Air Force Weather Oral History Program

An interview with

Col Wayne L. Golding

conducted by

Gerald A. White, Jr.

Air Force Weather History Office

AIR FORCE WEATHER
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

AN INTERVIEW WITH

COL WAYNE L. GOLDING, USAF, RET

CONDUCTED BY

GERALD A. WHITE, JR.

25-26 March 2003

Air Force Weather History Office
Air Force Weather Agency
Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska

August 2003

F O R E W O R D

The following transcript is of an oral history interview Mr. Gerald A. White, Jr., Air Force Weather Deputy Historian, conducted with Col Wayne L. Golding, USAF, Retired, at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, Florida, on 25-26 March 2003.

Colonel Golding served in Air Force Weather assignments during his entire career. Enlisting in 1959 for weather observer, he was commissioned in 1971 and retired in 1995. His last assignment was as Director of Environmental Services, United States Special Operations Command, MacDill AFB, Florida. Of special note is that he was an original member of the Combat Commando Weather Team in 1963. Later designated the Special Operations Weather Team, he served as Officer in Charge, 1971-74, after being commissioned, and then oversaw team activities in Panama and Southwest Asia as 6th Weather Squadron operations officer and then commander in 1989-1991.

No attempt has been made to confirm the historical accuracy of all the statements made in this interview. The transcript reflects the interviewee's personal recollections at the time of the interview and does not necessarily reflect the official opinions of the Department of the Air Force, the Office of the Director of Weather, the Office of the Air Force Historian, or the Air Force Weather Agency. Colonel Golding has reviewed and approved this transcript for release as edited.

Mr. Gerald White conducted and transcribed this interview. He also edited and annotated the transcript for ease of reading; however, only minor emendations have been made to maintain the essence of the spoken word. The editorial changes and annotations are enclosed in brackets. The participants' amplifying comments are enclosed in parentheses.

James A. Moyers
Chief, Air Force Weather History Office
Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska
August 2003

Colonel Wayne L. Golding

B I O G R A P H Y

Wayne Larry Golding was born on 6 March 1940 in Thomasville, Georgia, and raised there. After graduating high school in 1959, he enlisted in the Air Force, and after basic training at Lackland AFB, Texas, completed weather observer training at Chanute AFB, Illinois.

After base weather station observer assignments at Fort Rucker, Alabama, and Thule AB, Greenland, then-Airman Second Class (E-3) Golding was assigned to Detachment (Det) 27, 3d Weather Squadron (3 WS), Hurlburt Field, Florida, officially Eglin Auxiliary Airfield #9, in October 1962. In January 1963, he became initial cadre for what was originally designated as the Combat Commando Weather Team, later redesignated Special Warfare Weather Team (SWWT). Initially part of Det 27, 3 WS, the SWWT was redesignated Det 75, 2d Weather Group on 1 March 1965 and Det 75, 5th Weather Wing (5 WW) on 7 October 1965. Det 75 moved to England AFB, Louisiana with the 1st Special Operations Wing on 15 January 1967. By then a staff sergeant (E-5), he remained with Det 75 until selected for the Airman's Education and Commissioning Program.

Detached for AECP on 1 July 1968, he attended Texas A&M University, graduating in 1970 with a Bachelors of Science in Meteorology. After Officer Training School, now-2d Lieutenant Golding was assigned back to Det 75, 5 WW, which had returned to Hurlburt Field. There he served as Officer in Charge, Special Operations Weather Team and later as Chief Forecaster.

In 1974, he was then assigned as an academic weather instructor, 29th Student Squadron, at Craig AFB, Alabama. Additional duties there included Squadron Operations Officer, Squadron Executive Officer and Chief, Base Exercise Evaluation Team. Then-Captain Golding transferred to Scott AFB, Illinois, and served as a weather plans officer at 7th Weather Wing (7 WW), from 1977–1979.

He was then assigned as commander of Det 9, 7 WW, Scott AFB, with concurrent assignment as Staff Weather Officer (SWO), 375th Aeromedical Airlift Wing.

Promoted below the zone, Major Golding graduated from the Army Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1983 and was assigned overseas to Moehringen, Germany, as Current Operations Officer, 7th Weather Squadron (7 WS). In April 1985, he was assigned as commander of Det 9, 7 WS, and SWO, VII Corps, Stuttgart. Returning to the US in October 1986, he served as Chief, Production Branch, Air Force Global Weather Central, Offutt AFB, Nebraska, where he was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

In October 1989, then-Lieutenant Colonel Golding returned to the special operations arena for a third Hurlburt Field assignment as operations officer and later commander, 6th Weather Squadron, which included duties as SWO, Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC). With the 1 October 1991 reorganization, divestiture and inactivation of Air Weather Service (AWS) units, Det 4, HQ AWS, was organized to support AFSOC. Lieutenant Colonel Golding served as Det 4 commander until May 1992 when he was promoted to Colonel and assigned as Chief of Environmental Services, United States Special Operations Command, MacDill AFB, Florida. He served there until retirement from active duty in July 1995.

At the time of this interview, he was an Assistant Professor of Meteorology at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, Florida.

I N T E R V I E W

Mr. White: My name is Gerald White, Deputy Historian for Air Force Weather, and I'm interviewing Wayne Golding, Colonel, Retired, United States Air Force, who was a Weather enlisted and officer from 1959 through 1995. We're at his office [at] Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) [Daytona Beach, Florida] and it is Tuesday, 25 March, [2003] 1 o'clock in the afternoon. The first question, just as kind of background, is tell me about Wayne Golding growing up and joining the Air Force.

Col Golding: Well, it's been a long time since anyone has been interested in that. I spent all my formative years in Thomasville, Georgia, and graduated from high school there in Thomasville in 1959. I actually graduated when I was 19 because I repeated the fourth grade; apparently, I liked it pretty well. I tried it again and graduated in 1959. I held a lot of part-time jobs from about the sixth grade on.

When I was a junior in 1958, I decided I was going to try for the Coast Guard Academy because I knew that I wanted to go to college and looked around to see what was available. I'm not sure exactly why I chose the Coast Guard Academy because it was very difficult to get into the Coast Guard Academy. It was not by appointment but strictly by test scores. I took the exam; I think it was about a 20-hour exam over a three-day period and I had to have 2200 points. I got a tad over 2100 and so they told me I could go to the academy prep school and they would guarantee my entrance to the next class. The problem with that was there was a price attached; I think it was about six or seven hundred dollars. It might as well have been six or seven thousand dollars because I couldn't afford it.

At the same time, I was watching television and saw some ads for the Air Force. There was this really sharp looking staff sergeant on the "tube" there and then I

got the idea I was going down and join the Air Force so I went down and met the recruiter. You know how the recruiters are, you always get what you want to hear, and so he says, “Well, what have you been up to” and I told him about the [Coast Guard] Academy. He says, “O-boy, you’re a brain; you’re going to get commissioned in about 12 months in the Air Force when we sign you up.” Sure enough, he got the 12 correct; it was 12 years. He said, “What do you like to do?” “I sure like track and field” because I was pretty good in track and field in high school. He said, “Well, the Air Force is going to snatch you up and you’re going to be earmarked for track and field, so you’ll get a commission and you’ll be a track and field guy.”

The next thing I knew, I was standing out in the yard at the house and I saw this blue sedan come driving up at a fairly brisk speed and he was waving a paper out the window. He got to my house and he said, “Well, you scored very high.” I forget [exactly but] I scored general aptitude in the 80’s and he says, “You’re going to be a weatherman.” I said, “Well, I guess a weatherman’s as good as any” and that was the beginning. My dad was so upset because he didn’t know anything about me going in the Air Force. He was the type of person that really didn’t like the idea of his sons fighting in the military; he just didn’t want anything to do with the military. He was so paranoid about the military he didn’t want us joining the Boy Scouts. He was afraid that was getting a little bit too close to the military, but I was on my way.

About a week later, I was going down to Jacksonville [Florida] for processing and we took an Eastern [Airlines] airplane out to Lackland [AFB, Texas]. I said, “Boy, I was living in style;” the airplane seemed pretty good and I was in the Air Force, until they got me off. They were screaming and hollering and carrying on and I couldn’t figure out what all the commotion was but I found out I had arrived at basic training at Lackland.

It didn't let up, but this was back in the years when basic training was abbreviated. It seems like it was about four weeks or so and they shipped you out to tech school where you completed the remainder of your basic training and so I went to Chanute [AFB, Illinois]. The weather observing school there at Chanute was quite lengthy compared to today; I think it was maybe about nine months long. We got a lot of training and completed basic training there.

There was one thing that happened at Chanute basic training that was memorable; I got reduced in rank. I had one stripe and so the way it worked in basic was, back then, the barracks chief was your small god. The barracks chief said we were all going to wear fatigues and we were all going to march over to the center where we were going to clean the weather station up and graduate. We made our own formation; we didn't march with the 59th formation. We got back that day [and] they had the first sergeant and the commander there and they offered us all an Article 15 or a court-martial. A lot of people say it was mass punishment because there were about 38 of us that were given Article 15s and a reduction, lost a stripe. I felt kind of bad like I hadn't done anything wrong because the only thing we were doing was following the barracks chief's rules. I had lost a stripe and I was determined not to let it get me down. So, after I lost a stripe, basically no one ever knew it because I went home. My parents didn't know a stripe from a lieutenant colonel's leaf so I didn't have any stripes and they didn't know the difference.

Then I reported to my first duty assignment at [Det 9, 16 WS] Fort Rucker, Alabama, and the commander was Major Bell [Maj Jack A. Bell] for a while, then Major Kelsey [Maj William R. Kelsey]. Bell was the commander when I first got there and he called me into his office and he said "I noticed you got this area on your sleeve where you had a stripe and now you're not wearing a stripe. You want to tell me about it?" and so I told him about it. At Chanute it was going to be a local bust, which meant you would put the stripe back on, they wouldn't cut

orders. They did cut orders and they sent orders down and he got them so that was that. I was determined to work my way out of the hole.

There was a chief master sergeant, his name was Chief Gill [CMSgt Henry Gill], he was one of the first chief master sergeants in the [Air] Weather Service in 1960 and he really took a liking to me. So, after a while, it seemed like things started going pretty good for me. I was working pretty hard and Chief Gill took up my defense. Every chance he got, he would tell them what a good job I was doing. So after a while I was doing pretty well and I made my stripe back and made a second stripe [E-3, then Airman Second Class/A2C]. One of the things I did there was to memorize a manual we had called a Circular N[1], which was the bible for a weather observer. It was a pretty thick manual, and everybody knew that I knew what was in the Circular N. If anybody wanted to know the proper way to do something in the Circular N, they would go ask Wayne Golding.

I decided I was going to apply for a commissioning program and I submitted my application to, I think it was Major Kelso at the time, for Officer Candidate School (OCS). There was a rule in the book that said if you applied for OCS, and you had a short tour coming up (I forgot to tell you I had just been selected for a short tour to Thule, Greenland), that you had to serve half of that short tour before you could apply so I was stuck. I went to Thule, Greenland, served six months there and then applied for OCS. I don't remember all the categories on the test, all I remember is I missed one point on one category so I didn't get it. I worked pretty hard at Thule. Once again I was known as a weather observer who really knew my stuff, I knew what was happening.

I left Thule and still only had two stripes and was reassigned to Hurlburt Field [Florida]. In those years, I think [while] it was called Hurlburt Field, it was

[1] Circular N was one of several manuals published in the 1930's for use by the Army, Navy, and Weather Bureau in how to take and record observations. Circular N dealt with surface observations, Circular P dealt with upper air observations and Circular O dealt with synoptic observations. They remained in use until the Federal Meteorological Handbook series was published in the late 60's.

