Interviewer: Parker King

Interviewee: Sidney King

Date: 11/08/2023

Oral History Transcript

*[This interview was conducted on November 8th, 2023, over the phone at 5:30 PM. Parker King is the interviewer and Sydney King is the interviewee. Parker King is the grandson of Sydney King. This interview was conducted as an oral history project for Sarah Steinbock-Pratt’s Vietnam War class at The University of Alabama.]*

**Parker King:** And I've been I've been just trying to prep some questions for us and make sure they're all really good. Make sure I do enough research in depth, so that we can talk about it and have a good- have a good talk. And-

**Sidney King:** Yeah. And well, how much do you know about the Vietnam theater? Right now?

**Parker King:** A pretty- pretty good bit. I've been going to the library and reading some books on it. I'm in that class right now. So, right now, I think we, we just got up to Nixon in the protest. So-

**Sidney King:** Yeah.

**Parker King:** I've done enough research. I've done a lot of research into Thailand, and then you're gonna have to correct me on the name because I don't know if I'm gonna say it right. Is it U-Tapao (yu-ta-po)?

**Sidney King:** U-Tapao (oo-tuh-pow).

**Parker King:** U-Tapao?

**Sidney King:** U-Tapao. [laughs]

**Parker King:** Okay, U-Tapao. [laughs] I'll have to switch that up in my head.

**Sidney King:** Yu-ta-pow. [laughing] U-Tapo.

**Parker King:** Yeah, I wasn't sure how to say it, U-Tapao-

**Sidney King:** Yeah everybody I hear. I see, I see Thailand, you know, on YouTube or something. I'll watch it. They'll call little towns like Pattaya they call it pa-tay-uh. And I'm going no its Pattaya, Pattaya. [laughs]

**Parker King:** Cool, cool. Okay, so if I-

**Sidney King:** I've been to all these places.

**Parker King:** Uh-huh. Okay, that's gonna- that's gonna be cool then. So U-Tapao.

**Sidney King:** Yeah, it's about 30 miles from the Cambodian border. Yeah. And it's probably about 90 or 100 miles to Vietnam.

**Parker King:** Okay, so I would like to say that this is like, more of a conversation. And it's your interview. So like, any questions- or any stories that you want to tell. You can go ahead and tell them. Just-

**Sidney King:** Oh, really.

**Parker King:** Whatever you want to talk about? We can talk about. so-

**Sidney King:** Well did you ever get into the draft?

**Parker King:** Yeah, we- we've talked about the draft some I think that's coming up either next class or the class after that. We're going to talk in depth about it. So-

**Sidney King:** Yea well that was really what incited most of the riots and stuff. Everybody was not happy with the government telling them to go to war and they didn't want to go to war. And the young people from the colleges Berkeley, primarily out in California, they wanted to protest anything that was said, you know. And that was back in the day when, you know, we had Woodstock. I remember reading about woodstock.

**Parker King:** I love Woodstock.

**Sidney King:** That was the year I was in Thailand. I was in North Dakota when they did it. In '69. So I was in North Dakota, hadn't gone to Thailand yet. They had Woodstock. And there was a you know, it's bigger than what they thought things like that. But that was the, you know, the- I guess the culture was about that. That was one of the foreboding things of culture, you know, that and The Beatles and, you know. But the music was, was all you know, Black Sabbath and ugh golly. I'm trying to think of some of the names.

**Parker King:** Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix-

**Sidney King:** Yeah, Jimi Hendrix.

**Parker King:** I'm real big into the music, especially the 60s and stuff.

**Sidney King:** Oh, is that right?

**Parker King:** Yeah.

**Sidney King:** Well, it was very big then, did you ever watch the movie “Good Morning Vietnam?”

**Parker King:** I don't think I did.

**Parker King:** Watch that. That's Robin Williams you know the- the actor that died?

**Sidney King:** Check that out. You can see it it probably online somewhere I don't know where, but Good Morning, Vietnam. Look at that show and you'll get up primary it'll open your eyes exactly what's going on?

**Parker King:** Nice. I have, I have some questions if we okay, if we want to go through them and it's kind of like I'm gonna ask the questions, but you take the stories and you just go off with them and tell me whatever you feel like telling me.

**Sidney King:** [laughs] Okay.

**Parker King:** Okay. So I kind of first just want to talk about your early life kind of before the war and stuff and just to get some of that. So-

**Sidney King:** Highschool.

**Parker King:** Yeah. Well, when and where were you born?

**Sidney King:** I was born in Beaumont, Texas at a place called a Beaumont Infirmary, which was a birthing center at the time. Back in the day, but we were raised as poor family, but we didn't know it, you know, we always had food to eat, and lots of freedom running around his kids. You know, I think 10, 11 years old, I had a paper route. And you know, we endeavored paper route delivered papers at three, four in the afternoon after school, we'd have to go through our paper route. And then we'd have to get up at four in the morning, 3:30 and four o'clock and go in cold and rainy, and anytime. And at 10, 11 years old, you go up there and fold your papers and go ride through downtown Beaumont. And that was, that was my route, you know, and had all the homeless people and but nobody bothered anybody. And you know, I'm 10 years old and going old hotels and putting out papers, walking halls, and-

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** But, you know, I just went to school like everybody else right in their neighborhood, you know, went to elementary school and then went to James Bowie Junior High School in Beaumont, Texas from, back then it was seventh, eighth and ninth grade. And, you know, I was, of course, an athlete, I was so fast and I could run like a wild Indian.

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** But I went out for football, and I was so glad that they cut me I was like, oh my gosh, in this- it was hot and nasty. And I said- I always say, you go to, go play basketball. So I got on the basketball team. One of the things that was really neat about the basketball through- from my seventh grade, all the way to a senior in high school, that the guys that I played with, you know, from all over our neighborhood, we had probably seven or eight elementary schools, that went to that one junior high school- middle middle school, if you will. And we won 102 games nonstop. Nobody beat us. We we made Sports Illustrated.

**Sidney King:** We were- we were in the back page, you know? Where they always notarize people, you know? Honorable mention. And we won 102 nonstop games, before anybody beat us, they beat us 51 to 50. And we were seniors, and you know, just about- and I think because everybody went out and partied, you know, during prom or something that we we lost the game.

**Parker King:** Oof. That's-

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** But it was, it was fun. It was a good a good experience. We had a great coach. And that's all I did in high school was chase girls and play basketball, you know?

**Sidney King:** And so even when we got over into service, that's what I did. I traveled ever- I tell everybody, I went to Vietnam one time and I played a basketball game. Course I was trained to fight, you know, had weapons, I had everything. But still, just that's what they wanted to do in the Air Force. You know, they took pride in that stuff. And I remember one time when I was playing over and when I finally got to Thailand to jump ahead a little bit in basketball. One of the- my chief, I was I was an air traffic controller and I was in crash rescue. And when my chief said he couldn't let me go to these ball games anymore because I would- I would work Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and on Thursday, I would leave get on an airplane and fly away to Sri Lanka or Philippines or Bangkok or up land- Thailand and because we went all over the of Southeast Asia and just fly and go play ball. And he said "I can't let you go anymore." I said, "Okay." So I went and told the coach, so- the next morning, well probably about eight o'clock. You know, I heard this announcement over the PA said the sergeant King report to the chief's office. So I went to the chief's office and there was this little two star general. [laughs] And boy everybody snapped to, you know when I walk in, you know, and I said Sergeant King reports as ordered. And this general walks over and puts his arm around my shoulder and he said Sergeant King will play on my basketball team. That's an order.

**Parker King:** Yes sir. [laughs]

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** And he walked out. Guess what I did? I played basketball. And then went- and we won the Asian championship. We were really good. We beat China, we beat Sri Lanka, we beat India. We played all- Thailand, and Laos, and Cambodia. Phillipines, Hawaii, I went to Hawaii.

**Parker King:** So, you played for the- the US team?

**Sidney King:** The Air Force Yeah.

**Parker King:** Oh the Air Force team that's-

**Sidney King:** Yeah the US Air Force we have a couple of guys from the Army played with us. One was from Sattahip which is right there but Patea, which is- if you ever look up "Thailand" and look around you'll see Patea is the the summer home for the king and is the- queen that's where they stay at. It has beautiful beaches and stuff.

Sdiney King: That's what I did. I bounced on trampoline laid in the sun, drank a lot of coke colas. Had a good time. But, you know, we went to high school and you know it came time. I went to French High School in Beaumont, Texas and graduated '67. And it was pretty hard pressed because the war had started in 65. You know? They moved the marines in and started setting up bases and it was getting pretty tough. I've met a few guys who were there and the first "slaughters." They were kind of slaughters you know, it was really bad. Yeah, Americans lost a lot of people in there.

**Sidney King:** And then I went to basic training in Lackland Air Force Base and we got out of there after six weeks of training. They sent me to Biloxi, Mississippi, and I became an air traffic controller. I was there for about three or four months, I guess. And they sent me from Biloxi, which is you know, beaches. You've been there before. And from the beaches. I went all the way to Minot, North Dakota, which- Air Force has a lot of different divisions and the one I was in was SAC. They call it Strategic Air Command. And I was in- which is the big airplanes, the B 52s and the tankers and all that big stuff, the bombers. And I was there from '69 to golly, no no, no '68 to 69 so I was there for a little over a year. So I think it was in July of '69 I went to- they shipped me to Thailand. Well I got to, you know, got to come home to Texas for a 30 day leave before you went overseas. So I flew home and I enjoyed my time and everything.

**Sidney King:** But anyways, they ship you to an airbase out in California, so you can get, get trained for your M 16 training for your weapon, you know. So I went out there to Hamilton airbase, which is just north of Sausalito in San Francisco, and I went there and they keep you there for like 10 days, maybe 12, 14- two weeks at most. And of course that was you know, you're a regular service man, then you're not in training. So you kind of got a little more freedom you know, it's more like a job than anything else. And I had crossed trained over into crash rescue when I was at Minot. I got out of air traffic control because it was very stressful. I got out of it. And so I got into crash rescue. They said there's three things you can do if you want to cross train, you can be a cook, you can be a policeman, or you can be a firefighter, crash rescue, and I said I think- I've worked with those guys, and I know those guys, so I trained over that. So I was proficient in ATCO and I was proficient in crash rescue by the time I got out so- but anyways, they ship you to Hamilton airbase in San Francisco, which is no longer there. I think they finally closed it, but they knew that I was an ATCO. So they kind of kept me a little longer because they needed- they were short handed in their tower. And they were training base more than anything. Just to protect the West Coast. And I worked in there for like three weeks before they shipped out. I shipped out later. I thought for- there for a minute that they might keep me but they didn't. They let the orders go on through. They just TDYed me to go- temporary dutied me to Hamilton, so I stayed there for a little while. And then I finally got on a big ol' continental jet airliner and they flew me. 11- It was five hours to Hawaii and 11 hours to the Philippines and another four hours to Bangkok, Thailand, you know which I was there. But go ahead. What's your question?

**Parker King:** Oh, I'm just kind of to backtrack a little bit. But can you tell me kind of about like, LBJ's presidency and I guess Kennedy right before that. Because that was when you were in high school, right?

**Sidney King:** Yeah, I was in the ninth grade when Kennedy got shot. Was at Bowie junior high school and they, you know, they announced over the speaker for everybody to come to the auditorium. So we all went to assembly and during- they turned on a big TV, there black and white TV and we watched the assassination. Everybody cried and everything else but it was- it was really not- you know, Kennedy was a Democrat, but he wasn't- his, his. The way he talked and everything, and some of his platform was totally different than the Democratic Party. He kind of- winged it pretty good, but he was very, very intelligent. And I kind of think it got- it kind of got under the Democratic Party's skin I think, That's my opinion. And LBJ was a big ol' redneck from Texas and he would just loud mouth in Congress. He wasn't- he wasn't liked very much a lot of people didn't like him. But- him and his wife, they were rich ranchers out there in Austin, Texas, as you know, they were just- and he kind of took over and he kind of did what the Democratic party wanted to do, which was try to end the war. But he escalated everything. I mean, he moved 400,000 troops in there and did a ton of stuff that was just angry. Boy made all the- all the university people mad, and the colleges were up in a uproar, and the young people were having to flee to Canada because you know, the draft.

