

 **NATIONAL MUSEUM**
OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
Wings & Things Guest Lecture Series

My Enemy ... My Friend

Former enemy pilots Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Dan Cherry and Mr. Nguyen Hong My will discuss Cherry's book "My Enemy...My Friend."

BRIG. GEN. (RET.) DAN CHERRY: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. It's great to be with you tonight, and it's a privilege always to be with my friend, Nguyen Hong My, and to share this remarkable story. I think both of us are still amazed every day that goes by at how our friendship has grown and all the incredible sets of circumstances that have occurred over time to bring us to where we are today. We think there's a universal message to this story, too. It's not just a war story. It's much more than that. It's the story of the power of friendship. It's the story of the value of reconciliation. And these things, I think, have value to anyone no matter what your interests are, your age group or whatever. So we hope you enjoy our story tonight, and I'd like to turn it over now for a moment to my good friend, Nguyen Hong My, to have some words of welcome to you.

NGUYEN HONG MY (by translator): Last year I had the chance to come to the U.S. and I really enjoyed the time being here. This year, I thank you very much for the invitation and hospitality. I am very glad to be here again, and it's really good to see my friend and all of you here.

CHERRY: I'd like to also introduce Mr. Hugh Dou. Mr. Dou is a graduate student at Western Kentucky University and my home of Bowling Green, Kentucky, and he has joined our team to help Hong My and me to tell this story. So again, I hope you enjoy the presentation.

What we want to do is talk a bit about our life experiences leading up to our first meeting in combat. I'll show you a short video clip from the History Channel, the "Dogfights" program, that describes our dogfight far better than I can and then what happened after that fateful day, what happened to both of us. Our paths were certainly different, both before that day on April 16, 1972, and certainly afterwards – the unlikely reunion that occurred in 2008, and then the double full-circle that occurred just last year. We'll surprise you with that, I think. And then, what is our message? Why are we out here telling this story, and we have a good reason for that, and I hope you'll appreciate that.

I had a wonderful Air Force career. I was in the Air Force for 29 years, and I had great assignments, I got to fly great airplanes, I got to work with wonderful people. I flew a combat tour in the F-105 in 1967, somehow got promoted to Major in spite of all that, and then went on to volunteer for a second tour in Southeast Asia in the F-4 Phantom. When I arrived at Udorn Air Base, Thailand, in 1971, I was flying the F-4D Phantom II that you see here. This was the front line fighter that the Air Force had in those days. I want you to pay particular attention to the tail number on this airplane – No. 550 – because she plays about as big a part in this whole story as I

do or Mr. Hong My does. And now, Mr. Hong My, will you describe your career leading up to this point, please?

HONG MY (by translator): This picture was taken in 1966, 44 years ago, when Mr. Hong My was very good looking. *[laughter]* Actually, he attended the university in Vietnam in 1965, but he was recruited for the Vietnamese Air Force in 1966. He was sent to the Soviet Union to get training in 1966. The last picture was taken when he graduated from the Soviet Union training Air Force. He actually got back to Vietnam to serve in the Vietnam Air Force, but he was saying that he had only a two-day break before he went to real combat. And it was at that moment that Dan and Hong My saw their enemy.

CHERRY: As I mentioned earlier, the first time we met, we were certainly not friends, and it was on April 16, 1972. Hong My was flying his mission out of Noi Boi in his MiG-21 and I was flying my F-4 out of Udorn, Thailand, and the dogfight took place right here, about 30 miles to the southwest of Hanoi. As I mentioned, the History Channel has done a very good job with their “Dogfights” program where they combine real interviews with the people that were involved in a particular dogfight along with amazing digital animation against some great narration to put the whole thing in context. I hope this sets the stage for the rest of the story that we’re about to tell you.

[Plays History Channel program]

NARRATOR: April 16, 1972, American combat forces have been committed to the fight in Vietnam for eight years. Today, four U.S. Air Force Phantoms, call sign Basco, orbit 18,000 feet above Laos. The Phantoms are waiting to escort B-52 bombers into the heart of North Vietnam in a dramatic escalation of the air war. But there’s been a mix-up. The B-52s are still on the ground. The Phantoms are burning fuel at a rate of 150 pounds per minute. To reduce drag, flight leader Fred Olmsted orders the Phantoms to jettison their empty centerline fuel tanks. Still, the reduced weight won’t buy enough time.