[officially] Eglin Auxiliary Field #9,[2] and so I reported in there. Major Herbert Kaye was the [Det 27, 3 WS] commander in October 1962 and it was just another weather station until 15 January 1963. In 1963, January, there was some high-level message traffic [between] General Pritchard [Brig Gen Gilbert L. Pritchard] commander of Special Air Warfare Center based over at Eglin, and the Air Weather Service general [Brig Gen Norman L. Peterson[3]]. The message traffic that flowed said they were going to form an experimental five-man team; it was going to be called the Commando Combat Weather Team. It was just an experiment, I think they gave it nine months and that was in 1963. The team was done away with in 1991 so that was a pretty long nine months.

The next thing you knew, we had Captain Grimes [Col Keith R. Grimes] coming through the door. Captain Grimes was a brand-new shiny captain, he had pinned it on just a few days earlier and boy, was he ever impressive. He came in and he was full of enthusiasm and he was telling us about all this stuff we were going to be doing on the combat weather team. Frankly, I couldn't see myself doing half the stuff he was talking about. I was wondering if he had the right guy, particularly when he got to the part about jumping out of airplanes. I knew he had the wrong guy because I was scared of heights, I didn't want to get higher than about six or seven feet off the ground. So from that time until the time I went to jump school in July 1963, there was about five to six months there, I would be traveling on an airliner going somewhere and I would look down and say, "My God, am I really going to do this?"

[He was] the type of individual [that] was a leader by example. He took us out and he demonstrated the jumping. He made a jump out of a Huey, a UH-1, and he hit the ground screaming and hollering and with great jubilation. We were just so impressed that he could do that, there would seem to be no fear about it at all.

---

[2] As of July 2003, it was still officially Eglin Auxiliary Field #9 and part of Eglin AFB despite the "Hurlburt Field" sign at the main gate.

[3] Brig Gen Peterson was Air Weather Service commander 1 November 1959 - 13 March 1963.

I started looking at it and said, “Well, maybe I can do this” [and] I went to jump school in July [1963].

Jump school is pretty intense training for 21 days; lots of calisthenics, lots of running. Well to put it short, since I was a very, very lowly enlisted guy at the time (I was a two striper), they would start us out at 4:45 in the morning. We’d pick up [cigarette] butts, do menial chores, then we’d go out to the calisthenics field and do calisthenics until we were ready to drop. Then we’d run three miles and then we’d go over to the apparatus and train and then we’d do some more exercises and we’d get through the day. They would turn us loose back to our dormitory about 5 o’clock in the afternoon and then we had to do some chores there and then get ready to get up the next morning about 4:45. I got through all of that, then it got time for the real thing, the real jump; we had to do five of them at Fort Benning [Georgia] to graduate. I never will forget the jumpmaster; I was scared to death of jumping but I was more afraid of the jumpmaster than I was of the jumping and I guess that was a good thing. When it got time to jump, I was back in the stick and the first guy in the stick froze up. He didn’t jump and he started screaming and hollering and they pulled him out and we circled around and made another effort. Then, after we got ready to jump, the guys jumped out and then I was standing for an instant in the door, it was just an instant and that was the time of reckoning so I went. Nobody ever knows whether they’re going to be too afraid to jump until they actually jump. After the first jump, the second one was more difficult because I hit like a sack of bricks the first time. I was really dreading the second time but the second time was pretty light; I adjusted to it and the first five jumps went pretty well.

Then I was back at Hurlburt, jump qualified and ready to go. We had an Airman Strickland [A2C John L. Strickland]. He went before me to jump school in May or June. He seemed to have no problem with the jumping but he had a lot of [other] problems. He was my roommate, as a matter of fact, so we got along real well and I knew him extremely well. He seemed like just a normal guy but he had

mental problems. He became paranoid schizophrenic, and he was given a permanent discharge sometime in the first half of 1964. That was a medical discharge, which equated to medical retirement. He still gets that retirement today and it's pretty good sized because it's increased a lot over the years.

It was sad [and] at the same time it was funny as heck because I'll never forget the day that he was admitted. I was jumpmaster, it was a jump at Hurlburt, and Strickland was in the line-up. We were jumping at an airshow and we had to orbit over the Gulf [of Mexico] a couple of hours before we jumped. He came over and he says, "Wayne, the devil is aboard this aircraft." I said, "Strick, can you point him out?" He pointed to this crusty old intel[igence] guy, MSgt Phelps, and I said, "Yep, I can believe it." I knew something was wrong, but didn't know it was serious enough that I should have pulled him out of the jump; I [just] didn't know. So, we went ahead with the jump and he was successful with the jump, did just fine. We had to walk across this stream to get to the runway. Walking to the taxiway, I'm watching Strick walk across the stream after he had gathered his chute up and then he turned around and marched exactly back the way he came. I said, "Strick, what in the world are you doing?" "Well, the Lord told me that I had to retrace my steps or something bad was going to happen." I started to really get worried. We went into the weather station. Major Kaye was there, the commander, and Strickland thought he had become General Douglas MacArthur. He went into Major Kaye's office and I don't remember exactly how he asked but he needed to have access to all the secrets in the safe. Major Kaye says, "Oh sure, no problem, just wait right out the door there." He called the hospital and had them send over the guys in white. They hauled him out of there; they were literally putting the straitjacket on him and took him out while he was screaming. That was the end of Strickland. Although I have kept close contact with him, I've lost contact with him the past five years since I've been here [Embry Riddle Aeronautical University].

Mr. White: So there was no special screening or anything for selection to the weather team originally?

Col Golding: Excellent, excellent question. Now they have a lot better screening but there was no screening [then]. For example, I'll tell you how Major Kaye selected the people to be in the Commando Combat Weather Team that Grimes was going to be commanding. He says, "Well, we got this Commando Combat Weather Team," (this was at Commanders Call). He says, "I'm going to pass around this hat and we're going to see who's going to be on the team." He had these little pieces of paper folded up in this hat and I pulled out this piece of paper that said, "You are a commando." We had four of us who picked a piece of paper like that and that determined who was going to be working for Grimes. The second thing he says was, "Now, we don't have any NCOs [non-commissioned officers] so we've got to figure out which one of you folks is going to be acting NCOIC [non-commissioned officer in charge]." Then he went around the room and he says, "What size boot do you wear?" and I wore the largest boot so I became the acting NCOIC. Am I going too long?

Mr. White: No, that's fine. To back up a bit, once this experiment was past the nine-month point and they decided to keep it, how were the follow-on people selected?

Col Golding: Yes, we learned some things. We were having a nebulous start there, very uncertain because we were putting training into these people, we were spending good money on training and we were losing the people. Quite honestly, when I look back on it, I think there was some relationship between people's mental problems and the tempo that we were operating under. Grimes was a great guy to work for if you wanted to be active and wanted to be doing things. He was a bad guy to work for if you were the type guy who didn't want to be very active. Well, in the future, after those problems, we started having people come to our unit and stay with us. I think it was about a week, it may

have been a little longer, to kind of test them out, check them out and make sure they were going to be all right. It's difficult to tell just by having somebody come spend time with you, but it seemed to work because we didn't have any more problems.

In 1963, we started having quite a lot of activity related to jumping because we had to support these airshows over at Eglin. These airshows were the [Air] Commando sales department and they would have dignitaries from all around, all the various countries, and particularly countries [from] South America. They would come up and they would view these airshows and we would jump in the airshow. In addition to jumping in the airshow, we would take care of all the weather support. We would take a pilot-balloon [PIBAL] run to 30,000 feet and we would take observations so we were very involved in supporting the airshows over at Eglin. We got exceedingly good at parachuting because in 1963-1964, those first two years, I imagine I accrued 50 parachute jumps. In the Army, you can spend a whole career, 25-30 years, and not get any more jumps than that. So that was 1963, we were doing one airshow at Eglin [a month] with the weather support and jumping. Then in 1964, we had increased to one airshow and two practices. For all practical purposes, we had three airshows a month and that made for a lot of activity.

And of course, [there were] exercises; lots of exercises. We had CHEROKEE TRAIL, which was an exercise up at Fort Bragg [North Carolina], a joint exercise with the US Army Special Forces and Air Force Special Operations. This was a real important exercise; we did this quarterly throughout 1963 and 1964.

Mr. White: What I also really wanted have you talk about was how you came up with the training? How much of your time was exercises and training versus weather training and some of the different things you all did as the Combat Commando Weather Team?

Col Golding: OK, that's a good question. The way we came up with training was trial and error. We didn't have any good roadmaps for training when we first started in 1963. By 1964 we pretty much decided we had to have parachute training [and] we had to graduate from the survival school out at Stead AFB, Nevada; equivalent to the school at Fairchild [AFB, Washington] today. Then we had to go to tropical survival down at Panama [Howard AFB], Arctic survival up at Eielson [AFB], Alaska, and water survival. In those years it was at Langley [AFB, Virginia], later it was down at Homestead [AFB, Florida][4], I believe. We had all those survival schools and jump school and in addition to that, you had to know something about communications. Grimes had all of us training to be somewhat expert at Morse code; he saw that as being needed sometime in the future. Frankly, I never used Morse code, but never the less, we did all that. Then we had to have some language training, he felt we needed to be trained in a second language and mine was French. I graduated from the Sans French language school at Hurlburt. The only thing I remember about that course is we had a very good-looking female instructor; [that's] the only thing I remember.

Of course, [we trained with] small arms; as the years went on, regardless of what small arms were in use, whether it was the AR-15, the M-16, the 9 millimeter, the .38 special, the .45 caliber, whatever it was, you were expected to be an expert and we were an expert in every weapon. We didn't have any excuse to not be an expert because we spent an enormous, [even] ridiculous, amount of time firing at the firing range. I think, instead of firing once a year for qualification, we fired at least once a quarter, but there was a period in 1963 - 1964 where we were firing once a month; we were really firing frequently. That encompasses the training, that is, except for the weather training.

The weather training, for us as observers, encompassed some specialized things that we learned about on the fly. For example, we were very involved with

[4] As of 31March 1994, Homestead was designated an Air Reserve Station (ARS). The active duty units left after Hurricane Andrew essentially demolished the base in August 1992. Water survival school, as of 2003, was taught at Tyndall AFB, Florida.

supporting troop drops and we knew there had to be a better way than having a large balloon and a large, five-foot helium tank and hoses and clamps and regulators and all that stuff because that's the way we started. It was a real "goat trip" to haul all this stuff around and so gradually we developed a thing called an "effective wind system." The "effective wind system" eliminated the need for a large helium tank. [Instead] we had these little oxygen bottles, about a foot long and about six inches in diameter, and it eliminated the need for having hoses, clamps, regulators and all this kind of stuff because we developed a circumference for the balloon. We determined that it should be 74-inch [circumference] nighttime and 57-inch daytime. [The] 74-inch [circumference] accounted for the added weight of the lighting unit that you had to have underneath the balloon. The "effective wind system" proved to be quite successful. We didn't just develop that by ourselves; we [worked with], I think it's called Air Force [Research] Lab[oratory] today, back then it was called Cambridge Research Center, and they got all their high-powered mathematicians to figure it out for us. Now, we would jump into an area and we were getting ready to prepare the drop zone for maybe the Special Forces Group out of Fort Bragg coming in. We would have the little balloons, we would have the string for the circumference, we would have the small bottles and we could jump in with everything in a little rucksack that fit right beneath our emergency parachute and it worked really well. Beyond that, it simplified the plotting of the data. Instead of having to plot data out on this board with a ruler and converting the horizontal distance out of the balloon to knots, we figured it all out ahead of time and put it on a little 3-[inch] by 5-[inch] card and covered it with acetate. We knew that, for example, from let's say 1250 feet, that it took exactly one minute for the paratrooper to exit the aircraft until the time he touched the ground. If you looked on the card and you got 21 degrees elevation angle for the balloon, this produced 10 knots; the drift would be 100 feet per knot per minute in the air so it would be a thousand feet for a drop like that.

