite understand it. Because you always are alone on Wake Island. Something made me turn around and look and there was hovering about five feet away from me was this tern, looking right at me. Pure white bird with black eyes. Sort of looking at me. I can't read the intentions of terns, but I got to tell you, that tern did not look like it wanted me on its golf course. That may not have been the only reason I stopped playing because the course itself was not worthy of being called a course. Nothing had been done to it. They just poured this concrete out here and they pour one over there and they poured one over there, punched a hole in it, stretched some Astroturf over it and called it a golf course.

CB: *You are hitting over sand and coral?*

## **Recreational Drugs**

DL: Yes. There were no fairways, no grass there. There is very little grass on Wake Island. Although some people tried to grow some dope on Wake Island, speaking of grass. That had been an attempt. I never knew of anybody who succeeded in doing that. Any herbs that came in had to be imported, shall we say. There were people who imported it. It was not an unknown thing to suddenly—hum, that smells familiar. I am not saying it happened all the time and only a few people participated in it and I could give you names if you wanted but I don't want to.

CB: *Did it come in from Hawaii?*

DL: Yes. Also, from the far east. There was a kind of dope popular at the time called Thai Stick. That came in from the orient that was quite popular, and I must confess, deservedly so from my experience. I am not a stranger to such things, though that was about as far as I went with those kinds of activities. It was quite powerful. As far as horticultural activities went, most of them were pretty much dismal failures. That can be both good and bad.

CB: *Is it possible to make some copies of a few of the Wake Observers. You may have the only copies on the planet.*

DL: Absolutely. The neglect of these is not an accident. No one else would want them.

CB: *I had never heard of it.*

DL: It was apparently a regular thing. It supposedly had been a weekly paper for, I don't know how long. Maybe it had only started. This says Volume 2, No. 36, which may mean that Volume was sometime early in 73, could have been. Maybe the old editor had started it up for some reason or another and this may have only lasted a couple of years. This may have been only a little blip on the scope of Wake Island. I don't know. I know it was overseen by some one in Hickam [AFB], a young guy who came out a couple times who was in the information service in Hickam and had something to do with the Hickam paper. He and I got along fabulously. [his name was Mike Laughlin] He liked this kind of tongue-in-cheek sarcastic tone that I put in the paper because it was so different from every other military paper he had ever seen and so he was real supportive. Once he came on board, he always made sure I had enough ink, enough paper, a technician supplying me with new stylus or something like that. Then when the refugees came in, I wasn't doing the paper anymore because I was really busy, he printed some of my pictures in his paper at Hickam and from that point, apparently, I know of one person that says they saw one of my pictures later that year in a stateside publication. I have never received a cent for any of the publications of any of the pictures I have ever done. When we get to the pictures, I will show you which one that is. It is probably the best picture I have ever taken in my life.



CB: *Let's move on to the pictures.*

DL: On, one other thing. My radio show. There was a bulletin board inside the main chow hall and I would post once a week or so, notifications of what the show was going to be that night. I called this "The Martin Heidegger Concert". He was a German philosopher in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that I never understood. He just absolutely befuddled me and so for some reason, it probably betrays a huge flaw in my self-esteem at that time, I just would never refer to myself in any way, but I always used pseudonyms—the Martin Heidegger Concert—and your host Kenny Hackett, or some kind of doggerel name of who ever I was.

CB: *Oh, "Private Nick Danger, Third Eye" [Firesign Theater Recording]*

DL: Again, this was the kind of thing that half of the people wouldn't have understood a thing, none of the Filipinos would have understood a thing of it unfortunately, but it was only on a couple nights a week. These are just foolishness that I would put up and announce what the next thing was. There is a mention of Garner Ted Armstrong there.

CB: *That must have been something, listening to him out there on Wake Island.*

DL: I am certainly glad he was around to save us from the trepidations of our position. The rest of this is just sort of my "play list" as I was just sort of running along while I was playing at what particular time. I found that silliness goes a long way to addressing, at least in a temporary way, some of the problems of depression. There were a lot of depressed people on Wake Island and there were times when I was too, but I found silliness was a great way to address that. Silliness has been a part of my life forever and I guess I am just an unrepentant silly person.

## **Photographs**

### *Vietnamese Evacuees*

CB: *So, we are going to start looking at the photographs which are scanned onto disc.*

[Each photograph is numbered according to film speed, then roll number, and frame number. All the film was Kodak Tri-X, 135, 400 ASA. The negatives were scanned using a Nikon film scanner, using Photoshop. Two hundred of the images were archived on CD-Rom and given to the interviewer. All comments are by Dennis Lowden unless otherwise noted. Twenty-five of these photographs are appended to this interview

#400-10-20

A young boy sitting in a tree. He sat there, seemingly, all the time. He had a strange sad expression on his face and we almost have to call him the tree boy. He was sitting up in the tree called a Scaviola tree. I don't know if there is such a tree as a Scaviola, but that is what it was called by some of the old timers who were there.

#400-10-21

A young woman lying under a tree, sort of an evergreen type tree with very long needle-type leaves. She had a baby. Often the refugees would find shade, because it wasn't air conditioned, at least in their facilities. There wasn't, in May-June 75, any protection a whole lot from the heat, so being able to get out in the breeze, the trade winds which were comfortable, but getting out of the sun was something they wanted to do. This is a young lady and two of her children. I guessing it is hers, it could be that she is an older sibling. That happened a lot as well.

#400-10-22

The same girl, same woman. She is feeding her baby from a bottle. Bottle provided by the Air Force, I am certain.

#400-11-37

This is a young girl. She and her brother were kids that I knew and they apparently were alone. Her brother was a teenage boy and from all I knew from talking to them, they came without their parents. They were pretty much orphans and they really hung together real closely. One of my favorite pictures is of him and her. She was very sweet.

#400-10-40

This is that girl in the previous photograph plus her brother sitting on the bridge between Peale and Wake Island. As I said earlier yesterday, that bridge between Peale and Wake was a common meeting ground for a lot of people. They would sit there and sort of watch the time come in. The tide would come in from the ocean, under the bridge going to the lagoon. That was really the main flow of water in and out, depending on the tide and was just sort of a nice place to sit and watch the water and watch the morays and some people would even try to do a fishing there without too much success.

