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INTERVIEWEE: Major (Retired) Edward H. Booth

INTERVIEWER: J.R. Digger MacDougall

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By J.R. Digger MacDougall

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program Interview with Ed Booth, recorded on the 21st of January, 2004, in the City of Ottawa. Interviewed by J.R. Digger MacDougall. Tape 1, Side 1.

BOOTH: My name is Ed Booth—Edward Booth—B-O-O-T-H. I was born on 14 December 1938 in Westlock, Alberta. My father joined the Armed Forces, and went overseas in '39, and we moved on to a farm with his uncle who had been a World War veteran—First World War veteran. The uncle's wife was also a nursing sister in the First World War. So, my relationships with the military were formed fairly young. I attended high school in Barrhead, Alberta, graduated, and then, as we were a poor family -- didn't have much money -- I joined the ROTP—the Regular Officer Training Program, of the U of A, for the Army, and enrolled in the Royal Canadian Electrical Mechanical Engineers and started an engineering program at the U of A.

INTERVIEWER: So, Ed, you started in RCEME. Is that where you flew?

BOOTH: No. I did first phase in Kingston in the summer of '58, and then found out that I had failed two subjects at engineering the year before. And rather than write the sups, I was offered the Officer Cadet Program. I had to switch to Service Corps because engineers were required in RCEME. I went to Borden in September of '58. I stayed a year in Borden, did the second and third phase OCP and actually, in fact, did the Infantry's YO course in Meaford.

INTERVIEWER: That was the Young Officers' course?

BOOTH: Correct. From after graduating, and becoming a 2nd Lieutenant, I was posted to 19 Company Service Corps, in Whitehorse on the Alaska Highway in September of 1959. There, I was Transport Officer for close to a hundred and twenty vehicles running the highway. The Army, at that time, owned the Alaska Highway. All the maintenance, everything on the highway was done by the Army, and the Service Corps supplied all the supplies, transport, up and down the Alaska Highway. A Captain was supposed to be the Transport Officer but when I got there they had found out he couldn't make it. So, as a 2nd Lieutenant, twenty years old, I had a hundred and thirty vehicles—a hundred military, and forty civilian drivers. One sure grows up in a rush!

I spent two years in Whitehorse running transport up and down the Alaska Highway—everything from buses to tractor-trailers. I married the CO's daughter—one Patricia Tremble. That's one way to get ahead, or at least I thought it was. At this point in time, I was offered—the CO called me in one day, and said, "Would you like to try out for pilot training?" And I said, "Sure." So, they sent me off down to Edmonton for a medical. Passed

that, came back and got married, and then was posted to 13 Company Service Corps in Calgary. I was there about two months, and they sent me off down to Centralia to the Air Crew Selection Centre. Obviously, passed that and was back in Calgary for about one month. In November '61, I was shipped off to Centralia, Ontario, to start basic training with the Air Force on Chipmunks.

That training lasted through until May of '62. I got a hundred and twenty hours on Chipmunks. I was fortunate enough to come first in my class. At that time, for some reason, the Army had loaned the Air Force two L-19 Cessnas, and they brought them down to Centralia, and we got twenty hours on Cessna L-19s before being posted, in the summer of '62, to Rivers, Manitoba.

INTERVIEWER: Ed, what sort of training did you go through, when you went through your basic flying training, at Centralia?

BOOTH: The course for the Army pilots -- because remember, we were all commissioned officers -- their setup was really set up for training initial entry cadets into the Air Force system. And they did a fairly short course—something about forty hours—and then they were shipped off to Moose Jaw to fly Harvards. With us, they gave us a hundred and twenty hours, and it was quite extensive, because once we left Centralia, we had to be full-fledged pilots, almost. So, the ground school consisted of aerodynamics, navigation, formation flying and MET.

INTERVIEWER: Meteorology.

BOOTH: Meteorology. It was quite interesting. The MET teacher was very, very serious about his subject. I know I got a hundred percent once, in the last final exam, and you'd think I had just got the Victoria Cross or something.

INTERVIEWER: I would have thought that he would have brought out the champagne, with a feat like that!

BOOTH: I don't think he drank, but then, they would have been against his principles. But, anyways. On the flying side, it was a fairly extensive flying program. As I said, it was a hundred and twenty hours, covered all the basics. And also, there was a separate program for instrument flying, with a final exam -- under the bag. You had to fly under the bag in the back seat. Formation flying—several hours of that. A lot of cross-country—normal, low-level, and of course, night—cross country, and night time flying normal.

INTERVIEWER: So, you finished your training at Centralia. What was the next step in your flying career?

BOOTH: I went to Rivers, Manitoba, in August of '62, and went on to the L-19 course number 33, in September. I think there were six people on the course. The L-19 total course consisted of eighty hours—all done out of Rivers, flying locally. And of course, being an Army course, we didn't just fly from runways. In fact, even when you took off from the Rivers Airport, you didn't take off from the runway, most of the time. I remember we used to go out and land in farmers' fields—in fact, all over the Minnedosa Valley. Interesting things.

I remember one day coming back, and the ground crew were pretty perturbed because we had picked a field with a bunch of cows in it. The cows had left a few cow patties around and, of course, the L-19 didn't have fenders or skirts on it. So, when the wheels ran through the cow pies, they all ended up on the bottom of the wing of the airplane, in various places, which necessitated a good scrubbing.

Also, one of the things they used to teach us was landing on roads. I remember one evening, we were out in the evening and lined up on a country dirt road, and the aircraft was doing an approach to the road. The guy behind me said, "Watch out." The farmer had turned out of his field as I was doing the approach, and started down the road. He and I were going for the same piece of road, at the same time, until someone behind said, "There's a car below you."

INTERVIEWER: Ed, you mentioned that you topped the Chipmunk course. Were you as good a pilot flying the L-19?

BOOTH: Yes, I was. I graduated the top of my class. And I have to hand most of my—the Chipmunk, maybe, you know, I had some good instructors, but on the L-19, the CFI at the time was Harry Reid. He's long now departed, unfortunately. He was really top notch, and he always taught you to think. The first time we did it, he put me into a situation for one of my initial check rides to go into a confined area—you know, an engine failure. And, I chose to do, what we called in those days, a "high key, low key" turn first, engine-off approach, which I was too low to do. So, when I overshot, he took me up again, and said, you know, "Don't turn. Just put all the flap down." And that thing had sixty degrees of flap, and you could virtually point the nose down on an L-19, put it at 45 degrees, and go almost straight down. And we made it this time.

Then, he took me back up again, and said, "Now, we'll really make it interesting." And this time, he took control, and he said, "Turn off the switches." With that, the engine went clunk-clunk, and came to a halt. And he says, "Now, you really have got to make it." And we did. And subsequently, on my final check ride, he picked a place in the Minnedosa Valley that I shudder every time I think about it. But we got it in, and he said I was the first person to go in there, and maybe the last.

INTERVIEWER: Ed, as the top pilot on your course, you must have been given a few privileges while you were there. What sort of additional flying did you do?

BOOTH: Well, at Rivers, at that time—I think it was the Central Flying School had some Air Force pilots there, and they had, I think it was about five or six Chipmunks, to keep up their proficiency so when they went out to places like Moose Jaw, and various others, to do check rides on instructors, they would be competent. They liked to go formation flying, and most of the time, they could only scrounge three pilots, but they wanted four planes. So, they'd call over, and I'd say, "Sure, I'm not doing anything," being young and foolish. Of course, [I was] number four in the line most of the time. We'd do our briefing and go flying, and things like—they would do loops, in formation. You know, as long as you stick on the guy beside you—the wingman—it all works out well. You don't know where you are.

Anyways, one day—their favourite trick was to get into a tight turn and, of course, the fourth guy in the turn is pulling it the tightest. And they keep pulling it tighter and tighter, and then,

all of a sudden, you realize that the thing is stalling, and you flick out and you're upside down. And the lead comes on and said, "Number four, are you still with us?" "Yes." The other one is going down. They've been down to the line astern, and you step down, and you're flying on the tail wheel of the airplane in front. And of course, you can't hear him talking to the tower, or anybody else. You're just on the intercom type of thing.

And then, all of a sudden, you're locked on, and all the airplane goes bump, bump, bump. And of course, it's your wheels are on the runway, but you don't see it, and it really startles you. And the lead comes on and said, "Number four, are you down yet?"

INTERVIEWER: Well, that was pretty exciting stuff for you. So, what was the next step in your flying career? Then what was the next phase of your flying career, Ed?

BOOTH: OK, I think I had two weeks off, from the L-19 course, and it was off to fly helicopters. I remember I had two weeks off because my wife was something like eight and a half months pregnant, and I had two weeks off. So, we got in our Volkswagen, and went to Flin Flon, with her due in two weeks. Luckily, she took along *Mother and Child* and I had a quick read there. But we got her back in time, so I could start my BHTU course—Basic Helicopter Training course--in Rivers, on the Hiller helicopter, and this course was run by the Air Force.