Mr. White: Was there a lot of other specialized equipment or procedures that you developed by necessity for working out in the field that you wouldn't have needed running a base weather station?

Col Golding: Well, yes there was. Starting about 1966, January, we moved to England Air Force Base, Alexandria, Louisiana. We moved about 23 people; all had become jump qualified. Among other things, we were the test and development center for special operations and we were under 5th Weather Wing. We were really heavily involved in test and development. We had a little miniature Kern theodolite; instead of having this humongous thing, and we tested it and recommended it, but for some reason 5 WW never bought it.

We had another piece of equipment; it was called a balloon abort device. It was just a crooked blade that was protected by plastic until the time the blade would strike; it would come out of the plastic and strike the balloon. We felt that after the balloon had served its purpose for 1200, 1500, 2000, 3000 feet, we didn't need any balloons wandering around out there and giving away our position, so we had this balloon abort device that we used quite a bit. We had another thing called the one-shot helium cylinder. It was as the name indicates, just a throw-away, one-time use, a little tiny cylinder about one inch in diameter and about six inches long and so you could blow up the balloon and then toss the cylinder. It was carried in a belt; we used it for a pretty good while but decided the small oxygen bottles were the way to go so we used that instead. There were some other things, but I don't remember them.

Mr. White: Well, we can backtrack. As you were going along at Hurlburt and then England, was there a lot of conflict, or any conflict, between the special operations world and Headquarters Air Weather Service about what you guys were supposed to be doing?

Col Golding: You know how to ask the right questions. Yes, there was some conflict there. Grimes found himself in the situation where much of the time he was doing a weatherman's job but he was doing it under the auspices of special operations. He would be told "this is close-hold" and so he shouldn't let anyone else know. Therefore he would get into muddy waters, have a little difficulty with [Air] Weather Service because he didn't keep the Weather Service informed as to what he was doing but it was because of the instructions that he would get.

Mr. White: In your histories[5], you mention TDY's [temporary duty] just kind of in passing, I was wondering is that because they were classified? Did you do many TDY's for anything other than for things like the exercises?

Col Golding: Well, the only thing I did personally was I went on the exercises and there were lots of them. But now Grimes, I think it was late 1964 or early 1965, he got caught up in what was called WATER PUMP[6] and so he had to go over to Southeast Asia. His reason for going over there was he felt that he could be a forward air controller to General Vang Pao of the Laotian forces. He believed that because he graduated from the Air-Ground Operations School. I'm sure, although no one ever told me, that he [Grimes] graduated number one in his class because he always graduated number one in his class in every school he ever went to. He felt supremely confident that he could be the guy to do the forward air controlling for General Vang Pao. He had to convince Ambassador Sullivan [Ambassador William H. Sullivan][7] that he was the guy. Ambassador Sullivan gave him the green light for him to meet General Vang Pao and he convinced General Vang Pao. So after he controlled air strikes for about six months and he did real well, then he asked General Vang Pao if he could support a weather net in Laos and so that's the way that got started. One thing Grimes

---

[5] The histories referenced were for Det 75, which were included in the 2 WG/5 WW Histories from 1962 – 1968. Then-SSgt Golding was the Det 75 historian.
[6] WATER PUMP was a deployment of Det 6, 1 SOW (41 troops and 6 T-28's) to Udorn RTAFB, Thailand in April 1964 to support counterinsurgency training of Royal Laotian Air Force personnel.
[7] Ambassador Sullivan was the U.S. ambassador to Laos, December 1964-March 1969

always told me [was that] if you're a weather guy in the combat weather arena, it's not necessarily what you know about weather that gets you in the door; you've got to know a lot about a lot of things. You've got to be in superb physical condition, you've got to be an expert marksman because General Vang Pao was a very simple man. [Pao] understood if you could run five or ten miles and he understood if you always hit what you were shooting at. [Grimes] said if it hadn't been for him graduating from that Air Ground Operations School, there never would have been weather net, he was convinced [of that].

Mr. White: I'm curious; how was it you never went to Vietnam or Southeast Asia?

Col Golding: Good question. January 1966, I was a staff sergeant, so I was charged to go to England AFB and get set up to receive the rest of the team.[8] I was working really hard to get everything organized and the rest of the team was showing up there. It was about March 1966 and I got a stack of orders; I was going to go over to Southeast Asia and work on the weather net. Once he [Grimes] got the [Laotian] weather net established, we kept about ten people over there to do the quality control. So Grimes just rushed in one day in between TDY's (he was forever going TDY and it was just very difficult to keep up with him and his travels) and I said, "Well, I got some orders to go over to the weather net." He took the orders, looked at them and he said, "There's no way this can happen because I am forever gone and I have got to have someone here that can run the shop." He called Colonel Lindner [Col Kenneth A. Lindner], 5th Weather Wing [commander] and told him that he needed to have the orders cancelled, so I never went over. Sometimes that kind of nags at me a little bit because I was in the business from 1963 to 1968 and was never in an actual shooting combat situation. I certainly went on a lot of exercises, but never went to any shooting combat situations.

[8] 1 SOW moved to England AFB on 15 January 1966 and returned to Hurlburt Field 15 July 1969.

Mr. White: Are there any deployments or exercises you found especially interesting or challenging?

Col Golding: There was [an exercise] QUICK KICK, [April] 1967, and it was down in Puerto Rico on Vieques Island just off Puerto Rico. We were setting up an operation there; this was more like conventional support. We had to take normal PIBALs, I think it was about 24 hours a day, there were two of us; well, maybe it was 18 hours a day, we might have been getting a little bit of sleep. This was a long exercise, about 30 days, and during this time we took all these PIBALs and we had to transmit this to a ship that was off the coast of Vieques Island. Some admiral out there was getting these winds and they would transmit it back to Fort Bragg. They were preparing for a major "invasion;" it was C-141's flying in trail and there was 2000 troops that were jumping out that particular morning. Their job was to make the drop-zone on Vieques Island but there was a problem. We knew exactly what was going to happen, the drift was very significant. We knew the winds were 30 knots at [jump] altitude, and [so] we knew the drift based on the wind was very significant at lower levels. We knew the winds at the surface were gusting out of limits; they were greater than 13 knots. So for all these reasons, there were problems. Now we knew that if the C-141's flew in trail out over the water, that when the troops exited, they would drift back and land on the drop zone but the DZSO [drop zone safety officer], he was an Air Force captain, he simply wouldn't listen to us, simply didn't listen to us. We didn't have much rank; I was a staff sergeant and my assistant was a staff [sergeant]. So, the aircraft came in and they were determined the drop was going to go. The main reason was they had some bleachers out there and the bleachers were just full of dignitaries, anybody you could name, any general in the US, he was out there in the bleachers. The C-141's came in trail right across the center of the drop zone, released the troops and they all exited out over some very rough terrain, rocks and boulders out there. They had one death and they had about six or eight broken arms or broken legs. There was a major investigation and I had to go to Air Weather Service with my records, and I had

them. Everything I had showed there was a problem with this jump and nobody would listen to me. As I understand it, this Air Force captain's career was cut short.

Mr. White: In reading the histories, I see what appears to be a shift in the name and kind of the mission; I won't call it mission creep but mission shift from the initial test in 1963 to when you left in 1968 to go to school? Was that when you left?

Col Golding: I left around the 1st of July, 1968.

Mr. White: So, I see kind of a mission shift here. What did that mean at your level, I mean down at the grunt level, in terms of what you did and who you did it for and things like that?

Col Golding: Mission shift? Let's see, you're talking about our move from Hurlburt [Field] to England Air Force Base in Alexandria?

Mr. White: Right.

Col Golding: Well, the 1st Air Commando Wing moved from Hurlburt to England Air Force Base and we moved with it. Our job was to support the 1st Special Operations Wing[9] [1 SOW] whenever it deployed, worldwide. The further mission was to give a training apparatus for weather people that were coming in. We would get these people trained after six months to a year so they could then exit the England [AFB] confines and go over to Southeast Asia for the weather net so we had a pipeline. It started out being a TDY basis; we would TDY them over for six months [and] they would come back. In some cases, they would

[9] Activated as 1st Air Commando Wing on 1 June 1963, it was redesignated as 1st Special Operations Wing on 8 July 1968. It was later redesignated 834th Tactical Composite Wing on 1 June 1974, reverting back to its designation as 1 SOW on 1 July 1975. On 1 October 1993, it was redesignated as the 16th Special Operations Wing; its history and heritage were consolidated with the pre-WW II 16th Fighter Group.

come back and check in at the detachment, stay a couple days and then TDY back over. Finally, it was decided that the best way to handle that was just to PCS [permanent change of station] them, so we started PCS'ing people over for a year. Frankly, the people liked TDY's because you could collect up a lot of money over there in six months; you could come back and buy a new car and pay cash. It was incredible because you were out in the boonies, you didn't have any quarters or rations; that was the major change.

Mr. White: Besides Keith Grimes, are there any other Det 75 combat weather officers or NCO's that really stick out in your mind as being key players or as having made significant contributions to combat weather?

Col Golding: Well, yes. There was Captain Charles Smith, [Maj Charles S. Smith] who made major about 1968; he was a pretty good officer. There was Ronald G. K. Wong, he was a lieutenant and near the end of his stay with us, he made captain.

There's another guy who really stands out in my mind-Tom Watson [CMSgt Thomas M. Watson]. Tom Watson was a tech[nical] sergeant when he went on an exercise [with us], it was SWIFT STRIKE III. I failed to mention that, but SWIFT STRIKE III was THE exercise we cut our teeth on. It was the very first thing we did after we formed the team and it was about 1963, about May through June. Grimes was so impressed with him. He [Watson] was at STRICOM[10] down at MacDill [AFB, Florida], and so [Grimes] got him from STRICOM and he reported in [to us] early in 1964. Tom Watson was just a superb individual; he was probably the finest NCO I've ever known and I've known some really outstanding NCOs, so that's saying a lot for Tom Watson. He retired around 1972 and died about 1988; he had a blood clot in his leg. He was so good, in fact, Grimes selected him to go over and take on the task of opening the weather

[10] United States Strike Command, established 1961, redesignated US Readiness Command in 1972 and replaced in 1987 by US Special Operations Command.

net but he was just not successful with the weather net because he just didn't have the rank. When you were dealing with Ambassador Sullivan, you really needed to be an officer; that's the reason Grimes later went over.

There was Andrew Wilder, [SSgt Andrew V. Wilder], he was one of the original four. He went over and worked on the weather net and he was at a location where he was almost overrun. He was with Tom Watson and he was almost overrun by the enemy. [He] simply outran the enemy, Wilder told me. He said it was really amusing that he got an R&R, [rest & recuperation] vacation in Hawaii and he got a [Bronze Star]. He said he got that simply because he ran away from the enemy for everything he was worth.

Mr. White: You had mentioned earlier that your goal was to get a commission. How did that come about?