Phantom pilots know that there is nothing you can do in a Phantom to save that big, beautiful aircraft from burning all the fuel you’ve got. We had to make a decision.

Olmsted has two choices: Wait for the B-52s and risk running out of fuel or use their fuel for the flight’s secondary mission – hunting for North Vietnamese MiGs. Olmsted chooses the MiGs: The Blue Bandits.

He turns the Phantoms 180 degrees. Basco flight is now on the prowl. Flying No. 3 is Olmsted’s good friend, Dan Cherry.

CHERRY: Fred makes a turn and heads right for Hanoi, and we start pushing the power up and picking up the speed, and we cross that border into North Vietnam. Almost exactly at that precise time that we ingress into North Vietnam from our orbits in Laos, my back seater picked up two Blue Bandits.

Basco flight's audio transmissions were recorded, a remarkable historical record of air-to-air combat in Southeast Asia. *[radio transmission plays]* Two silver MiG-21s are 20 miles out and closing head-on at the Phantoms. Olmsted isn't backing off. He orders Basco flight to stay on course.

They march right down the radar scope...from 18 miles, to 12 miles, to 10 miles, to 8 miles.

CHERRY: I didn't see them at the time, and Fred said, "There's two silver MiG 21s there, Dan," and I said something really clever and smart like, "Where?" *[radio transmission plays]* Two Blue Bandits just went by us and that's when the fight really started.

Olmsted and his wingman give chase. He rolls his F-4 Phantom into a climbing turn and swings around 180 degrees. Olmsted and his wingman are maneuvering to get above and behind the Bandit into a firing envelope. Cherry and his wingman stay in trail, protecting Olmsted's 6:00. Then, Cherry spots a third Bandit, a camouflaged MiG-21 ambushing Fred Olmsted from behind.

CHERRY: We'd gone through about 90 degrees in turn when my wingman, Greg Crane, spots the camouflaged MiG right off our nose.

The North Vietnamese had set a trap and flight leader, Fred Olmsted, is the target. The stage is set for a legendary dogfight, a battle on the cutting edge of a dramatic turnaround in the Vietnam air war. The silver MiG-21s are here. Olmsted and his wingman are here. The camouflaged MiG streaks in on their tail here, but he doesn't see Dan Cherry right behind him on his 6:00. Cherry and his wingman streak forward and engage the MiG.

CHERRY: I rolled out, saw him and just headed right for him, and he broke left and went right into a cloud bank. Going into a cloud in North Vietnam is a scary proposition. I'm thinking, man, I don't want to go in that cloud, but I wasn't going to lose this opportunity either.

NARRATOR: For American airmen in the hostile skies of Southeast Asia, an innocent looking cloud can be a death trap. Vietnamese radar operators can track the F-4s through the clouds to launch surface-to-air missiles against them. The F-4s can electronically detect a SAM launch, but can't visually avoid the missile.

CHERRY: I couldn't stand it any longer, and I said I'm not staying in this cloud any longer, MiG or no MiG, so I'd look all around and my wingman confirmed his position. So the feeling then was we've lost this guy.

NARRATOR: Suddenly, Baby Beef calls out, "MiG, 2:00, 4,000 feet above, climbing right turn." It's a lucky break. The MiG bursts through the cloud bank right in front of him. Cherry peers skyward. The MiG has lost speed in his climb. He's directly in Cherry's killing zone. Cherry pitches his nose up, trying to gain a missile lock. His first MiG kill is right in front of him.

CHERRY: Things seemed to slow down in their motion to where everything became really clear.

NARRATOR: Cherry gets good tone. The infrared seeker head of the AIM-9 Sidewinder growls in the pilot's headset when it gets a lock-on. Cherry strains to see the missile track. Nothing. He quickly launches a second Sidewinder. Again, no missile track. The missiles have launched, but Cherry doesn't know it. The MiGs high-G turn has defeated the missiles seeker head.

