Interview with Daniel Kennedy

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Mosquera: Natasha Mosquera

A Note to the Reader

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Kennedy: My name is Daniel Bowers Kennedy. I'm sixty-eight years old, a native from Pennsylvania. I was an armored cavalry officer as well as an air cavalry officer. I was with the First Squadron Air Seventeenth Cavalry, before that I was part of the 82nd Airborne Division. Before that, I was with the 6th Armored Cavalry Regiment. I attained the rank of captain, and I was an Army aviator.

Mosquera: Can you briefly describe for me what your thoughts were on the war before the war started, during the war, and after the war ended? Did they change? If so, how?

Kennedy: Well, I had no opinion about the war before it started. During the Vietnam War, I was quite frankly more afraid of dying than I was of anything else. I mean my focus was on staying alive. After the war ended, I realized what a complete and utter waste of life it was. We accomplished nothing and sacrificed what fifty-seven thousand people? Yeah, I think we're stupid.

Mosquera: Going off of that, you said war is stupid, what else comes to mind when you think of war? Just start from war is and go from there.

Kennedy: If you've ever seen the Vietnam Memorial, that's what I think of war. All those names and some of them were my friends. If you're going to go to war, I think you need to go in order to win it not just to prove a political point. What do I think of war now? I just think of the men that I served with who died.

Mosquera: The United States once had a system of recruiting young men to go into the military. It was less than voluntary. Can you tell us what that process was called, how it worked, and how it impacted you as a young man?

Kennedy: You're talking about the selective service, the draft. It impacted me in that I wanted to get my commission rather than be drafted as a private. That's how it affected me. I wanted a better life than just a grunt.

Mosquera: For some people who don't know what the draft is, how would you describe the draft to like a four-year-old?

Kennedy: To a four-year-old? I have a four-year-old granddaughter. I'll pretend she's here.

Mosquera: Maybe a twelve-year-old, sorry.

Kennedy: Everybody is required to register for the draft at the age eighteen. All men are required to. Then you are given a number and that number is in turn called upon to determine whether you're going to be drafted or not. If you get a high number, you're less likely to get drafted. If you get a low number, you're likely to be drafted. We haven't had a draft in a long time though, now. I think men are still required to register.

Mosquera: Can you think back for a moment when you were told you were going to be sent to Vietnam? What was going through your mind?

Kennedy: Well, I was with the 6th Armored Cavalry Regiment at the time, and my position was an assistant adjutant. I created the orders sending a lot of guys to Vietnam. When I got the call from armored branch saying that they had orders for Daniel Kennedy to go to Vietnam, my first thought was "Oh, crap!" I didn't want to go, but it's just the luck of the draw. If you get orders, you do what you have to do.

Mosquera: I know you mentioned before that your orders got rescinded. Why do you think that was? How did you react?

Kennedy: When I was told that my orders for Vietnam were canceled…

Mosquera: Let's back up. I'm sorry. (unintelligible) Did you go to Vietnam? If not, why? How did that process occur?

Kennedy: I did not go to Vietnam. I was with the 6th Armored Cavalry Regiment when I got my orders to go to Vietnam. Sometime after that, I forget how long it was, my orders were rescinded. I was told I was not going to go to Vietnam. I think what happened is that I was darn good at my job as an assistant adjutant. The Colonel who was in charge of the regiment relied on me a great deal. I think he called armored branch and said don't send this guy. Let him stay here. That's what my feeling is. And how did I feel? Relieved. I only knew one guy in the service who wanted to go to Vietnam. He wanted to go to become a hero.

Mosquera: Can you just say that one more time because she was talking?

Kennedy: I only knew one guy that actually wanted to go to Vietnam, and he wanted to go because he wanted to be a hero. He didn't get killed. He was in my class at Washington and Jefferson College. He retired as a full colonel, but he was no hero.

Mosquera: Let's kind of go back a little bit. When you attended college, were you in the ROTC program?