It was a basic helicopter course of sixty hours. And it taught basically just how to fly the helicopter, some navigation across country and, you know, landing in confined areas. No instrument work because the aircraft didn't have any instruments. Night flying and, of course, emergency procedures -- auto rotations and things like that. On the course, there were seven officers. We all had wings, by this point. And they were all Armoured Corps, Service Corps, and we had one Infantry person.

The Artillery didn't go onto the helicopters because at this time the Artillery, you know, was flying L-19s spotter aircraft, and they had been since the Second World War, with the Auster and aircraft in the Korean War. But they went into the Armoured Corps and the Service Corps and the Infantry. The Army was planning on buying helicopters. In the case of Service Corps, they were planning on buying transport aircraft and they were looking, at that point in time, H-34s. So, what the object of the exercise for the Army—why they were training pilots from basic wings, right through to competent helicopter pilots -- was so they'd have a cadre of pilots available when the Army and the powers to be, decided they had the money, and decided which aircraft they were going to buy.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you went on to helicopter right off fixed wing aircraft. What were the differences in handling?

BOOTH: Well, once you get a helicopter flying, it doesn't fly much differently than a fixed wing. But it's from the time you leave the ground, into the hover, is the most difficult part. In my later years, in training helicopter pilots I used to take the student out to a forty acre field and give him control. And then, we said, in the first half hour if he could stay in the forty acre field, and hover, he was doing well. It was like trying to balance an egg on the end of a pin, and keep it there. But you know, you get the feel of it. And after a while, you get down to a thirty acre field, and a twenty acre field, and before you know it, by gum, you can even keep it steady enough to put it back on the ground.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you flew the Hiller CH-112, I believe it was.

BOOTH: Yes, correct. The Hiller was a—actually, the commercial version was a 12E. It had a Lycoming three hundred and some odd horsepower engine in it, and twin carburetor. It was quite powerful for a light aircraft. It was the equivalent of the Bell 47, at that time, but a lot more horsepower. One of the unique features about it was, because it was mainly a civilian aircraft, was that the control systems weren't hydraulic. The control system—the cyclic control on it -- actually ran two panels that were ninety degrees off from the main rotor system. So you didn't actually put your input for cyclic control into the main rotor blades in head. You actually flew these paddles. But it made it a lot more—you know, the pressures were higher and all that. But from a maintenance point of view, there was no maintenance. It didn't have hydraulic systems, pumps, and reservoirs and the whole nine yards. So, it had a baggage compartment on the tail which was a bit unique.

One of the interesting things was, of course, it would carry three people up front. But when you carry three people up front, the weight was too much to the front. So, you had to ballast it. There was a bar pinned to floor, in the right hand seat, in the cockpit, and this bar--I don't know--weighed something like fifteen pounds. You had to take the bar, when you had three people in the airplane, and walk around and put in underneath the tail boom, pin it in—in most cases, while the engine was running—and right inside the tail rotor, which was good fun. Make sure you went around the right side—the proper side to do it—without getting chopped up.

Then, when you landed, and you kicked out two people -- or two people and you ended up flying with just one on -- it was way too much weight in the back end, so you had to go out and pull the weight off again and put it in front. So, you had to do your own weight and balance automatically system, every time you flew the airplane, which wasn't too bad in training. But when you got operational later, it could be quite interesting when you had to take two passengers in and then depart with yourself. That extra step with the aircraft running—you run around the back, and your passengers wondering what the hell you were doing with this bar in your hand.

INTERVIEWER: Was it at this time that you started your tactical flying?

BOOTH: No. Well, yes and no. The Basic Helicopter course went for sixty hours. And then, we gained another couple of weeks off and we started the Tactical Helicopter Course which was run by the Army Aviation Tactical School at Rivers. Now, this was a school run by the Army, with Army pilots. And this was a hundred hour course, and it lasted--I think it was close to six months. But this one taught low level flying; confined areas; all kinds of operations like reconnaissance, artillery—well, spotting, and artillery fire direction; all these type of things that were all done from the helicopter.

INTERVIEWER: So, how did this course prepare you for any operational flying that you would be doing later in your career?

BOOTH: It was an exceptional course. I learned one heck of a lot. The guys that were teaching on it were in the best in the business. The Chief Flying Instructor was super. We did a lot of things like navigation. You know, they'd give you a map to do low level, contour

flying which was one of things we were doing. At this point in time, the Americans hadn't even done this. They actually came up to us later and asked us how we actually did this contour flying, and they even took our manuals. Anyways, it was a great course. We learned one heck of a lot of things.

Most of the flying, as I said, on the tactical course, you were never more than a hundred feet above the ground. In fact, most places, when you went through tree lines you had to kind of size it up, and make sure that the width between the trees was wide enough for the rotor blades. And in fact, I remember one day, my instructor, who was, said, "You can go through there." And I said, "No, I can't." He said, "Here, I'll show you." And yes, we took off a couple of twigs, and took off the end caps on the rotor. And he said, "I guess that's going to cost me a couple of beer."

Anyways, it was a super course, and it really put me in great stead for later flying. I flew later with the Armoured Recce Squadron, and I flew with the Americans for two years, and it really put me in the head of the pack.

INTERVIEWER: After your basic helicopter training course, did you stay at Rivers, or did you go to a unit?

BOOTH: Well, yes, I was at Rivers. ... I think the BHTU finished just before Christmas, and I flew most of January and February, doing test flights for the Maintenance Unit there that looked after the helicopters doing--you know, they'd change an engine, or whatever--rotor system. Someone had to take them up and test them. I did that for a couple of months.

Then, in March of '63, Bud Hill and Dan Danelick and myself were put on a heavy helicopter training course at Trenton, Ontario, and this was with—actually it was a Search and Rescue unit who did—it was for the Search and Rescue people. It was their course. And it was on H-21 which was a Piasecki twin rotor aircraft. In other words, it had a rotor at each end and the rotors didn't overlap. They were completely articulated and flapped, both back and forward. I think the name for it—they used to call it the 'Horse'. It was a hundred feet long from rotor tip to rotor tip. It had a tricycle landing gear, and a big radial engine in the back which drove into a combining gearbox. And then there was a drive shaft went fore and aft to the front and aft rotor system.

They had two models there—the A and the B. The A actually had wooden blades with a metal covering. It was quite exciting because when you started that up in the morning, especially if it sat overnight in the rain and some moisture had got into the blades, it doesn't take much on a helicopter to throw them off balance. And you could start the engine which you couldn't hear. You'd have to have the Flight Engineer back there, and all you could see was the instruments. You couldn't hear it start. When it would finally start, and then, you had to let it warm up.

And then, it had a dog clutch. It didn't have a hydraulic clutch or a face clutch—just two metal pieces that clanked together. And then, you'd throttle it back to minimum thing, and you'd click the switch and the thing went on, and the thing did a dance, as it tried to catch up to speed. And the cockpit went round and round, and you hung on, until the thing got spinning. Yes, one of it's endearing features, especially on the A model. The B model had the metal blades. Actually, there's two big fins on the back stabilizers. The A model had

fairly small ones. Its endearing habit was, if you went into an autorotation and didn't keep a coordinated turn—if you started in to turn, it had a nasty habit of swapping ends, which could get pretty exciting when you're doing an engine off and going backwards.

It also didn't carry a heck of a lot. I remember our sling loads consisted of two or three, forty-five gallon drums full of water, and that was about all it could do. In fact, if you were wanting to gain some altitude and that, we usually picked a ridge line, and then, used the up drafts along the ridge line to gain altitude, and help you--like a bird--push you up. But, like I say—a lot of systems—a lot of interesting things. Of course, they're not flying any more. The only place you see them nowadays is in museums.

INTERVIEWER: So, did this get you ready for operational heavy helicopter flying then?

BOOTH: Yes, this was the objective of the Army, at that time, was to train their Service Corps pilots on heavy aircraft. This was the only heavy aircraft that the Canadian Forces—I guess we'd use at that time—the Air Force had them--were the only persons who had heavy, so they offered us this course. And it was, I think, sixty-six hours I did on the H-21.

INTERVIEWER: Now, what was the next turn in your flying career, Ed?

BOOTH: OK, after [the] Trenton course, I went back to Rivers and then--those were the days when the Army did their big summer concentrations, all summer long, in Wainwright and Gagetown. They shipped the L-19s—sorry, the....

INTERVIEWER: Hillers?

BOOTH: ... Hillers off to Gagetown, and it was in support, mainly, of the Hussars that summer, and I was put in to fly one of the reconnaissance helicopters, for the Armoured Corps. And I remember, we went across country there once. We were going from Sussex to—oh, I can't remember—right across the whole southern New Brunswick. It was quite--very interesting. Very interesting, and quite an experience.

INTERVIEWER: So, your next posting was to the United States?

BOOTH: That's correct. I was posted to the 1st Aviation Battalion in the 1st Infantry Division, in Fort Riley, Kansas. It was an exchange position. We used to have a number—about five of them, I think, around the world, and this was the Service Corps one. I replaced a gentleman by the name of Blaine Bartley down there. And in the summer of '63, I started my flying with the U.S. Army. It was a young pilot's paradise. We had a hundred and four fixed wing and rotary aircraft, and less than eighty pilots to fly them. You remember -- and this is when the Viet Nam War was starting to build up and the Americans were putting in all kinds of helicopters and rotating pilots, so they couldn't train them fast enough to keep up the flow. So, the units in the States were being bled of pilots. So, I could fly any time, anywhere in the Continental United States I wanted.