CHERRY: I'm really angry. I mean, here my whole life I've never seen a MiG this close before, and I had this opportunity to get this guy and I've got an airplane that's not going to work.

NARRATOR: Desperate, the MiG noses over into a spiraling dive. He's hoping that his tight turns will prevent Cherry from getting another lock-on. Cherry and his wingman kick over into a diving chase. From 25,000 feet, the three planes hurtle toward the ground. The Americans have the weight and thrust advantage. Baby Beef has nosed ahead in the dive. Cherry clears him to take the lead, rolling to the outside, making way for his wingman. Beef can't use a heat-seeking Sidewinder. The MiG's turning too tight. He knows it can't lock in a high G turn. He fires a radar-guided Sparrow. Something's wrong. It drops like lead.

CHERRY: Then he fires another one and it does ignite, but it goes into a huge corkscrew out to the right. Then the third missile he fired, and it was tracking really well and I thought, "Man, this is really looking good!"

NARRATOR: Beef's third missile streaks through the sky – another radar-guided Sparrow. The Sparrow tracks steadily on the descending MiG. The MiG breaks hard right. The 500-pound missile should follow, but it darts past without detonating. Cherry and Beef have fired five missiles. All have failed.

Thrust into his first dogfight with an actual MiG-21, Dan Cherry is on a steep learning curve. He races through his options. Two of his missiles have failed, but he's determined to kill the MiG.

CHERRY: This is going to sound weird, but I'm thinking, I'm gonna land this guy. That's the aggressive feeling that I had at the time. I was not gonna let this guy get away.

NARRATOR: The MiG has lost air speed in the turn. Cherry and Beef pitch up and roll vertical to keep from over shooting. As they descend once again on the MiG, Cherry calls for the lead.
[radio transmission plays]

CHERRY: I kept telling Greg to get out of the way, and I'm in burner and I'm trying to close on him because I'm ready to shoot, ready to try to shoot.

NARRATOR: Cherry slides past Crane and fires a missile.

CHERRY: Lo and behold, that big AIM-7 Sparrow comes out of there, and it does one of these kind of like a barrel roll maneuver like this at first.

NARRATOR: The Sparrow appears to be tracking off course, but then, to Cherry's relief, it rides the Phantom's invisible radar beam to the target. It's 65-pound warhead detonates, ripping the right wing from the airplane. Cherry watches the plane plummet in a fireball. *[radio transmission*

plays] From the flames, the MiG pilot miraculously appears underneath his parachute. Cherry roars past his vanquished opponent.

CHERRY: I made a little jink with the airplane to miss the MiG pilot and his parachute. We went by him well within 500 feet of him, and I remember clearly his legs sticking out straight like this and the black flying suit he was wearing.

NARRATOR: Dan Cherry has killed his first MiG.

[History Channel program ends]

CHERRY: Well, it was an exciting day for us, for Basco flight, that's for sure. The ultimate in a fighter pilot's dream is to go out with a flight of four and come back victorious like that and everybody come home safe and sound. My flight leader, Fred Olmsted, went on to shoot down one of the two silver ones that came over our head as well. So we did a lot of celebrating that night in the Officer's Club. I wondered a lot about the fate of the MiG pilot because I saw him so clearly in his parachute, but as a lot of you in this audience know, you're busy the next day worrying about the next mission and you're out flying another combat mission. So really, whatever happened to him, I never thought about it much after that first day. It was a very exciting time and a real highlight certainly in my Air Force career.

For Nguyen Hong My, it was not so happy, and I'd like for him to explain to you a bit of what it was like for him after he bailed out of his MiG-21 that day.

HONG MY (by translator): After the void first fire missile, unfortunately he got shot down by the second missile. He bailed out from the MiG-21 with several injuries. Because the MiG-21 arm protection is not working is why he broke two of his arms right after he bailed out from the MiG-21. Because both of his arms are broken is why he couldn't open the parachute so he had to let the wind flow the parachute wherever it's going to go. After landing, he also broke his back because he couldn't control the parachute and go where he wanted it to. Mr. Hong My is a sick man in the hospital with several surgeries to get recovered. Luckily, he got healed and recovered after that and served in the air force for several years. He went back to the university, got his degree and worked in an engine company for many years.