Kennedy: Yes. That's how I got my commission.

Mosquera: How would you describe the training that you received at ROTC?

Kennedy: Minimal. It was like all of the training except for my flight training, I don't think it prepared me for combat or leadership particularly. Flight training, I think, was the best in the world.

Mosquera: When did you begin flight training? How did that come about?

Kennedy: I applied for it. I wanted the flight pay. I was accepted for it and I actually enjoyed flight training. It's true. I'm terrified of heights, so I had to overcome something in order to become an aviator. We even trained the Air Force helicopter pilots and foreign nationals. It was very good training.

Mosquera: Just to go back real quick, I know you mentioned before that when you were in ROTC you wanted to kill everybody. What did you mean by that?

Kennedy: After the war started, I probably overstated that. I wanted to get the job done. I wanted the war to get over. We used to joke that there were millions of people wanting to kill us. It was true, but I just wanted to get the job done and get it over with.

Mosquera: You said that people should go to war to get the job done. What did you feel the job that needed to get done by going to Vietnam and how did you feel about that?

Kennedy: Well, at the time I was young. I was twenty-one. My idea of war was just to kill the enemy. There's a lot you don't know when you're a brand-new second lieutenant. Yes, if I was going to go over there I wanted to just kill all the enemy I could.

Mosquera: Considering you did not go to Vietnam and considering the outcome of the war, how do you think you would have affected the turnout had you gone to Vietnam?

Kennedy: I honestly don't know. I know I would have done my job, whatever job I was assigned. Hopefully, I would have done it in a way that would have made the service proud.

Mosquera: Earlier you said that you had no desire to go to combat, did you have a desire for anything? Why did you decide to stay in the service despite the fact that your orders were rescinded?

Kennedy: It was the best seven years of my life, my active duty time. I loved being an adjutant and an assistant adjutant. With the Sixth Cavalry, I took care of the personal needs of three thousand men. With the First and the Seventeenth Cavalry, I took care of a squadron of a one thousand men, all of their personnel needs. It's very satisfying to be the person people come to for help when they're in trouble, when they need something, and you can fulfill that need.

Mosquera: I know you mentioned that you were the one who was making the phone calls sending people to Vietnam. Did you feel bad in a way that you knew you didn't want to be there, but you were the one making the phone call? How did you feel about that?

Kennedy: Well, it wasn't my call. I don't know why I remember this major's name. His name was Major Rice at armored branch. He would make the decision about who would go and where they'd go based on the needs of the service. I would just be the one who drafted the order and made the call to another officer and gave him the bad news.

Mosquera: Can you describe one of those calls if you remember it?

Kennedy: Oh, I remember one vividly. His name was Jimmy Carney. He was my best friend in the 6th Cavalry.

Mosquera: Would you mind just describing, where were you? Were you in an office? Describe the dialing the number. Take us there as much as you can. It's an amazing story.

Kennedy: Ok, Jimmy Carney was my best friend in the 6th Cavalry. He worked one floor below me. He and his wife and me and my wife, we went out to dinner a lot together. When I got the call from armored branch that he was going to go to Vietnam, I walked downstairs and said, "Jimmy, I have to tell you something." He knew immediately what it was. I felt really crappy about that. I never talked to him again after that, after he left.

Mosquera: Why not?

Kennedy: He was wounded in Vietnam. I knew that. Then he got out, and I tried to find him several times. I finally found out that he was the head of the park program for the state of Nebraska. I tried to call him a couple times, and I could never get him.

Mosquera: Why do you think that was? Do you think he was upset at you?

Kennedy: No, I don't think he was mad at me. I just think the war changed him.

Mosquera: Why do you think the war changed him?

Kennedy: Because he was my best friend and I never got in touch with him again. He never tried to find me.

Mosquera: Going back to pilot training, why did you choose to become a pilot? I know you mentioned before that your wingmen were 'damn good pilots', why would you consider you your guys 'damn good pilots'? If you could also just clarify, I'm not sure about the pilot versus the adjutant and how those two go together.