#400-11-27a

This on the bridge with the Coasties. On the right is a Coast Guard seaman. He is the guard at the time. He has a billy club in his hand. Nobody, as far as I knew, of the guards, had to use their weapons in anger. To the left is the Coast Guard Commander, whose name I don't remember. It was usual an Ensign or a Lt. jg or something like that. Nothing very high-ranking command the Loran station there. Often they were very young officers as well as enlisted men. The Coasties were primarily given the job of guard duty between Peale and Wake during this time because the Loran station was on Peale and they didn't want anybody there who wasn't authorized.

#400-11-30a

This is Annie. Her Vietnamese is Lam My Le. She taught French in Saigon in American Embassy School. Her French was real good. I spoke some French. So we would talk a little in French and she was a very sweet person. She had some distant relatives who were also being processed. (...) While she was on Wake, going through all the processing she found out she was pregnant (...) and, thankfully, she ended up in Wilmington, Delaware, in a Catholic sponsored, nunnery, while she was pregnant at the very end of her time. Her baby was born January 27, 1996. Her baby's name was Laurey. She wanted to give it an

American name . The nuns in the Wilmington nunnery, I know this first hand from having talked to Annie, said that she wasn't able to support her child and they would not give her any more help unless she gave it up for adoption. She wanted to keep the baby and so they essentially threw her out. I got a phone call from my friends the Hoangs, about whom we will talk later, saying "could you help poor Annie. You said you would accept our children. Would you accept Annie and her baby?" I said, "Sure". Annie came to live with me in February right after the baby was born. She flew into Rochester from Wilmington. I drove to Rochester in a blinding snow storm from Buffalo where I was living at the time and she lived with me until about June. I took care of the baby. I loved the baby. She was a sweet kid. I like babies anyway. Annie and I got along very well. She was a very sweet person, but eventually she went back to Wilmington. She had some distant relatives there who were going to put her up and so she and I lost contact somewhere around '77, like with everybody else. She was one of the few people I had contact with after Wake Island.

#400-11-32a

Hoang Thi Huyen Tam. Tam is the name she went by. She was the oldest daughter of the Hoang family. She was of the Hoang family whose father did not bring any money out, the brother who came out broke. She was the oldest daughter. She was very lovely. Her birthday is June 7<sup>th</sup>. I know she was probably 19 or so at the time. She spoke very good English so we got along real well. (...)

#400-11-33a

Yet another picture of Tam. I didn't tire of taking pictures of her. Annie, Lam My Le, became boyfriend/girlfriend when we lived together. That was different. She and Annie were very good close friends.

#400-12-12

Young Amerasian children romping and playing in the abandoned movie theater. This is the theater that we usually went to, but during the day, it was wide open. Everything is sort of open air and wide open, so, here are just a couple kids playing there. A lot of Amerasian kids came out early. This was early in the time—this is in May of '75. Apparently, they had some kind of connection with the American father that enabled them to do that. So I have several pictures of this particular situation.

#400-12-13

This is a single picture of one of the kids, very sweet, very haunting kind of face. Again, in the theater.

#400-12-21

The same thing. three kids together. One of my favorite pictures. They have been romping and playing. I came over to them. They recognized me and they saw my cameras and we would made faces at each other. I don't think they understood a word of English or very little. They were all pre-school. We are talking about two year old, three year old kids. With smiles and acting goofy...a sort of international language with kids.

#400-12-33

The same situation. Just two of the kids that were playing there.

#400-12-34

Same thing. One kid, towel in his mouth. Sort of a strange and pensive picture. I like it.

#40012-38

On the bridge again between Peale and Wake. On the right is a Coast Guard guard, not acting very guardly—like but mainly talking with pretty girls who were sitting on the bridge. By that time everyone knew there really wasn't a threat involved in anything. Certainly nobody expected anybody to fire bomb the bridge. The initial thought was we had to be careful of these people. We didn't know what to expect of them as far as maybe they might have been violent, may have been angry, may be a lot—that was a big rumor. There were going to be a lot of Viet Cong sneaking out to try to do damage to the base. Nothing like that ever occurred. Very quickly we learned that these were just vulnerable, sad people who had been uprooted from their homes and will probably never see their country again and were standing up in the face of it with enormous bravery and enormous poise. I think it attracted a lot of us to them because of that. So because of that, this coastie is sitting there and he is guarding the bridge, but he knew there was nothing to guard against really.

#400-12-39

I don't really know the exact story of this. I just happened to come along. This is apparently a father embracing his baby and surrounded by some other people, but, just the joy on this man's face, holding his child, is just contagious. I am glad I was there to see it.

#400-1-33

This is the greatest I have ever taken. I will give you the background on it. It was taken the first day of the operation. This girl came off the first airplane that landed at Wake and as I go back and look at the contact sheet, now, it was just about the only picture I didn't remember taking. All the rest of them are just boring, predictable, banal people getting off the airplane. I didn't remember taking this picture, yet it is a fabulous picture and it just shows a lot for the fact that I am not that good a photographer, I am a serendipitous photographer in that my subconscious told me to click even though I don't remember clicking. In that girl's face is just encapsulated something of the soul of Vietnam at the end of the war and the weariness. Here is girl who is probably 11-12 years old. [She was actually 8, and is carrying her half-brother] She had known nothing but war all her life. Her whole life has been consumed by violence and now she is being uprooted and leaving it all, no matter how terrible it may have been, leaving it all behind. It is my favorite picture, literally of all time. I am very happy to have been there and done that as they say. [In February of 2018, she found the web site where these pictures are posted and sent me an email. I was overwhelmed with joy to hear from her. I have carried this image in my heart for the 40+ years since I took it and it gave me a sense of fulfillment to know she has seen it and find out who she is. Her name is Teresa, married, living in Seattle, and as beautiful with her gray hair as she was in 1975.]

#400-14-19a

Tam again. She just did have an extraordinary photogenic face.

#400-14-30a

Another Amerasian kid. I think it was one of the ones who was playing in the movie theater in a previous picture.

#400-14-33a

A young boy showing off his non-existent muscles and just clowning and playing around.