INTERVIEWER: Were you actually involved in training Viet Nam pilots?

BOOTH: I was. Well, I was training them for the battalion but, actual fact, a lot of them were being pulled and going to Viet Nam. You know, they were experienced pilots. Some of

them actually coming back from Viet Nam were coming to us—the odd one--and they had some great stories and scars to prove it.

There, I flew—the first aircraft I got checked out on was a Bell 47, and gained another aircraft with wooden blades. It had a two hundred horsepower Franklin engine. And on a warm day, with a full load of pilot and one passenger, required almost as much runway to get going as an L-19. And it cruised at a top speed of sixty-five miles an hour. And it was great if you were going down a highway somewhere, and all the traffic was passing you. We used to always say, “To save gas, we’ll just pull up on a tractor trailer, and land on the roof, and we’ll go faster!”

Then I got trained on a Sikorsky H-19. This was the civilian model of the S-55. It had a big radial in the front, and a passenger compartment underneath. The pilot sat up on top. Like the H-21 which I’d flown with the Air Force, though, an old design—actually it was designed for the Korean War as a medevac aircraft. You get about a half a dozen people in the box and it was full. It had a bad habit of getting retreating blade stall. I fell victim to it one day, when I let the Crew Chief -- he, Americans only flew with one pilot -- and he was sitting in the co-pilot’s seat. Most of them were good [indistinct].

Well, I let him have the controls and he was over his farm, or something, and started into a turn, and let the speed drop off. Anyways, the next thing I know, I’m looking straight up at the clouds, and hanging half out the airplane. Luckily, we recovered it, and I took it home. Did a running landing -- back to Fort Riley -- did a running landing on the airport, and I never touched another one.

From there, I went on to fly the first Huey I flew. I flew on the 1B. This had a seven hundred horsepower Lycoming motor. It had nine seats, only in the back. It was a bit of a beast but, you know, in that day it was good technology. Compared to today, it was still a bit of a beast. It had no linear actuator. You pulled on the collective, and the motor—the turbine--would drop off. So, you had to pull the collective, give the turbine some time, push the collective back down again, then pull it up again when the engine decided it wanted to go.

Also, [I] flew there the L-19. We had L-19s there—TO1D, which is actually an L-19 with a variable prop used later in Viet Nam as a spotter aircraft, but it was used.... It had a full instrument panel in the back so you could do your instrument training on it. Also, got checked out on the U6A, which is really nothing other than a standard bush pilot Beaver. That was a great airplane to fly. It wasn’t very fast, but it would take a fair number of people and the Americans liked them. And the Army liked them because they’d get into the field locations and back out again and, you know, you could haul five or six passengers.

My secondary duty there, after I finished my Service Corps training, I was the Messing Officer of the Battalion Field Mess. Now remember, this was an Infantry Division, and each battalion had its own mess. For two years in a row, we got—I forget what they called it, but they rate all the messes, and ours was the best one in the Division. And that’s, you know, twenty-four thousand people in that. So, my CO, who had actually been an Exchange Officer with the Jump School at Rivers--he was pretty happy about all this.

I was replaced there, in early ’65, by Dave Simmons. I’ll never forget the first ride I took Dave Simmons on. He wanted to -- I took him out to give him a checkout, and he hadn’t had

too much experience at that point in time. One of the things we were up night flying, and I said, “Oh. Give me an autorotation.” And he said, “What?” And I said, “An autorotation.” I said, “I have control. Chop the engine.” And we did an autorotation to the ground, and Dave’s eyes came open after we were on the ground and said, “I’ve never done one of those before.” And he said, “I was never so scared in my life.”

INTERVIEWER: So, you were flying all these types of aircraft. Exactly what kind of flying were you doing?

BOOTH: Well, I was going all the time. One of the things, after I got there for a while, they realized how much training I’d had, and what my skills were. So, it wasn’t long before I had an instructor’s rating, and was checking out new pilots coming into the squadron, or into the company -- a lot of cross-country work. We used to go down to Eglin Air Force Base, down to the swamps down there, and we were preparing the division to go to—by this time the Division was getting ready to go to Viet Nam—the whole infantry division. So, we were doing deployment exercises, and they would actually fly the whole division from Fort Riley, on Charlie 124s—transport aircraft—down to Eglin Air Force Base.

So, it was a mobile deployment. And they would take everything in the aircraft, in those C-124s, from bulldozers, to graders. They took all our airplanes—all our aircraft—except the Mojave. The aircraft we were using was a fixed wing. It was a twin-engine aircraft for surveillance. That was the only one -- they wouldn’t pull the wings off it. But everything else went by these aircraft. And we flew in the swamps, at the Ranger school down there. They had seven airfields at Eglin Air Force Base. We did exercises—building runways and moving stuff around. It was a deployment exercise in supporting all kinds of troop movements. In forty aircraft troop movement things, there would have to be forty Hueys-- would lift a full U.S. Battalion into combat.

INTERVIEWER: Were you required to do any special duties while you were in the United States?

BOOTH: Well, I don’t know if you’d call it special duties. Everything was interesting. One of the things that comes to mind is that the LOHs, at that time—Light Observation Helicopters—which later came into being were still under development at that time. So, with the 1st Division getting ready to go to Viet Nam, they needed a recce helicopter that had more power and that. So, they used a substitute, which was 12-E Hillers, which they had down at the supply depot at Stockton, California. One day the CO called me in, and said, “I know you’ve flown Hillers and all that. We’ve got twenty of them down in Stockton [that we] need to come back. Go and get them.”

Well, a lot of the guys had flown Hillers at one time or another—a number of them—but that was years and years ago. So, I said, “Well, I could only find ten pilots.” So, off we went to Stockton, California, and I was supposed to check them out. Well, we got to the line up on the runway and there were ten helicopters all parked out there, and not one of them had dual controls in them. I said, “I’m not getting in one of those with no controls.” So, we had a big briefing, and told them how [indistinct], pulled them out in the middle of the parking lot -- or out in the middle of the runway. I said, “You’ve got forty acres here. Here’s how you start it.” I stood beside them, and told them how to start it, and off they went. And they needed the forty acres, for the first five minutes. And then, when they got confident and thing

[?indistinct], they came back in, landed, and we sent the second guy out. And that's how we spent the day, checking pilots out. Flew them back and, of course, we had a bit of problem there, because we had to cross the mountains. I had to go down as far as San Bernardino because you can't fly a helicopter over ten thousand feet without oxygen.

Well, we found a spot that was twelve, and we snuck through a pass at twelve thousand feet, and we actually ended up going to Phoenix, and then down to El Paso, Texas, with a little trip across the border to get gallon bottles of Bacardi's. The CO said, "I don't care how long it takes you back, as long as you bring me back a gallon of Bacardi's." And then, we'd fly back up through Amarillo, and up through Oklahoma, and then, back to Kansas, that way.

Of course, coming back through, you know, going, from San Bernardino, through Arizona and New Mexico. It was all desert. I remember going. We'd stop at places like--I think it was Barstow or somewhere to get fuel. And it was so hot! We had no doors on the aircraft. We had to spread our charts all over the seats, so we could actually sit down on them, when we got back in the airplane. The guy on his truck, who used to fill us—he'd keep a big tarp pulled over it, so it wouldn't evaporate out of it. And he'd pull the tarp over and crawl through the window and drive the thing over and fill our aircraft.

But the interesting thing was flying across the desert. We'd try to go at ten thousand because it was cooler. Ten aircraft in a row. I was like, at times, a tail end Charlie. You'd have some of the younger guys navigating, and you'd just watch. It was the funniest thing, because the first aircraft would go up and down two thousand feet, and you'd never really feel it but you're in the up and down draft. And the next one would go up and down two thousand feet. And then, all the way back to the tenth one. It was just like a bunch of yo-yos in front of you, going up and down. The first time it happens to you, it gets kind of startling, because if you're behind someone, all of a sudden, the guy disappears below you and then, the next moment, bazooop! Back up he goes past you, and he goes above you. But you're relatively—fore and aft don't lose any distance. So, it's harmless, but it's certainly interesting to watch.

INTERVIEWER: So, when you completed flying in Kansas, with the U.S. Army, you were off to Rivers again, I understand.

BOOTH: Correct. I went to 1 Transport Helicopter, Service Corps, which had just obtained, by that time, the CH-113—the Voyageur. It was a Boeing Vertol—sorry—at that time, it was a Vertol 107 Commercial, twin rotor. Actually, it's a follow on from the Piasecki 21—built by the same company. This aircraft had two twin turbine engines—GE engines—same actually ones that are on the Sea King today. And the rotors overlapped, and it had a completely different control system on it.

I stayed there for—I was on training, of course, just learning how to fly, to be qualified on the Voyageur. And in May, of that year, the Base Commander called me, and said they had an urgent opening for the Brigade Pilot position in Germany, and was I interested? I took all of about one minute, and I said, "Yes." So, in May of '65, I was off to 1 Brigade in Soest, Germany.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of flying did you do as the Brigade Commander's pilot?