**Sidney King:** You know, and I was in college. And whenever I got drafted in- I just, you know, I just got out of high school, you know, the feeling where you just don't feel like doing academics anymore. You're going I don't know, and I would show up, and I did this, I finally just, you know, made zeros in everything. So I just finally quit. But here come the first semester, and I didn't do very well. So I went to work. I was working at a Texaco service station. And I knew the draft was pressing on me. And I went because I was 1-A man. I mean, I was ready, you know. And it was pressing on you. So sure enough, I said, Mom, “I might as well go ahead.” So I went down to to the Air Force and signed up for the Air Force. And they got me on the bus within a week or so. And rode me over to Houston, Texas on a bus with a bunch of other enlistees is what we were. We weren't drafted. But on Wednesday morning, and that was on Tuesday, on Wednesday morning. My draft had already showed up the house. My mom called the hotel over in Houston said, "You got a piece of paper here. You know, wanting to know if- from the federal government wanting you to report for the Army, the Marines, you get to choose." And I went "well write on there and send it back." You know, "just tell them I've already signed up for the Air Force." There was no, no pressure on that. I had already raised my hand in Houston on Tuesday morning.

**Sidney King:** So I was in the Air Force. And then they put us on a bus and shipped us to Lackland Air Base in San Anton. And I was there for six weeks. So but you know, I was such a good athlete, I could run, you know, the mile, I could do a four minute mile real easy, you know, and so, I'd run off and leave everybody and course. They put me in air traffic control because they were- had plans on making me a forward air controller, which is the the guy that's in the foxhole between the enemy and the- and the good guys. And you're the guy that jumps out of the foxhole and runs and throws the smoke grenade at the enemy, so that airplanes can [cuts out]. And their life expected was about a minute. By the time, you got in country you only lived about a minute. I said I don't think I want to do that. [laughs]

**Parker King:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Sidney King:** So I said no, I don't do that. So anyways, that was what their plan was. I could- after I got out of there. And they were, you know, they- after about three years in the service, I figured out what they- those drill instructors were doing. They were trying to get people into certain, you know, occupations and they wanted you- because I was supposed to went to Sheppard Air Base or something for some kind of medical something. I don't know what that was. But they changed it and sent me to Biloxi. But what was neat about it was just between me and you as the guy went with his name was Corey Wells. His dad was a two star general. And Cory was our our squadron leader because he had ROTC and he had one stripe on his shoulder already, you know, so that he was- on his arm. So he was trained already, you know, and he and I became good friends and we went to Biloxi together, became roommates, and his dad would come by with the generals car and pick us up and take us to the officer's [inaudible]. We had some fun times. I said well this is cool. I mean, I was scared, shaking in my boots. Here I am a little basic Airman and we arrived in a generals car, you know?

**Parker King:** Yeah.

**Sidney King:** We got to do some good things. It was fun. And you got out there and you were free. And you could you know, you could have a automobile, you could do what you- you know just about anything, but you had to report to duty and you had to be on time, and it taught you a lot of respect and honor, and taught you how to do things, the things that college teaches, you know how to be responsible, and that's what I say and they just, if they would just bring back the draft they would shut everybody up. And everybody would go, "Uh-oh. I gotta go- I gotta go report to fight in his war over there in the Middle East." But it's- it was- LBJ was not liked. He was- he was very, very- even when he came on TV it kind of just irked your jaw. You know, you kind of looked at him and went, oh my goodness, but was not a popular president at all. He wasn't. Then in the- course, tricky dick came in, Nixon. And he shut the war down in 75.

**Parker King:** Yeah, he- he took presidency in '69, right?

**Sidney King:** Yeah. Yeah. January, '69. He won the '68 election. Yeah. And got, what's his name out of there- LBJ. Ladybird, was his wife. She was the rich when she had all the money.

**Parker King:** Could you tell me some of the dates for the places that you were and, when you volunteered and stuff?

**Sidney King:** Well, I went in February 26 of 1968. I graduated in September, went to Lamar University- it was back then was Lamar- Lamar tech, they called it. It was The College of Technology and Engineering. And I went there and- and I really didn't do well at it, I wasn't carrying a full load, I didn't care, you know, I was just tired of school. And so by February, you know, the draft was on you. After Christmas, I signed up. And in February 26 of 1968. I joined, so I had four years to do. In the Army and the Marines you had two years to do. You could do two or four in the Marines. The Navy was three or four years, whatever you want to do, but the Air Force was solid four years. And Air Force was an easier- easier route as far as going into the service. And it still is. And you can get some you know, you can get some rank on. You can make some pretty good money and you had time off and- and it was- it was a lot easier, you know? Except in Minot, North Dakota, it was cold as a- 65 below. I mean, it was cold. I mean, you put every bit of gear on that you could get. And you would try to walk to my- two blocks to the chow hall and you couldn't make it. You had to go back. I mean, it was- you would have froze to death.

**Parker King:** So you went- how did you end up in North Dakota?

**Sidney King:** Well, in February, I went to Lackland, and of course they kept me there until March, April the 15th is a close date that I left Lackland. And I went home on leave for two weeks. And then caught a bus. No, no, I'll take that back. Take that back. I left San Anton and got on a bus with a whole bunch of other guys. Because there was a lot of troops there was probably 12 to 15,000 troops over there in different squadrons. I was in Squadron 126. And they teach you everything, how to do guard, and how to be a guard. You had to pull your kitchen duty. You had to rake leaves. You had to- they'd send you over to the hospital and work and clean floors and there was different duties but they just used you as a basic trainee. And then you had to, you know, learn how to march. You had to learn how to handle a weapon. They took you to rifle training. You had to learn military jargon, you know, things like Sergeant King reports as ordered. You had to report and you learn how to salute. You learn how to- how to keep your mouth shut, and you learn how to do your little duties. And that was it, you know, and they would get these inspections and lieutenants- young lieutenants who- they were in charge of different squadrons would come in and do inspections and turn your bunks over and just yell and scream at you and "Where's your guns? Where did you hide this? Where is that? Do you have any drugs?" And [inaudible] boy they always and you're always had to- had to be sharp as a tack and you had to, you know, keep your- your fatigues clean and you had to, you know, it was- it was tough, you know, and he issued you all your stuff your toothbrush and then- and then, like ever two weeks. No, it wasn't two weeks. We finally got to go and get our paycheck. My first paycheck was $92. After being there a month, I was making $92. I was making $98 a month and they took like $6 out taxes. [laughs]

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** And you're there. Of course they pay for all your food, your clothing, they pay everything. You don't have to do anything. But then, one of my experiences- well, I'll tell you that in a minute. But you learned how to march people, and you learned how to be a leader, you learned some people were leaders and some people were very shy, and they never- they just showed up and did their job. And that was it. But most, most things they taught you to be gregarious. And of course, in air traffic control, they teach you to talk, you know, because you have to talk quickly. "Papa, tango, one, niner seven, you're clear for takeoff," things like that. You have to talk to 'em.

**Sidney King:** Well, they put me on a bus and sent me straight, with a bunch of other guys, a load, two loaded buses, all the way to Biloxi, Mississippi. And we got off there, and that was all new to us. We were young boys and we were, you know, no hair, we were shaved. And man, everybody- they even looked at us. We- boy we were rigid man, we didn't want to get into no trouble. We kept our- we kept our butts clean, you know? And get up early in the morning do our- all of our PT, we call it, physical training, we did all of that. Got all that done. Then we'd go- they'd say, "well today you got to go peel potatoes at the kitchen." Or you got to go do this or you got to go to do that.

**Sidney King:** And I got around a little bit so I had a good memory and I remembered all of the base. I remember where everything was. I remember one day they gave us the training for- for all military. They get it- we got a little bit of it at basic, at Lackland. But they give you this training about- about syphilis and gonorrhea and about nuclear weapons and about this- boy just stuff that you don't hear every day, you know? And there's a lot of giggling going on. And there's 400 guys in this auditorium and, you know, it's kind of funny. And you just sit there and watch the movie. Well they finally- we all got outside and everybody's standing on the curb, and this five star- or five tik Sergeant- five stripes Sergeant, "Anybody know where building 6409 is?" And I went, "Yes sir, I do." He said "Well, line these people up and march 'em all over there." And I went oh, golly. What are you talking- me march 400 people, you know, over there to building 6409 which is about six blocks away. And he said, "And dismiss 'em over there." Which is kind of the center of the whole Biloxi over there. So I got all these people, I got me five guys and we split 'em all in five different groups. We had about 100 people in each group and I'm up there in the front boy and I'm taking off down there. And I said, "Alright forward march," and we all started marching down this road. And we look- and I look back and it looked good. And I said, "Okay, road guards out. And had road guards that go out and stop the traffic and we march right on through. Well, I turned down this street and was headed to 6409 over there, which wasnt but about two blocks away. And it was a one way street. [laughs] And I'm going the wrong way. We had to stop cars and back them up.

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** It was a- I tell you, I said I won't do that again. Don't volunteer for nothing. So I kind of got in trouble a little bit. But I didn't get in trouble. No, we got over there made it. But I know everybody was surprised to see this whole 400 men marching out of this one way street. And marched 'em across the main boulevard and we all halt there. And I said, "Dismissed," and the [inaudible] would echo down the line, "dismissed, dismissed." And everybody scattered, and I went golly, my heart was coming out of my chest.

**Sidney King:** But that's some of the things you learned in the service. You learned to do that. Of course you had a lot of free time you could get on the bass bus and drive out to the beach and you didn't have no money. But you could go to the beach, you know? And you can meet girls and you could do things, listen to music and meet people and have fun you didn't have no nightlife. You had to be- you had a curfew you had to be in, because we were PATs, which is they call it as PATs because we were persons awaiting training. So we- I did all of that there and then they gave me orders to go to Minot, North Dakota. Nobody looked at me went, "How did you get that?" Me and one other guy got it. And I went, "I don't want to go to Minot man."

**Sidney King:** So I came home for 30 days after that. I got no- no two weeks. I'm sorry. Two weeks after that. I came home back to Beaumont. And I went got on an airplane and it flew me from Beaumont, on a little twin engine DC-3, I think it was, maybe it DC- maybe a DC-6, or maybe seven. But anyway, that was all they had back then, They had very few jets, you know? So I flew into Dallas got on an airplane and they flew me right on up to North Dakota and I wore my when I left- when I left Beaumont, it was 98 degrees. You know, you had short sleeves on, little khaki uniforms and you had your- you know, you always had to be in uniform everywhere you went. And I did notice that people wouldn't talk to you. They didn't like you. You know, they weren't like- now you see in the airports. You know, you see people being nice to the military and giving food and, you know, taking care of them and applauding them and clapping and stuff, but back then, they didn't like you. They didn't want to be around you and da-da-da-di. I flew in and got off the airplane up there in Minot, North Dakota. It was like 52 degrees or something. It was like, oh my gosh. Wind was blowing like 40 miles an hour man. I was like, "Oh my god, where am I?" You know, you put you on a little taxi and drove 12 miles out of town to the airbase and all new territory, you know. But you met a whole new crew of people, and new friends, new stuff. It was kind of exciting. You meet some strange people. There's some who liked housecleaning. Man, there was people who like to iron clothes enjoyed it. And were going, "What? This guy enjoys ironing fatigues?"

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** He would iron everybody in the in the whole- in the whole dormitory. He would iron their fatigues for him charging 15, 20 cents, you know, like a little bit of money. But you'd stand there and see him and iron clothes. Weirdo. But it was- it was fun. They had a big flightline. And course they had nuclear weapons. And they had ICBM missiles. So you got to fly out to the missile sites and you got to get on helicopters. You've got into the workforce of the Air Force. It wasnt- you got out of the training area and got into the real nuts and bolts of the Air Force, which is amazing. I mean, it's stuff that I mean, you're- when I remember I was on land standby one night, and it was so cold outside that I was in a pickup with a heater running wide open. And it was 27 degrees inside the pickup. I mean in your and you look out the window. And there's a guard standing out there. He's a he's an AP, an air policeman, with a dog. And he's standing in it. And it's 45 below zero. And he's got to be a two hour shift out there. On the flight line, and you're going wow. I remember all the snow bunnies. They were everywhere. I mean, you could chase them or do whatever, but they were everywhere.