Col Golding: Well, before we moved to England, we were at Hurlburt and in 1964, I took my first college night course. I had an agreement with Grimes. We have to backtrack a little ways now. Remember I got to Hurlburt in October 1962 and immediately I made it known I really desperately wanted to get a commission. So, Major Kaye had allowed me to go to Pensacola Community College during the daytime and I was working shifts at night. I did that for, I think, a period of 30 days, and it came to an end when I was selected to the Combat Commando Weather Team. Grimes said, "Well, I'm going to be honest with you, there's going to be about a year, to year and a half, where you're going to be extremely busy and you're not going to be able to pursue the college, but after that year and a half, I will allow you to take some college courses."

So I took courses in 1964 and 1965. Then in 1966, I really was burning the candle at both ends because I played an important role in the Commando Combat Weather Team (Det 75). In the early stages, I was the NCOIC and then Watson came and he was the NCOIC, then he deployed, so I would be the

NCOIC again. At the same time, I was taking, on the average, two courses at night and one course during the day (lunchtime) from Louisiana State University at Alexandria [LSU-A]. I was really burning myself out.

I took the Air Force Officers Qualification Test at the end of 1966 and didn't pass the entire test. There was one category, navigator technical, I think it was called, and it had an aerial photo interpretation part of the test. I made [an] exceedingly low [score] on the aerial photo interpretation, everything else I did all right. Grimes, in his usual fashion, looked at the results and he said, "Well, if you got a deficiency, you got to work on it, so I'm going to enroll you in the aerial photo interpretation course on base. I'm going to give you so many hundred hours in the mock-up of the jet here on base, the simulator. We're going to get your pilot scores up and your navigator technical scores up and, oh yeah, we're going to enroll you in a physics course out at LSU-A." We did all those things. Boy, this is quite a story because it just proves one thing; never give up.

In 1967, I re-took the test. My pilot scores were much higher; all my other scores were much, much better. The navigator technical score, because of the aerial photos, didn't change appreciably because I made very low [scores] on the aerial photo [portion]. Grimes says, "Well, darn." You know, he was a professional geologist from the University of Texas. [He] said he had known people in geology who didn't have the knack for looking at aerial photos and interpreting, could not interpret aerial photos, but it did not seem to detract from their other technical abilities. He believed that and while he was talking, Lieutenant Ed Town [1 Lt Edward A. Town] overheard that and said, "Well, I've never seen anything yet that you couldn't get a waiver for." He says, "I'm going to write a waiver letter to get it rolling." In the mean time, Grimes called the center [Air Force Military Personnel Center] down at Randolph [AFB, Texas] that controlled this commissioning program and he was asking about getting a waiver. They

said for the AECP, the Airman Education and Commissioning Program,[11] there are absolutely no waivers, you must score high on every single category: verbal, quantitative, pilot and navigator. There cannot be any waivers. Grimes said, "Well, all right," and in the meantime, I was exploring my options.

I can't describe it, I was just devastated, and so I decided that I was going to go in the Army, the Army Special Forces, and go through their OCS [Officer Candidate School]. I went down and talked to the recruiter, and when he got through talking to me, my mind had changed because they didn't give me any guarantees. The only thing they could tell you was you'll get in the Army; you've got to compete to get into Special Forces and you've got to compete to get into OCS and you've got to go through the Advanced Infantry Course. They didn't even recognize my basic training that I had been through in the Air Force so I was starting from zero. So, I went back to the unit and said, "Well, I think I'm going to take a 30 day leave" because I was about burned out.

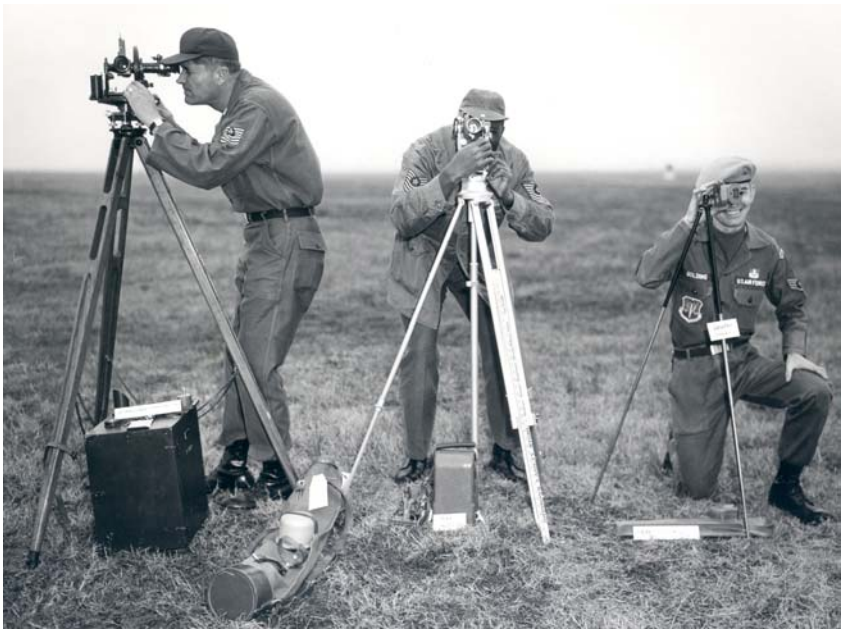
I took a 30-day leave and I came back and saw a package on my desk. I picked it up and it was a package about an inch thick. The very top of the package said something to the effect that your application for AECP is favorably approved, stamped "Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General McConnell" [Gen John P. McConnell].[12] You could of knocked me over with a feather. The paperwork had gone up and down, up and down; it went up to a high level and they would say, "Well, we don't think we can approve this because your score in the aerial photo is not very good." Then it would come back down and then it would get caught here by an Air Weather Service colonel and they would say, "Yes, but just look at all these other scores; he's practically doubled his scores in everything so we think, yes, he can make it." The paperwork just went like that and so finally it was approved by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

[11] Under the Airman Education and Commissioning Program, the Air Force would send airmen to college fulltime to complete their degree, usually an engineering, scientific or technical degree, if they had at least two years of college, had done well on the AFOQT and were otherwise qualified. After graduation, while not guaranteed, they would then normally go to Officer Training School and be commissioned.
[12] General McConnell was Chief of Staff of the Air Force, 1 February 1965-31 July 1969.

Then, I was so excited, I could hardly control myself, and I went over to take the physical exam. For the first time in my life, I had a cardiologist listen to my heart and he got this real worried look on his face. I need to tell you I was in pretty good physical condition in those years; I wasn't competitive but I was running marathons. He said, "Well, I don't know what to tell you but I'm going to have to refer you to the Air Force center for cardiology at Wilford Hall [Medical Center] at Lackland." I was referred down there in September 1967 and they finally made a decision 1 February 1968 and I was in the hospital all this time. They decided that I had a significant murmur. They said I only had two choices, "You could go back to being an NCO and jumping out of airplanes and everything [since] you're not having any symptoms or, if you want to get into a commissioning program, you've got to take a cardiac catheterization." [That's] where they send a thing up your artery and take some pictures in there. I agreed to that very readily and they wheeled me in there and they took it and they said, "Well, you've got a hole in the tissue wall separating the upper chambers, the atria, a hole about the size of a silver dollar. We'll give you an age expectancy of about 36-37. You'll have a massive cardiac failure." I agreed and they did the surgery right away, the next day. I recuperated in twelve days, that was a record at that time. Nowadays, I don't think twelve days means anything because they give you the surgery and two days later, they kick you out of the hospital. Anyway, I was out of the hospital and the good news was I left the hospital with a letter. It said you're qualified to do anything you want to, I'm just rephrasing, jump out of planes, there's no limitations, the surgery's 100 percent corrective. Then I was on my way [but] in the meantime, I was over the age limit, things were really catching up. I had to have a waiver for the age, so that came easier. I got the age waiver, and I think it was in July of 1968, I reported to Texas A & M.

Mr. White: Now, had you selected Texas A & M or did someone select Texas A & M and meteorology for you?

Personnel of Det 75, 5 WW, early-mid 1967: (front, l-r) A1C Melvin R. Keith, 1 Lt Edward A. Town, A1C Donald G. Linscheid, A1C Dennis McIntosh; (back, l-r) SSgt Maurice D. Kunkel, SMSgt Thomas M. Watson, Capt Keith R. Grimes, SSgt Wayne L. Golding, SSgt Lloyd W. Mitchell. (USAF photo)



Theodolite and transit field test, ca. 1966-67. (l-r) Master Sergeants (unidentified) from the 5th Weather Wing are operating a standard theodolite (left) and Kern theodolite (center). SSgt Golding (right) is operating the Brunton Transit, later adopted for use with the effective wind system. (USAF photo)

Col Golding: I tell you the truth, I was so glad to be going, that I would have gone to any college they could have found, but no, it was the Air Force doing, I had no say. It turns out Texas A&M was a very good school. I only had one complaint; they had a very strict grading procedure. 92 was considered a B and 93 was an A, so I didn't like that. I was used to getting A's if I got a 90, but I put up with it; I got used to it. I didn't make many A's. I made one A in technical writing and a lot of B's. That's the thing about Grimes, everything he did he was tops in his class. [At] University of Texas, he was Phi Beta Kappa in geology. He went to Penn State [Pennsylvania State University] [where] he got his bachelors in Meteorology [and was] top man in his class. [The] George Washington University MBA [program], he graduated near the top, I don't remember exactly. It wasn't just that, it was even in service schools, he always excelled. The guy was truly brilliant.

Mr. White: So the Air Force picked both your school and your major?

Col Golding: Yes

Mr. White: My boss and I had a discussion about this; going to Texas A&M as opposed to other schools in the late 1960's, were there many problems with being military personnel on campus or because it was [Texas] A &M, it was a little different?

Col Golding: No, there wasn't any problem. One thing, there was a very large contingent of Air Force ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps]; I don't remember the exact size but it was one of the largest in the nation. The only problem was within our ranks. We had 18 people in AECP, and we had one guy that was opposed to the Vietnam War. He was out marching around so they wheeled him in and got control of him. But other than that, we wore civilian clothes; we were just like civilians for all practical purposes, as far as the school was concerned. It was a good school, I found out since then it was one of the better schools that

emphasizes the practical applications of meteorology. For example, Penn State and MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], just physics and math running out both ears all the time and so I don't think I would have thrived nearly as well at those colleges.

Mr. White: So having graduated with a meteorology degree, was it your choice to go back to Det 75 or was Keith Grimes hand in this again?

Col Golding: That's an excellent question. You have to realize the reason that I wanted to go and get a commission had evolved, but at that time, it was because of my experience in special operations. I felt that I really had something to offer, that I could go back and knew exactly what had to be done in a special operations setting. So I was getting pretty close to graduation and there was a guy sitting in a lab with me, his name was Dennis Kalmas and he was a lieutenant, 1st Lieutenant Kalmas. One day he said, "Hot dog, I got my orders!" I said, "Yeah, where're you going?" [He said,] "I'm going down to Hurlburt, Det 75." "Damn, I just got my orders and I'm going to Dover [AFB], Delaware, behind the counter forecaster" [I replied].