This picture is Mr. Hong My on the right side with his friends and classmates who also flew a MiG-21 during the Vietnamese War.

CHERRY: These gentlemen that you see there lined up with Nguyen Hong My are some of the more highly decorated Vietnamese fighter pilots of the war, and they were all a member of his class when they went to the Soviet Union to train in the MiG-21 in the mid-60s.

Now another player in this that I mentioned earlier is Phantom 550, and here's an illustration of her. She continued to fight the war until the war was over and then she was reassigned to Korea in the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing. In the mid-80s she came back to the United States and was all painted gray. I'm always glad to look at this picture because fortunately someone was paying enough attention to keep the red victory star on the side of her. She continued to serve her

country very well at Tinker Air Force Base and Air Force Reserve unit and then she was reassigned right here to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in the Air Force Reserves where she flew her last mission in 1989.

She was parked over here on the ramp and sat there for quite some time and a VFW club in Enon, Ohio, made application for her and she was towed all the way from Wright-Patterson to Enon and put on display there in front of the VFW club in Enon, Ohio. So where she continued to really serve her country quite well and very proudly, I might say.

As far as I'm concerned, I finished my tour in June 1972, and came back to be an instructor pilot in the F-4. I was very lucky and so honored to be selected for the Air Force Thunderbirds and flew in that team in 1977 and 1978, went on to some wonderful assignments in the Air Force to include being a wing commander in Korea flying the F-16, and then decided it was time to retire in 1988, just about the same time that Phantom 550 decided to hang it up, as well. So we have a lot of parallels in our lives.

I went back to Bowling Green, Kentucky, my hometown, never really expecting to stay there, but as it turned out, second career opportunities came along, made some wonderful friends there and I've been there ever since. One of the first things I did was become a member of this group here. It's a group of guys about my age that get up real early every morning and we go for a very fast three mile walk and then go to McDonald's and drink coffee and solve all of your problems! *[laughter]* I know you're very comforted by that, but we're still doing it. We've been doing this for over 20 years. It's a lot of fun and one of the things we did, you know, this group has become very social, much more than an exercise group, but one of the things they asked me to do was to organize a tour up here to the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force. We did that. We decided we would rent a van and come up here. There were about eight of us, and we had a wonderful tour here in the museum and our plan was to go back to Bowling Green, through Cincinnati, see a baseball game and have a very nice weekend.

While we were here, General Metcalf's staff was very kind to give us a special tour and someone mentioned the fact there was an airplane that had historic significance to Kentucky and it wasn't very far from here. So we learned all about Phantom 550 and where she was, and before we went to Bowling Green, all anybody could talk about was we had to go over and look at this airplane. That's all my buddies could say. So we got our map out, figured out where Enon was, drove up to Enon, stopped at the Minute Mart, said, "Where's your VFW club?" They said it's right down the road, we went around a curve and there stood Phantom 550. It was really quite a reunion. Again, my red victory star on the side very proudly, and here are all my buddies I'm still walking with, even today. But this was the first time I think I ever told the story of the dogfight. I think I'd probably told it to my family, but for some reason, it was just the kind of thing you don't talk about much. But since we were very close, walking around this airplane and everything, and the guys wanted to hear about it, I told the general high points of the dogfight.

Again, bittersweet reunion – it was great to see her again, wondering what was going to happen to the airplane and so all the way back, that's all any of us could talk about was this notion of maybe someday, somehow, that airplane we could get it to Kentucky, get it restored and so forth, and take really, really good care of it.

But then, a bigger idea emerged and that was, as we did more research, we discovered there were aviation pioneers that had roots in south central Kentucky and nobody had ever heard their stories. Young people didn't know anything about people like Victor Strahm from World War I and Bert Hall from World War I, who was a member of the Lafayette Escadrille, had never heard about Johnny Magda of Korean War fame flying the Panther who was a leader of the Blue Angels, and all these wonderful untold stories. We said why not build some sort of a park to be sure younger generations are aware of these wonderful stories, and hopefully then, this park and the stories and the artifacts on display there can be an inspiration to young people, and actually turn it into an educational facility.