BOOTH: Well, mainly it was--most of the time, you know, the Brigade Commander didn't

use the aircraft that much himself, personally. But if you were going on exercise, the biggest user was the Signal Squadron, which was the Headquarters' Company that looked after location of the Brigade, and so on, and so forth. They sited the Brigade, moved the Brigade, and so on, and so forth. So, you were always flying an awful lot of them. Then, there was the Senior Staff in the Brigade, like the BM, the SO Ops and that—they were always off on reces or visiting someone.

So, when you were on exercise--the field exercise—it was usually started with reconnaissance runs to get locations, radio sites, routes—all that kind of thing. Then, once you were in position, we lived right at Brigade Headquarters in the field. Aircraft—we had our own maintenance setup, and we were pretty well—we were two pilots, two technicians, one aircraft, and we were on twenty-four hours to move at any time. And we did a fair bit of flying—night flying. And to a certain extent, the General would not too much use it, but he would fly around a lot of the units when they weren't engaged, and to visit with the COs and stuff like that.

In the base, during non-time, there was a lot of cross-country, around Germany flying, because the Brigade in Germany was spread out in--I can't remember the number—I think, twelve camps in the final analysis—and it was spread out over a fair piece of real estate in Germany, in Westphalia. So, it was a good half hour flight, from the Brigade Headquarters, which was on the Mohne--the Dam Busters' Lake. And down to Iserlohn, it was a good half hour run. So, if you had to go there, to Werl, or to Hamburg, and all those camps, it was a fair run.

So, a lot of times, if the General had to go down there, or one of the senior staff, we'd obviously run them down and back. Another thing was the helicopter was a favourite of visitors. People would come to the Brigade—every kind of business they could think of. And one of the things someone always seemed to put them on was a Brigade tour, which took about an hour or so. They'd get a helicopter ride for an hour, and I got pretty good at doing Cooks' tours. And you had to happen to know all the history of all the places. And in that place, there was a lot of history.

As I said, from the Dam Busters, you could still see the hole where the hole in the dam had been placed. We knew all the places where the stuff had washed down river when it went out. And then, there's all the historic sites like Soest. The Dom—the Church there--was built in 1200. Had a picture of the last supper, with Christ eating a pork ham—good Jew—things like that. And that was done quite extensively. And then, we used to do runs down to the Air Force section, to Zwiebrucken and to Lahr, for the different things that had to be done between the two Canadian units. The Air Force was down there.

Also, we got a fair bit involved with the 104 people. We'd have people come up and do an exchange, and we'd go down and fly in a 104, and they'd come up and go for a ride in a helicopter. Other things we'd do—we'd go and visit a lot of the--during non-exercise periods, we'd go out and fly around Germany to, like Div Headquarters, who we worked for—4 Div—was up in northern Germany. A lot of times, people would have to go up there to liaise, or whatever they did. So, we did a lot of flying around the 1 British Corps unit area.

INTERVIEWER: Did you run into any difficulties, when you were doing all this flying around Germany?

BOOTH: Well, it was kind of interesting, now, if you look back. We didn't have any weather information—a weather station, or anything. In fact, we didn't even have any flight planning. We used to fly all over Germany. And when I say we, it was not only the brigade flight, but the three L-19s were doing the Air OP flight with the Artillery, and the six Hillers with the Recce Squadron. We flew all the time. In the four years that I was there, we never had an accident of any kind, and never had weather—you just got used to [it]. Of course, you were flying low.

You had to fly low for two reasons. There was jet airplanes flying overhead at high speed, at very low altitudes. And you just got competent in knowing where you were and what the weather—local weather conditions. And there'd been a number of times that I've spent at gasthofs in the middle of interesting places because the weather just went zero to the ground, and that's where you stayed. But, never had any accidents and any problems, and it's kind of amazing that this day and age, where you can't go anywhere unless someone gives you a half hour weather briefing.

INTERVIEWER: Ed, you mentioned low flying jets being a hazard. What was the problem there?

BOOTH: Well, most of the tactical flying in Germany -- and most of Germany was what they called a "tactical low flying area." And the jets of all nations—Belgian, British, American—not so much the American, but then, the Canadians—they flew at, you know, a couple of hundred feet. We're talking 104s, Fiat G-91s—they're all zipping along, and there was nothing—you know, you'd be at two hundred feet, and flying along fat and happy, and get split from behind by two G-91s--one on each side of you. That sure gets your attention.

Or you're crossing somewhere like the Teutoburger Wald, which is a ridge that runs across Germany, and you've just climbed high enough to get over it, and you look ahead and you see this dot and a smoke trail coming at you. You're almost in the trees and you realize that this guy's coming straight at you, and he's not going to clear the trees any higher than that—can't see you, because the low density of the helicopter, with all the Plexiglas and that. And you pull—I remember one day pulling up fast and watching the guy go underneath me. And I could see him—clearly see his helmet and his face as he kind of looked up with a startled look. Luckily, we never had any incidents, but you had to be on the deck most of the time, or you were fighting with the jets.

INTERVIEWER: End of Side 1. Interview with Ed Booth. End of [Tape 1] Side 1.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

[Canadian War Museum Oral History Program Interview with Ed Booth. Tape 1, Side 2.]

INTERVIEWER: Did anything stand out in your mind, Ed, as a memorable experience, while you were flying in Germany?

BOOTH: ... Probably, the weather was one of the biggest factors. Like I said, you flew—the lower the ceiling got, and the less the visibility. But I remember going down the Ruhr Valley which we were in, in the wintertime, and watching the smoke coming up from all the factories, and they were all low silhouette [?] factories, but the colours. You know, there'd be orange smoke, and greenish coloured, and black, of course, and everything else. And there'd be high humidity, and you'd get it to somewhere like Dusseldorf or an airport, and the sun, say, would be shining above. And they would be calling unlimited ceiling, but you could only see half a mile ahead in the smog. And then, you'd get back to your base—back to Fort Henry—and if you didn't wash the blades off in the next day, they actually—the leading edge of the metal blades, because they were bare from—you couldn't keep paint on them, because of the rotation—they'd actually had blisters on them, from the corrosion in the air.

INTERVIEWER: So, at this stage of your career, now, you're a Captain, and you return to Canada. What happens next?

BOOTH: OK. I was posted to 403 Squadron, in Petawawa. This is a tactical training squadron—still exists today—for training, at that time, Huey pilots. We were equipped with ten CH-118 single engine Lycoming powered Huey aircrafts—CU-H1s—the Americans called them H model. It had a 1200 horsepower Lycoming engine. A very good aircraft. It had been proven. I mean, it was developed through the—it was an aircraft designed actually for the end of the Korean War, for medevac. But of course, it got its baptism of fire by the Americans in Viet Nam. So, if they couldn't destroy it, nobody could. So, it was a great airplane.

INTERVIEWER: Was this the Huey H-1B?

BOOTH: It was the H-1H.

INTERVIEWER: The H-1H.

BOOTH: Yes. We had ten, as I said, and the first purpose of 403 Squadron was to get up to speed, and to start training new Huey pilots for the soon to be formed helicopter squadrons that were going to be formed in the Land Forces, or to support the Land Forces. There was going to be a squadron at Namaio in Edmonton, one at Petawawa, one in Valcartier, to support each Brigade. Now, to do this, they needed a minimum—we were tasked to provide twenty-four pilots on a course at a time. And the instructors we had was one of the first integrated instructor cadres, I guess, you might call it. We had Navy, Air Force and Army instructors on 403 Squadron.

Our first course started, and it had twenty-four students on it. Now most of these—these were all helicopter pilots of one vintage or another—could be from any of the three services. We were training them to fly, and get ready to take over the new Huey—twin Hueys—the 1Ns that were being procured, and would arrive in 1971. So, this was in 1970, we started training these people. However, up until that point, in 1970--I went there in '69—the squadron was being deployed all over North America and the world on deployments with the military—a lot of deployments to north Norway, for instance.

I went to Norway once with the squadron. We took the whole squadron—the first helicopter squadron—Canadian one—ever to go over there, up near Bardefoss, up north of the Arctic

Circle. Quite a place—flying along the fjords, right up to Russia, right up to Sweden, Finland. In fact, the first deployment I had was after I got checked out was about three months after I got back to the squadron. I was back in Germany again, because the squadron had been deployed to Germany—actually to Denmark and to Germany—to work with some NATO troops.

So, that was the first deployment. Then, it was to, like I say, Norway, the U.S., and the squadron went a number of places. It went to Jamaica, all over the place, until we started the twenty-four pilot intake, to get them ready for the new tac hel squadrons that were going to be formed.

INTERVIEWER: So, this was about the time that the FLQ Crisis broke out in Canada?

BOOTH: That is correct. I was just sitting down to Thanksgiving dinner, on October of '70, and I got a call, and he said, "You've got one hour. Pack a bag, and don't expect to come home for quite a while." So, we deployed—the whole squadron. We took off that day, and started hauling infantry to Ottawa, to secure Ottawa. I don't know how many trips we did. Half the helicopters were detailed to stop and stay in Ottawa. The other half went back to Petawawa.