#400-15-1a

Hanh. She is a younger sister to Tam. Hanh was my personal favorite of all the kids I met on Wake. She was Hoang Thi Duc Hanh. She was born September 2, 1959 and so she was about 15 in this picture. She was just a very sweet young lady. Her personal name would be the last one given, family name would be the first one given. Thi always meant girl and maybe she would have a middle name and maybe she wouldn't. Some did, some didn't. This is Hanh and she was just about my favorite of the kids.

#400-15-2a

Another picture of her. Sort of a more pensive mood.

#400-15-3a

Same thing just slightly backed off a little bit in distance from her.

#400-15-41

Again on the bridge. Again a guard and a little girl. Sort of a cute picture of them looking at each other with really sweet expressions. Cute. Why not? Cute is OK.

#400-15-8

Under the shade with Tam and Annie and some other kids, just sort of laying out and taking it easy and sort of a mixed little scene of different people doing different things. This is often what people would do. Sort of like in the song "Mad Dogs and Englishmen go out in the mid day sun". They didn't go out in the sun. They stayed under a palm tree or something like that.

#400-16-3

A couple of boys. I didn't often get a chance to have boys pose for me, so these were a couple of boys, one, I think kneeling down and I think one standing up. I don't remember much about them personally.

#400-16-4

A couple of kids—2 boys, arms around each other, sort of posing for me, but typical sort of saucy boy style.

#400-18-24

This is a picture of a little baby asleep on a table. For some reason, I just loved the way this kid was lying, so I took maybe 8-10 pictures of this one sleeping kid in this empty sort of a barrack type room that they used, next to slotted windows.

#400-18-27

This is a close-up of this little baby and he is probably no more than 2-3 years old, sleeping, on a hard table, absolutely a hardwood tabletop.

#400-18-28

Same kid, different exposure

#400-18-3

This is a picture of a young man who I guess was trying to run a kind of three-card Monte game or something—a card sharp. He was trying to demonstrate for me all his card playing tricks. He was funny.

#400-18-4

I think this is the same kid. I used a wide-angle lens—I think a 20mm wide angle lens to get close to him but sort of spread out the action.

#400-19-22

Just a kid standing there posing. Sort of shyly, but posing none the less

#400-19-23

Don't remember taking this one. Another kid standing there under a tree.

#400-19-24

Now I have an idea. This is a group of kids of which the previous one was one of them. A group of kids standing under a tree. In almost all cases, they loved to stand under trees, to get away from the hot tropical sun was a good thing to do. In almost all cases you will see them under trees trying to soak up the breezes but not soak up the sun.

#400-19-4

This is a family picture. The young lady was Nga. I don't remember the family name, but Nga pronounced Naa. Very attractive young woman. I took a lot of pictures. I think I included one more in here. We talked a lot. Her English was very good. She said she had been in law school when she had to leave Saigon. She was a law student and we talked about things and she seemed to be extremely cultured and well read and just a lot of quite dignity. She had a very old grandmother with her plus her grandmother and she and her grandmother were pretty...she was very protective of her. Two of the pictures we had before of two young boys posing were her brothers. Nga eventually landed in LA because one time I went back there, I tried to visit her. I had an address for her but she was not home. I got to see her mother but I never got to see her. I didn't see her after Wake Island.

#400-19-44

Nga sitting in a tree. A lot of people loved to sit in the trees. I don't know if she was just clowning around or what, but there she is sitting in a tree, wearing sort of a traditional Vietnamese kind of dress.

#400-20-27

A young lady whose name I don't remember. She is again very pretty. She would sit and talk with us. When I say "us", often Greg Manuel, my other weather buddy, he and I would hang out together and there take a couple pictures. After a while we would try to talk English with them to try to help them with the English, but generally speaking it turned out that he would be a good person to just talk with and I would step back a little bit and take pictures. That made me a little less obtrusive.

#400-20-30

The same girl.

#400-21-10

Hanh again. She is offering me a glass of water, glass of lemonade—close to where they lived outside the barracks where the family was. I would meet them there and we would talk and have a good old time.

#400-21-11

This is me with Ti Ti. TiTi is apparently Vietnamese for little or tiny or diminutive as Ti was the smallest of the Hoang children. Ti was born in 1965 on January 11 and she was about 10 years old here and she, almost as much as Hanh, almost adopted me and occasionally you will see pictures of her just sitting on my lap and in some sense, maybe I was a surrogate father or what, but it was very nice.

#400-21-15

This is a picture with Ti sitting on my lap. Tam is sitting next to me and Hanh took the picture.

#400-21-17

Puts Hanh back in the picture. The same thing. Ti is sitting on my lap, Hanh is sitting next to me and Tam is sitting next to Hanh.

#400-21-12

Is taken actually more or less in one of the barracks where the family stayed. This is a young boy, just sort of looking at me—with some sort of expression on his face—sort of "Hello, what are you doing here?" or more likely "Hello, what am I doing here?"

#400-21-28

Nga. This is Nga alone.

#400-21-32

This is Nga with her grandmother, fairly wide angle shot. This is the beach on the east side, pretty much you might say, behind the Drifter's Reef. There was a little bit of a beach on

that inlet where the water was coming in from the ocean to the lagoon. Under the bridge, but this is actually east of the bridge by 200 yards or so. It was a fairly nice beach and you can see, I think I am pretty much shooting east or a little bit east and sort of heading out. I think I am shooting more like southeast, but that was a big gathering place for a lot of people on that particular beach.

#400-2-1a

3-4 kids playing little games by themselves by themselves by the barracks where they just moved in. This is an early roll. 400-2 would be a roll taken on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April. This was right after the first wave got there. That sets the scene real well.

#400-2-21

This is almost a full family unit sitting under a tree outside the barracks where they have been living and it is just one of those mixed pictures. I like mixed pictures where almost everyone is doing something different. I don't like pictures where everyone is looking at me with a stock expression. I do have some of that but this is more of just everyone is doing something slightly different.

#400-2-22

This is an early picture and I believe it is probably three siblings with the older daughter holding her young brother or sister and next to her is a brother, middle brother and holding a paper cup of something that was being passed out at the time. Behind them is a little bit sort of the general area on Wake on which they lived and that may be the chow hall in the upper left-hand corner. The chow hall that they would use.