**Parker King:** Yeah.

**Sidney King:** And I remember an air crash, they had a B 52 that lost all the electronics. It was a- they shoot a lot of touch and goes. The first crash I saw I was in the tower over there. And they had- to build this runway, which the runway was probably three miles long. It was pretty- 14, 15,000- I think is 12,000 feet, but it had an overrun, but they could- you could land B 52 zone it easily, you know, and KC 135 tankers, which were the refueling thing. But they had- they also had the Jets. They were F 102 darts they called 'em, which was a swept wing jet that they kept in hangars, and they were- they were on standby. I mean, you would see the guys- klaxon and horns would go off, and they would run out of the base ops and run across there and get in their planes, they'd fire 'em up. And I'm telling you, when they- the doors came up on that thing, they'd come out of the doors, and they had a lot of- like about a 45 degree turn to hit the runway. And I mean, their tires were squealing around that corner. Those dudes were doing at least 150 miles an hour when they got to that turn, and then they hit the afterburners. And man they were in the air. I mean, you could count to probably 50 from the time that door opened and they were off the end of the runway. It was amazing. And I mean, it's stuff that in the Air Force that you just go, "Wow."

**Sidney King:** And I've talked to guys who- I had a friend who was a major in the Marines, and he would check out a- he had been in there for 20 something years. And he would check out a plane here in Tampa. And they say well, he's got business in Lang- at Langley airfield up in Washington, D.C. So he had to fly to Washington so he would check out a F-111. From Lackland- from Tampa, up here at MacDill Air Force Base. And he said you could- he said, you could set the c2omputer on that jet for 40,000 feet. He said, that thing would take off and you get it off the end of the runway, that computer kicked in and it would turn straight up, and he said you couldn't even take your finger to shut it off. He said when he got to 40,000 feet and leveled off. He said man it was amazing. He said he left here and went to Langley in Washington. It took him 45 minutes, and he was in the approach pattern, and he said those jets- you're running 14, 1500 miles an hour.

**Parker King:** Wow.

**Sidney King:** He said, you can let take off at Lackland, that's 110 miles across Florida to the Atlantic. He said I'd take off the end of the MacDill runway, and he says I hit the afterburners, and I turned left and you count to 12, and you can see the Atlantic Ocean. I said wow. He said it's amazing. He said, You got to hang on boy. But I told him, I'd like to take a ride with you. He said, Yea I'll take you. I said yeah, I just want one of those little slow rolls. He said, no, no, I'll give you one of those corkscrews. And went no, I'm not going with you.

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** But that's a story for here, but- but my first crash up there in- in Minot, they had a dug, a big giant ditch, along the side of the runway that was about 40, 50 feet wide. And when they would find these big rocks out there, and when they were, you know, cleaning the- the foundation to build the runway out there was 24 inches deep. And the overruns were like three foot deep, solid concrete. So the runways were really, really built well, but they had that long ditch. And the tower was on the back side of the ditch. And it was pretty tall tower, it was brand new, and it was really nice it had all the latest stuff, which it's all been changed out nowadays, but- and we were up there and this- I actually was not up there I was kind of down in the break room, which is about three quarters of the way down. And somebody you know, you could- you could hear the- the tension in the tower and they call it, the tension got pretty tight. And I stepped outside on the little deck and there was this jet coming right towards the tower. F-102 jet. Had lost one of its right landing gears and was corkscrewing down the runway. It went off in that ditch, of course when it went in the ditch it went about 50 feet and stopped, because you know all that rocks and stuff down in there. So I jump and run down the ladder, I wasn't very far, then I noticed up on top the guys had already thrown the lanyards out, big ropes to evacuate the tower. They were ready to get out of it. I thought they were gonna get hit.

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** And so I ran over there and- and I was- well I wasn't the first one there. I was probably the second, but there was- I mean it was- thing was smoking. No- no fire, nothing just- it was hot. And the pilot was out, he was out cold. And I went over there and reached in there and opened this little door on the- on the left side of the plane and pull this lanyard and it blew that canopy off of that thing about 100 feet in the air, and it landed way back here behind it and got up on there. I hit the D ring and I lifted- straddled the nose of the airplane. And I lifted the guy up out of there and I handed him- set him on the side of the plane and handed him down to two other guys. Then about and the fire department got there. And of course they sprayed foam everywhere. But nobody said anything great about anybody. “What happened here? Why didn't he-“ I don't even if it got a report or anything. I was like okay, they never even asked, you know.

**Parker King:** Yeah.

**Sidney King:** But anyway, the guy turned out he was okay. He just knocked him out. And he had a a bruise on his head. But that was it.

**Sidney King:** **Sidney King:** And the next one, they had a B 52 that had lost all of its power on the left side, and it barreled into the- I had already crossed trained over in the crash rescue. I was a firefighter then. And it was probably six, eight months later. Maybe longer maybe maybe almost a year. But anyways, that big B-52 ran off the runway. Well it actually didn't it was airborne. And it just dove right in. You could see- whenever I got over there walking around finding bodies and stuff, you know, because everybody died on board. There's nine people on there. You see them operator, the navigator, the pilot copilot and the electronics man. And then they have a- these planes up there didn't have a tail gunner. So it only had eight men on there but it had a tail gunner. It was the tail gunner was operated up from the cockpit, really right behind the cockpit. He didn't have to ride back in the back of the plane. But anyways, you see him some of them jettisoned out because they have a high altitude ejection, they don't have- like a fighter you know it has a- I mean they can eject off the deck of a carrier, you know, whereas a B-52 you can't. You gotta ride it down. If you're, you know, if you're below 5000 feet, you don't even have a chance to get out of plane. And they all died in there, but I was over there doing rescue and walking around and it was cold but it was the, you know, the fire and the plane was indistinguishable. They couldn't even hardly find the cockpit. And everybody was looking for the, you know- and I found a piece of leg here and a piece of leg there, and the one guy jettisoned right into the ground. He was still sitting in his seat and broke- both of his arms were broke off. And his face was pulled way down. I mean, it was yeah, you know, the impact just slaughtered him, you know?

**Parker King:** Yeah.

**Sidney King:** And I was standing next to this landing gear. And I was kind of leaning on it you know, and the- and the tires on a B-52, or really on all airplanes, has a lot of metal in it. Little shavings and, you know, they'll stick to you but I had a crash rescue coat on, so it didn't bother me. But I was leaning there just waiting to see what's going to happen, the big, big wigs hadn't got out there yet. And I walked away. They- somebody said something that they found the cockpit, so I kind of started walking that way. I got about 30 feet away from that landing gear. And it was burning on the backside, the brakes and all the landing gear was burning back there. And there's real bright burning, you can't look at it. And it magnesium is what they are, the brakes and all. So it was burning behind there. I got like 30 feet away and those tires exploded. I mean, there was 20, 30 seconds from death right there. I would've- it would've killed me. And I walked away from it. And- man I mean that landing gear and all 'em tires went sky high and everybody was- they all- you could hear the silence. When that thing hit the ground, you went, oh my gosh.

**Sidney King:** And then this major light colonel, or whatever he was, told everybody, "If you've got a weak stomach, you need to get out of here. There's a lot of blood and guts here. If you don't- you don't need to be touching anything if you've got a weak stomach. You got to-" Well, we found the pilot. And he was, you know, you could see down his windpipe, you can see his bottom row of teeth. No head, it was gone. And, of course you try to pick him up- he had lots of heat and stuff. And this one guy tried to pick him up under the shoulders, I got under the back of the knees, which actually was just- full of just liquidy skin because the body had already been- I mean he was broke up so bad. And I picked up under the knees to pick this- this flight suit up to put it in one of the body bags. Well this kid that picked- I dont even remember his name, I think it was Horwath was his name. He was Jewish guy, from Connecticut or something. And he puked right in the middle of that guy's belly. When you picked him up, his body kind of fell apart and odors came out. I just turned my head and kept going, but he puked with a light colonel screamed and yelled at him to get away, get away a couple of the guys we all got him put in that body bag. And I was like, oh man. So it was a pretty telltale experience, you know, and of life and death and- and tragedy and of course accident and, you know, what your job is really all about, you know?

**Sidney King:** So there was a lot to do in the Air Force and lots of mistakes could be made and things said that you couldn't take back and stuff like that, you know, and then you had to deal with your social life. And when we were in Biloxi and 1960- 68. They let women in the Air Force to start being in air traffic control, radar, and radio, and scope dopes is what they call them. But our our squadron, where I was at, was the premier squadron. It was the one that all the inspectors came to look at when they brought visiting generals and stuff they because we kept our place beautiful. And we had to give our squadron to the ladies when they came in. We had to go to the squadron next door but I was almost finished with training anyway, so. So I was just hanging around waiting for orders, you know? Then I got the orders to- out of- from Minot. I was so glad to get out of there. It was so cold and golly. There were no pretty girls up there, Minot has no pretty girls.

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** You saw one pretty girl. There was 14 guys hanging around and he's kind of laughed. It was really funny, you know? And the social life was kind of slow, and they had on base stuff going on, but not a lot. But you kind of stayed in the fire station, and had a dormitory, and had you know, just regular life. It was- it was a job and then got transferred to California and got my training and stuff and then went to Thailand. And that's when, you know, you kind of go, oh my gosh. First thing I noticed about when I got off the plane at Don Mueang Airport in Bangkok was the place stunk. I mean smelled like, oh my God. And of course I found out later it was a Khlong. The Khlong is where all their sewage goes, open ditches. That's where all of their waste goes. And it stunk the hole- if you ever go to India or Asia or someplace, you'll- always take you a fresh set of clothes in a Ziploc bag. When you get ready to get on the plane to leave, you go in the bathroom and throw your clothes away, all of them. Put that suit of clothes on and leave because that odor will be with you all the way- and it didn't leave me for like two months after I got back to the States.

**Sidney King:** But yeah, we had a big bad crash and Thailand too. We had a B-52 run out the end of the runway loaded with bombs. And they all went off. I mean, it blew a hole in the ground. 23 feet deep. It blew an air chopper, HH-43B was the crash rescue chopper, blew it out of the sky and killed one of the- two- it killed a pilot, copilot. And one of the EMTs in the back with the firefighter who was in there, Turner. He and I played basketball together. He- he survived. He was in the hospital for long time. Nice guy. I mean, nicest guy, black guy, but he was really nice. And it blew their chopper out of the sky. And when that thing exploded- they were going back and they- you could hear him over the radio. Well I- I was behind a fire truck that weighed 66,000 pounds. And when that explosion they pulled us away, because- in the Air Force or any any ammunition, if it's engulfed in flames, it turns white because it has a paint on the outside of the bomb, or bombs, that will turn to an ash white when- when they have fire on the- on the weapons on the armaments. But when it penetrates- the heat penetrates the weapon and it gets to the explosive inside, you see red smoke. When you see red smoke, you don't go in, you stay away. So we kind of- we saw the red smoke. So we turned out, we were about a little over a half mile away and we turned sideways and everybody got out, hid behind the trucks and it was a bunch of us. And when that explosion went off all those bombs, he had- he had 24 external 750 bombs and 88 internal 500 pounders. I mean, that was a lot of bombs, a lot of weapons. And it- it went off and my ears rang for two weeks. But it lifted that truck six feet off the ground and threw me down that runway about 30, 40 feet just rolling. And I was we all came up I was laughing, that's something you don't see every day.

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** It was amazing man. And it like- well, it threw shrapnel it, it threw bombs. There was bombs that didn't explode. And it it threw a couple of bombs. 10,000 feet away two miles. One of them landed on a hooch one of the hooches. And there's a guy that sleep inside there. And he hit the front porch and tore the whole front out of the hooch and he's standing there in his underwear. I remember seeing the pictures. But if you look that up, you'll- you'll see it. "U-Tapao." That crash. And I think it was July of '69. July of '69. You'll see that crash and it'll talk a lot about it. But it was it was amazing. I mean, you're standing on the flightline there and all of a sudden you see this jet coming and you're going you're looking at your radar and you're going what is that? You know, it doesn't have a call sign it doesn't have a notation you don't have it on the board. And this jet goes down your runway about four feet off the runway at- at 1700 miles an hour. He goes out across the bay of- of what'd they call that. That was Siam, the Bay of Siam, which is the Bay of Thailand. But anyways, and then it turned back east it was just- it was a Russian fighter came in buzzed our field. Yeah, all kinds of stuff. You'd see little windshield shot out of planes and you'd see all sorts of stuff man.