Here was a guy that knew nothing about Det 75 and he was going where I wanted to go and that kept eating at me for about two days. I said, "Well, I'm fixing to do something out of character," because in the past I tend[ed] to go along with the flow and I don't make waves very much. This particular time I decided I was going to pick up the phone and find out who the commander was at Det 75 at Hurlburt and I would take it from there because I really wanted to get back to Hurlburt. [The commander] was Santos Pantoja, a major. Major Pantoja was delighted to hear my name. He knew me because he was at a higher level during QUICK KICK when I was out at Puerto Rico in the exercise and he remembered me and he was favorably impressed. He said, "Man, you are the answer to my prayers because I got to have somebody come down here and be OIC [officer in charge] of this Special Operations Weather Team. I am the

detachment commander here; I know how to run a [weather] detachment but I don't know a damn thing about how to run a Special Operations Weather Team." He said, "You just answered my prayers, stand by the phone!" This is a pay telephone. He says, "Don't leave, I'll get you an answer," I think he said he'd get an answer in 30 minutes. Sure enough, he called back and said, "This is a verbal but your orders have been changed to be followed up hard copy." So, that's the way I got to Hurlburt.

Then Dennis Kalmas and Pantoja, that's a whole different story. Kalmas was an Air Force Academy graduate. He had been there [Hurlburt] a few weeks or a couple of months before I got there. He'd let his hair grow and not cut it and so forth. Major Pantoja was having a hard time. To make the story short, there was a letter that showed up on the commander's bulletin board for all to see. It looked like his [Pantoja's] signature, it had to do with Kalmas and he wanted to apply to be a pilot. This letter (I don't remember the exact words) accused him of some very unflattering things. Kalmas got the letter and took it over to the IG [Inspector General] at Eglin. The IG was a general officer and things started to happen. I was deployed and I was glad I was deployed to Fort Bragg on an exercise. By the time I got back, Pantoja was headed to Langley [AFB] and Kalmas was headed the opposite direction, I forget what base. There was a lot of conflict between those two; it didn't work.

So they [AWS] sent in Lieutenant Colonel Fisher [Lt Col Robert K. Fisher]. His job was to get the detachment straightened out. He had a long time as a navigator, probably 20 years, he was a fine officer and he let me run the SOWT as he didn't know anything about it. March 1971 is when I arrived there and Pantoja probably left in the latter part of 1972. No one ever said anything but it was apparent that [Fisher] had some instructions from high command to reduce the special operations weather team or perhaps get rid of it. After a while, I got frustrated because everything I wanted to do, he wouldn't approve it. He had a good reason, it was logical if you listened to the words, but I finally decided I

wasn't going to win in the Special Operations Weather Team business. I walked over and I told Lieutenant Colonel Fisher that I wanted to be the chief forecaster; 1st Lieutenant Snipes [1 Lt Earl R. Snipes] was leaving, I said I'd like to be the chief forecaster and I could do a good job. He agreed to let me be the chief forecaster, provided I would continue being the SOWT OIC. So I would work during the day over there in the weather station, then at nights and on weekends I was working over here with the SOWT.

Mr. White: So there was not a Det 75 separate from the base weather shop; it was all part of one [organization]? Or was there a Det 75 and you had to go through the base weather officer to get to 5th Weather Wing?

Col Golding: That's an interesting question. No, there was not a separate detachment. It had changed back because in 1966, 1967 and 1968 we had a completely separate detachment, then I went off to college and when I came back in 1971, then we were back to having one unit. It had been greatly reduced; it went from 22-23 people down to about six people, they had really put the brakes on.

Mr. White: So you saw kind of the wrap-up of special operations. Did you volunteer to go to ATC [Air Training Command] at Craig [AFB, Alabama], or was that part of your career development?

Col Golding: OK, boy, you really know some good questions. What happened there is, I got my orders in the middle of 1974. From 1971 to 1974, I took every opportunity I could to go to tech schools, to go to short courses. I went to radar school, a satellite course, tropical meteorology [all] at Chanute and they started adding up. They started looking for a guy to be an academic weather instructor and my name, I've been told since then, rose to the top because I had a lot of additional schools. It scared me to death, really, because I was getting outside

Air Weather Service by going into ATC and I didn't know what that was going to do to my career.

When I got down to Craig, it started off really well. I got a high level endorsement from General Leroy Svendsen [Maj Gen Leroy W. Svendsen, Jr.] [29th Flying Training Wing Commander], he was an old special operations guy. He didn't remember me by sight at first but when we talked a little bit, he linked that to Grimes and he and Grimes were really close, so I got an indorsement from him. Then I got accepted for Squadron Officers School in 1975. In the meantime, we [AF] had revamped the OER [Officer Effectiveness Report] system so we're on the 1, 2, 3 version and boy, did I get messed over! I was at Squadron Officers School and it was like "out of sight, out of mind," so let's give him a 3. My immediate boss, who was a major, put me in for a 2. Looking back on it in retrospect, I think I truly deserved a 2 but got a 3. I was so devastated, I thought for about a day or two about just hanging it up and getting out. I was a young captain. It wasn't just me; we had some other people getting 3's because they had a quota system. In the meantime, they made up this plaque, they selected me as the Junior Officer of the Quarter for the flying squadron so they wanted me to show up over at the auditorium and present me with this plaque. I told the commander that I really feel like I needed to be honest about this because I won this plaque and am supposed to be this super-troop and got a 3 and they just don't match up; I didn't really want to accept the plaque. He said he thought everything in the long run would work out and he thought I should go ahead and accept the plaque so I agreed.

In the meantime, I decided I was going to make them eat those words. I went over to the wing commander, Colonel Bishop, [Brig Gen Charles E. Bishop] who was looking for someone to be in charge of the Combined Federal Campaign for greater Dallas County area, that would be for the base and downtown area. I said, "Colonel Bishop, you've found your man because I want to be the Dallas County Combined Federal Campaign chief and believe me, I can do the job." He

said, “Yes, I believe you can,” so he selected me for that and I set a new record for donations. That wasn’t all I was doing; I was doing everything I could lay my hands on if it’s extra. For example, I became the operations officer and later the executive officer for the flying training squadron. Then I became chief of the Base Exercise Evaluation Team responsible for conducting numerous exercises for the flying wing each year. The following December came up and Colonel Bishop called me. He was the wing commander so it’s unusual, and he said, “It’s Charlie Bishop here, have you checked your OER?” “No sir, not yet, I’ve been too busy.” “Well, Merry Christmas,” so I went over and checked and I had a 1 so I was back on track.

When I left there, it was 1977, and Palace Weather down at Randolph called me and told me there was a colonel at Scott that had requested me. Of course, the base [Craig AFB] was closing, that’s the reason everyone was shipping out. The OER I got when I left there was signed by the vice commander of Air Training Command so I was definitely on track.

When I got to Scott [AFB, Illinois], I’d been on delay en-route to take a little vacation, and reported in to the [7 WW] DO [Director of Operations]. He said, “Well, I guess you’ve heard Colonel Grimes had gotten killed.” “No, I hadn’t heard;” I can’t describe how I felt at that time. It took me about a week before I could even do anything. Pat (Mrs. Keith) Grimes asked me if I would be chief of the honor guard for the funeral; I told her that I would. I went out there to Austin. It was the strangest thing. I was going to be chief of the honor guard. I saw all these troopers, they were all combat controllers. There were a good many of them, 11 or 12. There was one guy who was a captain, of course I was a captain, his name was John Carney [Col John T. Carney, Jr.]. He said, “I know that Pat Grimes said that she wanted you to be the chief of the honor guard and I can see why she would say that, but something I have to tell you is I’m commander of this group of combat controllers and there’s no one else who’s going to be in charge of them but me.”

I could understand that. Before I could really respond very well, there was a senior NCO, Chief Jim Howell [CMSgt James A. Howell], and he pulled [Carney] off to the side and talked with him. [Howell] was a guy I had known for some time in special operations. Then Carney came back over and said, "We want you to be a member of this group." He allowed me to wear a gray [combat weather] beret that I had with me. We did the ceremony. There wasn't a dry eye there. That was the same way when General Collens [Maj Gen John W. Collens III][13] did the eulogy at Scott; there were just people openly weeping. I've heard a lot of generals give addresses and I've never heard a general that had so much trouble get through that eulogy; it was a difficult thing to do.

Mr. White: This assignment to Scott, this was the first time you were back in traditional weather since you came back from Thule. Was it hard to get back into more conventional weather business after spending all the time you did in Special Operations?

Col Golding: That's an interesting way to look at it. I hadn't even thought about it that way before. No, I didn't have any trouble at all. I was assigned to DOW, that was the office symbol for the Director of Weather over in MAC [Military Airlift Command] headquarters, the puzzle palace so to speak, and my job was a weather planner. I had to prepare these horrendous messages, very lengthy messages that would to go out to the whole world when MAC aircraft were going from Point A to Point B. It was my job to make sure that weather support was arranged for those departures and arrivals.

I found that the special operations [background] helped quite a bit because right down the hallway was the functional manager for combat control, a full colonel. When I saw there was only a small flow going into someplace, maybe three or four aircraft or something like that going in a place, it just wasn't efficient to have a weatherman there to take care of it. I would go down to the functional manager

[13] Then-Brig Gen (later Maj Gen) Collens was AWS commander, 15 February 1974-6 August 1975.

for combat control and say, “I wonder if you can have a combat controller at this location and take weather obs [observations] and control the traffic there at this place.” They would always agree. My boss was amazed because of the fact I could just go down the hall and ask them to do this and they would do it. He said, “That’s great, I’m not going to argue with saving weather people.” It worked pretty well.

I worked there some extremely long hours because we were undermanned; it seemed like everywhere I was at, we were always extremely undermanned, so I worked there pretty hard. Finally, I got a call from this guy I worked for at Craig, I don’t remember his name now [but I] got along real well with him. He said he had just recently taken over as commander for a recruiting squadron covering the southeastern United States and he wanted me to be his DO [operations officer]. He said, “Listen, all it’s going to take is for you to give me a yes. We have guys wearing enough stars; they’ll make it happen.” I told him I’d think about it overnight and he called me the next day and I declined. I told him as much as I liked him, my heart was really set on being a detachment commander. I told my boss, Colonel Fanning [Col Robert W. Fanning], about this phone call and said I had declined it. He said, “You realize, there are no guarantees about being a detachment commander, but I’ll tuck this in the back of my mind and we’ll see how things go.” I said, “OK, I’d go with the flow.” About a year later, I got picked to be a detachment commander at Scott, so [in] January of 1980 I moved over.

The interesting thing about it, maybe I should mention it, was in 1976 when I was back at Craig AFB, I got an envelope from Grimes. I opened it, it wasn’t a letter, it was just a note that said, “Well, I finally made it, full colonel, and nobody ever makes full colonel by themselves and I’d just like to thank you.” He said that he was sure all the hard work I had done helped him make full colonel. I knew it was a lie. I mean, how was a staff sergeant going to [help] make somebody full colonel but it was the thought that gives you a feeling for the kind of person he [was]. He said “I would like to invite you up to Scott to spend, say a week, here

at the house. Would like to show you around Scott, call and let me know." So I decided I did want to do that. He was constantly hopping a plane here to go over there; he was always hopping planes. That hopping [planes] didn't appeal to me so I took a commercial plane and went up there. I don't think I had ever met his wife Pat. I stayed with them, I think it was Monday through Friday. When he picked me up at the airport, he had his flight cap in the car with the full colonel eagle on it, and he tossed the flight cap over to me and said, "I finally made it." I was just a captain at the time and a full colonel seemed like God-Almighty. I looked at that colonel eagle and it was really great that he had made full colonel.