#400-22-23

This is another Hoang. This is a daughter of the rich brother. This is Hoang Thi Xuan Mai. They didn't hang around with me as much as Hanh and Tam did. Xuan Mai was born on October 16. She was very pretty and very nice but much more reticent and much less eager to come and talk with anybody. Eventually we got to have a little bit of a rapport.

#400-22-25

Also Xuan Mai. Both of these pictures were taken sitting on top of a bunker, WWII bunker that had been built and it was in that general area. I have some other pictures where a wide-angle view so you can get the whole bunker. That was place that people liked to go to watch the sun set and also the breezes were a little stronger up there. If it was cloudy but still hot and you got up there the breezes on top of the bunker were usually stronger than the breezes at sea level.

#400-22-27

This is on top of the bunker, very wide angle shot. You can see a lot of what went before. I just going to guess now, but I think I was shooting almost due south. I was on the bunker myself. This is some the Hoang kids on the bunker. There are little places to climb in and it



was very much a military bunker that was abandoned at that point. I think that the bunkers were mainly used for storage. I know that we used a bunker for storage for our meteorological stuff and I think these were mainly storage bunkers and you might say the hatches in the top really, if not sealed, you couldn't get very far into it, so nobody was going to be harmed by it. The interesting thing is, while there were as I said, police around, nobody got on anybody's case about climbing on top of a bunker and playing around, so—again, I almost wonder about and am very happy that there was not a large police presence to get in the way of some of this stuff.

#400-22-30

Same kind of thing again. The Hoang's, a little bit closer, playing on the bunker.

#400-22-31

This is another one of the Hoangs. Her name is Dung. It is pronounced "zhung". She was Xuan Mai's younger sister. She was very shy as well. I didn't often get a chance to take her picture.

#400-22-33

Dung again. Same exact time, but at least she turned her face and looked at me and gave me sort of a non-expression.

#400-23-1

Xuan Mai. This is on the bunker again.

#400-23-2

This whole roll must have been on the bunker. This is Tam. There is a lot of background, panorama. This, it seems to me was shot towards the northwest.

#400-23-3

Again the same scene on top of the bunker. I was standing up and shooting down on Tam and others.

#400-23-4

This is definitely Xuan Mai at sunset, looking towards the sunset. So what you are actually doing on top of that bunker is looking more or less toward the lagoon. The lagoon is the water you would see in the background.

#400-23-44

Also on top of the bunker, more shots to get a little bit of the foreground picture of the bunker. Again the Hoang kids, my constant companions, and hope they liked it as much as I did. I believe there is Tam and maybe Ti Ti. The experience of Ti sitting on my lap was usually the emotional highlight of my day.

#400-23-6

Here is a picture of a bunch of them, probably some of the Hoang kids, climbing, I think it was a bunker but it has all been covered with undergrowth and things like that but they were

climbing as if they were climbing a mountain. It is either a natural promontory there on Wake Island, which there were not many or a bunker that has been covered over and eventually stuff has been growing out of.

#400-23-9

Walking past Paxton Hall with a bunch of kids. I think they may have been going either to a meal or to something else, but it looks like an official formation of kids.

#400-2-4a

I don't know who this woman was. This was very early. This was the second day of the operation. There was an older gray haired Anglo woman who came through, apparently as important as hell, because everybody laid out the red carpet for her, shook her hand, did a bunch of stuff for her. So here is a picture of her. If you know anybody who knows who she is you can probably find out something about her. She was only there for maybe one day. But she was clearly someone important in the hierarchy. I don't know anything more than that. She was definitely kowtowed to.

#400-3-32

Sort of a family unit together inside the barracks where they lived. A posed family unit

#400-3-34

Another or maybe the same family but they are stretched horizontally, sort of sitting on cots and in the room where they stayed as a family. Again, this was an early part of the time when either I was allowed to come in more often, or I chose not to come in later. I think this may have been a sense later on that this was their home and I shouldn't just barge in at any time.

#400-3-35

This was really one of my favorite ones. It is a close up of a bunch of kids, all grinning at me because I am making a fool of myself with this camera. The great thing I like about this is you look at all the people in the picture, every where from the guy in the far background in the door and the older girl standing on the right and everybody has a different expression. All the kids have something different. There is one guy with a very calm, passive almost stoic expression and other people are just cracking up these kids. This was just a panorama of different expressions.

#400-3-37

This is a group of about four kids standing under a tree kind of horsing around and then decided to pose for me and so I never can resist.

#400-3-39

This is some of the kids that were in 3-35 and in the same place outside the door of their barracks but they were sort of loitering around in some random order rather than that strange posing that they did before.

#400-4-3x

Some military airman first class giving instructions or directions, pointing a way to one of the refugees, a young man.

#400-4-5x

Jeannie. Jeannie Tso. She was ethnic Chinese, though a Vietnamese citizen. This was her first day. She was just off the plane, all dressed up, where to go, what line to stand in? Stuff like that. She was very pretty. It turned out later that we became really good friends and I got to visit her. She was eventually sponsored. She and her sister were adopted by a church in Virginia Beach, Virginia. I would go down to visit them a lot. Jeannie is a very fine memory I have.

#400-5-0

Speaking now of fine memories...Pham Thi Dua. Dua spoke real good English and I guess just wanted a friend, someone to protect her, so she would hang around me. I liked her. She was pretty and very sensitive. She eventually went to Cupertino, California. The last time I heard from her was 1984. (...) She had a wonderful sense of humor.

#400-5-1

This is another picture of Dua.

#400-5-16

On the far right of this picture is Base Commander, Major Bruce Hoon. This is one of my favorite pictures. He is squatting down there. Some Filipino guys are standing next to him swigging down a beer in mid day and some other people. Just standing there during the Vietnamese time, watching the passing scene. I know exactly where it is because I am shooting almost exactly due east and this is the beach along the inlet, coming in. If we were just to be looking over here—is the bridge, off to the left and behind me but only 20 feet.

#400-5-19

Here is Dua again on the bridge. There is really only one bridge we got here, the one between Peale and Wake. She is trying to shade herself. She was always complaining about how hot the sun is here on Wake Island and how she wished she had an umbrella and so she has a little grimace on her face trying to shade herself from the afternoon sun.