And basically, that's what we did. We got the support of our city and county government, we coordinated closely with General Metcalf and his staff, and suddenly, the next thing we know, we have a tiger by the tail, we've gotten permission to take possession of the airplane. In early December of 2005, Phantom 550 was dismantled here – you can see a little ice on her nose and it was really cold! We got that done but again, on December 7, 2005, she rolled into Bowling Green, Kentucky, on two flatbed trailers.

We got busy right away cleaning her up and putting her back together and this is what she looks like today. We were able to, with the advice of the museum staff here, take her right back even better than she looked on April 16, 1972. Today, she sits proudly on display at Aviation Heritage Park in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Now, going through all of that process, the fate of the MiG pilot, of my adversary, came more and more into my consciousness. I'd really put it out of my mind for all those years, but now being married back up with this wonderful airplane that took such good care of me, caused me to think about who that MiG pilot might have been. What was his name? Did he have a family? Did he really survive that bailout? I did not know the answers to any of those questions.

So we started doing some serious research on it, made contact with some people in Vietnam through some friends here in the United States and became aware of a television show in Vietnam, translated means “the separation never seems to have existed.” Very similar to an old TV show we had here in the United States called “This is Your Life.” They take separated people – for whatever reason they were separated – and do video profiles on them and then they reunite them on live national television. Tu Yen, this young lady who is the producer, and national news anchor as well, heard about my quest to find out the fate of the MiG pilot. She sent me an e-mail and said please write me a letter, tell me what you want to do, and I will see if I can assist you. So I took great pains to write a rather simple one page letter, but I said basically in there, that I'd always been curious and I wondered what his name was, did he really survive, and did he have a family, things like that that you would naturally want to know.

I never expected anything to happen, but literally two weeks later, I get an email back from Tu Yen that says we have found the brave MiG pilot, and we want you to come to Vietnam and meet him on live national television. A few weeks later, I was airborne. Jumped on a United Airlines airliner in Nashville, Tennessee, and 23 hours later, I was in downtown Ho Chi Minh City in Saigon getting ready to go on this television show. Stayed in the Rex Hotel that many of

you may be familiar with, and the next morning we got busy with Tu Yen and the interpreter as she was explaining to me how the television show was going to go and what was going to happen the next day.

Now keep in mind, we have never seen each other at this point. I think Mr. Hong My knew more about me than I knew about him. All I knew was what his name was. So we left the hotel and headed to the TV studio about 9:00 at night. We got there and I was invited up on the TV set. Tu Yen started to explain what this program was all about and she was showing a copy of the letter I wrote to her upon the TV monitor. Then I joined her on the set and she started to interview me, asking me questions like why I'm there and what I hoped to accomplish by all this. Then the next thing she did was introduce Nguyen Hong My. I looked across the studio and from out, literally, behind the curtain, out stepped this handsome, fighter pilot man *[laughter]* and my heart is beating 90 miles an hour because I wanted this meeting to go well but I didn't know what kind of a person he was. My intuition told me that as fighter pilots, we would have far more in common than we ever did differences. So I was really looking forward to it but also was very apprehensive.

We shook hands, and with a very firm handshake, Hong My said to me, "Welcome to my country. I'm glad to see that you're in good health and I hope that we can be friends." And so the friendship and the chemistry started right there immediately. Now I'd like to ask my handsome – by the way since he's traveled in the United States and we've been exposed to a lot of media over the last couple of years, his new name is "Movie Star" *[laughter]* – and Movie Star, I would like for you to give the audience your impression of our first meeting.

HONG MY (by translator): Mr. Hong My was notified that he was going to meet General Dan Cherry here so he wasn't really surprised, but he was really glad to see the pilot who had shot him down 36 years ago. He was thinking now that the war has ended, we're not enemies any more. We're just two pilots, one to seek the other. Who is this person? What is his personality? Actually, when he came to the studio the first time and met Mr. Dan Cherry, he went right away and shook General Dan Cherry's hand because he thought that right now, when the war's end, we're just friends. During the war, we were enemies, but we're really not enemies. You're only enemies when you know the person, when you hate the person is why you become enemy. But he doesn't know General Dan Cherry. Both of them just try to serve their country and try to battle to protect their country. Mr. Hong My doesn't have second thoughts, just goes right away, shakes General Dan Cherry's hand, and want to be a friend to him right at that moment.