So I went over and spent some time with him in the MAC headquarters. He was so active. He was in XOZT. XOZT was the office symbol for Special Environmental Technical Plans or something like that, and I think he was the number two guy over there. While I was there, he was on the phone. He would get calls, these are just calls that you would never dream that a military officer would get [like] a call from a congressman wanting to know about the stretch of the C-141, strengthening the wings of the C-130, throwing dollar amounts around and so forth. It was just mind-blowing. He offered me a job right there to come work for him. Boy, I hated to turn him down. I told him I really enjoyed working for him, but my mind was set, I really wanted to be a detachment commander and so I politely declined. Then of course when Palace Weather called me in 1977 and told me he [Grimes] had picked me, I figured that's it. Then he got killed.

Mr. White: So you became the Detachment Commander in January 1980, is that everything you thought it would be?

Col Golding: I knew what it would be. I knew it was going to be the biggest job I'd ever had in my life. I knew that because I had been around detachments and was always viewing things from the standpoint of "what if I was in charge?" It was a big job, we were grossly undermanned; we didn't even have a station

chief. To make things worse, we had the IG breathing down our neck; they were going to be there in November of 1980. I could have just as well have gotten me a cot and put it in my office and slept there because I would've saved the extra time from driving home and driving back; I was out there all the time. We pulled it off and got an excellent [rating] from the IG. It was the first time that unit had an excellent in years and years. We got an excellent but it wasn't a sterling excellent; we squeaked in with excellent. I don't even know how we did it because it was terrible, we didn't have the people.

Mr. White: From there, you go to Army Command and General Staff [College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas]. Did you select that and was your special operations background a help there?

Col Golding: You need to step back to Colonel Elliff [Col John J. Elliff]; he was 7th [Weather] Wing commander [then]. I was working extremely hard; there's no other way to put it, and Colonel Elliff was not a person to give you any feedback. I just hoped for the best, I hoped he knew I was working hard doing the job. In December of 1980, he called over, just like the other guy did, and he said, "Have you checked your OER?" "No sir, I've been too busy." "Merry Christmas!" I couldn't believe it, I went over and checked my OER and it was signed by the vice-chief of staff of MAC; it just blew my mind.

I knew something was up when I started getting phone calls from across the way, over in MAC headquarters. It was the other end of Palace Weather; they had representatives over there and the other folks down at Randolph. They would call me and they were wanting to set up an appointment with me so they could come over and see me. That's unheard of, it's always the other way around. You hope you can get over to see them, and they'll let you in the door. They wanted to know what I wanted to do; apparently they knew I was going to be promoted [to major] below the zone. I told them I no longer had a burning desire. My burning desire was to be a detachment commander [but] now I would just

[take] whatever came up next. I was willing to go do it to the best of my ability. The next thing is I had this Army Command and General Staff [course].

No, I don't think it had anything to do with special operations. It may have, I don't know but I never heard that. I remember asking Colonel Elliff about that. I think he said he put in a preference for me to go to that school and that it was a really great school. That was one of the best schools. If I had to do it over, that's where I'd want to go.

Mr. White: From there, you go to 7th Weather Squadron, supporting the Army in Germany, so you finally get overseas.

Col Golding: Well, that's very interesting because when I was graduating from Army Command & General Staff, I didn't have any orders in hand. It was [only] a verbal but I was supposed to go to 2nd Weather Wing headquarters and be working in DOX for a Lieutenant Colonel Tom Taylor. Tom Taylor was on the staff at Command & General Staff at the same time that I was a student, but he had orders to go to 2d [Weather] Wing, and I was going to be working for him. I found out later that General Chapman [Brig Gen George E. Chapman][14] decided he wanted to breath some fresh air into the Army squadrons. He didn't want to have people graduating from certain colleges just going to the wings; he wanted to place them strategically in the weather squadrons.

I went to 7th [Weather] Squadron and worked for Colonel John Taylor [Col John H. Taylor]. He was a just a super guy, in many ways he was like Colonel Grimes. He was a good guy to work for. If he thought you were a guy who knew what you were doing and were going to do it, he just stepped out of your way. I saw him about two years ago [2001] when I was in Omaha; I bumped into him at a place I was shopping. I told him, "You were one of the best commanders I ever had." He said, "Well, that was because I was smart enough to get out of your way." It

[14] Brig Gen Chapman was AWS commander·30 July 1982-1 July 1988

worked real well, but I didn't know it until well after the fact, after I had left that position. He reminded me again this last time when I met him. He was explaining to my brother, he say's "Well, Wayne didn't know it, but he replaced three people." I had found out before then and can believe that I replaced three people because the workload was just tremendous. I kept thinking to myself, "How can one person manage all this?" I managed to do it but just barely. We had a SAV program, a staff assistance visit team, and we had to go around and visit 26 detachments throughout Germany and Italy. I was the team chief and a major at the time. We were on the road a tremendous amount of time. I think it was maybe 60 percent of the time we were on the road visiting these places and getting them ready for the IG. Then when I come back, the work that had collected up there was covering my desk, so it was an interesting time.

I was there from about June 1983 and moved over to Stuttgart [Det 9, 7 WS] in early 1985. There's no question in my mind that was the toughest job I ever had, there in Stuttgart. I was working [as the SWO] for an Army three-star, VII Corps commander, and the chief of staff was General Crouch [then BG, later GEN William W. Crouch, USA]. General Crouch was a guy with tremendous energy, he was the youngest one-star in the Army at that time. They had to frock him, he wasn't really a general yet but they had to make him a general to maintain control there in VII Corps. There was a saying there among the staff that Crouch would either be Chief of Staff of the Army or die early of a heart attack, one of those two. About five years ago, I turned on the television to C-SPAN[15] and I saw him testifying before Congress. He was a four star and the assistant Army Chief of Staff. He almost made the top but he never got the top slot.

It was a tough job because Crouch looked at the situation as if it were real because he viewed the East Germans as being a real enemy, and of course they were. He viewed them as coming across the border, through the Fulda Gap,

[15] C-SPAN was a multi-channel cable network broadcasting Congressional activities, such as committee hearings, and other public events of interest, showing them as they happen without commentary or commercial interruptions.

engulfing Germany, not when you expected but coming in on a weekend or a holiday or something like that. He expected you to be sitting by your phone on the weekend and when he called, if you didn't answer the phone or if you hadn't called the command center and told them you were leaving the phone and were going out to buy a loaf of bread or whatever, you would be explaining to him what was happening. He gave me a hard time. I had to give a weather briefing to him about once a week, the whole staff, and he had a perfect memory. If you gave him a briefing last time and you were wrong, this time he would say, "Wait just a minute Wayne. First I want you to explain to me why you missed your forecast, and then I want you to apologize to the staff and swear that you're not ever going to do this again." You know, I'm not sure to this day if he was joking or if he was serious. His staff sympathized with me and said, "Man, we don't how you can put up with that." I said, "It was easy, he was wearing stars." So, I would do it. It seemed like he gave me a hard time, but when I started to leave, he said, "Wayne, I noticed you're leaving, come by and see me tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock." I'm a lieutenant colonel selectee by then, so I go in and he's just chatting, very casual, and he says, "I just wanted to take this opportunity to tell you that you have done a great job and I really appreciate the job that you've done since you've been here. I would be proud to work with you if you were a lieutenant colonel, colonel, general, it doesn't matter what." And that was that.

Mr. White: So you leave there and you go to Offutt and [Air Force] Global Weather Central [GWC].

Col Golding: Oh, boy.

Mr. White: Probably different than anything else you've done.

Col Golding: Oh, boy. I had real misgivings; I spent about a week deciding if I wanted to retire because I thought that Global Weather Central was the end of the line. I had never heard anything except bad stuff about Global Weather

Central and it was a long cry from what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a squadron DO and a squadron commander. GWC, I didn't know how to take it. I finally screwed up enough courage, this was December 1985, I was Chief of the Weather Support Force for REFORGER and we had REFORGER going on over there. We had the 2nd [Weather Wing] commander coming through, Colonel Ziegler [Col Gary F. Ziegler], and I ask him, "I just want to ask you a question, sir. I got orders to go to Global Weather Central and I'm not sure if the assignment is a good assignment or if somehow I've screwed up and am just too damn stupid to know it. I want you to level with me." He says, "No, you haven't screwed up, you haven't messed up at all, you're right on track. I think if you go to GWC and you do a great job, everything will fall in place."

I went to GWC and everything fell into perfect shape. I have to confess, I didn't know all the nuts and bolts of what was going on around me. When I first got there, that was my first decision-before I leave here, I'm going to know all the nuts and bolt of all these sections for the tropics and Europe and Asia and so forth. Finally, it became apparent to me that the only job I had was to manage people; that's what I excel in. I had about 70 people. I was chief of C-team and C-team had a reputation for not doing well. A-team and B-team always led C-team. I think we turned that around; C-team led the pack. There were lots of people problems, when you have that many people. I say lots, there were some, but we had lots of people that truly succeeded and they succeeded because I gave them an opportunity.

We had a guy at GWC named John Penhallegon. He was a Master Sergeant I had known over in Germany. He was a good solid performer but had fallen out of favor somehow, so when I got to GWC, he was on my team. He was asking for guidance and I said, "Well, plain and simple, you've got to be active, you've got to be doing things. Why don't you get yourself a college degree, volunteer to be in charge of this or in charge of that." By the time I left, he damn near pulled off Senior NCO of the Year for the entire GWC. He came in number two. The

guy who was number one, I was writing his package and supporting him as well, SMSgt Dave Wallace, and he did get Senior NCO of the Year for GWC. All I can say is GWC really was a turning point in my career, because I excelled there in GWC. We did well and, as a result, I got to be DO of the [6th Weather] squadron at Hurlburt.

Mr. White: So you go back to Hurlburt about 16 years after you left. What did you see had changed about special operations and combat weather; leaving as a young lieutenant and coming back as a senior lieutenant colonel?

Col Golding: Technology had changed quite a bit. We had technology I was not familiar with at the Special Operations Weather Team [SOWT] level. We had a team that consisted of 10-12 guys and they were superb. The only way I can describe them is they were pretty close to being a combat controller, they were that highly trained. They have names for all this [equipment] but I forget all the names. They had a large rubber boat so they could infiltrate by boat. They could infiltrate by underwater diving and of course they could infiltrate by parachute. Even more than that, they could infiltrate by HALO [high altitude, low opening] parachute from 30,000 feet and freefall down to 3,000-2,500 feet and then continue. They had various means of ingressing and egressing. Then they had some pretty fancy equipment once they arrived at the scene. They had this gadget they could just point at the aircraft and transmit their information up to the aircraft. They still used the effective wind system we had developed for troop drops. They had miniature equipment that fitted into a little package, that was maybe 6-inches by 4-inches by maybe 3-inches thick and it had everything there they needed for surface observations in this little kit.

The bad news is we had a bad egg in that basket, in that SOWT, and it became apparent in [Operation] DESERT STORM. He got over there and apparently he was an alcoholic, or if he was not an alcoholic, he was close to it. He had trouble controlling his alcohol because when you're over there, there's maximum control

because alcohol is strictly taboo, so he got in trouble. Not only did he have alcohol but he had girls out there in the middle of the desert, they were having a sexual orgy so he got relieved and sent back to us. He came in and said, “Sir, I know I don’t have any right to ask you anything but I wonder if I can ask you for one more thing. Can you write a letter to the Secretary of the Air Force and tell the Secretary of the Air Force what a great guy I am and that way I’ll get a better discharge?” He had to resign his commission. There were a couple of different categories [of discharges] and he was trying to get a better category by having me write this letter. I looked him straight in the eye, I said, “I really like you as an individual, but as a military man, you showed some very poor judgment and there’s no way I can write this letter.”