#400-5-21

This is under the bridge. There were some kids, elementary kids, and Dua went down there as well, all dressed well and they were apparently trying to catch fish and they may have caught some, I don't know, but she was down there to inspect whatever they were doing. She came over alone and I think that is one of the reasons she sort of hung onto me a lot. She really had nobody, even a distant relative in the camp. I guess she figured I was trustworthy and I regret to say that I was.

#400-5-3

Dua again. We had gone the beach south to the old housing area. We just sort of wandered in looking at all the old houses and we were sitting, I think, in an abandoned yard and she just was sitting by a tree and I took a couple pictures of her. I gave her the copies.

DL: Backtracking a bit—I was still working six days a week at the Weather office working a rotating shift. I had given up the paper and I had given up the radio station mostly. I was doing almost all photographs. I would take pictures of people and always make little 5x7's or something like that and take them back to them the next day. I would always be supplying them. When you see some of these contact sheets, you will see that there are pieces cut out of the contact sheet and that would have happened primarily because I went back with the contact sheet and maybe they would be leaving in the afternoon so I would cut this little strip out for them. I always make extra pictures once they said what they wanted and give them to them for free of course.

#400-5-36

This is two young Vietnamese men and a woman. The woman is in traditional Vietnamese garb of long dress with slit up the side with long white pants underneath it and the two guys are reading some kind of paper, probably processing papers and maybe one of knows English better than the other. It has to probably with some of that.

#400-6-20A

You asked yesterday about as people came through and maybe their connections. Here are three people sitting on the bridge. They are facing west. I am facing East towards the ocean shooting them. On the right is an American guy and to the left of him are two Vietnamese women who are always, almost always, seen together and they definitely have a history together. (...) This may be two sisters. This may be just friends together and maybe this is boyfriend/girlfriend—I have no idea. But just looking how they interact, you could tell that the young lady on the left in this picture just really did not want to be anywhere near this guy. He was always hanging around them, I guess, as their protector. One of them certainly didn't seem to want that.

#400-6-23a

On the bridge, watching people apparently trying to fish and looking over the side there is a young girl and her younger sister, as just a part of the scene and watching what is happening.

#400-6-27a

Here we have a blatant law breaker. This is a Filipino guy driving a Kentron truck. We were forbidden to have them in any official or unofficial vehicles. He is giving a ride to about three cute Vietnamese girls. He doesn't seem to be ashamed of it. He never got into trouble I am sure and it was sort of a funny picture.

#400-6-28a

Same scene exactly, slightly different pose

#400-7-28a

Here is a Kentron-Hawaii vehicle with a couple employees in it talking to a young Vietnamese girl. This just looked like a scene you would find in "COPS" with the girl leaning on the car... Just an interesting scene with various kinds of stuff and vehicles around there. Some are civilian vehicles. There were civilian vehicles on the island. At this point in 1975 and when I arrived you weren't permitted to bring a vehicle on the island. You weren't permitted to take a vehicle from the island, so all the vehicles were there were the only ones that were going to be there and for the transients like me, we could buy a vehicle and we could sell it when we got ready to leave and the prices were really low because nobody could make a killing. I bought a VW bug for \$300 and sold it for \$300 when I left. It was a way to get around. You could buy a 10 speed through the exchange.

#400-8-19

Taken inside the laundry, the base laundry, in which there was a mixture of Filipino and Vietnamese. Some of the Vietnamese had volunteered to do laundry duty and they would help out the Filipino guys. Jeannie Tso, who I had mentioned before, was in a previous picture is one of them in here along with her sister, Helen. Jeannie is much more vivacious and energetic and Helen was much more placid and stoical. I got to know both of the real well.

#400-8-20

Another laundry picture, same scene

#400-8-21

Same thing. Laundry picture

#400-9-28a

"Sitting on the dock of the Bay" I guess you would say. An Anglo guy, and American. I don't remember exactly what he did. I don't think he was military. I know he wasn't a doctor. But he was one of the support people who came in just for the operation itself. He is sitting there surrounded by three Vietnamese kids all looking a slightly different direction which is, I guess, what I like.

#400-25-40

This is some kids trying to break open a coconut that they knocked down from a tree and using rocks or, actually, big pieces of coral and they are trying to crush it.

#400-25-41

Close up of them trying to get into the coconut itself.

*CB: Did you ever eat the coconuts there?*

*DL: I don't think so. I don't remember doing it. No. I don't remember. There were coconut palms, so coconuts were there. Coconuts are really hard to get into.*

#400-26-10

A little girl sitting under a tree who was using a palm frond to make a little crane or a little bird. She had folded it origami style and then put it on the end of a string to just hang of sort of an ornament of the tree.

#400-26-17

This is another picture of that same series of her folding and then hanging this palm frond thing.

#400-26-20

A picture of the lines at the chow hall in a big wide-angle view prior to a meal.

#400-27-17

In the foreground with his back to you is Greg Manuel who was my best friend. Gregory Victor Manuel was a weatherman with me and my best friend on the island. Unfortunately, we lost contact. He did come to Kansas City and visited me because he was still in the Weather Service and I was teaching here. He came to the school so we went to a Chiefs game, hung out a lot. Somehow, we just lost contact. He was originally from Lake Charles, Louisiana. Last time I knew of him, he was in Los Angeles. Anyway, he is there talking with a Vietnamese boy.

Greg, after I started doing it, would try to teach English, a little bit.

#400-27-20

Greg is there in the middle between two young ladies. (...).

#400-27-23

These are the same two ladies without Greg.

#400-27-27

A bunch of kids sort of posing. I always hate it when they would see the camera. Some kids automatically sort of line up and pose. This is one of those groups who posed.

#400-27-31

Greg again with a couple of Vietnamese kids, young boys, he had taken under his wing.

#400-27-33

We are looking due East into the ocean. I think it is farther south on the island, more or less toward the old housing area because in the foreground there is this cement block thing. There are some kids back here and I don't know if it was sort of an impromptu school.