Mr. Hong My was explaining to me that fighter pilots have to feel when they see the enemy, they will feel the feeling "that is the enemy there." After the dogfight, they just seek others; they know who it is.

CHERRY: We continued the interview with Tu Yen on the stage there and one little part about that I'll share with you is she had collected still photographs of my family and Hong My's family ahead of time. So while we're being interviewed, these photographs are being shown up on the big TV monitor on the wall and I can see these things. And as photographs of my children and grandchildren started to show, I got all choked up, tears in my eyes, I couldn't talk and I was just terribly embarrassed. Here I am in front of my new fighter pilot friend, but somehow the sense of

how the story of this whole thing could have turned out so totally differently and how far away from home I was and what precious treasures my children and grandchildren are, just hit me all of a sudden. So it was tough right there; I was embarrassed about it but finally got myself under control. And then the producer or anchor started showing pictures of Hong My's family and he did the same thing I did. *[laughter]* So all that was okay.

After the show was over, we retired to their waiting room or what they call the Green Room *[laughter]* and, being from Kentucky, I thought only suitable that a little gift of Kentucky bourbon, and Hong My told me just the other day that he has not touched it. It's on display in his home and I'm not sure I believe that. *[laughter]*

Then we're sitting there and I had a chance to ask him about the badges that he wears. The pilot wings, of course, Pilot First Class, Vietnam Air Force, and this is called the Ho Chi Minh war medal, and as he explained to me at this moment that he was awarded that for shooting down an American airplane in January 1972. I will tell you more about that part of the story as we go on through the presentation.

We went on up to a wonderful hotel called the Majestic Hotel in downtown Saigon and an open air restaurant. We drank a little wine, got to know each other a little bit better and again our personalities worked right from the beginning. While we're sitting there, Hong My asked me, he said, "In your airplane, you shoot missile like this or like that?" *[laughter]* I see Denny Garby back here who flew the F-105, and the 105 you shot your missiles with the button on the top of your control stick. But with the F-4, you have a trigger to shoot the missiles, so I told Hong My I used the trigger. So he grasped my finger like this, and he goes. *[laughter]* So I had my trigger finger spanked right there in public. And right after that he invited me to come to his home and have dinner with his family, which I thought was wonderful. I never expected anything like that. We were doing the interview in Saigon and Hong My lives in Hanoi. So the very next day we got on a Vietnam airplane and flew to Hanoi. We're reading the newspaper accounts of our television appearance here and we became overnight celebrities, I think. But again, it was a surreal feeling flying over this countryside that I'd flown over so many years before under totally different circumstances.

We got to Hanoi, and as it turned out, we were staying in the Metropol Hotel and Hong My's home is within walking distance. He said, "I will pick you up at 5:00. Is walking okay?" I said, "Yes, that'll be fine." And so my traveling companion is a gentleman by the name of Larry Bailey who is on our board and then my good friend, John Fleck, who's responsible, I might say, for all this wonderful photography and accompanied me on the trip to Vietnam. Hong My came to the hotel and we took this nice leisurely stroll through the streets of Hanoi – just a wonderful experience seeing all the old French architecture and the street side, and then all the motor scooters in that city as well.

When we got to Hong My's home, his son came out with his grandson, Duc. Now Duc, right here was celebrating his first birthday on this very day. At this time, Duc was Hong My's only grandchild. So I went over to the little boy and tried to strike up some sort of relationship, and the next thing I know, Hong My hands me Duc. I'm thinking how far the trust had come between the two of us in that short period of time that he would trust me with his only grandchild. It was

very emotional for me and again added to the friendship that was building rapidly. Since then, grandpa here, has been blessed with another grandchild and let me introduce some very important people here, if I might, to you. His daughter, Zon ... will you stand Zon? Her husband, Fon [*applause*] and little Bon Le. It's delightful to have them with him this trip as well.

