

Hotfoot/42 Side A
Interview with Paul Chiapparone
November 16, 1981

PC So anyway they proceeded to dump fuel and I remember that took a while anyway.

KF Did they say why they did that?

PC Dump fuel, because you can't land with a full, we hadn't been in the air for more than an hour, and they had enough fuel to get to Washington, D.C. and apparently you can't land with a full load of fuel. So anyway they proceeded to dump fuel and I remember John telling, the flight engineer was reading off the pounds that were left, and finally John said "okay shut it off." And the flight engineer says, "it won't shut off" and John says, "oh, my goodness." And what had happened is the valve apparently that uses up the fuel got stuck, so that went on for another good five minutes. And I was a little concerned here, I mean I just couldn't see us coming down with fuel landing out. So they finally got that closed and I was watching and London is noted notorious for its fog. And sure enough that night I think there was a 300 foot ceiling. And John said to me now watch the altimeter and soon as we get down to the 300 feet you're going to see the runway. And we're down and it's 600, it's 500, I said to myself boy, I can't see a thing it's soup out there. Right at 300 Ken it lit up like a Christmas tree, literally lit up like a Christmas tree. It's the most beautiful sight in the world, so we land and everything's fine. Now, one thing I left out, when we were departing Frankfurt in addition to having problems starting the engines, we had to get de-iced because it was so cold there. You know how they come and they spread this, and the airport closes at 12:00, and it was like 11:00 and we're waiting for this de-icing machine to come. And John had said to me "you know if these guys don't get here we're not going to be able to leave here tonight, because they won't let us take off. Well, as it turned out they finally came then he had trouble starting the engines

PC they had to come back and de-ice again and he got them to hold the airport open in Frankfurt for another half hour, he really did. So that was another interesting episode there waiting for the de-icing machine to come, for us to get de-iced, for Pat Sculley to pay them for the de-icing.

KF Oh, he paid in cash?

PC Oh yea, he had to pay for all this stuff. Anyway we landed in London went to the hotel and went to sleep that night and I guess Pat and Ross and Merv you know arranged for us the next day. The next morning we got up, I think we had breakfast we to Heathrow and boarded the Braniff flight that day.

KF Gadwick, you must have gone to Gadwick.

PC Gadwick, that's exactly right. Boarded the Braniff flight, I remember the trip back, one thing that I remembered is that one of the stewardesses that was on that flight was the same girl that had flown to Vietnam with Ross when he tried to deliver the Christmas gifts there. And I understand she subsequently died in an automobile accident, but when we got on the plane alot of, he was recognized and alot of people starting talking and he started telling the story. I had a tremendous sensation of pride in just knowing Ross. Just being there, not because I was part of it and I wasn't a hero because the guys on the rescue were the heroes. But when Ross was telling all this and to see the expressions on peoples faces for the first time I really realized what an impact what Ross had done was having on other people. I mean they were just, all the flight attendants were up in first class, so I don't know what happened to those poor souls back in the coach. I mean all listening to the story, we got up the pilot came down, he was talking, it was just a tremendous experience it really was, and I really felt good, naturally I felt good because I was good. But I felt good because I knew Ross and I was associated with Ross and I was associated with a group of people that were just second to none, it was a tremendous feeling. That's what an 11 hour flight? Boy, it went

PC like that. That's one time that it didn't last a long time. We had a super meal, took alot of pictures. Ross had us kissing one of the stewardesses, you know he always puts us in this most purest kind of world but he's putting us all up to this. He told me that he wanted me to say something at the airport so I should start thinking about what I was going to say. So naturally we landed and we got through customs without any trouble at all. And that's when I saw Ruthie, Karen, Ann Marie and that was a very, very emotional meeting. You know, it was just a great feeling, super feeling, so I kind of held Ann Marie. In fact when you come tomorrow when we go Friday remind me if you haven't seen the pictures yet I've got some pictures. I've got an album that we put together of the trip out and the flight to Frankfurt and also the Braniff flight back, and the reunion here at the airport. I've got some, and also down in my office, I've got a picture of Colonel Simons hanging up and I've got a picture of Jay and I at the airport in Dallas. You'll see Jay with a beard. So then we went to the I think they call it the Concorde Room at the Braniff terminal, and everybody's applauding and I remember being very hot and I was holding Ann Marie and Karen and Ruthie were there and alot of our friends were there. It was just a very, very emotional time. Ross talked, I talked, Bill Gaylord talked, Bill Gayden talked, and Colonel Simons talked.