**Parker King:** [laughs]

**Sidney King:** You round a corner one day and they had revetements that protected the B-52s when they loaded them and fueled and separated the planes from each other. And I rounded a corner one day and one of the bomb loading little tugs they call 'em, they loaded bombs. Like, they could load two 500s at a time or one 750, but had a little nose on them and they would lift it up and hold it in place while they put the pins in, you know? And he had run into one of those fuel tanks and that whole revetment in there- I mean, they were huge. They were like, two football fields wide and football field deep and you could back a B-52 in there. And it was- it had twelve feet- had 12 inches of- of JP Ford jet fuel all around that plane. And you're looking going, what you do now coach? He was trying to drain out- they had a great drainage system, but- then that little utility startup unit, we called it a little generator, was running. Man, I went, oh, no, we had to wait out there. And you know, whenever you shut a generator down and it pop, pop, pops, it sparks, you know? We threw a towel over that thing, man and captured all the sparks to keep that thing from blowing up. I mean, you get emergencies and just shake your head and go, “Are you kidding me?”

**Sidney King:** But it was an experience. And we did our part. We kind of helped the theater and those planes would leave and they were so loud. Three planes- three B-52s at a time. Of course the KCs would take off. There would be three or four of them would take off and they would hover in place. Because when the B-52 left, there'd be three- three sorties there were three- three sorties of three airplanes, nine aircraft would leave. They would make their turn to the east and they'd hit out over there and then they would go bomb the factories and all in Hanoi and North Vietnam and any bombed the Ho Chi Minh Trail, they bomb wherever they told him to go. Then they would turn right over the South China Sea and come back around and meet the KCs and refuel so they can come back, you know? And they were sending the same B-52s from Guam which was on the other side of China and in Japan. They're B-52s are over there they were coming and bombing too, so they drop millions and millions of pounds. And they would come back and they would land. They would be a lot lighter you could tell. Their bombs are gone and, you know, their pins are flapping in the breeze and they would land and all go home. And then two days later they'd load up, go again, you know? But it was- that was their job. And our job was to keep them in the air, you know?

**Sidney King:** And I remember one day we were we were online standby out there and this equipment truck, MMS was the maintenance people that took care of the B-52s, you know? The pilots would come out on their own service van, but the crew that got the plane ready, which were the crew chiefs and stuff, they would- we got- we got a holler and one said, "Hey, come with us hurry, we need some help!" So we were like, okay so we follow them. And there was this one spot where they park the B-52 that was in a revetment and it was called Juliet 9. And we all pulled up there and I noticed they were all [cuts out] lights on the front landing gear on this, and there was a 20 foot Cobra wrapped around the landing gear on B-52. 20 foot long.

**Parker King:** Oh my gosh.

**Sidney King:** I was like- and what we did- well, he- you know, they got to pulling on this- one captain he was a copilot got to pulling on his tail and messing with him, and made him mad he come down his hood was eight inches wide. You're looking at this thing, he's looking at you four feet, and he could move and you're going- you try to get away and then he'd grab him again and bring him back and they said we'll get one of those hose sacks. We're gonna put him in that sack and I went oh my gosh. I'm sitting here you know of course I'm into and I'm young and crazy and running around. But so they kind of got his attention. The captain went around the behind him and he grabbed that Cobra and that Cobra went berserk and I mean almost got away. But we picked him all up. All of us, about 15 guys there we picked him up, put him in that sack and he put his head in and they closed the sack and tied it up. Boy he was squirming all over. Big ol' heavy thing, weighed 250 pound. Put him in the back of a pickup. Well they had a beer garden over by- by the tower over where I worked, over at operations. And they they took the snake over there and put him in a cage with a gigantic boa constrictor- boa- it was an- not an anaconda. It wasn't a Python, it was a boa and they always had a big board up there and they took bets your 50 cent bet of what day that that- that the boa would eat that rooster. They put a little banty rooster in there and feed him once a week. One who was closest to the day and time won the [inaudible], you know, it was usually about 15, 20 bucks, you know? And they put that snake in there too, with that boa. Well he went up in one tree and the boa went up and the other tree. Cobra stayed up in the tree and wouldn't come down. So they put two chickens in there to feed him and they tried to feed him and he would never eat. So the boa finally ate his chicken too, but, you know. But he finally died in captivity. But there were plenty of them around there.

**Sidney King:** When they'd ever brushburn you know, we'd be online standby out there and following these guys, because, of course, I played a lot of basketball. So, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, you know what I got. I got to be in the- in the truck and follow the crews around that sprayed agent orange around the perimeters and burn fires around here to get rid of the brush, because they need to see the fences, you know? And snakes running everywhere. I'm like, oh my god look at the snakes man. I mean, you go 20 feet and see five snakes and you're going oh golly. So I got to do that Monday, Wednesday- Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, I worked. On Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, I was flying somewhere playing ball. Come back and work some more.

**Sidney King:** So they put me on fire extinguisher maintenance. That's what I did. I went around and signed a little initials on these fire extinguishers. If they were in the green, good. If they had lost their pressure, I'd put them in the truck, bring them back to the shop and fill them back up and get them right and seal them and take them back out. You know? I had a good job. And they sent me back to England Air Force Base in- in Louisiana. Alexandria, Louisiana. That's when I met your grandmother. And of course she and I was engaged whenever when I went to Thailand. We got back we got married and we- we lived in Pineville over in the north side of Alexandria. And I finished out my my service over there and we got out and move back to Beaumont. That's what we did you know what it was? That was in '72. And of course I got into fire department over in Beaumont, Texas and I went to went to Lamar University, I got a degree in fire science and got a degree in- what else was it? I dont remember, something else? But then I went to three years of engineering school and I was I was a firefighter making $16,000 a year back in the early 70s. And you know, me and your grandma lived in a trailer. And your uncle Dusty was born, but in '72. So at least the Air Force paid for that which was good. You know, because I was they carried it over and 72 said if he's born in that year that they'll take care of the bills so he was born in Beaumont, but he was -he was paid for which was good, because we didn't have no money you know?

**Sidney King:** But so I joined the Beaumont Fire Department, I had the greatest job that you could ever ask for I drove the chief around. We were the first entered all the fires, and last ones to leave. Me and the chief were good friends, you know? He was a battalion chief, but he was a great guy, you know? And I often wondered about him after I left but I got a call from one of the chemical plants over- and your grandma wanted to move back to- back to Louisiana. So we sold our- our home in Vidor, Texas and we moved back over to Simpson, bought five acres of land, I built a big ol' house. And then Greg was born, your dad and I worked at the fire department out at Fort Polk, Louisiana for a while. Of course it wasn't paying nothing good but I went to work at the chemical plants you know they call me and said "Yeah, we got a job down here for- we need a planner scheduler and you got you got plenty of college. Come on." So I went down there and I was the planner scheduler for Allied Chemical, down in Baton Rouge. Went to work down there with a bunch of guys. Ol' boys out of Simpson, you know? And that's where I ended up, you know, did my four years which was seemed like a drug on quite long, you know?

**Sidney King:** And I remember going to on one of my times I was playing basketball and, you know, we'd fly into Bangkok. We'd spend the night in Bangkok at a hotel, they always took good care of us fed us and whatever. The next morning we'd get on another plane. We'd fly to one of the bases up in Thailand, Takhli or U-Tapao or Uborn- Udorn, Uborn, or we would fly to Vietnam, you know? And they would- we'd always fly to Bangkok. But anyways, I had finished everything and I was getting- I had my last five days in country there, and I'd had almost packed and I'd moved out of the U-Tapao. I was staying at a hotel at five days, so I caught me a little baht bus, and rode 90 miles all the way to Bangkok, stayed in the hotel up there. Which they had my name all on there ready to go, because it took care of your flight, everything. So anyways, I walked down, hung around Bangkok, eaten here and there and da-da-da-da-di and then I went in, they had a little bar off of the front counter. And I heard a voice talking in there, you know, couple of GIs and they're talking, had two girls with them. And man, I said, I know that voice. Who is that? And I walked into that little restaurant bar. And I walked right over those two guys and I looked down and that was one of my best friends from high school. He was in the army. He was on R&R from Vietnam. And they were drunk as Cooter, had two girls and they were sitting in his little booth and I went, "Cecil, what are you doing here?" He said, "Sid, what are you doing here?" You ran into people, you know? It was really weird how you were halfway around the world and you're just- wow. There's Cecil Osmond. And it was cool. He he came back home. He did his two years did a year in Vietnam. And he came back home and went to work for a trucking company. And he was working on the loading dock one day in a big truck backed in crushed him against the dock and killed him. That's like a year after he got back in country. It was really weird. Cecil Osman.

**Sidney King:** But you hear stories, like get all the time, you know? Or your friend was and where this one was? And I go up to the VA now and I run into guys, do you go "Where were you at?" "Oh, and I was Takhli man." I said "Yeah. What do you do up there?" He said, "Well I was in aircraft maintenance and da-da-da." And this guy's, you know, 70 years old, 80 years old. He'd sit there and tell you stories. You want to hear some good stories. Go to the VA hospital. They'll tell you all about it. What this one did. What that one did. "Do you remember such and such?" "Yeah, you remember that big ol hill over there?" "Yeah." "I climbed that hill?" "No way, man." It was just crazy stuff. It's memories. You know, there was a lot of people over there and a lot of them didn't come home.

**Sidney King:** We had a flight that go out to to power once a while they would take they would fly a bunch of bodies in and we'd fly him out of there. I don't know why they brought 'em to us. Because most of them left, you know, Cam Ranh Bay, which is a big airbase in Vietnam. They'd fly 'em straight to Manila, and then flying to Hawaii and back home. Yeah. For some reason, they came over there. I don't know if they had died- country or whatever. And, you know, that's like talking to my wife, Jean Ann [inaudible]. Talking to Jean Ann's brother. He was in the army for two years. He went to Laos, which is, you know, right across the river, the Mekong Delta from Vietnam. But he couldn't wear his uniform. He was in civilian clothes. And he became he all I could get out of it was a he was a lookout for the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and they would sit in this tower at night, and count the number of movements on that trail and report him and he said if you ever get caught you- you're not in the service, you know, they had credentials that were civilian credentials, and stayed in a hotel or a hooch or- and they would walk around real- even to this day Timmy's got this air about him that's kind of a quiet secret deep type, you know? Yeah one of those I could tell you, but I'd have to kill you, you know?

**Parker King:** [laughs] Yeah cause Laos was neutral right so everything-

**Sidney King:** Not really, they were going through the the you know if you ever read that about the killing fields of Cambodia and Laos, they killed people he was a lot of warlords and stuff just killing tribe after tribe. And there's- they still don't know they went one place where they started digging up these trenches, and found 1000s of skulls. They just kill people. And there was a name for him. Phnom Penh was the capital, I was trying to think of the name of the- the outfit they were they were very mean and nasty. And they were critical of any kind of government Foundation. They were just they were just nasty and nobody ever went to Laos. You stayed away from there. Cambodia. But there was a, you know- I did get to go while I was there. I went on a trip to the- to the bridge over the river Khwae. You ever hear that?

**Parker King:** It sounds familiar.

**Sidney King:** Yeah, there was a movie about it, and they destroyed the river and that was back in- back in the world war one or two, but it was, you know, they had to destroy this thing. It was a mission, these British soldiers and to destroy the bridge with a train on it. And they did but it's still there. I saw it. It's way up in north Thailand, up in Chiang Mai. We went and played a ball game up there. And we had the week before they get us a flight back on Monday, they were gonna fly straight back. So we had a whole day and me and two of the basketball players, Jim and I, we got on a little baht bus and he cost you like a dollar for all of us to drive to. It took 20 baht for $1. And a bot is about a nickel, you know? And I think it's still that way. But anyway, you pay that money ride in the back of a little pickup truck. And take you right up to it and give you a little tour and walk you up on the railroad tracks and you buy some pineapple in a ziploc bag and eat pineapple and drink a coke cola. $2 and you've had a great day. But that's what we did. We got to visit all the, you know, the floating market in Bangkok. Got to go see a lot of stuff.