We stayed in Ottawa for, I think it was four days or five days, and then, at five o'clock in the morning, we were told to deploy to St. Hubert, Quebec, and not to fly over Montreal. Later that day, they locked the doors, got us in a room and told us ... the War Measures Act was going to be proclaimed. And that's when they had just found Laporte — the body type of thing--and the crisis was on. So, I didn't come home from St. Hubert -- I think it was for two months.

INTERVIEWER: And what kind of flying were you doing for those two months that you were working on this FLQ Crisis deployment?

BOOTH: Well, the start of it, of course, was the funeral of Laporte [which] had to be looked after, and that was going to happen, downtown, in Montreal. So, I was tasked to non--I can't think of what the word was. I don't know how you can do it non-descriptly, but I was supposed to fly down, along Montreal, and locate a spot, downtown, to bring in the Airborne, with helicopters--with our ten helicopters. I remember flying down there—not pretending I was going anywhere—just heading straight across. But we did pick out a spot. I think it was a place called—it was a parking lot, called Place des Armes, I think. Anyways, it's not there any more; it has a building on it--but it was right downtown.

And then, we proceeded, the next day, to take the whole Airborne division [Regiment ? :ed] via helicopter, in a daisy chain operation, from St. Hubert and land them on that big parking lot which the police had cleared. And they deployed into Notre Dame and on the roofs of all the buildings and all around Montreal.

It was kind of interesting because we had taken our twenty-four students with us who were on course at this time but hadn't been qualified to do anything. I remember, my first run down, I had got a full load of troops behind us, and all that, and I said to the co-pilot, who was the future CO of 408 Squadron—Colonel Argue—and I said, "Would you like to take it?" And he said, "I've never flown with a load on before." And I said, "Well, it's a good time to

learn.” And I remember, he said -- we were going around the end of the Hydro building, and below, looking up at the people looking down at us, and he was saying that I was talking him all the way down. And we did that all day long. And then, we took troops into various other places, and so on, and so forth.

After that, once the funeral had been done, then we started taking troops and MUC police—the Montreal police—into various places to raid them where they suspected there was people or something. And we’d drop in, and they’d search places, and so on and so forth. That was very interesting to see some of the police tactics, or lack of them. One of the biggest problems we had was all the guns they carried. We’d take a load of their police, and put them in, and we’d give them a briefing, and we’d look at them, and they’d say, “No ammunition. No guns loaded.” And they’d have all these Thompson machine guns and goodness knows, no two seemed to have the same gun, and then, they’d off load them.

We’d say, “Pump out all the ammunition.” And they’d do it all over the floor, and they’d go scrambling for their ammunition. We didn’t really want to get shot in the back by some of these guys [that] were getting a bit trigger-happy. Never did have any incidents with guns going off, except one. The Air Reserve were flying Otters at that time, and a lot of them were young guys, and someone issued them all nine millimeter—we were all carrying nine millimeter guns, or pistols, with ammunition. Of course, most of us Regulars had no problem with it. But they gave it to some of these Reserves. They had never seen one before. And one guy’s in the front of his Otter, playing with the gun, and it went off and it fired through the floor of the aircraft, and went through the exhaust pipe, and missed the main fuel tank, by about, just a couple of inches.

INTERVIEWER: Just before you participated in the FLQ crisis, you did do some training down in the United States. What was that about, Ed?

BOOTH: Yes, after I came back. I came to the squadron in ’69, went back to Germany on exercise, and then, I came back, I--I think it was November, December. They sent me down to Fort Rucker, Alabama, to the American Army Aviation School to take the helicopter instrument course because the aircraft—the Huey H Model—was instrument qualified. So, they wanted all pilots to have an instrument ticket—the typical old Air Force instrument ticket.

So, off I went. It was kind of interesting. They were flying A model Hueys, which are kind of an interesting aircraft. It was the first aircraft ever—Huey model—built. It had a great big fuel tank in the back, a metal one across the floor. It didn’t take passengers, and all it was used was for instrument training. And it was quite an airplane because it took off at seventy knots. It flew at seventy knots, and it approached at seventy knots. Of course, that didn’t make much difference, because, you know, instrument flying, it doesn’t really make any difference.

But to give you the enormity of the problem the Americans were going through at that time, I remember watching a graduation parade while I was down there. When I say parade, I mean a flyby. And there was a hundred airplanes in it. A hundred Hueys came by! There were nine hundred and sixty helicopters on Fort Rucker alone, as training aircraft and whatever. But that was the school. I don’t know how many fields they had where they kept them all.

You'd be doing an instrument approach to a place like Dophin, Alabama, and most of the places here in Canada—well, all the places here in Canada--when you're flying instrument, when talking to a controller, you always repeat back everything that's said. You know, he'll tell you, "Turn, Army no so and so, turn right. Hold so and so heading." And you have to repeat that back. Not down there. There would be sometimes twenty to twenty-five aircraft, on approach, at the same time. And they just kept up a steady pattern of telling one, and you had to really listen as to who they were talking to, and do what they did. You know, they're watching you on radar, of course, if you didn't do what you were supposed to do. But that's how many aircraft there were.

The other thing that made it equally hard, we had, by this time, pretty well established that our aircraft were two pilot aircraft, and all our Hueys were flown—we always flew with two pilots. But the Americans, and I think today, still, only use one pilot. So, when you're doing an instrument course, the guy that's sitting in the left hand seat, the instructor, all he does -- unless he's giving you a demonstration -- once you're going, you have to do everything. You have to write down your own instructions, give them back out again, handle everything in the aircraft. In those days, the instruments like the VORTAC and the receiver in the aircraft was manual. You didn't have any automatic dialup systems.

So, you had to use—it looked like a coffee grinder, and you had to spin this thing around—especially if you were doing an intersection hold. So, you had to tune in one frequency, fly the airplane, wait until you got [a response?], then reach down, and crank this thing around, and try and find the next frequency for the next cross reference, and crank it around, keep the airplane flying, turn out on the proper headings. It was a handful, but it was a very good course. When you finished that one, you knew you could fly instruments.

INTERVIEWER: So, after the FLQ Crisis, then, I want to take you back to Petawawa. What additional flying did you do there?

BOOTH: After the FLQ Crisis, we were right back into the training mode. We had to get these twenty-four students out, and graduated, and then we had to get the next twenty-four in and get them out, because the first twin Hueys in the batch—we bought fifty of them ... and this was the first twin Huey, we had—when I say we, the Canadians had developed the twin Huey, along with the American Air Force, as a twin engine aircraft. The biggest reason the Canadians got involved in it—of course, it was using Pratt and Whitney PT-6 engines, with a combining gearbox, and of course, they were all built in Longueuil, Quebec. So, it was a big commercial thing. So, Canada put the development money into it.

So, we got—along with the U.S. Air Force—we got fifty of these initial twin-engine helicopters, and they started coming. I was on the first pickup for those and went down to Fort Worth, Texas, to the Bell plant, and spent two weeks down there on their course, learning how to fly the twin Huey, and then, brought the first five back to Canada. Those were the first ones. The training squadron had to have the first ones, because we had to convert all the people we had trained on single engine Hueys, now on to twin engine Hueys.

Now, this course was only a short one, of course. They were already Huey qualified, so all they had to do was be able to handle another engine, and another different emergency procedures, and so on, and so forth. So, that was in the spring of '71. And the squadron

started picking up their aircraft, I think it was in the summer. The first squadron started picking up their aircraft in the fall of '71.

In the summer of '72, 403 Squadron was moved from the tank hangars, actually where they'd been in Petawawa, to Gagetown. They built a new facility in Gagetown—a new hangar and that, and put 403 down there, along with the newly formed 422 Squadron. In Petawawa, they built a hangar on the Mattawa Plain and that's where the newly formed 427 Squadron, with their Hueys, went.

In my case, I was one of the few that didn't move to Gagetown. I went as a Staff Officer Operations, to 10 TAG Headquarters, in St. Hubert, Quebec. That was the controlling or Headquarters for all the tac hel squadrons and the tactical jet fighters.

INTERVIEWER: Now, that was an operational flying job for you. What did your duties involve?

BOOTH: Oh, they were quite varied, and it was kind of interesting because remember, we've got new squadrons. Suddenly, there's four new squadrons, plus the operational training squadron—403-- plus there are two CF-5 squadrons—tactical fighter squadrons—all belonged to this new unit called 10 Tactical Aviation Group, which supports FMC. So, that's why we were collocated with FMC Headquarters, in St. Hubert. The only problem was, of course, is that the vast majority of the aircraft in the newly formed 10 TAG were helicopters. But, we didn't have any senior Army helicopter pilots—I mean, not even Army. We just didn't have any senior helicopter [pilots at all?].

So, what happened is that the 10 TAG Headquarters was pretty well staffed by almost all Air Force types, one or two Navy types, and a group of Army types, but they were all in the lower ranks. So, it became quite interesting. I remember the Deputy Commander. We had a small accident in Gagetown, and he came rushing into my office, and he said, "I thought there was only one helicopter involved in that accident in Gagetown." It was an incident, but there was rotor blades involved. And he said, "But there must have been two, because there's two rotor blades have been damaged." Well, as anybody knows, there's two blades on any helicopter, at minimum.