We went into his home. He had a magnificent meal prepared for us, and we sat around and got to know each other even better. A lot of his friends came in to visit at the time and again, we had just great, warm hospitality everywhere we went and particularly in Hong My's home. We drank some more wine, maybe a little bit of brandy with that, and then it was time to go back to the hotel, probably about 11:00 at night. And as I showed you in an earlier picture, Vietnam is full of motor scooters and Hong My is no different. He has kind of a souped up version, but nonetheless, he has a motor scooter and my friend decided it would be most appropriate if he took me back to the hotel on his motor scooter. [*laughter*] And so here we go, in the middle of the night, through the streets of Hanoi heading back to the hotel and we're all laughing and having a great time. I'm thinking to myself, well I managed to survive and didn't die during the war, but I know I'm going to die here now. [*laughter*] But I had a wonderful pilot, so I had great confidence.

Hong My asked me if I wanted him to be my tour guide the next day and I said yes, I would love it if you would. So he took me and my friends on the most wonderful tour you can imagine of Hanoi – all of the military museums, and in particular the place I really wanted to go was the Hoa Lo prison or what is more commonly known to Americans as the Hanoi Hilton where so many of my friends, and probably some friends here in the audience, spent some time. As you can tell, Hong My is a very gregarious, happy person, and as we approached the prison, he became very somber and respectful and really walked a couple of steps behind me as we toured it. The prison was built back at the turn of the century and built mostly for the primary reason to house Vietnamese prisoners during French-Colonial rule, Vietnamese Nationalists. So most of the exhibits in it -- it's now a museum – depict Vietnamese prisoners being held. But there's a small section that shows where American prisoners were being held, as well. It's not a pleasant place, but I'm so glad I had the opportunity to go to it. It gave me a better perspective on things.

I'm looking at some of the exhibits on the wall about the Americans and while I'm looking at some of the photographs, Hong My walks up behind me and whispered in my ear. He said, "You have friend in here?" And I said, "Yes, I did. That's my friend right there. That's Colonel John Glenn right there." He just dropped his head and respectfully stepped away. Again, it meant so much to me because I knew that he knew how tough this was for me. We finished the tour, went out on the street, and were waiting for the van to pick us up, and Hong My asked me to do something for him because I'm getting ready to go back to America. He said, "I would like you to do research for me. The American airplane I shot down, I think the pilot was killed. If he was killed, I would like to extend my condolences to his family. If he survived, I would like to meet him someday." So I promised him before I left that I would do everything I could to research the facts of that situation. I also extended an invitation for him to come to America and promised him I would work on that. Now this is in April of 2008 when this is taking place.

So I get back and start doing the research and everything and also talking to my friends on the Aviation Heritage Park Board about how we're going to make this happen. Hong My needs to

come; we need to reciprocate his hospitality. We were able to make all the arrangements, raise the money necessary to help out with the travel expenses, and in April of 2009, Hong My and his son, Kwon, arrived in Nashville, Tennessee, and I was there to meet him.

We dedicated Aviation Heritage Park on the anniversary of our dogfight, as well, and Hong My participated in that. It was a great honor for me for him to do that. On the anniversary of our dogfight 2009, we dedicated Aviation Heritage Park and for the first time in history, *[laughter]* a fighter pilot has returned from a dogfight in aerial combat having been shot down, and sat in the actual cockpit of the airplane that shot him down – first time that’s ever happened. I thought I was going to have to talk Hong My into getting in the cockpit because I really wanted him to, but he brought it up before I could, so that was good. *[laughter]*

I had a chance to reciprocate as well in our home with my children and my grandchildren. Hong My is a wonderful man, with a great way with children and they gravitate to him and he loves them, as well. So we had a wonderful time there in Kentucky.

I had a chance to get him in the cockpit with me, too. This is another thing I felt was important, somehow, in that I wanted him in my little Cesna 172. So we got in there one day and we flew to Frankfort, Kentucky, and visited the Kentucky Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It’s a wonderful memorial and in Kentucky, we’re very proud of it as it’s in the shape of a huge sundial. The shadow, as it traverses around the granite plaza, it touches the name of every Kentucky soldier that was killed in the war on the day that he was killed. Hong My said at this time, it made him very sad because it caused him to think of not only all the people that were lost in war, but all the families that were left behind.