Kennedy: Every cavalry squadron has an adjutant. We call them S-1s, but in order to be in the air cavalry squadron you have to be a pilot. The intelligence officer was a pilot. The S-1, the adjutant was a pilot. The commanding officer was a pilot. Every commissioned officer had to be a pilot. It was just a condition of the job description. We had to do our minimum flying hours just like everyone else. That was just fun to do.

Mosquera: You mentioned that the pilot training was the best training you ever received. Why is that? Can you just describe what training was like?

Kennedy: It was intensive, very focused. It happened every day. I had a wonderful instructor pilot, Jim Agee was his name. I actually lived with him and his wife for a period of time during flight school. They pushed us to the limit. We would have contests between my instructor pilot and me as to who could do an auto-rotation. That's landing without power with your engine basically disengaged. We could pick a spot on the ground and see who could land closest to that spot. It was very competitive. We were also instrument

qualified which was very challenging at first to learn how to fly without being able to see anything but the instruments on your control panel. Very challenging, but when you got out you knew that you could fly that thing.

Mosquera: What kind of aircraft did you fly? Before you were taught had you ever considered becoming that type of pilot?

Kennedy: When I was a little boy, I decided that three things I wanted to do in my life was to write for *Life* magazine, become an aviator, and become a lawyer. I did all three. What did I fly? We called them slicks and scouts. Slicks were UH-1H or Bs or Cs. They were troop carrying aircraft. Scouts were the OH-58s and the OH-6 which were small aircraft designed to scout, go out and find the enemy, draw fire. Then you'd allow the attack helicopters that were above, that I did not fly, to come in and get the bad guys.

Mosquera: So they were airplanes. There were troops on them. Or they were what type of aircraft?

Kennedy: I'm sorry, they were all helicopters.

Mosquera: What was it like flying? What were you flying? Did you feel happy like you were on the top of the world? What were your emotions?

Kennedy: Well, I'll tell you the happiest flying I ever had was night flying. You know when all you can see is the stars and the diamond-like lights on the ground. It's just very relaxing.

Mosquera: You mentioned that you always wanted to write for *Life* Magazine and become a lawyer. Can you just tell me how all that came to be considering you were a pilot at one point? How did that all play out in your life? And did the military service have anything to do with it?

Kennedy: Not my military service had anything to do with it, but one of my uncle's military service did. He was a Naval aviator who was lost at sea in World War II. My mother just idolized him. His picture was always on the piano. Some of his flight gear was always hanging up on the basement steps. I wanted to be like Uncle Bill, become an aviator. Then every Wednesday night after dinner, I had to walk down with my brother to get his allergy shots. The magazines in the doctor's office while I waited for him to get his shots were *Life* and *Look*. I loved *Life* magazine, and I wanted to write for it. Military didn't influence that at all. I just always enjoyed writing.

Mosquera: When exactly did you start writing for *Life* and *Look* magazine?

Kennedy: I didn't write for *Look*. *Look* died a long time before I was able to write. I wrote one article for *Life* in 1994. I was sent on assignment for another article in '97 or '98, but it didn't get published because we weren't allowed access to a certain aircraft crash scene. The police wouldn't allow us in. If you know anything about *Life* magazine, it's all about the pictures. I did that article on a country vet up in Gilman, Illinois. I had a lot of fun doing that one.

Mosquera: Just to clarify, you became a freelance journalist before or after serving as a pilot?

Kennedy: After.

Mosquera: Why did you stop being a pilot? What happened?

Kennedy: In 1976, the war was over. Back then you made captain in two years which is really fast. We had more captains then the Army needed, so we had what's called a RIF, a reduction in force. They let a bunch of captains go. I was one of them, and then I went to law school.

Mosquera: What happened after the RIF?

Kennedy: I applied for law school and got into the University of Pittsburgh Law School and spent three years there.