**Sidney King:** I remember one time we were walking down the street and you're here with these basketball players you got, you know, three of them are six foot six, six five, six eight. You're walking down the dark street of Bangkok and all sudden his black Mercedes limo. Not a limo. It was a [inaudible] stretch, but it pulled up and, man, these guys jumped down with guns and kill these two guys right on the street, across the street from us. And we're looking and I said, "Oh golly, we're in trouble." Of course, I was the only one head he said sense. I said, boy I pushed everybody in this little bar. I said get in here, get in here. You didn't see anything. Anybody ask, you didn't see nothing. You don't know what happened. All you do is you heard the noise. So don't- don't get into it." Anyways, we're in this bar. And we kind of had to stay in there, because the police showed up, and they catching witnesses, and they were doing all sorts of stuff. But the limo, they grabbed these two guys threw him in the back of the car and drove off, man. The blood was everywhere. And we kind of went oh my gosh. But we went into his bar. So I just pushed him in there. And here's a bar. Let's get in and get out of the way. So we went in the bar. And we're standing there and I've started looking around. I'm going there are no girls here. We were at a gay bar and I was going oh man, we in trouble. And these Thai girls dressed like- or Thai guys dressed like girls. And one of 'em's making pass at this black guy i always played ball with. I was like no, don't, don't, don't go with her. It was so funny, that was our experience, you know?

**Sidney King:** But we- we found all the nice places to go, you know, and they had little places you could go out of the way places that serve [cuts out] food and golly I mean it was- even back then. It's changed a lot now I hear. But it's- back then you could go to these little gardens where they had koi fish and waterfalls. You could sit there and spend five bucks and you know, eat everything in the house. But those were experiences and it was it was good experience for a young man. I was ready to get back home. Boy I tell you that that? But that's my experience with the service my four years and I enjoyed it. It was a good part of me. You know, I have a lot of, of medallions and stuff, you know? I keep a lot of military stuff. I still have my uniform and everything. And you know, that still fits me. You know, I weighed about 195 pounds when I left the service, and my uniforms, I still got it. Yeah, it's hanging in the closet, you know? Yeah. Like take a picture of me with it sent to you.

**Parker King:** Yeah, I was gonna say that would be some cool pictures if you sent me some of those.

**Sidney King:** Yeah, and I have you know I have all my stuff hanging on the wall. I have my- my commemorative service medal United States Air Force, tells where I was at, Technical Sergeant Sydney A. King, Strategic Air Command, 307th Bomb Wing, 4750A Support Group, The 3rd Air Division United States Air Force. And it recommends you and says from February 27 '68 to February 26 of '72. I'll just send you a picture that. And I have all of my metals. You know my Vietnam medals and everything, all my rankings and everything. I have all of that.

*[Cut out story of King’s commemorative coin and stamp collection. Also, a story about his work life and how he ended up in Florida.]*

**Sidney King:** Probably could think of some more stuff for you, but pictures would probably do more than anything. I mean, it was really very casual and hot all the time, in Thailand. I was in the South of Thailand. They had rubber plantations, and you learn the language, and you learn the people, the culture, some things you can't do. You know one of the big things was you can never put your feet over a Thai person's head. Oh, boy. They would yell at you, you know? Your feet never go over the head. I was worried- you know when you lean back and prop your feet up? No, no, you don't do that. A lot of religious stuff over there. Of course they were Buddhist, you know? We got to go see the reclining Buddha, the Golden Buddha, or the Emerald Buddha; got to go and see all- it's just something to do while you're in Bangkok, you know? You just go ride around. You know, you had a few nickels on you, you could go somewhere, you know? You can go back to the hotel, and they feed you good, and put you in a nice room, air conditioned, swimming pool, and go play basketball, and beat people. That's what we did. But that was my experience in Thailand and Vietnam.

**Sidney King:** And I did go to Vietnam one time. We landed- we were in a C-47. And we taxied to the transit ramp. And there was another C-47, I think, and another littler plane, like a ops planes, one of those observation plane. And they were smoking on the tarmac. They were smoking from the zappers last night. They got bombed. They had mortars, and they were firing them into the- into the base, and they hit a couple of airplanes, and I looked at the guys and I said, "Guys, we're not gonna be here very long. We're gonna play our game, and get outta- we played indoors- I mean, outdoors. They had an outdoor net and bleachers, and we went over and beat the snot out of them ol' boys. Course, they were Air Force, guys. I don't remember the name of the place we were at. Tuy Hòa, or wherever it was. I don't even remember the name of it.

*[Cut out story about his brother Alvin and his ancestry. Also, another story about how he ended up in Florida and some people he’s met.]*

**Sidney King:** Well, I hope I've helped you a little bit with your report and I can send you some more pictures or something. I'll give you a big swab of those.

**Parker King:** If you don't mind, I still have some more questions if you want to keep talking about it, because-

**Sidney King:** Sure I'm good.

**Parker King:** I'm really enjoying all your stories.

**Sidney King:** Theres a bunch of 'em.

**Parker King:** Yeah. So when you were talking about the basketball, can you, tell me what places you went to, and, how the Vietnam War, and the Cold War kind of impacted those places?

**Sidney King:** Well, everywhere in the Air Force, we were supports, is what we were. We were the support people. We would- we would, you know, we weren't- I guess they had air force bases in Vietnam, but they- everything out and around Vietnam bases, around stuff. And it's been like when they had the Iraq war, they had to [inaudible] it in Saudi Arabia, we had an airbase. That's where they supported the war in Iraq. Because the planes would land there, and they would leave Israel and they would leave, you know, Saudi Arabia and- and they had air bases there that we would build, you know? They built a big airbase in Iraq, and they finally- that's how they did it. They support the wars is what we did, from above, you know? You rule the skies, you rule the war. And we ruled the skies, you know, I mean, it was really cool. It was- but, you know, LBJ pulled us out of the war too soon- or not- he didn't he- Richard Nixon really did. And he was a- he was a Republican. LBJ was a Democrat. And a Republican, you know, get us out of the war. Just like Trump does, get us out of the war, you know? Stop fighting so much. Just killing people is not good, you know? But anyway, the we were in more support than anything. They needed help. You know, we had choppers we had. We had the skies. You needed a jet. He'd be there in three minutes. He hadn't even left the ground yet, you know, and they were that quick and that fast.

*[Cut out story of a friend that flew for the Navy and his experiences during and after the war.]*

**Sidney King:** But that's the Vietnam, man. It was part of everybody's life. And it just- everybody came back, and there were so many people went to Canada to avoid the draft. It was terrible. It was, I mean, they were burning the draft cards and burning their bras and draft cards and moving to Canada. There's probably some still up there. You know, that won't come back.

**Parker King:** Did you have any experiences like firsthand with any of the protests or anything like that or anyone you knew?

**Sidney King:** I remember in the airport one time at- in California when I landed at- I guess it was San Jose was where I landed, south of San Francisco, because that's when he took me north through San Francisco to Sausalito and up there into- and Pueblo Bay is where I was up in- golly, I'm trying to think of the name of the places I said it a while ago. That's what will happen to you when you get old. Hamilton Air Force Base, but they- there was a protest going on there. But they weren't on the property they were out at one of the main roads. And when we left there we were on a bus headed north. Prolly wasn't a bus. It was a limo. There was maybe six of us in a limo. Not a limo. I guess it was a bus, one of those little buses, but they were protesting in the street. Signs and screaming, cussing and yelling. Of course, that was California, you know? They were in Berkeley wasn't far away, you know?

*[Cut out story of a friend who was a B-52 Navigator and his wife who was hippie.]*

**Sidney King:** But it's just- do you the best you can you know? And, you know, take half of what you hear and don't, you know, and don't believe half of what you see, you know? Just kind of make your own way and kinda- you'll understand life is real cruel and mean. And, you know, death doesn't mean a lot anymore. You know, people walk around with an M-16 and shoot a bunch of kids, you know? That's terrible. Like we had a fight down here in Ybor City, the other night and some guy pulls out a gun and just starts shooting him and ends up shooting like 12, 13 people and kills two people. And you're going, "It was just a fight. It wasn't like it was some planned execution," you know? Like some school bombing or something. It was just a fight. You know? Guy got mad and pulled his gun, you know?

**Sidney King:** I mean, I remember taking a gun away from your uncle Royce one time. He went his truck and got a gun and was gonna shoot this guy. Are you crazy? Went under his seat of his van and got a gun, pulled it out, and point it toward that guy. And I grabbed that gun, I said, "What are you crazy? Gonna go to jail tonight?" Golly, Uncle Royce was crazy. But he was a Marine, you know?

**Sidney King:** But all that- you know, that war and stuff with all the protests and everything. They had some, but there's not near as many protests as there were with the you know, with the Palestines going on now. You know? With Hamas and stuff, and the Arabs and all that and people I'm going, you know, "They need to outlaw where you have to wave a flag of some other country in a protest. Yeah, I know this is American you got freedoms, but, you know, wave the American flag. You outta be glad you're here, you know?" But they're not. They just want to protest something and they don't know the whole story. I noticed it quiet down a little bit more when they saw the facts and stuff. It quiet down a little bit. But, you know, I don't know what's going on over there. I really don't care that much. You know, you kind of learn close your doors in and I live in this little spot right over here this little half acre I live in you know, and this is my life, you know? You put in your 70, 75 years and then you leave this place.

**Parker King:** Yeah. I mean, this late in life, you probably don't really need to hear all of it.

**Sidney King:** Oh, man, I don't care. I listen to it. You know, I'm smarter than I act. You know, some times. I like to just laugh things off and make jokes and everything, but you know, still got 132 IQ and I can sit there and think about some stuff.

**Sidney King:** You know, but you just gotta go, "Okay, I'm not getting into that." But put in your 40 years, you know, your work. And then you can stop, take it easy and do what you want. Get up when you want. It’s nice, but I’ll send you some pictures, man and stuff and you got any more questions, I'm not doing nothing.

**Parker King:** Let's see. What about- so when Nixon took office, he kind of made a stance that he was gonna pull us out and Vietnamiz-, Vietnamization, where he was going to like, put the war on the Vietnamese and kind of let them try to fight it. Did you, notice less people where you were, or like, less B-52s, or things getting pulled out?

**Sidney King:** No, we didn't- we didn't downsize at all in Vietnam or in Thailand. Thailand stayed goes we were out of Vietnam. But we stayed. In fact, I talked to a guy not long ago, a couple of years ago who was at Takhli. And he said he was there later after the war. It stopped at '75. May of '75 it was over and they pulled everybody out of there. And they brought a lot of people with 'em, which was cool. It was just about the same as this Afghanistan thing that happened last couple of years ago. I mean, they just- it was- it was terrible. It was- they shouldn't have done it that way. They should have took control of the place, moved everybody around where we wanted 'em and then back out slowly, you know? But it was getting so terrible, and so much pressure on the- on the politics of running this war, and it's costing a lot of money, and this and that.

**Sidney King:** And, you know, it was really not- not a good time. And Nixon- you know, all he did- all he did was the Watergate, the tapes and stuff. And that was- that's like a slap on the hand from what they're doing now. They're finding people doing stuff now. You know, like election fraud, and all sorts of stuff with Trump and with- with Biden, and you're going with Obama, they're finding stuff on Pelosi. And you're going oh my gosh, you know, they're going through all this junk. This is like 100 times different than just that little slap on the hand, where they went in and stole a couple of tapes from some little safe in Watergate offices. And you're going, "How stupid can you be?" But like it was a different time. In fact, if- if anybody acted the way they do right now, they'd call them communists and Marxists, and whatever else. If anybody did that back in the 50s and 60s, they would throw you out of the country. Blackball you. You couldn't work. They would pull all of your credentials. I mean, you'd go amiss. I mean, it was really- golly, they had- they'd take you to- put you in jail if you even symp- sympathize with the with the communist or with the- with the Nazis or the Russians or anybody. Boy it was bad. It was like, whoa. But now, you know, you can go do whatever you want. You're kind of looking at it and going, "Oh my gosh, I wish I could start the draft up again. That'd shut 'em up. Put him back in- put 'em on the front lines. Let 'em worry about it there." And I'm not sure how you feel about it, but I don't care. I'll talk about it anyways.