We went down to Sun ‘n Fun, as well and spoke to a lot of audiences down there, a great turn out, and were able to get Hong My a ride in the back seat of this Yak airplane. We felt like it was appropriate because it had a red star on the back. But he had a great time and we did, too. Then we got to go to Washington, D.C. I thought that was RErealAL important to get to Washington. We got to visit the Capitol. We were able to present at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, and then the visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was just most important to both of us.

Then, back to the research, the badge and everything, and what I discovered. I discovered that in January of 1972, Hong My shot down an RF-4 reconnaissance version of the F-4. The airplane crashed in Laos. The front seater’s name was Bob Mock. The back seater’s name was John Stiles. Both men were rescued by an Air America helicopter relatively uninjured. They went on to fly, continue to fly, more combat missions. When all of these facts became known, what I wanted to do more than anything else was to live up to my promise to Hong My, that I would try to arrange an opportunity for him to meet the pilot he shot down.

In part of my research, I discovered that Bob Mock had been killed in a car wreck about five years ago, but John Stiles is alive and well. He’s a college professor living in Goldsboro, North Carolina. I’d like for Hong My to speak now about his experience meeting John Stiles.

HONG MY (by translator): As I mentioned about the fighter pilots, they had a feeling. When Mr. Hong My told me about his experience when he met John Stiles, he was staying inside the hotel. He looked out and saw John Stiles get out of the taxi and he ran out and said, "I know you! I shot you down!" [laughter] He was saying that you can all see that they have a chemistry, they recognize each other, after almost 40 years. They were just staring like old friends, not enemy, just people who meet together at first sight.

CHERRY: It was a great experience to be on the outside of that meeting and watching all that happen, the chemistry developing between the two of them. John Stiles had had great difficulty bringing closure to his wartime experience. After we met in the hotel, the first picture you saw there, John and his wife, Barbara, had set up a very nice dinner for us in a Vietnamese restaurant in Arlington. We went over there, we had dinner, and after we'd been there a while, Hong My, John and the interpreter went off in the corner all by themselves. They were over there talking about all the circumstances. Then they both came back about 45 minutes later with big smiles on their faces, and John said to me, "Dan, I've been waiting for this for 37 years. It's like someone has lifted a tremendous weight off my shoulders."

And so, you know, it was just so important for both men to meet each other for the first time. So again, we're going to have an opportunity tomorrow and over this weekend to see John Stiles again, and we're also going to have an opportunity to meet the helicopter pilot, Mr. Bob Nobles, that rescued John. All of us are going to be together at an Air America reunion in Raleigh, North Carolina, over this next weekend.

Why are we out telling this story like we do? A lot of people are interested in war stories, but as I mentioned at the beginning, there's a lot more to it than that. This notion of reconciliation, what is it we hope to accomplish? Hong My and I have agreed totally in all this, that we hope our reconciliation will help other Vietnam War veterans, and we know it has. We've seen it happen in audiences we've spoken to. We hope that our example, also, is an inspiration to our two countries to try to further our relationships and to make them more economic relationships and cultural relationships. Vietnamese people are nice people. They're good people; they're hard working people, and they need to be allies of the United States of America.

There's some universal messages here, I think. If you let go of your grudges, the power of friendship ... all of these things we hope that you pick up on from the story. I hope you'll have a chance to pick up a copy of the book, *My Enemy...My Friend*.

Hong My, do you have any closing comments you'd like to make to the audience?

HONG MY (by translator): Hong My says that when you look at this picture, you cannot imagine that these three persons standing right there who were trying to shoot down each other 40 years ago have now become really close friends, and will always be best friends.

CHERRY: Thank you, Hong My, and ladies and gentlemen, it's been an honor for us to be here tonight. Let me thank General Metcalf and his staff. They've been so gracious to us and again, to be able to make this presentation in this wonderful place is truly an honor. I thank you for your attention. I hope you've gotten something out of it.