Mosquera: What made you decide to apply to law school?

Kennedy: I had an English degree, and there's not a lot you can do with an English degree. You could teach, or you could write. I decided to go to law school to fulfill one of those three things I always wanted to do. Then I started freelance writing. I started the University of Illinois' alumni magazine. I was the founding editor of that, and I wrote for the *American Bar Association Journal* for about fourteen years as a freelancer. I worked for a host of other magazines. Ones like *Parents*, you probably know *Parents* magazine. I don't know, twenty or so magazines I wrote for.

Mosquera: Could you describe the training you got to be able to make those calls that said I'm going to send you to Vietnam? Talk about what training you

received. You told the one story about your best friend. Can you think of another story in that specific role? Start please with how you were told this is the job you're going to do and the kind of training you got for that job.

Kennedy: I had no training whatsoever for the job as an assistant adjutant. I just reported for duty. They saw I had an English degree, and they said if you can write you're going to sit here. That's going to be your desk. Everything else was on the job training.

Mosquera: Do you remember the first call you made? The first time you had to call someone and tell them you're going to be going to the war?

Kennedy: No, I do not remember the first call. The only one that sticks in my mind is Jimmy. I mean I made the calls to a lot of guys, but the Sixth Cavalry regiment was a replacement depot. Guys came here and went to Vietnam, or guys came back from Vietnam and got discharged. It was not a training function. I don't think we ever did any training except ride Jeeps once. Like I said, it was all on the job training. Thank heavens there was a manual for everything.

Mosquera: How did you feel about the training you got regarding calling people and telling them they're going to war?

Kennedy: Well, I never received any training in how to do that. Like I said earlier, I got a call from armored branch saying Lieutenant Smith is going jungle school

and then to Vietnam. I'd call Lieutenant Smith and say your orders are coming. I'd write out the orders.

Mosquera: When you think about the role you played in the Vietnam conflict, when you reflect back on that forty or fifty years later, what do you think about that service that you provided?

Kennedy: I was very proud of my service, still am, especially with the First Squadron Air Seventeenth Cavalry. This is its unit's crest by the way. A great bunch of guys.

Mosquera: Have you kept in contact with any of them? Have you ever had a reunion?

Kennedy: No, no reunions. I did run into one of my instructor pilots, strike that check pilot, who cleared me for the OH-58. I ran into him at the Air and Space Museum once in Washington, Larry Hogstrat was his name. He was a funny guy. He's the only aviator I knew who had business cards made up. He called himself an aviator extraordinaire. He said he was available for Bar Mitzvahs and massacres.

Mosquera: Can you say that again? It sounds like an amazing story. I'm sorry I just didn't hear it. He's available for what?

Kennedy: Bar Mitzvahs and massacres.

Mosquera: What does that mean?

Kennedy: He would fly for anything. You want to invite him to a Bar Mitzvah, he'd go to that. You want to invite him to a massacre, he'd go to that. He was a funny guy.

Mosquera: That wasn't alluding to his time in Vietnam then.

Kennedy: No, it was a joke.

Mosquera: I want to go back and get clarification on a few terms. If you wouldn't mind just elaborating on enlistment commission and the draft.

Kennedy: Enlisted ranks are those who don't have commissions. They're privates and sergeants. Then there's a special class between commissioned officers and enlisted men called warrant officers, and warrant officers made up the bulk of the Army's pilots. They had no command responsibilities whatsoever. Commissioned officers have command responsibility: the platoon leaders, company commanders, all the way through generals. Selective service is something you don't have to worry about, the draft. That's how most people got into the service during the Vietnam War. They did not volunteer. They were drafted and told what they had to do. There were a lot of protests against the draft, but the protests against the draft go all the way back to the Civil War. It's involuntary.

Mosquera: What was your process through that multi-layered system you just described?

Kennedy: I went through ROTC at Washington and Jefferson College and was commissioned as a second lieutenant on the day I graduated.