KF What did Simons say?

PC Simons, you know, you've got to understand most of the time all I heard was Simons do was curse. And I'm thinking to myself boy this guy's going to get up to talk and I figured oh well he won't say very much. He basically said that he was really proud to have been a part of such a fine organization, that's all he said, so he didn't say an awful lot, but it sounded good. So anyway, we stayed at these friends of ours house and the next day is when the movers come and we moved into our house and I got a call from Ross that morning saying, "I want you to be here at noon." So I don't have any clothes yet, I'm still, put the same clothes back on. And I come back here at noon and we're going to go to a press conference. And Ross says to me "I want

PC you to talk at the press conference again." And so I did talk at the press conference and this is when he introduced Colonel Simons and this is when I said to myself, I can't believe that Ross is going to let this guy talk to the entire world when all he knows how to do is curse. Well Ken, I'll tell you he stood up and he made a speech that would put the President of the United States to shame. The way he said, "I don't know of another company that would ever consider doing anything like this," and on and on, he just made it very, very, very perfect. He was a journalist major apparently and it was obvious then when he wanted to talk he could talk to anybody at any level. But when he was with us it was f this and f that you know. So anyway we had the press conference then and Ross did most of the talking and I basically said a few words. In fact I kind of quoted what I said in the memo that I had to write to you about. The feelings, when I described the feelings of EDS, and I guess the other eventful time was at Colonel Simons' funeral. I gave part of the eulogy there and I have also written down what I said in the eulogy and when I talk about my feelings of Colonel Simons it's best described in the eulogy. So that's about it.

KF Okay. What denomination was his funeral service?

PC We had it in Ross' church so I guess it's I think it's the United Methodist, whatever Ross' church is.

KF Presbyterian.

PC Presbyterian. And we had the same service here and in Dallas, the church was filled. It's a beautiful church, you ought to go by and see it. And I was there, I felt really honored that day because a couple of reasons, number one I got to meet Robbie Risner, and Jerimiah Denton and all the other great famous POW's. We all gave the eulogy. What Ross did was he had assembled a group of men whose lives Colonel Simons had either saved or attempted to save. And there were probably five or six of us and we all gave you know, four or five minutes eulogy. It was really beautiful and somebody sang the Battle

PC Hymn of the Republic and then Robbie Risner gave a real, real good eulogy, just super and the eulogies are all written somewhere. In fact Robbie's may be in the book, xxxxxx xxxxx book. But it really tells what these guys thought of Colonel Simons and those fellows endured alot more than Bill or I did. You know they were military and trained for it, and then they suffered alot more than we did. Relatively speaking we thought we suffered, but we really didn't.

KF Okay. Let's just see if we can pick up a one or two highlights. You've told me, I asked everybody when they were most frightened, but you've told me in fact, it was in Rezaiyeh.

PC Rezaiyeh, yes.

KF What was the happiest moment?

PC I'm not sure there was, there was alot of happy moments, Ken I'm not sure which was the happiest. Going in the hotel in Tehran was a very happy moment. Passing the first roadblock was a happy moment. In Rezaiyeh, having the fellow come back after calling Tehran to tell us that everything was okay, was a happy moment. Crossing the border, you know those whatever the 50 of 100 yards getting across there was a very happy moment. Seeing Ross in his hotel room was a very happy moment. And then seeing Ruthie and the kids, so those were very, very happy moments, maybe it was a crescendo that built up I don't know which was at the time they seemed the happiest moments I've every had in my life. So maybe I had the opportunity to have alot of happy moments in a short period of time. But I don't know if I could point out one and say this was the happiest. I tell you what the saddest was. It was standing up there at Colonel Simons' funeral that was really the saddest.

KF Of the people in the dirty team, who would you say you were closest to?

PC Jay.

KF Okay, why was that?

PC Jay and I had gone through an awful lot during November. I couldn't necessarily be totally honest with all our employees, I had to at least show them that we were concerned, which we were. But Jay, was the one person I could close the door to and say okay, what do you really think. Do you think we ought to move them out, do you think we'd better do this, better do that. So Jay and I kind of developed a bond prior to the time that I was taken and prior to the time that we evacuated our people. Because he was really my security person there, and he was getting the Embassy briefings and he and I were pretty much going through the analysis of what we should do. And then I was reporting back to Bill Gayden. And Jay even had the women assembled once and had Jay go talk to the women you know, about what we were doing, about the evacuation plans, etc., etc. I probably have to say that Jay. Now I was also very close to Bill Gayden, you know because I've known, Bill wasn't a part of the dirty team I don't think. But you know, it was interesting that the three of us...