#400-27-44

Two young women who were both nurses. Either nurses or nursing students because they talked about that upon occasion. They were also very refined and sort of elegant young ladies who had a good education, good upbringing and I enjoyed talking with them. Both of

them were people that were enjoyable to talk with. Their English was perfect, but I liked them.

#400-28-14

I believe they are either taking injured people out of a medic truck to load into an airplane to take off the island.

*CB: Did they arrive injured?*

*DL:* They may not have arrived injured as much as they had been diagnosed with something during the medical processing. Or—they might have arrived injured.

#400-28-15

This is the same thing so this is a little bit more of an action picture with people carrying a stretcher out of the truck, an ambulance kind of truck, and toward the plane.

#400-28-17

Loading into the plane. We sort of got every bit of it here.

#400-28-19

A long line of Vietnamese finally getting off Wake Island, standing in line to the plane to get on the plane. They finally processed out.

#400-28-3

I can't remember her name. I wish I did. She was just a sparkplug. She was full of bubbly happiness. She is standing in front of the Wake Island sign. She was about to leave and there was a Wake Island sign down by the Base Ops, but off to the East. She had seen me out taking pictures and she dragged me down there, made certain I had a picture of her standing in front of the Welcome to Wake Island sign. So there is it.

#400-29-13

This is inside sort of a medivac airplane. There is a guy lying on a cot. This is sort of a double decker sort of thing. He is being evacuated out on a Medivac kind of airplane. This is in early June 1975. It started the 26<sup>th</sup> and had been going on for about six weeks, something like that.

#400-29-14

Another line of people heading for the airplane on the tarmac and you may have noticed in the last few pictures, there have been a whole lot of people getting out of the island on the tarmac.

#400-29-16

Here is somebody on a stretcher being attended to on the ground, about to be put on a plane out of here.

#400-29-19

This is taken inside a plane. It was a charter DC-8 that they flew out. This was a family that I had seen on the island. You might ask why I am on this plane. I am on this plane to leave Wake Island as well because that morning as I got up there was a teletype message that my father had died and on it was scrawled — see Bill. Bill McDonald. I knew my father had had some heart problems and I didn't think they were that serious and he had just turned 60 the month before, in May. So I went to McDonald and asked when I could get off the island. He told me there was a plane leaving this afternoon with some refugees and we can probably scare up an extra seat on it. I told him I would appreciate it and so I got out that afternoon to go to my father's funeral. I went to Hawaii and he died in Ft Lauderdale so I went to California to LA. Because of the international date line, I got in LA before I left Wake Island and went immediately to see Sonya, called my brother in Ft. Lauderdale to find out more about it and found out he had hanged himself. So we had a lot of interesting things. That really threw me for a loop. I went and visited a friend, another philosophy major, named Cheryl Bobbitt and wanted to know what she thought of it and she went to a file cabinet she had in her house and brought out a file folder of all the suicide notes she had left. She apparently been a serial suicide attempter but never attempted that much. I think she more enjoyed writing the suicide notes than actually doing anything. I had some strange people in my life, so as I was leaving Wake, I didn't know he had killed himself.

#400-32-15

After going to my father's funeral and visiting other relatives, on my way back I stopped at Ft. Chaffee, Arkansas at Ft. Smith where the Hoang family had been relocated after they left Wake. They left Wake probably in late May. They came in early May so they spent 3-4 weeks here. She had just arrived at Ft. Chaffee not long before. On my way back, I flew into Oklahoma City because that was where my son, Jake, was living with his mother. In 1975 he was about eight years old at the time. Then I rented a car in Oklahoma City and drove to Ft. Smith which is in the eastern edge of Oklahoma and stopped in at Ft. Chaffee and was able to talk my way onto the base to the refugee place and gave the name of the Hoangs. I took a letter with me and they had their return address on it so I could trace them down real well and the guards at the gate could see that I actually knew somebody there. It was great to be able to see them again.

#400-32-15

This is one of a series of pictures that I took with my old girlfriends again, Tam, Hanh and TiTi and Xuan Mai, Dung.

#400-32-16

Another one of them

#400-32-20

This has me in it, the tall one, surrounded by the Hoang ladies.

#400-32-24

There I am with Xuan Mai and Tam and Hanh and TiTi off to the side giving a peace sign



#400-35-32

I am now back in Wake Island. One thing I notice about the pictures now, as opposed to the pictures before when there was this break because of my father's death. I find myself spending less time taking pictures of people and really getting involved with the people themselves and more time taking pictures of the operations. Maybe it was the absence of the Hoang girls, too. I see it as sort of an impersonal time, maybe I was just—I don't know.

So here we have some children playing under a tree. A lot of distance shots rather than close up shots. There are a few close up shots but I am keeping my distance in some sense from people and also involving myself in the operations and the institutions of the refugee thing rather than before when I was embracing everybody.

#400-35-34

A guy with a little toy. Looks like a little truck he has his foot on. At this point, by the way, I stayed away about three weeks or so on my father's death.

#400-35-36

A little kid standing on a bench, looking in a window. When I got back I also noticed there were far fewer refugees on the island than there were before. This was about the beginning of July and the numbers had decreased quite a bit. It almost seemed like what we had left was the wretched of the earth. The people who came in early seemed to have connections. They seemed to be well read. They seemed to be intelligent or educated. They probably had had a lot of cultural advantages and all of them had pretty well processed out and now all we have left are people that had nobody and nowhere to go and really, maybe no great hopes and perhaps this is one of them.

#400-36-13

A little family unit standing in front of their barracks.

#400-36-15

Inside a barracks with the cots but a statue of the Virgin Mary. Somebody had, in packing what little stuff you are going to pack with you, fleeing your country, somebody was religious enough to pack a big three-foot statue of the Virgin Mary and make that what they were going to carry with them. Amazing. There is was in their barracks. Wow.

#400-36-18

Another family unit standing outside of their place.

#400-36-21

A Vietnamese doctor who was apparently in the Vietnamese military but he was helping in the medical processing and I think he loading up a syringe there. I remember him as being very useful and did a lot work there with his people.

#400-36-23

A lot of pictures from here on are going to be medical processing pictures. Here is a corpsman. They used the air guns in those days for injection. I think he was sort of brandishing his air gun.