I was in the Tactical Evaluation Section, as a Captain, working for an Air Force Major. And there were two Captains in it, and, I say, this Major. And we were supposed to go out and opeval the tac hel squadrons, and declare when they were ready to be operational. Well, the Air Force guy was a fighter guy, and he didn't know too much about it. So, he'd just send us off either together, or by ourselves, to opeval a squadron, which was run by, sometimes, pretty strong-headed Lieutenant Colonels who had their own ideas. Only one of them was an Army type, and the rest were either Navy or Air Force. And they weren't about to listen to, or like, in some cases, what some Captain was going to tell him about how to run a field squadron. Which got to some pretty interesting conversations, and so on, and so forth. It all worked out, but sometimes it was a bit trying, especially for the two Captains in the organization.

INTERVIEWER: Your duties as Operations Evaluations probably took you just about anywhere and everywhere, with Army Aviation. What were some of those jobs that you did?

BOOTH: Well, as I said, we had to evaluate all the squadrons, to make them operational. And that was, you know, a field operation somewhere out usually in their local area. I've discussed that. Then, after the squadrons became operational, then they went to various places, or were around for various operations during the year. One of them, of course, was assigned to Norway as the northern flank defense for NATO. I had to go over there, and opeval on why they were in situ, out of, you know, north of Bardufoss. I went to, oh, where was the 'bicycle lake', down in the Mohave Desert. 408 Squadron was going down there, and I had to [go there]. [It] ended up a lot of times, these people actually didn't have enough pilots, and I ended up flying an aircraft down for them, from Edmonton.

Other trips were: I flew out of Whitehorse for a while—the 422 Squadron had to go up there to support the Airborne. They didn't have enough pilots. So I went and filled in. I used to move aircraft around, for maintenance. I remember once, I had to take an aircraft from Ottawa to Botwood, Newfoundland, in the winter, which was great fun, flying over the open water in immersion suits. I was keeping a currency. I had to keep currency on Hueys, because I was now the Standards Officer, also for the Brigade—sorry, for 10 TAG Helicopters—the Huey side. As such, I had to go out and give qualifications rides every year to the Standards Officer in each of the squadrons on the Hueys.

So that was a fair job, and I had to keep running an annual standards conference, and stuff like that. We had to keep all the manuals up to date. But most of the time, I had to go out, like I say, and fly. We didn't have an aircraft at 10 TAG Headquarter. So, I had to go out and use squadron aircraft. That was never really a problem. I used to fly the Kiowa. I was checked out on the Kiowa. I was an instructor on the Kiowa. That was another thing I did at 403 Squadron, just before I left there.

I got checked out on the—the Army, actually, had a couple of Cessna 182s, which they had obtained for V.I.P. flying. And one of those was stationed at St. Hubert, and I got checked out on it, but it was taken away, within the first year. I also flew--one of the things we'd do in Tac Eval, in Op Eval, we had to opeval, not only the fighter squadrons, and the tactical helicopter squadrons; we were also responsible for the Air Reserve squadrons. They were situated in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Edmonton.

So, every year, we had to go around [to] each one of these organizations—'wings', they called them—and test them on operations and on flying. So, on that side, I had to get checked out on the single engine steam Otter. That was quite an experience, because, not only did I fly it on wheels, I flew it on skis and on floats. It was quite an experience, that. And as I said, we used to deploy them out to the fields and the squadrons—the Otters—all over North America.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you were at 10 TAG in 1976 during the Olympics. Did you have any involvement in that?

BOOTH: Oh, very much so. 10 TAG coordinated, ran, and of course had all the passenger carrying helicopters in the Canadian Armed Forces. So, virtually every helicopter that was flyable in Canada was in Montreal for that two-week period. 10 TAG put out all the ops orders, organized the whole thing and then controlled it during the games because we had to move people from various sites, as far away as Kingston, to Montreal, to St. Jovite, out to—I think there was in the Eastern townships there, there was....

INTERVIEWER: Venues?

BOOTH: Yes, there were venues all over. And V.I.P.s—people had to be moved all the time. I can't remember the exact number of aircraft, but we had all the Voyageurs, all the Hueys, and a good percentage of the Kiowas, which were on security type things. We pulled in every pilot that was available in the Canadian Armed Forces. In fact, we were getting co-pilots qualified on two or three hours in the aircraft -- if they'd actually only seen a Huey sometime in their past. And they were pulling twelve-hour shifts for two weeks, and there was no slack. We had just enough pilots. If we ran two twelve-hour shifts, we could man them twenty-four hours a day. And, as a consequence, I was pulling twelve-hour shifts in the Ops Centre. And on my days off, to give some of the guys some time off, I would usually pull another twelve-hour shift on Flight Deck.

But it was exciting. It was a lot of fun. Luckily, we had no incidents. In fact, probably the most interesting part was, as you probably know, the big O—the Olympic Stadium—was built and supposed to have a roof on it, so that they could close it if it rained. But due to the Olympic rules, it had to be open to the air when there was an event on. Well, the roof didn't get built until some years after the Olympics. And part of the problem we didn't know, was what if it rained, and got the field all soggy--whether it could be dried out.

So, one of the suggestions was, that we take a helicopter in, and hover over the open field. So, I flew in the top of the Big O, and hovered around, and we determined that, yes, it would move the air and all that. We weren't too sure how much it would dry out, but I had the distinction of being probably the one and only helicopter ever to go into the Big O.

INTERVIEWER: With all this operational flying, were you required to do any upgrades to your own training?

BOOTH: Well, actually in '74, I was fortunate enough to be chosen to go on the Okanagan Helicopter Mountain Flying Course. That doesn't probably sound like much to the average [person], but in the helicopter world, in those days, that was one of The courses. It was run by the—I guess, you'd call him famous--Bud Teletson. Bud's story was he learned to fly a helicopter back in the late '40s, and he applied for a job—I forget who had the helicopter. But anyways, he went down. And the guy said, "Have you flown?" And he said, "Yes, I've flown." "Have you flown a helicopter?" He said, "No." He said, "Well, there's the helicopter. You turn that switch there on, push the button until it starts, and see if you can fly it." And that was his training.

But anyways, he was a phenomenal pilot. He'd set up this Mountain Flying Course, out of Penticton, B.C., and it was a world wide renowned course. I was fortunate to spend just over a month out there flying with them. And it was a fantastic course, going into high mountain places, into gold mines, and learning all the tricks and tactics of flying in the mountains, with the winds, and the optical illusions and things like that.

One of the other unique things that I did in 10 TAG Headquarters. As I said before, most of the people in 10 TAG Headquarters didn't know much about helicopters until you got to the bottom of the deck. When General Turcotte left FMC Headquarters, I was in charge of hosting a little luncheon for him. And our general, at the end of the thing got up and said,

“General Turcotte, in light of all you’ve done for Army Aviation, we’re going to dedicate a trophy for an annual helicopter competition, called the General Turcotte trophy.” And [he] shook the general’s hand, and everybody clapped, and off they went.

Well, a day or so later, I guess, the general said, well, what he’d based it on was that the tactical fighters—the F-5s—had an annual competition called Open Challenge, every year. And what they did is they got all the squadrons together, out at Cold Lake, or Bagotville, for a week. They painted different bullets in their machine guns different colours, and flew in and shot at targets, and then, they counted the coloured holes, and added up, in the quantitative numbers, how many each squadron had got, and added that up. Then, they did a recce role, and they gave grid references and hid things out there, and the pilots were supposed to fly out there and take pictures and come back. Then they had a big celebration type of thing, and came home. So, this is what he wanted—a competition on the helicopter side.

Well, there was only one small problem--that we don’t do things as subjectively in the helicopter business, as they do in the fighter business. So, he didn’t know what to do. So, he said to his top Colonel—the Deputy Commander. He said, “Set up this competition.” Well, the Colonel, he looked kind of dumb-founded, and said, “Yes, sir.” [He] walked down to the Ops Officer, who was a Lieutenant Colonel, and said, “Remember [what] the General said about this competition. You look after it.” And the guy said, “Hmm.” [He was] another fighter pilot. And he said, “Oh, yes.”

So, he went to my boss, who was a Major--fighter pilot--and said the same thing in the Op Eval section. He then turned to me, and said, “It’s yours, baby.” And I looked around and there was nobody below me. So, I ended up having to host—run—organize—create--everything from the ground up, a helicopter competition. I called it “Collective Challenge.” And it was a challenge, because how do you measure what helicopters do? You know, was a helicopter hover better than the other one? How do you measure it? Does it carry more people? No, you carry as many as you’re supposed to carry. You don’t carry any more. I mean it was a lot of things that just didn’t equate.

Then, when I started talking about it, I had one squadron commander who was openly hostile about the whole thing. He said there was no cotton-picking way his boys were going to compete in a competition, because if they didn’t win, they’d all feel badly. Anyways, I ended up running it. It was a week-long event. I won’t go into the details of what we did, but I had to accommodate three kinds of aircraft—Kiowas, Hueys, Chinooks—and it had to happen over a week long period, in one place in Canada, and it had to be—you know, it had to have a dinner at the end, and the whole nine yards. To this day, it went four times. As it turned out, after I left 10 TAG, I flew a Chinook, and it was the only Chinook ever to win the competition.