Mosquera: Last time we spoke you mentioned gold bars. I want to make sure I'm not missing anything important. Could you just describe again what the gold bar was about?

Kennedy: The gold bars were for second lieutenant. There's a gold bar on each shoulder or if you're wearing khakis it's on your lapel. It's just an insignia of rank. That's a second lieutenant. First lieutenant is a silver bar. Captain is two silver bars, and on up through the ranks.

Mosquera: A little earlier you mentioned the insignia on your shirt. I wanted to make sure I didn't miss that either.

Kennedy: No, this is the unit crest for the Seventeenth Cavalry.

Mosquera: Go back to Dan before the war and then after the war. What would you say is the difference between those two men and why?

Kennedy: Care-free before and focused afterwards, very focused.

Mosquera: Why would you say more focused?

Kennedy: Let me give you an example. When I went to law school, I never took a book home. I used every second of every day studying and preparing for my career. I treated it like a job just like I treated everything in the Army as a job. It forces you to get focused. You know you can't just walk out and quit.

Mosquera: After getting your orders and hearing they were rescinded, where were you at the time? What was your perspective on life after getting that call?

Kennedy: Well, I was at headquarters, Sixth Cavalry, when I got the call that my orders had been canceled. At the time, I didn't ask why. I didn't really want to know why. I was just grateful. Like I said earlier, I only knew one person who really, really wanted to go to combat. That person wasn't me.

Mosquera: Where exactly were you stationed?

Kennedy: The Sixth Cavalry Regiment was at Fort Meade in Maryland. The Eighty-Second Airborne, the First Squadron Air Seventeenth Cavalry, was at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I was also stationed at Fort Rucker in Alabama which was the Army's flight school.

Mosquera: Going into the flight school and everything, did you have a plan? Were you planning on going to war? Were you just doing it to idolize your uncle?

Kennedy: Well, there were a variety of reasons why I went to flight school. One was my uncle. One was flight pay. One was I seriously considering a twenty-year career, and being a pilot doesn't hurt you when you're going up for advancement. Like I said there were a variety of reasons why I went to flight school not all of which had to do with my uncle. That's where I got my start thinking about aviation as a child.

Mosquera: There was and still is sometimes a lot of negativity towards the Vietnam War. Do you remember any instance or any rally that you went to or any personal experience that you went through where you felt that tension?

Kennedy: Yes, there was a bar in Elizabethtown, Kentucky outside of Fort Knox where all armored officers had to get their initial training that had a sign in the window that said, "No servicemen or dogs." There was an incident once when I was riding in an elevator at Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh. There was a young woman there who called me a "baby killer." There were riots in Washington D.C. in '69 and also in Detroit against the war. Basically we were treated like dirt. The civilian population, a lot of them just didn't have any respect for servicemen.

Mosquera: Could you go back to that day when you walked up to that store and read that sign. What was going through your head? What were you doing previously that day? What did it look like outside?

Kennedy: It was summer. It was hot, humid. It's Kentucky, you get hot and humid in the summer. I saw the sign, and I just got sick to my stomach. I didn't throw up or anything. It just made me sick to compare us to dogs.

Mosquera: Could you also go back to the moment that you were talking about with the lady in the elevator?

Kennedy: I was in an elevator at Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I was in my dress greens which are green uniform and obviously Army. This young lady in the elevator with me, we were the only two people in the elevator, she just looked at me and said baby killer. I didn't know what to say. I just ignored her. This may have been around the time of the My Lai massacre with the

Lieutenant William Calley who was convicted of killing all those women and children.

Mosquera: Just to get a sense of where we are in time, could you tell me once again where you were stationed and what years?

Kennedy: Well, I was in from ’69 to ’76. I spent two years at Fort Meade in Maryland, and then flight school, and the rest of my time at Fort Bragg in North Carolina.

Mosquera: Can I go back to the elevator? I’m just fascinated by that story, and I’m trying to picture that young woman. Do you remember how old she was? Do you remember what she looked like? Do you remember what she was wearing and what that whole thing felt like to you?