So that was that, but I bet it wasn’t about a week later when I got a package about one inch thick coming from over there. I don’t remember if Schwartzkopf [GEN H Norman Schwartzkopf, USA] was on there or not but they had everybody else, and it said he was supposed to resign his commission and be kicked out of the Air Force. For some strange reason, I never understood exactly how this worked, it had to be sent to me. I had to be the one who decided what happened to him, not the folks over there. I read through it very intently from start to finish. It was sad but at the same time it was funny in parts because when he was returning from the desert, he’d been out there and everything. I forgot to tell you that the way this thing was revealed-these goings on out in the desert-[was that] he suddenly remembered that he had forgot his radio. He sent one of his troops, one of my troops (they all belonged to me), back to get the radio [and] he turned over and wrecked the jeep. He started walking out to the area where the security police were and they started questioning him and he spilled the beans. They [security policemen] were waiting for him [the officer] to arrive. When he arrived, they took him in there for interrogation and he showed pure stupidity. He was an expert in martial arts and he started doing this martial arts business to the security police and that’s when they really clamped down on him. They put him in handcuffs and they really got mean with him. Last I heard of him, he got out of

the service [and] was working for this very large agency in New York City counseling on AIDS [Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome]. They either called me or asked me to write a letter and I did.

Mr. White: Were any combat weather people involved in Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama? That happened right after you got there.

Col Golding: I arrived there [Hurlburt Field] around August of 1989 and JUST CAUSE was in December 1989. I get a phone call in the wee hours, like 1 o'clock in the morning or something like that, from the commander, Colonel Utley [Lt Col Tom W. Utley], telling me to get out to the squadron ASAP. I got out there and JUST CAUSE had already kicked off, so we were running through Emergency Action Procedures.

To answer your question, we had one staff sergeant from Det 75, which was at Hurlburt, deployed. There may have been a couple or three deployed from Det 75 with the [1 SOW] aircraft down there. There was no use of the SOWT attached to the squadron. Colonel Utley was called over by the [Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC)] vice-commander and severely chewed because they could have used the SOWT in certain places en-route because they had some fog and low ceilings. It could've added a lot to the operation. No, we didn't have any involvement except maybe two or three people deployed with the aircraft.

Mr. White: Did you get a chance to deploy to Southwest Asia for Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM or were you strictly back at the ranch?

Col Golding: It's the darnedest thing I've ever seen. I spent 36 years in the Air Force and I would volunteer to go do anything, anytime, anywhere, I was always volunteering and never went into a shooting combat situation. What happened in Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM was I got a call from the 7th

[Weather] Wing commander, Colonel Turner [Col Melvin O. Turner] [who] said he needed to talk with me very closely about a major I had assigned there, John Connolly. He would like to talk to me because there seemed to be a need for him over there. We had a commander's conference of some sort [coming up] and I had to go up to Scott a couple of days later. When I got up there, we had a closed-door session and he said that "John Connolly was the only guy on the planet that the 82nd Airborne Division feels they can trust to be their SWO." They had some problem with their SWO, and he said, "We really want to have John Connolly over there." This would have been DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. He said, "I've got one question for you. Can you function as the squadron commander and the squadron DO for what may be the duration?" I said, "Well, I know it'll be difficult but, yeah, I can do it." If they were to [then] send me over of course, there would be a squadron with no commander and no DO and that wouldn't work.

Mr. White: JUST CAUSE was kind of the "coming out" of Special Ops. You've already addressed that the [weather] special operations guys already got their hand slapped for not deploying the combat weather teams. Is there anything else, besides that, that could have been done better in either JUST CAUSE or DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM? I know during STORM there wasn't very much in our [unclassified] files so far on special operations coverage.

Col Golding: I think there was substantial support during DESERT STORM but that support was provided by our Det 75 at Hurlburt. They gave dedicated support to the flying operation of the 1st Special Operations Wing that deployed for DESERT STORM. We had an officer over there, Captain Kevin Johnson. He did a great job, the aircrews were afraid to go anywhere unless they got a weather briefing from him. He was really good. (Additionally, we had another officer and two or three NCO's deployed to support the 1 SOW. We also deployed one Master Sergeant with a rawinsonde package and supplies for about 30 days. We deployed a SOWT (TE) early in the operation. TE means

tactical element— parachutist, trained almost like combat control personnel. These were the personnel I spoke of earlier.)

I forgot to mention, in 1963, SWIFT STRIKE III up in the Ft Bragg area started around early April and lasted a good 30 days. Grimes had arrived a little bit early for the planning stages and there was an [Army] colonel there. His name was Gerassi, he was a full colonel, and he was with a certain special forces group, probably the 5th but I don't remember. He told Grimes he could gather up his little balloons in a box and he could go skipping along the highway there and leave his camp. Grimes didn't put up with that for a second. He was polite but he went over and picked up the telephone and called [2nd Weather Group]. There was a Colonel Buck [Col Alvin B. Buck, 2 Wx Gp vice-commander]. Colonel Buck later died of a heart attack. He was an airborne full colonel, probably the only full colonel in the Air Weather Service at that time that was on jump status. He bloused his boots; that was before it was popular to blouse boots but not too many people would ask him [about it]. He got on a T-39 and came down there and marched into Colonel Gerassi's office and they had a little séance there for about 40 minutes I guess. When they came out, Colonel Gerassi walked over to Captain Grimes and said, "I think we're going to be able to use you here after all." And that was the way we got started, that was the first [joint] exercise.

Mr. White: Had you made a real convert of him by the end of the exercise?

Col Golding: Yes, I really think so because this was a very broad exercise that covered just about everything. We made a lot of contributions to the exercise as far as weather information and I think he was a believer.

Mr. White: [While at Hurlburt], you found out you made colonel and were going on to MacDill [AFB, Florida] from there. Would you care to talk about how that came about and what you did when you got to MacDill?

Col Golding: Well, there's one thing that happened before I went to MacDill. 1 October [1991] is when the [6th Weather] Squadron inactivated along with the other [weather] squadrons around the world, when McPeak [Gen Merrill A. "Tony" McPeak][16] did away with the squadrons. The very next day we stood up a brand new unit in the same facility. It was called the Combat Weather Center. That was a brand new concept; we were supposed to be developing techniques and equipment for supporting the Air Force and the Army worldwide. I was only there for just a few months; I finally left in April or May and went down to MacDill.

Then, when I got to MacDill, it was a very broad job. My immediate boss was an Army colonel, his name was Wagner. He's now a general. He was the J-30. Above him was the J-3 [Director of Operations] who was a one-star who made two stars while he was there, "Fig" Newton [Gen Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton, USAF]. He is a pretty famous general [who] went on to make four stars and retired as commander of Air Education and Training Command.

So while I was there, it was just amazing to me how broad my responsibilities were and how little manpower I had to do the job. General Newton looked at me like I was the answer to the weather for special operations and he expected me to know what was going on everywhere with regard to special operations. My job was to make sure weather was structured correctly and they had the equipment they needed and they had the training they needed. Having said that, we only had myself, a captain and a major. Major John Schneider had been an airman two-stripe working for me at Hurlburt when I was OIC of the Special Operations Weather Team. John Schneider was a good man to have there on the staff.

Immediately, I started scratching around, trying to figure out how I was going to get some people. First thing I noticed is I was chief of METOC, which meant Meteorology and Oceanographic Services, which meant I should know

[16] General McPeak was Chief of Staff of the Air Force, 30 Oct 1990-24 Oct 1994

something about oceanography and I knew next to nothing about oceanography. I talked to the general and various people and attempted to get an oceanographer there on the staff, and I did; Jim Bancroft, a [Navy] Commander [O-5]. He was really great. We would get calls from all over the world about oceanography and he always knew the answers.

As time went on, it became apparent to me that we needed to have some kind of structure for supporting special operations. There was Lieutenant Colonel Rip Coleman, [Lt Col Cranston R. Coleman] who was the Chief of Meteorology at AFSOC there at Hurlburt. I believe it was his idea originally to organize weather people so that we'd have a special squadron to support Army Special Forces. I supported that 100 percent so I gave a lot of my time in making that happen. It was an enormous job and took a lot of doing because we had to have AFSOC submit an organizational change request [OCR] to Air Staff and Air Staff had to coordinate with the MAJCOMs. We had to have PACAF [Pacific Air Forces] and USAFE [United States Air Force in Europe] support the OCR and we had to have the chief of Meteorology at the Pentagon, AF/XOW, support it. Our big problem was ACC [Air Combat Command] non-concurred on the OCR simply because those resources belonged to them, they were providing the resources at that time to support Special Forces and they didn't want to give that mission up [to AFSOC]. My J-3 was very good, a very smooth politician, and he made a visit to ACC/XP in December 1994. He got them to agree on the "crosswalk" and it still took a long time to make it happen. I retired in March of 1995 and they stood up the squadron in 1996; that's the 10th [Combat] Weather Squadron at Hurlburt. That was a major, major initiative, which the J-3 did quite a bit in making happen.

Mr. White: Was there anything else about the big picture at [US]SOCOM that surprised you or that you had not considered as important or had even thought about?

Col Golding: Quite honestly, when I looked around, I saw everything as being broken and I thought my job was to try and fix all the things that were broken. (I hired Colonel Bill Culver (Ret) as an independent contractor to conduct a study to determine the optimum meteorological and oceanographic (METOC) for the entire command. We hosted conferences for data collection from units worldwide. This study was to serve as the objective for METOC developments for the next decade.)

We didn't have any tactical communications to speak of. Once again, Rip Coleman was at AFSOC and he was a super, super guy when it came to computers. He really understood computers, and matter of fact, he works in computers today. When he retired, he went to work for Sonalysts [Inc] and he prepares meteorology programs for computers.

Back then, he was toying around to come up with high resolution satellite data for putting into a computer, then you could get all this data and it would improve your ability to forecast for weapons systems and so forth. I thought that was great and I told him to take the ball and run with it and started an initiative called the Tactical METOC computers. I don't know if you're familiar with it or not but it's a man-transportable SOCRATES, they were computers that were fairly small and they had a lot of flexibility.[17] We started getting money any way we could get it to buy these computers. Right away we bought six Module 2's, which was the advanced computer, and put one in each Theater SOC [Special Operations Command]. AFSOC got money and bought nine modules and distributed them around there and JSOC [Joint Special Operations Command][18] bought three. I don't know if you know this but USSOCOM [United States Special Operations Command] has its own budget program so we put money into the budget. We

[17] SOCRATES was a ruggedized desktop PC size computer (in four modules) designed to ingest high-resolution real time data for forecasting weather and oceanographic data in support of special operations. In addition to the ones listed above, the purchase of 62 Module IV's were programmed for use by field units.
[18] Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) was established in 1980, located at Pope AFB, NC and Fort Bragg, immediately adjacent to Pope AFB. JSOC was a joint headquarters designed to study special operations requirements and techniques, ensure interoperability and equipment standardization, plan and conduct joint special operations exercises and training, and develop joint special operations tactics.

POM'd [Program Objective Memorandum][19] for money into the budget to buy these computers. Best I can recall is it was about $3.5 million dollars. I understand they have the computers now; they got them for all the teams out there.

That was just one problem, the tactical computer problem. Another problem was the theater SOC manning. It was atrocious, because we had the theater sub-commands for these special operations, they were responsible for providing weather support out there and all they had were weather guys that would just volunteer to be weathermen [because] they didn't have any manpower billets. So I made it a point to visit each theater SOC and I requested the SOC commander to assess his situation and I asked him if he needed a weatherman at the SOC. Each SOC commander said they absolutely needed a weatherman but the problem was he was unable to fund for the weatherman [billet] at that time. That was a problem of major proportions, not having a weatherman at each SOC.