#400-36-27

This is more medical processing. I mentioned before that used the old school house down in the residential area of Wake as the immunization place and you can see the school house stuff there, black boards, desks, stuff like that, sort of whatever they had they used.

#400-36-3

This is a family standing outside of the residence they used. There is a sign hanging from their house. It looks hand done. There were a lot of military stenciled signs often in Vietnamese saying — Oh, Wake Island for sell, low price, contact somebody. We have a little family trying to sell the island.

#400-36-30

More medical processing. Same guy with the air gun, about to fire off a round into the arm of a young boy and it was great with the wide angle. You get so much context, not just the arm and the bubble but everybody watching stages of either amusement or alarm. There was so much going on I didn't want to limit what I had to see.

#400-36-5

A baby sleeping in a hammock. I don't know if it was a homemade hammock or one that they were able to get there. There were a few hammocks around and it may have been the Air Force was distributing hammocks. It wasn't only the Air Force that was there. I know Catholic Charities were there sending people and they may have sent other things as well. But here under a sort of open air kind of a building, a baby slung in a hammock. I think it was a mother or daughter tending the baby.

#400-36-9

Just a group of kids hanging around under a tree, staying cool.

#400-37-12a

A woman getting, I assume, oral polio vaccine. Some oral vaccines were given. I assume polio was probably, the Sabin vaccine, was the major one.

#400-37-14a

Another polio vaccine dispensing to a different person, a little wider view.

#400-37-18a

This was a little girl. She was really being brave about getting shots and she may even be smiling in this one. She was really being brave about it.

#400-37-20a

The same little girl after she got her shot. She was standing to the side clutching her arm where she got her shot but still smiling and almost beaming, maybe that she was brave and she got through what ever it was.

#400-37-21

Two older people, adults, in a similar pose, clutching their arms after they had been shot with a vaccine.

#400-37-25a

A girl standing in an abandoned house in the housing area. I got a couple more pictures of her that I just adore in the enlargements, 16x20's but this is one of them.

#400-37-27

The same girl sort of clutching the handle of that door with sort of a funny expression on her face. She was very sweet, about 2-3 years old. Spoke almost no English and yet we were just sort of making faces with each other, just being nice.

#400-37-28a

This is the picture of her that I like a lot. She is showing me on her fingers, she is counting in English, 1, 2, 3, very hesitatingly, but also using her fingers as counters. I listened to her and praised her but also took pictures of her.

#400-37-37a

Inside the residence of a woman who was very proud of clean she kept the place. She spoke very good English, first of all, and it was immaculate. She wanted to make certain that we knew that this was something she cared about. She worked part time as an interpreter in the medical stuff.

*CB: Let's back up here. Is the little girl in 37-28a wearing dog tags? In this one, too.*

*DL: I don't remember that. Hanh had a little bell that she wore around her neck and I don't remember seeing anything else. I don't know that for certain. It could well have been something that they got through their first processing.*

#400-37-3a

Here we have a very reluctant young girl getting shots.

#400-37-4a

Another recalcitrant child and father, father comforting the child. Either on the prospect of getting a shot or just having gotten a shot. I don't know which it is. An unhappy child.

#400-38-14

Again, a young girl, about 12 or so getting a shot. The same corpsman I used before, a young black man, holding this girl's arm so she doesn't mess up the shot. The other guy is a doctor from Catholic Charities. I don't know his name. A good hard worker, compassionate.

#400-38-17

Pretty much the same scene. Same girl didn't want to get shot and being held.

#400-38-3

A man who is getting a shot from the air gun and looking a little with a little bit of an attitude.

#400-41-26

This is in a sort of hospital and what is being pictured here is a man in the hospital who apparently is the father of this baby being held by his wife, sort of reaching for the baby. Sort of a nice little thing. The father was ill in some way and she was visiting him and letting him hold the baby for a little while.

#400-41-3

Sort of a medical examination. This is a doctor, either a Major or Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force looking at a baby. The baby's mother is the woman who was the translator. She was very nice. This doctor was a very nice guy. There was one doctor there that I didn't put any pictures in this group for you. He was a needle guy. He was doing a lot of immunizations and when ever he was going to shoot somebody, he would always just show them the needle. Almost as if he was there to give pain. Sadistic.

#400-41-4

This is a different doctor but the same thing. This is a physical examination by a different doctor.

#400-42-10

Inside the medical tent.

#400-42-11

We now begin the dental scenes. No end to torture. This dentist, Skelton I think his name was, was a really nice guy. He tried to do the best he could in a very painful situation. He was a captain in the Air Force. He is working with a Vietnamese young girl and he had, as his dental assistant, a dentist from Vietnam. They worked well together.

#400-42-2

A group of kids sitting on a cot. It is a good group.

#400-42-26

They were going to operate on this guy and so he is laying on a cot about to give him general anesthetic. It wasn't for anything that serious, I mean, look at the conditions here. We are not talking about real operating room stuff, although they are going to move him into the operating room after he was out. Maybe it was going to be something like an appendix or something fairly minor. There he was laying on a gurney of sorts.

#400-42-5

Kids hanging out the window of their living quarters.

#400-43-15a

Dentist again giving an injection to this young girl who was in the previous dental picture.

#400-43-16a

He is checking to see if it is dead yet.

#400-43-21a

He is working on a patient.

#400-43-30a

He is again working. His assistant, the Vietnamese dentist is with him.

#400-43-33a

Again the dentist and his assistant

#400-44-28

This is the best picture I ever took that is out of focus. Just slightly out of focus. The kid just got a shot, tears streaming down his face, but just slightly out of focus.

#400-44-29

The same kid in focus, but the picture isn't as good.

#400-44-30

A young girl getting a shot and you can see the air gun over here and the compression.

#400-44-7

Another medical exam

#400-46-23

Another hammock picture. A mother and child in the hammock and I believe that she is pointing up to something.

#400-46-27, 28,29 and 30

Most of these are the girl washing her hair with the 7-up can. There is a great scarcity of water. The water had to be shipped in and they put it in tanker trucks and they would go around to the neighborhoods where the people were and people would come out with their buckets and fill them up for washing or whatever and she had her bucket and got it for shampooing her hair. The only thing she could use was an empty 7-up can.