Kennedy: I know that she was young. I’d say early twenties. She was attractive. Memory has it she was wearing a dress. That’s about all I can remember. She had long hair.

Mosquera: What did it feel like when she said that and you had to stay in that elevator with her?

Kennedy: Very uncomfortable. I wasn’t moved to hit or anything like that. I just didn’t want to be in the elevator with her anymore.

Mosquera: I know you said it was on the job training. Did you feel any guilt behind making the phone calls when you yourself kind of dodged having to go to Vietnam?

Kennedy: I knew that question was going to come up. Sure, I felt guilt. I felt survivor's guilt. Some really nice young men that I knew got killed over there, but survivor's guilt left me when I first held my son.

Mosquera: Can you tell me what that moment was like for you and why guilt went away? And when was it?

Kennedy: Well it was November 11th of '82 when I first held him. If I had been killed in Vietnam, he wouldn't have had been there, and he's the finest man I know.

Mosquera: Would you want your son to follow you into aviation?

Kennedy: No, he has absolutely no desire to do that. He has a good career. He's enjoying his life, and that's what I want him to do.

Mosquera: You mentioned riots and things in D.C. Were you in D.C. yourself or did you experience any of those riots?

Kennedy: No, my unit, the Sixth Cavalry, went and defended the Treasury Building, but I didn't go with them. I had to stay back and do all the paperwork that adjutant's do. I had a never-ending supply of paper. This was before computers. Everything had to be done on a typewriter, and everything had to be perfect. You can imagine how much paper you waste on a typewriter.

Mosquera: A lot of people refer to their friends as Vietnam buddies. Would you say you had war buddies in a sense? Would you refer to them as that?

Kennedy: No, I refer to them as friends. No, never thought of them as Vietnam buddies. We didn't share that experience.

Mosquera: What was it like for you after getting that phone call and going back to the life that you were living knowing that it could have been completely different? What did you do differently? Was there anything that changed for you?

Kennedy: Frankly, I don't think anything really changed for me. There was that initial feeling of relief, but during that time I was so doggone busy. I didn't have time to think about a lot of stuff.

Mosquera: You mentioned your unit going up to defend the Treasury Building. You mentioned the verbal abuse you suffered. What was the country like then? What was it like for you being in the military living through that? Describe America at that time and what it was like for you living through that.

Kennedy: America at that time I think was almost ripped apart. These riots weren't just isolated things like a Ferguson, Missouri kind of thing. These were mass riots, burning buildings. I remember one trooper with the Sixth Cavalry that went there told me afterwards he was so dog-gone mad that Jane Fonda was there mocking the troops. They weren't even allowed to have bullets. All they had was a rifle with a bayonet. They couldn't defend themselves or quell a riot or do anything. The 101st Airborne went to Detroit to do a show of force, and all

they were allowed to do was run in the streets, no weapons at all. Just to show there were a lot of soldiers there to stop the riots. The only times I was treated with respect by civilians, and I'll never forget these times, is when I'd fly commercial. I'd wear my khakis for example and my wings. We called them stewardesses back then. They'd come back and say captain would you come up with me. She'd say you fly first class, and that happened several times to me. I thought that was nice.

Mosquera: What was going through your mind at that time compared to the disrespect you felt with the lady in the elevator and then other civilians?

Kennedy: I'm sorry. That wasn't an isolated incident, the lady in the elevator. I was at a bar in Mount Lebanon, near Pittsburgh. I was in my khakis, and a guy at the end of the bar looked at me and said, "What's the matter? Couldn't you find a real job?" One more beer and I think I would have decked him, but people just treated us with such disdain.

Mosquera: Why didn't you hit the guy? What stopped you from fighting him?

Kennedy: I didn't want to go to jail. I just drank my beer, and I left.

Mosquera: Could you describe the scene? What was happening that day? Did you guys interact beforehand or did it come out of nowhere?