INTERVIEWER: And I guess you can feel proud for all of that.

BOOTH: Well, yes. It was something that will be probably never done again, or will be done again.

INTERVIEWER: Ed, when you left St. Hubert, you went to Canadian Forces base, Ottawa, at Uplands to 450 Squadron. What were your duties there? What was the squadron establishment, and what kind of flying did you do there?

BOOTH: Well, 450 Squadron was a Chinook squadron. It was equipped with four Chinooks. They were the C model which was a fairly advanced aircraft when we got them. It had a lot of systems the Americans didn't have on theirs. It had an upgraded capacity. The internal load on it was twenty thousand pounds which is, you know, a fairly hefty load for an aircraft. You could load—you know, drive a couple of jeeps in, sling a couple of guns underneath, and the ammunition below that. The aircraft then would also do—you could put enough bags in there to fuel, to do ten hours of straight flying. It was a fantastic airplane.

It was fully operational, fully instrumented. You could fly in, you know, any kind of cloud systems and that, except it didn't like too much ice. But it would take a certain amount. As I said, we had four aircraft. We had twelve pilots, and one CO. So, we had a crew of one and a half, because it was a two pilot airplane. So, it had a crew of one and a half, so we were pretty lowly established for a field unit. We were a complete field unit—had all our own transport, all our own spare parts. We could go to the field and live for any length of time—kitchens, everything. We had cooks, mechanics, vehicle mechanics, drivers, so on and so forth—everything to keep a complete field unit going. And we did.

We did several deployments. Mainly though, our main jobs were “one offs”, you might call them—transporting all—like the Airborne, for instance, would need—because they were stationed at Petawawa—a bunch of drop capability, to go out and check out their parachutists. And we'd fly out to the drop zone, in an hour's notice, and we could put five hundred paratroopers through their paces, in a matter of a couple of hours. We'd just park on the end of the runway, take on twenty two, pull up, in three minutes let them out a string, circle around. We'd be back on the ground before the parachutes were down, pick up another load, and put them out again. That wasn't terribly exciting from the pilot's point of view.

All kinds of transport missions. A lot of them—I held, for instance -- carried the Lancaster bomber that the Warplane Heritage Foundation now flies around. I moved that, back in 1975, from Goderich, Ontario, to Mount Hope—slung it underneath a Chinook. It was a long, slow run, because we had a drag shoot on the back of it, but it tended to want to go sideways and do funny things, after we got past about sixty five knots. It was about an hour long slow run—a bit hair raising, because you had to keep dodging around all the buildings and things underneath, because if it let loose, you didn't want to cause a disaster on the ground. It would be a big enough disaster losing the airplane.

And, we did a whole series of things. For instance, the squadron actually put in a microwave line—installed a microwave line, from Alert to Eureka, in the Northwest Territories. And that was to bring the data from Alert down to southern Canada in a more timely fashion than it had previously been able to do. Before, they used to put it on tape and Herc it down. That way, it would come in every two weeks or three weeks. But they decided to use a satellite. And there's only one small problem. When you're in Alert, you're so far up you can't see the satellite. The satellite is on a geosynchronous orbit around the centre of the earth, about thirty three thousand kilometers up, but it couldn't be seen from Alert. So, they microwaved the data down to Eureka, put a tower on Black Stat Mountain, and they'd get a one-degree shot at the satellite. So, that was one.

We used to go to the Arctic quite often, ... in the spring—because the mapping and charting from the government organization that does mapping -- we'd take the Hueys and the Kiowas out in the summer, and move their surveyors around and do all their plotting and that for mapping. They needed fuel. So, we'd go up there in the spring, and put out the fuel caches in big bladders.

Another job we did was for the US Navy. They wanted to see how torpedoes would react under a solid sheet of ice. So, they came to us, and said—I guess they'd gone to their Navy SEALs and said, “Can you support us in the Arctic?” And they said, “No cotton-picking way! We're not flying in that cold!” So they came to us and actually apparently contracted with us. I don't know. I didn't see the money part, but I know how the operation went. So, we were tasked to support them. I ended up going into the Kane Basin, which is north of Thule, in Greenland, which is about halfway between Thule and Alert. And that was the only place they could find eighteen thousand feet of water, with a solid ice cap.

What they did is they brought in a nuclear sub and a team from, I think it was the Institute of Massachusetts Technology. They'd fire the torpedo at a sound source, and they wanted to see how it reacted under the ice. Then, to recover it, they would burn two holes in the ice, put down a set of divers and then pull the torpedo up through the second hole. Then, we would latch onto it with a harness and lift it out through the ice. They'd lay it on the ice, drain all the seawater which had been taken on board to substitute for the fuel that was burnt off, and then, we were supposed to sling them back to Thule. Kind of interesting.

The torpedoes—their by-product to combustion is hydrogen cyanide, in the motor, and they said, “Don't ever put them inside the aircraft.” Well, we tried to fly the things in the cold air, and they wouldn't fly underneath the aircraft. So, we ended up building a partition in front of the aircraft, put them in the back, and leaving the back door open, so we could get two in that way. But it was quite interesting, especially when the exercise was over, the sub broke through the ice to say “Hi!”

Another one that was interesting and, again, one of these pretty quick things. We had a couple of Chinooks out in Petawawa, supporting the brigade out there. It was an evening, and I got a call. And this [was] when the Cosmos 954 crashed, in northern Northwest Territories. If you probably remember back and that, it was the satellite that had radioactive material on it, and spread it all the way from Slave Lake, right across Canada, to Baker Lake, pretty well. They needed someone to get in there, and get an idea of what was going wrong, or what the problems were, and that.

So, I was tasked, around four o'clock in the afternoon, to, “Go direct. Do not come home. Do not pass Go. Go direct to Baker Lake,” and pick up all these mad scientists. And we were going to go out and do the area. Well, with a pocket full of money, and all that, off we went. We got to Baker Lake and it was forty some below. We got out to the site, put the scientists. They recovered the stovepipe piece, and everything else. And, they were gone more than—they were told that they could only be so many hours, but they took a few more, and by that time, the aircraft got too cold soaked and we couldn't get one of the engines going. So, it was a whole problem over that.

We finally got it going the next morning when they dropped—Herc dropped some Herman Nelson—and we got it fired up, and we got the thing—but we got them out of there. But it was a cold night. But, we had taken tents up with us, so, you know, we weren't in any jeopardy, but it was kind of interesting at forty some below. Anyways, that exercise progressed on for two or three months, because they set up a camp called Up Morning Light—[an] operation they established from out west. [They] set up a camp in the Northwest Territories and with the Chinooks we actually flew fuel out of Yellowknife to Snowdrift and a number of places like that so that the smaller aircraft picking up the radioactive materials had fuel, and could refuel and so on and so forth.

And the Chinook, actually, we picked up the bigger pieces of radioactive material, because all this radioactive material went into lead containers, and the bigger pieces—the lead containers were too heavy for the smaller aircraft to carry. Again, another interesting exercise.

INTERVIEWER: You did some exchange work with the United States, as well, Ed?

BOOTH: Yes, we had an Exchange Program with the 159th Aviation Battalion, in Fort Campbell, Kentucky. They were a Chinook squadron, or a Chinook unit. What we would do is we would send a couple of aircraft down there to work with them on an exercise. Then, especially in the winter--they liked to come up here in the winter, because they didn't do much cold flying--they would come up here, and send a couple of aircraft and work with us on exchange, and fly with us, and so on, and so forth. It was quite a rewarding setup—the exchange of ideas and procedures.

Of course, our aircraft--luckily for us--would carry more than theirs, so we could demonstrate some things that they were incapable of doing. Unfortunately, now, we've sold our Chinooks and they've got better ones than we ever had.

INTERVIEWER: Ed, would you talk about the capability of the Chinook?

BOOTH: OK. The Chinook, as I said, was a fully instrumented airplane, and if you put enough bags on it and that, and enough aircrew, you could go ten hours which at a hundred and thirty knots is going to take you, you know, well over—about fifteen hundred nautical miles. And we did that to a certain extent going north, because any time you went north, there was nothing for fuel. I mean, you know, there was places you could get fuel and other places that you just couldn't, because we took too much of it. But, I know one day, I flew from here to Shilo, Manitoba with one fuel stop--IFR.

The aircraft would take—it had seats on the sides for thirty-three passengers, and would take twenty-two jumpers. We had a static line rigged inside. We had a centre row of seats we could put in. We could take forty-four people sitting. And we did this a number of times, because one of our standing tasks was major air disaster relief. And that was in case an airline went down somewhere. We were always on call to be able to show up and take out as many loads of casualties. And the Chinook had actually space -- it was rigged, and we did it several times -- for twenty-four stretcher cases. And we did a couple of exercises out of Borden where they actually simulated aircraft crashes, and we moved the casualties from Borden to Trenton.