**Parker King:** Yeah, no, I'm willing to listen.

**Sidney King:** I'm not objective, or I'm not unobjective about anything.

**Parker King:** Yeah.

**Sidney King:** That's really sad.

**Parker King:** No that's a good way to be to be, I mean-

**Sidney King:** Yeah, why fight about it, man.

**Parker King:** Yeah, it's an educated debate. You just-

**Sidney King:** You have a right to say what you want to do and I do too, so whatever. You know?

*[Cut out story of a friend that worked at a mobile refinery and a story from when he was a firefighter in in Beaumont, Texas.]*

**Sidney King:** But yeah, I didn't know- I didn't know about the riots and stuff and a lot of flag burning- end up a million people. I mean, you watched- what was it? What's the show with ol' Tom Hanks? Where he was a soldier, went to Vietnam and-

**Parker King:** Yeah, was that Forrest Gump?

**Sidney King:** Yeah, Forrest Gump. And I mean Washington was like that. I mean, it was really- you know, it was- and probably there's a lot more tales then that, you know? And that people get- they were just- marijuana everywhere. They was smoking dope and acting crazy and doing quaaludes and all sorts of stuff. I remember those names those pills. All sorts of drugs. And Haight-Ashbury was the big- big place out in San Francisco, out there at Berkeley College. And then they had the- do you remember the the shooting at- in Ohio? Have you done any research on that? What was the name of that? They were- where the National Guard. That was in that was later. That was in '74, maybe, '72, '74. But they sent the National Guard on that campus- at that college. And the kids were coming at him and they fired on him and killed a bunch of 'em. Boy I mean- I know it don't need to be but my goodness. You stop and think, if you were in China, they would've killed you. They would've shot you, cut your head off. You know? It's crazy. But here it was like, "Oh my gosh, you just shot some kids." And it's- you're free in America, but you ain't free as you think you are? You know?

**Parker King:** Yeah, especially during war times?

**Sidney King:** Oh, golly. It's rough man and just trying to stay out of it. If you don't have to go into service, don't, you know? And I have nothing but accolades and good stuff for the for the VA. They take good care of us. I mean, I've got two knees that they put in there this year. And that's $100,000. And I mean- they took- I mean, you're like "Oh my gosh, you just say nothing like a hospital out in the world." They're in no hurry. They come and look at you. They think you're- Man, you just go, "Are you kidding?" I was in a private room. I was- they took and put two brand new titanium knees in me, man. You go around there and you see these old buzzards hanging around that don't and half of them are probably homeless and they stink and they smell and you're looking at him and they treat 'em like kings. You're going, "Now that is cool." I'll tell you. It's- it's special. You know, you not in the system out here anymore? Your kinda in their system. I even dri- I drive to the hospital. Just to make a run up is 38 miles. They paid me $25 to go up there back. I put it in as in my travel time. They send me- they sent me to checks yesterday. Last month and another check. I've got four checks, $25 each. Just to go to the hospital, they pay me to go. I'm going, "Isn't that crazy?" But they take good care of you. The VA is- a lot of people got stuff to say about stuff, and the whiners and complainers and slobs. Its same as the Vietnam War, you had whiners and you had complainers. You had people who just wouldn't go and hide out in the hills of Kentucky and- and I mean, they were out, and go get him, you know? Drag 'em off to the war.

*[Cut out story of his brother Alvin and Dwight and their experiences with war. Also, about how he ended up transitioning from working in engineering to remodeling houses and laying flooring.]*

**Sidney King:** But yeah that’s- I'm glad you're gonna you're gonna have enough stuff to do your Vietnam War.

**Parker King:** Yeah, I mean, like I said, we can keep going. I've pre-made a lot of questions.

**Sidney King:** I can tell you just keep asking man. I can answer as much as I can, without getting sidetracked. Rabbit trails take a lot of time. But-

**Parker King:** What about the Tet Offensive? Because that was January 1968.

**Sidney King:** Well, yeah, that was before I got there. And if you look, you'll see the Tet Offensive, which was one of- it was one of their holy days. The Vietnamese people celebrated Tet. And they did- it'd be like, kind of like the Saudi Arabia's do Mahosha Dean or whatever they call it? Some holy- holy war, something it's- it was something to do them to muster up their allies and Ho Chi Minh was the leader. And to get them to all head south and let's all go fight. They made a pretty big push. Well, the Tet Offensive, the B-52s were running, they would come in land and hour and a half they were reloaded, refueled and hit the runway again. I mean, they were right and left. They were they were killing so many North Vietnamese. It was- it was stupid. It was like, wow. But LBJ, Lyndon Baines Johnson would not let the bombs- they wouldn't let the bombers go bomb in Hanoi, the capital of North Vietnam- Vietnam. They would not let them go up there. They could do some harbor stuff along the coast, you know, the China Sea, but they couldn't go inland and bomb the people. They wouldn't let them kill the people. And which, you know, if they would have done that, you know, like the Israelis are doing now they- and just sweep in there and say, "Look if y'all don't get out of the way, somebody's gonna get hurt." But they didn't do that. They tiptoed in, and they wouldn't give him free rein. And that made the troops kind of lackadaisical and want 'em to sit back and get drunk and smoke dope all day. It made him- it made him lazy is what it did. And they didn't like it. And they didn't- they didn't like the government stopping them, you know? They're out there to win a war and they wouldn't let them. But the Vietnamese weren't- they pretty formidable. They were- they were pretty tough- you know? And they had thousands of people- thousands- hundreds of thousands of soldiers. And they were funded by China, you know? China gave them all of their strength. But they the Tet Offensive was just, it didn't last long, it was probably six months, I think. But it was an all out press to finish the thing, you know, for the North Vietnamese. And all we did was go on the defense, and defend everything, but they kill lots of South Vietnamese. They'd come into villages, and just raid 'em, you know, and kill everybody. And it was- burn it to the ground. And of course, we get there the next day, and you'd see the- you know, and of course, the Vietnamese will say, "Well, where are you? Y'all supposed to take care of us." And we're looking at him going, "Well wait a minute," you know? And their hands were tied by the government back in Washington. And they couldn't do anything and this and that. And it was kind of like just stay alive. You know, became that just survive. Don't get shot.

**Sidney King:** You know, I had a lot of friends who died in the war, you know, friend of mine, Robbie Brock. And James- James Holly was one of my best friends in high school. And he he made it through Vietnam, and made it back home. And a friend of mine Robert saw him. I talked to Robert not along ago on Facebook. I saw Robert and he- he said he ran into James Holly over in Hawaii on his way home from the war. And he was so hooked on drugs so bad, when he even got back to the States him and his sister both died within two years from drug overdoses. They were just so hooked on the drugs and stuff from the war, you know? But they were you know, some of them are best friends from high school, you know? You hear other stories, you know, Joey Brown he died and this boy died. Their names are on that wall up there in Washington DC on the Vietnam- Vietnam memorial, you know?

**Parker King:** Yeah, that black stone that's dug into there. Yeah.

**Sidney King:** Their names are all on there. You know, you knew all these people. And you always knew everybody. You knew families all the way down into South Beaumont and North Beaumont and West Beaumont, that had friends who died, you know, in the war. And that was just one little part of- little pocket of Southeast Texas, you know, not counting all across Louisiana, Baton Rouge, and Shreveport, all the people who had died. And lots of people died. Man it was- their bodies would come home in draped caskets. And I'm sure they're doing now too, you know? Well, with Afghanistan over with, it's a little different, but those people just don't want you. It's almost an unwinnable war, you go over there, and you're trying to help 'em. But you don't need to be there. And it was more of a- it was more of a political war than anything. You know, let's this fight over the money in Congress and in the Senate. They fought over money all the time, trying to pass more money for this, more money for that. And then they'd give money to North Vietnam. And they finally said they're going to pull out and were going to repair the whole place. End up- we had $7 billion- billions of dollars just repairing the place. You're going wow. You know, I mean, stupid stuff, like goodness, gracious. Reckon somebody attacks you, and then blows you up. You want to go back and retaliate. But they wouldn't let you, you know? And so many memorandums came down to it, you know, don't do this, don't do that don't- they had more don'ts than they did dues, ou know? I don't know how the officers made it. It was so tough because they couldn't, you know, you had guys who could win wars guys who were fighters, man. And they wouldn't let 'em. They wouldn't let 'em they'd say alright pull out. And you're going, "Wait a minute, this is the Tet Offensive," you know? It was a bad portion of the war, but it didn't last long. And we repelled 'em pretty good.

**Sidney King:** Of course it was the bombing. I mean, those guys would go hide in the caves and the bombs would hit and these- these things, I mean, it killed a lots of people. Those bombs were terrible, man. I mean, carpet bombing. I remember playing basketball up in north- northeast Thailand. I was at a- I was at a tower at the airbase up there, Udorn was the name of the place or Ubon. Ubon was the name of it. It was one Udorn and Ubon. And one of my friends from North Dakota was up there. He was a crash rescue guide. And we were up in the fire tower or in the control tower talking to a bunch of air traffic controllers, and we were sitting out on the deck and I could see- I said, "What is that lightning over there?" He said "No, that's a B-52s bombing." It's like 50 miles away, and you could see the sky lighten up. He said they're making a run over there. And you'd sit there and you could hear it, "Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom." I'm going, "That's the B-52s from U-Tapao." And you up there watching the war, you know? Say man, "That's weird."

**Sidney King:** But it was like, you know- you know, like the country of Haiti. You know, have you ever thought about how Haiti is so worn and beaten, and you go next door to the Dominican Republic and it's like, Hawaii, you know, it's beautiful, green. You step over the border and everything they've- they heat all the firewood, anything that will burn, you know, to cook them something to eat, and there's no animals. There's not- golly, it's just like death all over that whole country of Haiti. But it's on the same island as the Dominican Republic, you know? And the Dominican has beautiful resorts and has all this beautiful stuff. But that's that's the way it felt in North Vietnam and Laos and Cambodia. It was like death when you step over the border into Laos. It was like, you felt something man. It was weird. It was a weird feeling. It's like death was right there not far away. You had to watch it open your eyes and your senses and go. Something's wrong here.

**Sidney King:** You know, whereas in Thailand, there was a lot of fun. Guys would go out at night and go down to the bars and get 'em a little girl and stay all night. You know, you had young boys from Minnesota who had never been with a woman in their life and they try to get- get it all done in one week, you know? Try to catch up in one week and you're going, "Will you slow down? You're gonna kill yourself, boy." But that's the way, you know, young young guys were back then there. And those girls didn't care. They were just out for the money, you know? Spend a couple of bucks and spend the night with a girl, you know? I dont know, man. And you could tell the guys who got the syphilis and they walked around with these little jingling pills in their pockets. You know, you could hear- you go, "Oh, you went out last night, didn't you?" They're on sick call the next day, you know? Got the STD or whatever they call it? Yeah, that went on a lot in Thailand and Vietnam. You know, it was a whole business going on over there with that.

**Sidney King:** And of course, all of the relics and all of the souvenirs and stuff but war was not fun over there. It was unwinnable, you know, it was it was not good. It was unwinnable, of course, then the North Vietnamese, they backed away in '75. They downsized everything. And everything was in Saigon, and right there at the American Embassy, was where that last helicopter left, they got on it, on the rooftop and flew away and never came back. You know, just stay away. Now we're friends with 'em. We have an embassy over there. And they have one over here. And I'm going, "Oh just give it 30 years and it'll change you," know. And most of those people who fought in that war are dead, you know? Agent Orange- David, you know- I mean, Alvin, my brother, he's got Agent Orange. You know, they're doing a lot of testing on him now for his colon and stuffs got cancer in it or whatever. They saw a lot of stuff in there. So he's working on that over there. You know, find cancer from that. He's right up on the DMZ, right up on the North Vietnam border firing his gun every day, they'd give them coordinates and they would bomb it you know, just fire that big gun, 155-Howitzer. And that's what he did. He was on the artillery. He went to Fort Bliss after his Fort Polk, and that's where they teach you to fire guns, and Oklahoma if you're going to be a tanker or Missouri, and if you go to infantry you stayed in Vietnam- or in Fort Polk in Tiger Land and you know that's infantry. Where you got shipped off to Fort Bliss. El Paso. And it was a lot of going and coming.