Kennedy: It came out of nowhere.

Mosquera: What was on the jukebox? What did it smell like? Paint a picture for us.

Kennedy: It smelled like beer. There was no jukebox in that bar. It was more of a burger joint. To this day I can't remember what that guy looks like. All I remember is his sneer and that rude comment. It was a bar that was frequented by Pirates, Pittsburgh Pirates, the baseball team. I can't remember the name of it. It's probably not there anymore.

Mosquera: What does that do to you having those people do that to you repeatedly? What does that do to a young man? What did that do to you? How did it change you?

Kennedy: Well, it made you not really like people. The only people I could count on were the guys that I served with. I didn't trust civilians. I don't think they liked us for whatever reason. Some really bad things happened in Vietnam. I can understand some of their anger and some of their feelings, but some really good things also happened. I met two Medal of Honor winners. That's not something you take lightly.

Mosquera: Can you tell me why you met those two Medal of Honor winners and what they won the medals for?

Kennedy: One was an aviator. No, actually both of them were aviators. I'm going to just mention a number. I don't remember. He was a med-evac pilot. A med-evac pilot goes to a landing zone, picks up wounded, and takes them back to a hospital. He had multiple aircrafts shot down under him in one day. He kept getting into a new bird and flying the same missions. He put his life at risk many, many times in one day. The other guy who was a young lieutenant. He

had been a warrant officer and got a battlefield commission. I was just walking around Fort Knox one day and I saw him. I saw he only had one ribbon, and it was the Medal of Honor ribbon on his chest. I look at him and say, "Is that the Medal of Honor?" He says yes. I asked what he had done. He was scouting. He ran across a North Vietnamese Army regiment in an encampment, and he called in artillery fire on that base. He stayed there at great risk to his own life too. They were trying to kill him, but he stayed there until he had to return to base. Brave guys.

Mosquera: What did it feel like to you to have met those two men, especially one coming from aviation?

Kennedy: Well, that med-evac pilot just amazed me. Most people don't live through getting shot down, and he lived enough. I want to say he lost nine aircraft that day. I don't know why that number sticks in my mind. I was in awe of him. That's a lot of courage.

Mosquera: I'm assuming he went through the same training that you did as well. I doubt that's something they prepare you for. Do you think if you were in the same situation would you have done the same things?

Kennedy: I think when he was doing what he was doing, he was running on adrenaline that day. I don't think he thought about it. I don't think anybody thinks, 'I'm going to be a hero today.' I think he was just running on adrenaline. Can I tell you one other story that you might find interesting?

Mosquera: Sure.

Kennedy: When I was going through flight school. The first female aviator in the Army's history was in my group, in my class. Everybody was thinking she was going to fail because she was a girl. I flew with her a couple times. She had a great control touch. She was a good aviator and a very nice young lady. Her name was Sally Woolfolk at the time. Now it's Sally Murphy. If you pick up a history of the Vietnam War, you'll see her picture. She made it as an aviator.

Mosquera: You said you guys were close, correct? Like friends?

Kennedy: Oh Sally and I? Yeah, we got to be friends.

Mosquera: You mentioned the wall. Looking at that wall, did it ever cross your mind about the Vietnamese that died as well? Did you ever feel a certain way about them that you felt about the American soldiers?

Kennedy: No. I didn't feel the same way at all. I saw the traveling wall down in Sadorus or Tolono or somewhere down there south of Champaign. They had a traveling wall, sort of a miniature sized version. The names were grouped by dates. You know who died on what days. I went through there, and I found two or three of the guys I knew, but there are fifty-seven thousand names on that wall. They weren't just names. One kid that, I've never used this term to describe a guy before, but he was the sweetest guy I ever knew. He helped train us in armor school when we were brand new lieutenants. He got his

orders to Vietnam, and the first day in country, that means first day in Vietnam, he got a bullet through his head. We were all just in such shock because this guy could have been your best friend, but you would never think of him as a combat officer. He just didn't have that vibe about him, and then he gets killed the first day.