Other things I did with a Chinook—a number of times we were tasked by civilian—well, through the military—but to lift airplanes that had gone through the ice. That was a favourite pastime of certain people in the North Country. They'd land their airplane on water, and they would break through the ice. Now most of the time, it didn't sink, right? The wings would hold it up. But it usually would have several tons of water in it, and made for an interesting recovery.

Many other times, we slung aircraft—mainly for the Armed forces, or people. We slung T-Birds. We carried a Dakota from Ottawa to Petawawa, for the museum. We moved several T-33s around. Voodoo 101s—we've moved around, put on pedestals—quite a number of things where heavy lift was required. Unfortunately, we've gotten rid of all the Chinooks. We don't have an aircraft any more that can do those type of missions.

INTERVIEWER: You had a special duty with 450 Squadron, as well. I believe it had to do with the Summit Conference.

BOOTH: Yes. It's probably the most power I'll ever have in my life, and never want to have that all again. It was the first Summit Conference held by Canada, as you remember, and was part of the G-8. It was in 1981, the Summit was held here. It was split venues between Ottawa and Château Montebello, on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River halfway between here and Montreal. The event was, of course, all the world leaders coming—or most of the world leaders, and security was pretty tight.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Ed Booth. End of Side 2, Tape 1.

END OF TAPE 1

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program Interview with Ed Booth, recorded on 21 January 2004 in the City of Ottawa. Interviewed by J.R. Digger McDougall. Tape 2, Side 1.

BOOTH: OK. The high security necessitated us flying people from Ottawa to Montebello by helicopter. To do this, we ended up with thirty-five... Well, first off, they needed someone to coordinate it and run the Army side—well, it was the Army side, at that time—the Armed Forces side. Seeing as I was in Ottawa already, they decided to task me to do it. We eventually brought in thirty-five Huey helicopters, somewhere around fifteen Kiowas, and the two U.S. Marine presidential helicopters.

As I said, the venue was in Montebello, so we had to run a flight. We had to put in purple airways to Montebello so nobody could fly on those days when we were flying. We had three routes going out and back, all at random. We flew five aircraft in a flight when we only needed four. But nobody knew who was in which aircraft, at what time. And, we ended up flying the Heads of State and their delegations from Ottawa out to Montebello. The Chinooks took their baggage, and the Hueys took the passengers.

Then, of course, there was the odd flights for the Prime Minister—Trudeau, at the time—wanted to go in and out. We had to build a helipad downtown Ottawa. We built it on the site of the old NDHQ Headquarters, where now the Regional Headquarters City Hall now stands.

And we had to build in a pad at Montebello, and of course, take over a whole bunch of things around Montebello.

To control the thing, I had to set up an Ops Centre, in the East Block on Parliament Hill; an Ops Centre at Uplands, because actually there, I had two F-5s on standby. One of the things we determined was that Montebello was the world's largest log cabin, and anybody could fly over in a light airplane, and drop an incendiary on it. So, we were a little concerned. So, that's why we put a purple airway and a 'no fly zone' over Montebello. I had two F-5s standing by—armed—though we couldn't have used them, really, armed, because we didn't have the authority. But, we'd do lots of flybys and let everybody know that they were armed and standing by, and fly them around, in case anybody had any ideas.

We had a radar set up just outside of Hawkesbury, to keep an eye on the site. It was not known by very few people. There was a portable radar out of Trenton. And we had controllers—Armed Forces people—in the Air Traffic Control Centre in Montreal and in Ottawa, so we could immediately, if they determined there was somebody who wasn't supposed to be where they were, they could get through to us. So, this was quite a hectic operation.

Then, what I ended up next—the last thing I really needed was I got handed a Fire Department. Suddenly, they realized that the Fire Department at Montebello—the little town there—couldn't handle a fire, really, in the Château. So, they gave me a complete fire department, with fire engines and everything else, and we deployed that to Montebello, also.

It was quite exciting and it was kind of interesting working with world leaders, because as it ended up, with the security at the airport, I ended up telling the world leaders when they could arrive and when they couldn't. We had to sweep the runways with Kiowas and we were worried about handheld missiles at that time. And so, we had to keep it very secret as to when they were coming in, and where they were parking the airplanes, and so on and so forth.

And it was quite interesting, also, with—I think I was working with seven Police Forces, at that time. It was the Ottawa, Gatineau, Hull, OPP, QPP, RCMP, Nepean—just anywhere we flew over, another Police Force, and they were all a different problem. Then, of course, I had to work with the MOT on controlling the airspace, which was another problem in itself.

INTERVIEWER: Ed, you finished up your career in Carp, where you were the Operational Commander for the Federal Warning and...

BOOTH: Reporting System.

INTERVIEWER: Reporting System—thank you. And that was 1992 that you got posted there. Before you went there, you had one tour at National Defence Headquarters. Would you describe your duties there, and what in fact, it was that did for Army Aviation?

BOOTH: OK. Actually, I had three jobs in NDHQ. The first one, and most important one, from my point of view, and from an Army Aviation one, was I was with the Director of Land Aviation, on the Army floor. Now, we actually worked for the Air Force, for the Director General of Air Operations, which was the Air Controlling staff. But seeing as we were

looking after Army Aviation, we were down on the Army floor because that's who we were supporting.

The only problem was that our staff was, instead of-- the Director wasn't a full Colonel. He was only a Lieutenant Colonel. What they'd done is taken the old Army staff and just integrated it into the Air staff, but at only about one-tenth of the personnel that the Air had. So, we had to look after all the aircraft maintenance of all the helicopters—direct all the maintenance. We had to do all the buying of aircraft, operational running of it, maintenance of it.

I was the Fleet Manger for three fleets of aircraft, and that—I [did] just everything that had to be done with it, as far as a higher headquarters. One had to look after ..., from writing engineering orders to fill out op manuals, making sure that everything was running properly, and attending all the things in NDHQ like Aircraft Management Committees, and stuff like that. It was three years there--close to four--and it was a great job. But I didn't fly at that point in time. I was off my flying. I'd done twenty years of flying, and in Canadian Armed Forces, twenty years is considered more than most people ever could dream of. So, I'd gone there with a lot of experience, and did my duty. As I said, I'd been rewarded earlier for it.

INTERVIEWER: Ed, you mentioned that you had other postings at NDHQ. What were those?

BOOTH: They reduced the numbers in DLA and mine was the position that they—not eliminated, but they just didn't fill. So, they moved me down to Director of Nuclear Biological Chemical Warfare, which wasn't exactly my cup of tea. I lasted there a year and I decided that, again, I just--nothing was going forward. It was an area that nobody seemed interested in. It didn't seem like there was any rewards in it.

So, I went to my Career Manager, and said, "I'm out of that place, one way or another. I'm out of the Forces, or that." That's when he then offered me a position with DGMR—Director General, Military Review--which was doing comprehensive audits of military organizations. And, it's virtually the same that the Auditor General does. We used the same—it was a newly formed group. The General I was working for would have been a Lieutenant with me before. The Colonel I was working for—Dave Walters—we'd been flying together before. The man I was working directly for had worked in brigade headquarters. So, we had a good mandate in front of us.

We did a lot of good things. We did a lot of audits on a number of things. I went to Cyprus. I did the U.N. tour, and went down to visit our boys in Honduras, who were disbanding the Contras—the rebels, all over the States, Canada. After four years, we wrote lots of good reports. Unfortunately, they seemed to criticize NDHQ more than anything else. After four years, they eliminated the whole organization. So, I was on the road again.

INTERVIEWER: Ed, I'd like you to think about someone listening to this tape, maybe two hundred years hence. What one message would you like to leave them with, about Army Aviation and the contribution it made, not only to the Canadian military, but to Canada, during the period that you were a pilot, in the Canadian Army, and the Canadian Armed Forces?

BOOTH: Well, we certainly advanced helicopter operations in Canada, and partly to the U.S., I guess. We had some leading things we did and a lot of civilian organizations seemed to pick up on a lot of the things we did. Again, we were at the beginning. We were still flying aircraft when helicopters, like I said, had wooden blades and things like that. So, we did a lot of things for civilian organizations.

You know, I remember one day in Petawawa, an emergency call came in on a flood, across the river, and they couldn't get an ambulance across. There was a woman having a baby, and they had to get her back fast. So, it was after work hours and I was just going home, so I jumped in a helicopter, grabbed the first guy I could find, and we charged over to the Quebec side, brought her back, and she virtually had the baby. She had the baby on the gurney going into the hospital. Those kind of things were rewarding. We did a lot of civilian things—picking up. I've been on several search and rescue things—picking up survivors, and sometimes the pieces of wrecks. Those kind of things are quite rewarding. And we've advanced that technology reasonably well, in the time that we were in Army Aviation and in Canada.

INTERVIEWER: Ed, I want to thank you for this outstanding contribution you've made to this interview series. You have provided us a phenomenal background of the types of equipment that existed, your entire military career, and how you moved through the ranks as a pilot in the Canadian Army, and the Canadian Forces. Thank you so much for the work that you've done, and the effort that you've put into this interview.

BOOTH: You're very welcome.

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program Interview with Ed Booth. Tape 2, Side 1. Interview ends.

TRANSCRIPT ENDS