**Sidney King:** And of course, the airlines were making money, because I went over on a continental airline. I'll never forget, I was sitting at the back of the plane. It was a three seats on each side, you know, and I sit right next to a beautiful lady. Me and her talked all the way to Hawaii. She was a stewardess and I mean, she got me- went back there and got me some good food man, brought me- We chatted and chatted and of course, you know me, I've got a gift to gab. I can talk to anybody. And we chatted all the way, laughed and cut up and and it was you know all those GIs on there. Probably 250 people on that airplane, every seat filled. And I sat the back of the plane me and one other guy I can't think of his name. But anyway. And we were all headed inland. You know, when you left the Philippines or Hawaii, you were flying to Manila. The Philippines was 11 hour flight. And you just slept all the way course she didn't go that far. She just went to Hawaii and got off. But I went on to the Philippines. And then when you left the Philippines to go to Thailand, you flew right over Vietnam. So when you flew over Vietnam to get to Bangkok, they gave you $60 for your for your combat pay, they called it. So we made an extra $60 In our paycheck. We were excited. I got 60 bucks, man. Course by then I already had two stripes on my shoulder. No, I think- yeah, because when I got to Thailand, I got my third stripe, I became sergeant. And once you get that third stripe, man, you are proficient in everything you did, man, you could you could run a show, you know?

**Parker King:** What did each of the stripes mean?

**Sidney King:** Well, one stripe, of course is where you had no strife was an airman basic. He was just a basic and you didn't have nothing. You were in basic training. And when you got one strike you were airman second class. And two stripes was Airman First Class back then they've already made three stripes words or Airman First Class now but when you got three stripes you are a buck sergeant. And then went to staff sergeant was four stripes five stripes with tech sergeant. When I got out of the service, I was three striper and then I made four stripes. So I went into the reserves for two years. So they gave me my fourth stripe and while I was in New Jersey, gave him a fit. I didn't make no money because you just went two weeks every year, every year for your your training just to stay proficient, you know, hung out and wiped down fire trucks is all I did at Eglin Air Base in Houston, Texas, England, England, England was in Houston and England was in Alexandria. I go over there and do my two week training and go over and state your grandmother didn't like Pam did lock me leaving that go over there. I'd be gone for two weeks. They took care of you know you stayed right there in the place. And you know, it was training you had to do it. Two months, two months or two, two weeks a year. The summertime Yeah, that was back when they were doing it we're doing the astronauts and stuff training over there. T firefighters, freedom fighters and stuff flying as with all the astronauts flew those little jets, you know. They fly from Florida and back landed England. Eglin Air Force Base. I remember going over there I remember Pam and Dusty come in when I'm best. He was a baby. And they came over and I got my paycheck from from the paymaster over there. They gave me a paycheck and I had enough money to go to Six Flags. Was it Six Flags was there in Houston? What was the name of that? At the Astrodome? There was a amusement park there. You probably didn't hear?

**Parker King:** I'm not sure. Was it? Six, six flags?

**Sidney King:** Something I can't- AstroWorld, that's what it was. AstroWorld. And I remember taking Dustin and Pam to that, we walked around AstroWorld and you had a paycheck. We got a paycheck from over there. We'd have no plan. No money to stay anywhere. You know, we drive back to Beaumont, and stay at my mom's house, you know. That was back in the day. You didn't have nothing you didn't. We was poor and we didn't even know it. You know? I always had something to eat and something to do. Anyway, that was a story. But so I got, you know, tech sergeant. So it was a good time. It was a long time ago. 50, 55 years ago? 52 years ago? I was 20, 21 years old, your age.

**Sidney King:** We had the world by the tail, you know? Yeah. Got out of there and just got to work. That's what you got to do. When you get out of college, go to work. Just work the old time and just work and they'll pay you for your time. Do it for 40 years, and you can think about retiring. Yeah. I retired at 65. And G's in the money just flows. I don't know where it comes from. They just keep going. So you just have to just, you know, they send you a check in the mail. Say, “Okay, here's another one,” and then you’d spend the last one. “What the heck is that doing here?”

*[Cut out a story of his commemorative military coin collection.]*

**Sidney King:** Anyway, it was not a great time. I can't say it wasn't a great time, or it was because I wasn't indrawed in combat. You know?

**Parker King:** You still have a lot of really valuable experiences, though. It still sounds interesting, you were still a part of the war.

**Sidney King:** Oh, yeah, you were there. I mean, you saw things that you go, "What was wrong with that guy?" He crawled out of there and his arm is gone. You know, you go, "Wow." And you see this little plane that took off this morning. It was called an OP-10 or PO-10. And it was a little observation plane. And what it does, it goes up, it's a twin engine plane, but it has these propellers on it that are really quiet. And it can glide too, it as big wings. And it goes and has this canopy, this bubble canopy. So you can see 360 degrees, and it has two people in it, and it flies over Vietnam. And it pinpoints things that the fighters, "Whoa, whoa, look at all those troops there." And they pinpoint each of those parallels. And then they call into artillery, or they call in the- it's just an observation. Well, they get shot at a lot, because they don't go real fast. And one came in one day, and the canopy was blown totally off of it. A bullet hit, man, and the guy's face was all bloody from. I mean, you're traveling 100 miles an hour, but that ain't fast at all on an airplane, and they can shoot at you. And they lowed down and shot at him and shot the canopy out of that thing and the crash or the canopy, cut this guy's face, like took his ear off, you know? And they come back and land and you walk over there and go, "Oh, that guy doesnt look too good. What happened?" Then you start looking at thing and you go, "Oh, I see it got shot it." You see things come back with bullet holes in it. You're going whoa. They shoot at 'em a lot. And they're in combat.

**Sidney King:** And their always doing exercises of all sort where they're like, all of a sudden, they show these two sampans or three sampans coming up on the beach. And these people are invading the U-Tapao, the airbase. And, of course, the air police and the Thai police, and they all swarmed down on top of them. Andhey call us and we run out there to you know, and you got a big force to meet those people on the beach. And they put them on the ground, and handcuffed 'em, and like treat 'em like terrorists, you know? And they're shooting guns and everything will pop up. Oh, you're going "Whoa." Bullets flying. It's just rehearsing what could happen. And you go through all of that, but it was cool.

**Sidney King:** And I remember one of my roommates and when I first got back to U-Tapao I was in a dormitory. It's like a four story dormitory, house about 300 troops and they had like four guys to a room, three guys. Some had two, but anyway, my roommate was a guy's name was- he was a Jewish guy. Arnold was his last name. He was a company clerk. And his family would always send him care packages. I mean, like three a week you'd get these care packages of this Jewish food that was kosher and everything you know, gefilte fish and all sorts of crackers, and he'd have instructions on what to do with this and how to pray over that. I'd be there with him. I just I'd eat some of that stuff with him. I'd go, "That's pretty good." And then of course we ate roast beef.

**Sidney King:** And we go to the- they had an airbase, or a airman's club made for the enlisted people. The noncommissioned officers club they called an NCO club, and the airman's club. And we'd go and they'd have people come from America, bands, make tours through there. I mean, we'd see people like Tommy James and the Shondells, Jerry Lewis and the Pacemakers or something. They were up there with the Beatles and everybody. I mean, they were on Ed Sullivan's show. They were famous little bands, and they would come through and they'd play a couple of nights. And I remember when I was in- at the airbase in Hamilton air base up there in North California, north of San Francisco, would go to the airbase at night. And there was a band there. And this guy was the lead singer, and he was real hairy. I mean, this guy had a hair, you pull handfuls off of his chest, his arms were like a gorilla. And you know who it was? It was Black Sabbath. And it was Ozzy Osbourne. The guys on TV, you know? It was him. And he's on this little eight foot stage with a drum set and a bass guitar. And he was a lead guitar and mics and they were singing and we were dancing. They would sing the, "In A Godda Da Vita, baby." And we were dancing to that crap. We had so much fun. Well that's what was going. That kind of music, you know?

**Sidney King:** But just try to see that movie, if you can, "Good Morning, Vietnam." And that'll tell you a lot about Vietnam. Because they had radio. We listened to the radio all the time. And the USO club, and Bob Hope came over. I think I saw him twice when I was over there. The Bob Hope show, he'd bring the girls with him, you know? They'd all sing songs. And we'd be right there. And it was cool. USO you know, you see that on Facebook, or YouTube. If you go in there and do the "Bob Hope." you'll see where he toured Vietnam. And it shows we're there, and all the guys in uniform. Some cool stuff.

**Parker King:** Did you have any other music you really like listening to" That impacted your views, or that you listened to because of your views on the war, maybe?

**Sidney King:** No, no, not really. I was- you know, in high school stuff I was, of course athlete, but how I danced a lot. And we would go in Beaumont, they had on Friday and Saturday night, they had places where the teenagers could go dance. No alcohol, but they'd have groups like, let's see- we had a guy named SJ. Well, I can't think of his last- Pattillo, Pattillo. S.J. & The Crossroads. He had a little band and they would play, and they were really good. And then they'd have people come over, like The Grass Roots from Houston, they would have- And some of the names I can't think of 'em, but they were little bands, garage bands, more or less, but they were really- some of them had records and were famous, you know? And they would come over, and they had a place in downtown Beaumont, called the Rose Room, at the Hotel Beaumont. And all the kids would show up there. Course we'd be there, pay two dollars a person and dance. I mean just get sweaty and dance, and drink Coca Cola. And we had another one called the King Edward Hotel, and the Imperial room. We go over there and dance, but it was for kids, you know? It wasn't a bar or anything. They had cokes and stuff, no alcohol. And kids would slip out on the balconies and smoke and stuff. But it was a place to hang out. And we all learned to dance, you know?

**Sidney King:** And then every once a while we'd go across the river into Louisiana, where the big oaks are over in Vinton, over there this side of Lake Charles. And we would end up going on the other side of Lake Charles. And they had these big clubs over there, and boy if you talking about going to watch it some good fights, you'd see some good ones. Knock-down-drag-outs boy. Drunk, drunk, drunk. We'd go over there, and have to drive 30 miles back home, but it was okay, it wasn't bad. But you could drink over there when you're 18. Of course I never drank because I was always the athlete. And I was always the driver, the designated driver. My buddy had a '57 Chevrolet and I drove it four-speed. I'd drive that '57 Chevrolet, we'd have 10 people in there man. Drunk as Cooter, just, "Stop the car I'm gonna throw up man." Wandering out through the bushes, you'd have to go get 'em.

**Sidney King:** Some of those boys went on to the war. But I did have some buddies that didn't have to go. I don't know my best friend, Bobby, he didn't have to go. But James Holly went yeah. Bobby Nero, his brother was in the Army. Bill he didn't go to Vietnam though he worked at DuPont oil or DuPont chemical his whole life. Nicest people, man, they were some good folks back in the day. Never had any- well we had confrontations, but they were just- just taught you how to fight. That's most that was. You had to get in fights here. It's good for a guy to fight. You learn how to take a punch and you're.

Sideny King: I mean, me and Royce went at it a couple time, we fought. And I always thought- I was scared of Royce. But boy when I fought him I went, "He's a wimp." I said, "I think Dusty hit me harder than Royce did." It was fun though. It was back in the day. Roger would stand and watch, your Uncle Roger. It was back in the day, though, we'd have some fun times. At the deer camps, we'd be up there.

**Sidney King:** But yeah, it was good, that some of the guys came on back. And then the war slowed down and '75, so by then I was out of Beaumont already and we'd already moved up to Simpson, you know? Up there but, they were all from all over all parts of the United States. I mean, they were everywhere. Even some of the Spanish guys, and Mexican people, who immigrated over here, they joined the army, you know? And they got their citizenship which is good, you know, that was a good way to get it. You know, dedicate your life and volunteer for the service. And then you get your get your citizenship, and your family and their- you know, it was a good thing. And that was one of the incentives they gave 'em, was you get your citizenship if you join the army for three years, you know?

**Sidney King:** I enjoyed it. It was- you talk about it now, and you didn't die, so. And you didn't get hurt nothing. I think about the hardest injury I ever got was I got a GG shot one time, and I did rest. You're supposed to go risk for 12 hours. I went played basketball and my leg, I thought my leg was gonna fall off. One of them gamma globulin shots, you had to get one every six months. It kills everything big enough to die. You had to get one of them. You get one in the service. So we got one, you know? That's like you hear in the service nowadays, you know? Well, I'm not taking that. You know, I'm not taking this shot. I'm not gonna take that pandemic shot. No, I'm not. In the service you took it. "Hey, you gotta be at the dispensary tomorrow, you're getting shots?" "Okay." We went, you stood in line, they shot you, you know what you got? You got everything from diphtheria to the flu. You know? They give it to you. How do you get to say no? You can't say no. "Take it, buddy." Here, captain said, "Go to the dispensary and get your shots." You went and got 'em. You didn't say, " Oh I don't want to take that shot." COVID, "You got to take the COVID shot." "Oh, I don't want to Captain." "Go to the dispensary, or I'm gonna put you under arrest." You can't disobey the order, what's the matter with you. And you hear that on TV and you kind of look at it funny going.