Mosquera: I know you said you didn't feel any way in particular about, but have you ever met a person of Vietnamese descent? If not, would you care to meet one now? How would you feel about that personally?

Kennedy: Oh I've met lots of Vietnamese. We trained them at Fort Knox. We trained them at Fort Rucker. I didn't have anything against those guys at all. I have nothing against Vietnamese in general, but at the time I didn't think of them as anything but an enemy.

Mosquera: Did they go through ridicule from others?

Kennedy: No, I never saw any animosity towards them in training at all.

Mosquera: How did the South Vietnamese end up in that training? What was your experience with them? Can we just spend a couple questions exploring that? Tell us about how they got there and why.

Kennedy: Sure. At Fort Knox in Kentucky, that was the Armor School. I don't think the Armor School is there anymore. I think it moved out to somewhere in the west. We were giving the Vietnamese our tanks to use, our APCs, armored personnel carriers to use. They had to come to Fort Knox to get trained in how

to use them. They would bring over detachments of trainees to learn how to handle an M60-A1 tank or an M48. Same old, same old with the Fort Rucker in Alabama. They were using our helicopters, and they had to learn how to fly them. So they came to Fort Rucker where all Army helicopter pilots were trained. That's how they got there. That was their purpose. The goal was to go back to their country and hopefully be able to use the equipment that we gave them. Does that make sense?

Mosquera: Do you have any stories about working with them or meeting them or having a beer with them?

Kennedy: Oh no. Never would have had a beer with them. For one reason, biggest reason is they didn't speak any English at all. I had one in my flight class, one Vietnamese, who on his first solo flight crashed and burned. Didn't know him well though.

Mosquera: Do you feel the training was just as rigorous as what you guys went through despite the fact that the language barrier was there? Do you think you could have trained them a little harder?

Kennedy: When I said we trained them, I didn't include me. I meant the Army trained them. I imagine it was just as rigorous as ours. Although I doubt that they did instrument training. Because in order to fly under instrument conditions, you have to be very fluent in English.

Mosquera: You mentioned you only knew one guy who actually wanted to go because he wanted to be a hero. Then you said he went, came back, and wasn't a hero. Why don't you think that guy was a hero? Tell us the story about him and tell us why he wasn't a hero.

Kennedy: I'll give you his first name and not his last name. His first name was Gary, and he was in ROTC with me. He said that he wanted to go to Vietnam and get the CMH which he meant the Medal of Honor. We used to joke with him and say no that's "Casket Medal with Handles." He didn't take a combat arms position. He took a Medical Service Corps commission, so he never saw combat. All of his dreams of getting the Medal of Honor would have vanished.

Mosquera: What was your attitude towards a guy who would want to go over just to win the Congressional Medal of Honor? To me, it just doesn't sound like the right reason. What was your attitude towards him?

Kennedy: We always thought he was an idiot. I don't think anybody who receives a medal for valor in combat goes out with the intention of getting a medal for valor. I think they go into combat thinking, 'I want to survive this.' Then something happens and they react to a situation in a way that nobody else would have reacted. They are picked for that honor not because they wanted it but because it just happened.

Mosquera: Let me throw one other thing out. In terms of who was the enemy, you were serving in the Vietnam area. You weren't in Vietnam, but you were part of the Vietnam War. Could you say who you saw the enemy as and why?

Kennedy: That's a funny question. The one I would have feared the most were the Vietcong because they lived in communities. You couldn't tell the good guys from the bad guys from what I understand.

Mosquera: Did you have a personal enemy? Just based on your experience, did you have a personal enemy here?

Kennedy: Yeah, and you're going to be amazed at the response. There was an Australian major who gave me my check ride in the OUH-1 who did nothing but swear and belittle me and my copilot. I thought there's the enemy. You're supposed to be on our side. I regarded him as an enemy.