#400-46-28

Same girl, same thing

#400-46-29

Same girl, same can, same hair

#400-46-30

An old person walking away with a cane.

#400-46-34

Another older person walking down the road.

#400-47-2

Again in the shot area. A father and his two children and he was sort of clutching them rather closely giving them assurance and comfort.

#400-47-3

We have another shot given to a very elderly Vietnamese man. Again the air gun.

#400-47-7

A picture of kids sitting in the school house window watching the show. The show is people getting shots. The only game in town so they are looking on and laughing.

#400-48-17

A baby being checked out by a doctor. The mother on the right and I think the interpreter is holding the baby.

#400-48-26

A wide-angle view of the whole shot thing including, on the left, the kids watching it with amusement and on the right the actual deed being done.

#400-48-27

A shot being administered to an unhappy child

#400-48-30

Kids looking in the window

#400-49-11

The woman on the left. Everybody is looking to the right. Is the mother of these two Amerasian children. (...) She and her friend were the, um, sexual entrepreneurs who wanted me to sponsor them when they went to the US. Here she is with her kids.

#400-49-15

This is maybe my second favorite picture of all these. I have a large print of this. This is one of the daughters of the woman I just mentioned before. She is sitting on this cot holding a blond-haired baby doll and with this strange expression on her face. It just moved me.

#400-49-16

Same girl, different pose

#400-49-28

Young girl making a kite and trying to fly it. There were always winds there. That was a great thing about Wake Island. There were always winds. You can see by looking at the ground around her how barren it really was. It was just a moonscape. Some trees back there. Extraordinarily hardy. What ever grew was extremely hardy. Some clumps of some kind of vegetation, but generally it was pretty bleak.

#400-29-29

Some body from Kentron driving a truck.

#400-50-14

A family group waiting for the bus that will take them out of there. They have vacated their barracks which I think may be visible in the rear there. They are kind of standing there waiting for the bus.

#400-50-15

They are getting in the bus

#400-50-16

Still getting on the bus

#400-50-22

Still life of discarded mattresses and sort of a broken and discarded bike in the foreground. At this point I was getting a little forlorn. I am seeing all these signs that people were leaving. I realized that now things were going to get back to normal. I don't like normal. Normal on Wake wasn't that great. Especially after having all this around you.

#400-50-34

I did this for the sign. The sign is in Vietnamese so I can't tell you what it says. This was in front of the housing area. They eventually did use the housing in the area farther south that had been the private housing area. This is in front of an abandoned private house that had been used during this operation because they just needed as much floor space as they could to get people in there, so they took every available space. They first used barracks and then had to use some of these abandoned houses.

#400-50-35

This was curious thing. This was a Santa Claus, sort of a plastic Santa Claus, that had been around, abandoned, but it was strung on the tree with his feet on a lower branch. For reasons that elude me yet.

#400-53-12

More piling of stuff outside a residence and I think through the window there are people waiting for the bus that will take them out of there.

#400-53-15

There are these four young girls that were playing sort of in a hallway of an outdoor building and they were just sort of giggling to each other. Doing silly stuff.

#400-53-16  
Same group

#400-53-17  
Same group

#400-53-20  
There is a couple in the door of this place. It was almost like a garage, I guess, and there is something in Vietnamese that someone had spray painted on the door.

#400-53-21  
A picture of the tank truck with the water in it and someone filling a bucket from behind so you can get a picture of the back tank truck and filling water.

#400-53-27  
A family group with a father. They have made an impromptu swing by suspending a cot from the arm of a tree with some rope and then the father and all his kids get on the swing and the larger child is pushing the swing.

#400-53-28  
Same scene.

#400-53-32  
A really old woman juggling. I have never seen an older woman in my life. She is using three stones or pieces of coral. She was very proudly showing me how she can juggle them.

#400-54-11  
The last child born on Wake Island, I will bet my life. She was born there in the Wake Island Hospital and there is the mother and I took a few pictures of this because this was very much near the last person there.

#400-54-12  
Same thing.

#400-54-20  
Here is a Boobie, a flying bird.

#400-54-21  
Another Boobie

#400-56-27a  
This is out on Wilkes Island now and these are a couple of Boobies.



#400-56-30a

This is one of the serendipitous things where just suddenly the right picture came along and I was there to take it. Here is Walt Koch, an air traffic controller, taking pictures of the birds and I am back here taking a picture of him taking pictures of the bird. There is one bird showing off.

### *Hydrogen Generator*

#400-57-11a

The hydrogen generator. This is a close up. We are looking up from the bottom. This is the floor. You can see a little bit of stuff coming out this joint. That is not supposed to be coming out. This is the leak that we were worried about so much. It is all supposed to be contained in there and siphoned off into the balloon. There shell around it is just sort of a shell and in the inside is the actual generator. This is a hole we used to wash it out. We are looking through the shell. There are little holes on all different sides to let out whatever has to be let out.

#400-57-14

Same sort of thing. A little more gas coming out this time. I probably took this during a balloon inflation and the first one was just as the reaction was starting to take place, and then as it became more prominent, the leakage. Eventually we almost get interference with the picture because there is so much excess of gas around.

#400-57-15

Same sort

#400-57-18

Here is a longer distance thing of the whole thing itself. A bunch of gas coming out and the pipes coming here. We would use that to wash off things. At least one of the pipes goes to the balloon. There are rolling doors here so the balloon could go out the doors depending on the ambient winds. But you can see. There should not be this stuff coming out during the middle of the process.

Here is the water tank. We fill the water tank and then we let x amount of water into it after we had loaded all the caustic soda and the aluminum. We had to use a scoop to load the soda and aluminum. X number of scoops of this and X number of scoops of that would make the witches brew work.

This is Bobby Uchida from the Weather Service that came out to Honolulu to check out the leaking stuff. This is a picture of him and two other guys.

#400-58-17

This is an immature frigate bird. The frigate was the largest bird that migrated to and from Wake Island and this is an immature one. He is still big. They are really big birds.

#58-22

A Boobie mother with an egg in the foreground.

#400-59-27a

My buddy, Greg Manuel, playing tennis after everything is over and we could get out and play tennis and commiserate about the fact that we no longer have pretty girls to look at.