KF Oh, no, I'm sorry, Bill Gayden was in the dirty team yea.

PC Okay, Bill Gayden I was also very close too. I had worked with Bill and I know the kids, and I've known him for years, I worked him in 1970 back in New York, I've known Bill every since we started EDS. So you know, I felt, I told you that I felt good when I saw Jay in the prison, I also felt very good when I saw Bill Gayden for the first time. I was very close to a number of people. I probably didn't know Joe Poche as well as I did the rest but I'm very close to Joe now, became very close to him. Keane and I had been with each other for years, we were never that close but overseas I indicated to you you become, you get to know your people alot more overseas than you do here in the U.S.

KF On the subject of Joe is he always so withdrawn or does he melt when he's with people he knows?

PC No, that's Joe. You know he got me to the side before and says "how's Ruthie." But never changes voice, "how's she doing." Showed sincere interest in her well being, but you know, the same monotone. Joe's a warm person, he really is he just doesn't show it.

KF What makes you think he's a warm person.

PC I think basically think Joe's a warm person I think what happens is after you know Joe for awhile you forget that he appears to be cold. And that's Joe, and you know Joe, when you first meet him you know he appears to be very cold and withdrawn. But I think that's his nature, once you mellow him.

KF Okay. While you were in jail and coming out, were there any worries at home unconnected with Iran? Ruthie was buying a house, but was there anything else in your family that was on my mind.

PC No, both of my parents had passed away, so that wasn't. The one thing was that I think I've told you before, Ruthie kept timing out in terms of telling her family where I was. And that was, I didn't know where that stood, so that was a concern.

KF She kept what?

PC Well she kept telling her, when she first came home in December, she told her mother that I would be home in about two weeks. Well she kept timing out because two weeks then went to four weeks, then went to six weeks, then went to eight weeks. And I was worried that I didn't know what the situation was with the newspaper, as it turned out you know, we were in the press long before we should have and I thought about if that happened what would happen to my other relatives. I do have a large family in New York and Philadelphia, would they be wondering. As it turned out I have a cousin who I'm very, very close to he was in contact with Tom Marquez and not demanding, but was quite insistent on knowing where I was, etc. And Tom was telling him whatever he could and normally that we were safe,

PC and he didn't know much beyond that. And then I think called him up a day or two before we got back and said we would be back in town on this particular day. But I didn't have anybody home sick or those types of things.

KF Okay. What was the funniest thing that happened in the whole adventure?

PC I don't know, I really have to think about that. We laughed an awful lot but for some reason I have a mental block and I can't describe what we were laughing about. They weren't timed we laughed tremendously. I remember one time in Mahabad we were standing outside the Shah's guest house and one of the revolutionary guards handed Jay his gun. And I thought that was quite comical because I was still thinking very seriously that these guys were really playing games with us and we were really under arrest. And when he had Jay his gun, I said gee this is strange, I wonder why he's doing that. The poker game I thought was funny, I just thought it was very comical here we are...

KF At the border.

PC At the border in Eastern Turkey, there's supposed to be bandits I could look see the Iranians and wave to them, here we're sitting down and playing poker I thought that was funny. I don't know, I'm sure I'll think of something, but nothing comes to me.

KF Okay. I asked you all about your childhood and everything. So I think that's it. But if you think of anything else, let me know.

PC I will do that, you've asked me to write down the books that I read while I was in prison, I will do that. Plus I'm also trying to articulate feelings which for me are sometimes difficult to do, but at least I'll give you a start on paper and you kind of do what you want to do with that.

KF Okay, many thanks.

PC Great, I enjoyed it.

KF And me.

PC I'll see you Friday, I'll probably come by about 4:30 or so and we'll drive out to the house, we only live about 15 or 20 minutes from here.

KF Good, that's wonderful.

PC Merv said you thought you need maybe an hour or so with Ruthie, okay fine.

KF I think that's all.

PC She'll be there.

KF Friday, 1:30.

PC Okay.

KF Okay, I'll be there.

PC Look forward to it Ken.

KF Thanks, give Ruthie my best wishes. I'm very happy that's she's feeling better.

PC Great, okay.

END OF TAPE