**Sidney King:** But now I hear that they have a card if you're in the service, and you're in basic training, and you carry it in the top pocket, you know of your blouse. And you have if the sergeant or the drill instructor is yelling at you and you're stressed, and you feel like there's too much too much pressure that you can't handle it anymore. You can pull that card out, and you hold it up and he can't yell at you anymore. I heard that and I went "Are you kidding me? You gonna do that to a drill sergent? He'll chew your ear off." You got to discipline the people. And I'll tell you that's what people need is disciplined. To understand that your voice is your voice, but you better watch it. It'll get you in a lot of trouble. And don't ever say no. Or I can't, "I can't do that."

**Sidney King:** We had a guy, a University of Alabama boy. His name was McConaughey, Chester McConaughey. He couldn't even tie his boots. I had to tie his boots for him every morning. He didn't know how to tie shoes. He said, "All through my life. I've had slip ons, my whole life." I said, "You don't know how to tie the bunny ears." We laughed. "You got to do the bunny over here, the loopy over here." I'd tie his boots for him every morning. And then I run the mile, and I'd finish ahead of everybody, two squads ahead, I'd pass everybody up, then I'd have to go and put Chester's arm around my shoulder, and help him finish the mile. And he was a big boy, but he lost a lot of weight while he was in there. It's hard to- I can't believe I remember the guy's name 55 years ago. That's amazing. 57 years ago, and I remember Chester McConaughey.

**Parker King:** You remember a lot of names. Of everybody.

**Sidney King:** A lot of names. Yeah, do. I know a lot of stuff, man. But yeah, there's a lot going on. But you'll get into it, you'll understand. Don't be introverted. Be extroverted in your life and talk to people. Start stuff. I start things I go to people standing in the line at the grocery store, and I start something, you know, I go to the VA and I look at people "Hey, how you doing today?" You know, just to start talking. And you never know what people's going through. You know? Sometimes Jean Anne tells me, "You need to you need to shut up." I said, "No I don't." I always look at 'em and say, "Hey, what do you call a hippie's wife?" And they look at me and go, "What?" I said "That's Mrs. Hippie." They'd laugh. "Well what happened to the frog that parked in front of the fire hydrant?" "I don't know." "He got towed." Just start it. Get some going with 'em. Be extroverted in life, and start things, you know, you'll learn a lot more and you'll be- you can do things you know? That's how you get a lot of stuff done. But you have a good time with it? In hope you can get some more of that.

*[Cut a story of one of his friends and a description of his car. Also, describes his commemorative coin and stamp collection.]*

**Sidney King:** I’ll think of some more stuff, man. Viet Nam. But watch that movie, “Good Morning, Vietnam.”

**Parker King:** I'll definitely watch it.

**Sidney King:** You're enjoy that. It will give you some inspiration, that you see what's going on. You see guys going off to war. You see the frustrations in their minds, it's really- they had the radio, Robin Williams is a radio disc jockey, he's famous, and he comes to Vietnam, and everybody expects these great things out of him. They think there's going to really boost the morale, it's going to do this and do that. And he finds out that you can't do that, and then he finds a sympathy with the people, and it's really cool. It's got a good plot to it. He tells you what a person's mind, a soldier's mind goes through when he gets in country there. Because as an American, we have sympathy for people and stuff and empathy. And we can walk a mile in their shoes if we have to, but other countries don't. They don't feel that way. We do. They're harsh and mean and take, take, take, take in life. They're not givers. And you'll find out why America- anything happens in the world, we always send a lot of money, a lot of food, and a lot of people. We send the volunteers, we send the money. Nobody else collects money. Sweden doesn't collect money and send us when we have an earthquake. Nobody does it for us. We do it for everybody else. That's why we're still allowed to be here, I think. It has a lot to do with because we're givers. American people are givers. We're not takers.

**Parker King:** Yeah. Don't feel like a lot of that started around this time period in the Vietnam War. Yeah, we felt like a responsibility to, to give and to protect.

**Sidney King:** Yeah. And we had empathy for the people you know, and them wanting to get their freedom, and we understand freedom because we have it here. And they don't. I mean, you go down to countries where you- you go to Mexico and do the wrong thing, you end up in jail, man. Be at the wrong place at the wrong time. Spend another year or two in jail down there. But here it's different. It's like, whoa, this is America man. I can get in my car and drive down and get me a hamburger if I want to. And if I talk real nice, I can get ol' buddy over there to buy it for me. I mean, it's different. It's, we're just a bunch of givers over here. And they're not. But you know, it's like, don't bring your Puerto Rican flag over here. I don't need a Puerto Rican flag waving my face at the red light. I don't need that. Get out the American flag. You want to be American be one. You like it over here? Be an American. Don't be a Puerto Rican. I'm not Irish. I don't care where it came from. I'm here. But it's a different feeling, man. You just have to keep moving. Oh, well, but watch that movie. "Good Morning, America." You'll like it.

**Parker King:** Yeah, I think I do after you tell me just a little bit about it. It sounds really good.

**Sidney King:** Yeah. Robin Williams. You like it? Good movie.

**Parker King:** Yeah. So just really quick, can you tell me like more about the basketball and like, where you kind of went with that and how’d you het into it and stuff.

**Sidney King:** I was a hustler. I just like- fast. You know, I wasn't but five foot ten, five eleven, but I could jump there. I could stick my arm in the basket. I could jump really good. And I did. When a big guy goes to the basket, I went with him. When the rebounds coming, I went with him. They'd look at me like, "What the heck are you doing?" Boy, coach would look at me and say, shake his head me and nod at me, and say "Get on him."

*[Cut out a story about him playing basketball in highschool]*

**Sidney King:** And I took that into the Air Force with me, when I went into Air Force. I mean, I had guys playing and who played basketball in the parks in New York City. Donald Sanford was one boy. And he had never played organized basketball in his life. He's like six foot two. And could stick his head in the rim. This guy was amazing. And to have him on one of my forwards, and I was the guard, And man, I'll tell you what, between those two guys, and I had another guy, a white guy named Jim and he was- us three guys. And then we had that 6'7", 6'8" under into the bucket. We beat everybody.

*[Cut out a story about working and playing with LSU basketball players while he worked at Allied Chemical.]*

**Sidney King:** But, you know, we won the Asian Championship we beat everybody would be China, man. We weren't. I went to the island of Sri Lanka. India came and played us. Yeah, we got a nice gym though. It was in the Air Force. We had nice sports places. Now they're better than ever.

*[Cut out a story of playing basketball at England Air Force Base in Alexandria, LA, and leads into talking about him going back to college after his time in the Air Force.]*

**Sidney King:** Lived in a trailer house, you know? Going to college at night, and slipping off and trying to get a class in here and a class there. Of course, people called and said- I was making about 20,000 a year, 25,000 a year, and they offered me 55,000 to go to work, and I went "Okay, I think I'll do that. You don't have to twist my arm." So I went. Went to the chemical plant. I was a planner scheduler. I planned all of the maintenance work inside there, all the valves and all the appurtenances, all the controls everything. They'd give me a budget and I'd say okay, let's do this, this, this, this, and this, and I'd have all- every morning I'd have seven or eight jobs for the maintenance crews to do.

**Parker King:** And you went to the Lamar Tech College?

**Sidney King:** Yeah.

**Parker King:** Yeah. And then how long were you there?

**Sidney King:** Oh, golly, I from '73 to '75 and a half, '6. Went at night school. I didn't go to regular school. Just went nights. So I could get something you know? But it didn't help me end up in the long run. I end up wanting to work for myself. So I did. But I did learn that in the fire department that most of the guys worked some kind of construction, or they work some kind of like tinting windows. They had their own little business, you know? And a lot of them, some of them did wallpaper, some did painting, some did constructions, some built houses. Because as a fireman, you work one day on 24 hours. And you were off for 48, two days off. So you had to do something, you know? It was good times and bad. You just had to take the good with the bad. But you know, when you're married and young and feel like you should be doing more than what you're doing. You know, life kind of beat you up a little bit. Until you get a hold of what you're really supposed to be doing, which is about 35, 40 years old.

*[Cut out story of how he switched from a planner/scheduler in engineering to working in flooring. Also, a story about his stepdaughter.]*

**Sidney King:** It was good. It was a good long life, you know? And I'm just healthy as I can be good. My blood pressure's great. I don't have any problems. No internal problems and no heart problems. My knees were sore. Too much basketball, I think. I got new ones now, but I'm in good shape. Doing good, man. Well, I'll have to let you go. It's 10:30 here.

**Parker King:** Oh, yeah. You're an hour ahead over there?

**Sidney King:** Yeah, but I ain't going nowhere, I'm still here. What have I gotta do tomorrow? I got PT at three o'clock. I get up and get coffee, and watch the news is what I do. And my wife takes her three mile walk, and I used to go with her on the bike, but I havn't been lately because of the legs. But I need to start.

**Parker King:** Well, I'll let you go. Thank you so much for talking to me. This was-

**Sidney King:** Anytime. Call me anytime I'm around. I hope that you got enough information. A lot of stuff that you can use. I can think of anymore. We can talk again, man. We'll talk some more.

**Parker King:** I'm really I'm down to talk some more. Try to get whatever else we can get.

**Sidney King:** Have been recording this whole time?

**Parker King:** Yes, sir.

**Sidney King:** You gonna have fun. You got a lot of editing to do.

**Parker King:** Yeah, I've got some editing and then I gotta transcript it. So I gotta do that. But it's not gonna be too bad. I'll figure it out.

**Sidney King:** Yeah, yeah, well I'll send you some more pictures. I can get a lot of pictures. But watch that movie, man. You'll enjoy it. It'll enlighten you.

**Parker King:** I'll watch it for sure.

**Sidney King:** "Good Morning, Vietnam."

**Parker King:** And thanks for telling me the history that I didn't know on your side and stuff. With what happened with your parents and then like-

**Sidney King:** We had an uncle Uncle Bat. He lived in Batson, Texas. He's the oldest bachelor in the state of Texas. He's 102 years old and he never married. My Uncle Bat.

**Parker King:** Yeah, there's just a lot that I didn't know. And it was really cool to get all of it.

**Sidney King:** Yeah. Yeah, you'll get some more. We still got relatives alive over. A lot of Kings still around. Got a lot of family over there.

**Sidney King:** But you know, there's a lot of things you'll hear about VFWs and Veterans of Foreign Wars, and all these little- they're just glorified beer joints is what they are. Where these old soldiers go, and trying to hustle something, or trying to miss- you'll hear about a lot of those, the VA, some of these places where they just- I've been to places where they get up, in the morning down here, at seven o'clock they're at that bar, or at that VFW hall. And they go in there, the American Legion or whatever, and they start getting drunk. They eat their breakfast, and they drink, by 10:30, they're drunk as Cooter, they walk across the street at their house, they crash go to sleep for about three or four hours, wake up at three in the afternoon, head back over to the bar at the VFW, belly up there and drink and drink to seven eight o'clock at night, eat 'em a little breakfast or lunch or supper, and go back home and just crash. That's their whole life. That's what they do. You're kind of going, "Man, just waiting for death, is what they're waiting on." It's really sad. And I've seen it so many times. I mean, I've been in those places and worked. And you see a same guy coming back and forth, and you're looking at him going. Golly, what a life? It's rough.

**Parker King:** Yeah. It sounds like it.

**Sidney King:** Sad.

**Parker King:** Yeah, it's just I guess ways to deal with it.

**Sidney King:** Well just remember don't go in the military unless you have to.

**Parker King:** Yeah, unless there's a draft.

**Sidney King:** Stay away from it, man. It isn't good for you. I mean it could be good for some people, but- probably was good for me, I guess.

*[Cut out a discussion about how much money airmen of different ranks make per year.]*

**Parker King:** Okay. Thank you so much.

**Sidney King:** Alright Parker. You're welcome.

**Parker King:** It was really good.

**Sidney King:** Call me anytime, man. I'm around.

**Parker King:** All right. I will. Thank you. Bye.

**Sidney King:** Alright buddy, take care. See ya.