Near the end of my tour at USSOCOM, very early 1995, I was called upon to brief General Downing, [GEN Wayne A. Downing, USA]. This was a time when the command was under the gun from DOD [Department of Defense]. DOD told the unified commands they had to cut a certain percentage of manpower at the headquarters and USSOCOM was no exception. I had to go in there and give him the briefing and obtain his approval to retain the three billets I had at USSOCOM. I mentioned Commander Bancroft, he was not in a normal billet. The Navy had created a billet for him and he showed up on their UMD [unit manning document] and not anywhere else. So I had to justify the three people I had there in the headquarters. I was simply amazed, General Downing was a

[19] Program Objective Memorandum was a budget planning document, part of the Planning, Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS) originally imposed by then-Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara in the early 1960's. The POM was a "rolling document," updated annually, which layed out budget requirements for the next 5 years in addition to the current and immediate upcoming fiscal year. The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, which created the United States Special Operations Command, also gave them authority to program and spend money (within Congressionally imposed limitations) apart from DoD.

four-star and I expected to be in and out of there in maybe five or ten minutes. To show you the level of interest he had, that briefing lasted about 50 minutes. It was unheard of. He was alarmed to find that he didn't have weather people at the various SOCs and we didn't have sufficient communications and all this kind of stuff. As a result, he didn't give me any direct feedback during the briefing, but the J-3 called me, I think the same afternoon, and said the briefing went real well, that I would be keeping the manpower. At some point between then and now, I've heard they lost all the [weather] manpower at USSOCOM.

Mr. White: From when you started in special operations in 1963 to 1995, over 30 years in special operations at the beginning and the end, what in your opinion do you see as the most significant change over that period of time?

Col Golding: There's been a lot of change in equipment. There hasn't been much change in people. People are basically the same, they have creativity and dedication and the very strong desire to do the job to the best of their ability. They continue to do the job, no matter what, no matter who is the boss, no matter what the structure is, they do various work-around's, whatever is called for, they do the job.

The big change is equipment because equipment has improved so much. I remember when I would first go out to do the exercises in 1963, we would just look for the nearest telephone, quite honestly, and call the weather station and get an update on what they saw on the weather maps, draw some sketch on a piece of paper and that was it at the very first. Today, probably the very most important change is, in a word, communications. We have these little tactical computers everyone has out there that ingest high-resolution meteorological data and, as a result, you can get just about the same forecast out there in the woods as you can get right in base weather.

Mr. White: Something you said, talking about your briefing with General Downing and the after-effects and even tying back to your experience in the 1970's as a special operations weather lieutenant there at Hurlburt, do you see the education of higher headquarters and keeping the combat weather capabilities, what they can bring to the table, as being important to keeping special operations weather funded and manned and operationally ready?

Col Golding: I think that's important. It's an education process or a re-education process. When I think way back in 1963, Grimes spent a large amount of his time selling the program to people. He shouldn't have had to do that but it was necessary. He was the salesman and had to sell the program on what we could do for the customer. That was repeated as people changed positions; we had to repeat that on about a yearly basis until today.

Mr. White: So you feel like you have to keep fighting to hold onto whatever it is you've got because a new group comes in and doesn't know or doesn't care or what?

Col Golding: Basically, they see a weatherman and they know a weatherman knows something about the weather. When you're dealing with Army Special Forces, for example, it may be different in terms of today but it used to be, you had to prove yourself and prove you were more than a weatherman. If you were wearing jump wings, that kind of gets you in the door, but you had to prove you knew your business, you knew jumping, you could take care of yourself, you were an expert marksman, in short, you were a soldier. Then, after that, they were interested in the weather but the first thing you had to do is prove you fit in.

Mr. White: This is kind of a big picture question. If you were combat weather's king for a day, you could go back and be a flag officer and do anything you wanted with combat weather, what would you change and why?

Col Golding: Quite honestly, I would go back in time a bit and have a [weather] staff at USSOCOM. I think it was a terrible mistake in getting rid of the staff at USSOCOM because you need people that can fight for your programs and if you don't have anybody on the staff, you're just about out of luck. Even if you're at AFSOC, which they are now, but AFSOC is merely a component and it's not the same as having somebody on the [USSOCOM] staff that can fight for the programs, fight to get the money in the POM and do all things you need to do to get the weather support done correctly. (For example, there was a need for NAVSPECWARCOM [Naval Special Warfare Command] to have Meteorological and Oceanographic (METOC) support. The best that we could do during my tenure was to arrange adhoc METOC support provided by attached operational unit or mobile environmental teams from the Navy Oceanographic Service. I shouldn't forget the Army SOF. Each of seven SF Groups has nine scuba teams, which require support. To do this correctly, it would require a long political battle (like the battle we had to stand up the Air Force squadron, 10 WS) for resources and ultimately the resources would have to be approved in the USSOCOM POM.)

Mr. White: To wrap up, we are looking for combat weatherman, other than Keith Grimes, who are no longer alive and who have distinguished themselves in the combat weather arena to offer up as potential candidates to have buildings and other things named for them, to memorialize them and build up the heritage of combat weather. Given your extensive background in combat weather, I'm curious whom you might recommend.

Col Golding: Tom Watson comes to mind; he retired as a Chief Master Sergeant. He started out at Strike Command as a tech[nical] sergeant and made a name for himself before he came to us. After he came to us, he continued to perform superbly. To point out how highly I though of him, I named my son after him. He was quite an individual and I have to say, if it were not for Tom Watson, I never would have made colonel or even been commissioned. I'd have been

lucky to retire as a master sergeant, because Tom Watson made sure I had time to go to college at nights. He's the reason I'm here today talking to you.

Mr. White: Tom deployed with Keith Grimes or as part of the Laos operation, is that correct?

Col Golding: He was the first one to go over to Laos. I think he went by himself the first time and tried to get in-country and establish the weather net. Grimes had complete faith and confidence in Watson. He felt that Watson could pull it off if anyone could pull it off. [Watson] didn't fully recognize or understand the political situation [when] he got over there and no matter how sharp you were, an NCO couldn't handle it. You had to be an officer so that's when Grimes went over. Later, Watson went back to Laos with Wilder.

Mr. White: In wrapping up, are there any other thoughts you'd like to share about anything we've talked about yesterday or today that maybe have come to mind that you think are important as to the evolution of combat weather and your role in it?

Col Golding: Yes, there is one thing. Back when I was commissioned in March 1971 and arrived at Hurlburt to be OIC of the Special Operations Weather Team, there was one major problem they had and it was a problem that stemmed back to a problem they had in 1963. It was next to impossible to get communications because in order to have communications [gear], you had to have people that could take care of the communications, repair it and work on it, control the codes, a lot of things that revolved around communications. Starting in 1963, we had some radios on order and they continued to be on order until about 1966 or 1967 before we finally got some. Even then, they were on loan. We didn't own the radios; they were on loan from an agency there in the 1st Special Operations Wing.

Then, when I came back in 1971, the first thing I found out was they didn't have any radios. There was somebody over at the combat control team that I knew, Chief Master Sergeant Jim Howell. Jim Howell is one of the most famous people in the entire Air Force; he performed a parachute jump from some extreme altitude. It wasn't a world record for a parachute jump, but it was the world record for a team effort, I think it was something like 36,000 feet and so he went down in the record book for having that parachute jump. Anyway, I asked him about the radios, I had known him for a long time, and he told me that he could let us have a couple of radios. They would maintain them and we could just have them on a hand receipt as long as we wanted. That was a tremendous help and cut through the red tape, because, if I had ordered them, we'd have been another three years getting those radios. He was the guy at Grimes' funeral that pulled John Carney aside and told him I was all right, so they let me be a member of the honor guard.

Mr. White: Thank you very much for your time, I know you have a busy schedule with academics and everything so I appreciate this. Combat weather is one of the threads we are trying to track down and learn a little bit more about. With that we'll bring the interview to a close. Thank you for your time.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

A2C	Airman Second Class
AB	Air Base
AECP	Airman's Education and Commissioning Program
ACC	Air Combat Command
AFB	Air Force Base
AFGWC	Air Force Global Weather Central
AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
AIDS	Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome
ARS	Air Reserve Station
ATC	Air Training Command
AWS	Air Weather Service
Brig Gen	Brigadier General
Capt	Captain
CCWT	Commando Combat Weather Team
CMSgt	Chief Master Sergeant
Col	Colonel
DO	Director of Operations
DOD	Department of Defense
DOW	Director of Weather
DZSO	Drop zone safety officer
ERAU	Embry Riddle Aeronautical University
HALO	High Altitude, Low Opening (parachute)
IG	Inspector General
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
Lt	Lieutenant
Lt Col	Lieutenant Colonel
MAC	Military Airlift Command
Maj	Major
Maj Gen	Major General
MAJCOM	Major command
METOC	Meteorology and Oceanographic Services
MSgt	Master Sergeant
NAVSPECWARCOM	Naval Special Warfare Command

NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NCOIC	Noncommissioned Officer in Charge
OCR	Organizational change request
OCS	Officer Candidate School
OIC	Officer in Charge
OER	Officer Effectiveness Report
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PCS	Permanent change of station
PIBAL	Pilot-balloon
POM	Program Objective Memorandum
REFORGER	Exercise acronym - REturn of FORces to GERmany
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
SAV	Staff Assistance Visit
SOC	[Theater] Special Operations Command
SOCOM	See USSOCOM
SOW	Special Operations Wing
SOWT	Special Operations Weather Team
SSgt	Staff Sergeant
STRICOM	United States Strike Command
SWO	Staff Weather Officer
SWWT	Special Warfare Weather Team
TDY	Temporary Duty
UMD	Unit manning document
USA	United States Army
USAFE	United States Air Force Europe
USN	United States Navy
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
XOW	Director of Weather, Air Staff
XP	Plans Division
WS	Weather Squadron
WW	Weather Wing

GLOSSARY OF PERSONALITIES

Bancroft, Jim Commander, USN

Bell, Jack A. Maj

Buck, Alvin B. Col

Carney, John T. Jr. Col

Coleman, Cranston R. “Rip” Lt Col

Collens, John W. Maj Gen

Connolly, John Maj

Crouch William W. GEN, USA

Culver, Bill Col

Downing, Wayne A. GEN, USA

Elliff, John J. Col

Fanning, Robert W. Col

Fisher, Robert K. Lt Col

Gill, Henry CMSgt

Grimes, Keith R. Col

Grimes, Pat (Mrs. Keith)

Howell, James A. CMSgt

Johnson, Kevin Capt

Kalmas, Dennis 1 Lt

Kaye, Herbert Maj

Kelsey, William R. Maj

Lindner Kenneth A. Col

McPeak, Merrill A. “Tony” GEN

Newton, Lloyd W. “Fig” GEN

Pantoja, Santos Maj

Peterson, Norman L. Brig Gen

Penhallegon, John MSgt

Pritchard, Gilbert L. Brig Gen

Schneider, John Maj.

Schwartzkopf, H Norman GEN, USA

Snipes, Eric R. 1Lt

Smith, Charles S. Maj

Strickland, John L. A2C

Sullivan, William H. Ambassador

Svendsen, Leroy W. Jr. Maj Gen

Town, Edward A. 2 Lt

Utley, Tom W. Lt Col

Vang Pao, General

Wallace, Dave SMSgt

Watson, Thomas M. CMSgt

Wilder, Andrew V. SSgt

Wong, Ronald G. K. Capt

Ziegler, Gary F. Col