

John McNalis Oral History Interview

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McNalis: My name is John, J-O-H-N McNalis. It is the 3rd of January, 2012. I'm doing this interview at the Pritzker Military Library.

Kiefner: Hello Father McNalis. I'll get started with some general background. When and where were you born?

McNalis: I was born on the 6th of December, '50, in Chicago.

Kiefner: And did you grow up in Chicago?

McNalis: Except for the time that I was on active duty, I've been a lifelong resident of Chicago.

Kiefner: Tell me a little bit about your family, where you came from.

McNalis: The first year that I was alive, which I have no memory of, I lived on the West Side of Chicago, after my parents had been married. Then the rest of the time was in the Logan Square neighborhood, Kedzie and Dickens, Saint Sylvester Parish, grew up there until I was ordained in 1976. That was my residence.

Kiefner: Tell me a little about your family.

McNalis: My mother and father are now both deceased. My dad was a veteran of World War Two. He was in the Army. I have one brother; we had two other brothers that died in infancy, Rh factor that doesn't exist anymore. But

I have one brother who is 18 months younger than me, 2 years in school, and we both have a lot of similar interests and -- but, just little slight separations. We had both gone to the seminary in high school, and then he dropped out and went on to University of Illinois and became an attorney, but while he was at "Circle," [University of Illinois, Circle Campus, Chicago, IL] his dream was to become an "SF," special forces, so he left school, and went and got all of his training for special forces through the reserves. "Circle" at that time stated that if you went into the service they would count that for the gym class. Well, when my brother came back, after going through Airborne special forces training, they were balking on giving him his gym class off, (chuckles) and that would have added an extra quarter of school as well. Needless to say, he didn't want to get my brother upset over something so stupid as that, so he got credit for that, but he raised a stink over it. He had gone into special forces. Both of us were in karate. Both of us were work involved with computers, photography. Since my brother was Airborne, he would tease me about the Air Force, and I said, "Who wants to leave a perfectly sound aircraft?" So we've teased each other about our choices and selection of service branches throughout the years.

Kiefner: How did you father's World War Two experience impact your childhood? Was there much discussed with you as children?

McNalis: Well, that's sort of interesting. It's amazing that either of us went into the service for how much he talked about how he hated it! (Laugh) He was never in combat. He was a radio operator. He went to Fort Monmouth for

his training, and he was in the Pacific, but he just said that he hated every day being in the service. What was interesting was that both my brother and I, when we were growing up, built plastic model airplanes, and we had found some of my Dad's old wooden models in boxes that he had never built. I can kill myself the day that we didn't save those, but we got in there and started putting glue on them, and absolutely ruined his collection that would have been very special today if we had someone who could have built them. But my dad had the old pilot boots from a B-17 air crew, and he would sometimes wear those to the football games so we always wanted to play with those. He had some of his army uniforms still around that weren't being able to be worn, but they would be in the storage area. And my Dad had a fascination, or really a strong interest in flying, not to be a pilot, he just liked airplanes. While we were growing up it was very common for us to go over to Midway Airport just to watch planes coming in from the car, and anytime we went on trips, we would just enjoy flying. The very first flight I had was in 1957, my dad had a job interview down in Texas and we flew to Dallas, and at that time I had an ear infection and I was sick on the plane. So those were the memories. My mom was deathly afraid of flying and she flew as little as possible throughout her lifetime. It just developed that I couldn't wait to have an opportunity to fly somewhere, and that's why I think I picked the Air Force, because of that interest. My dad never saw any combat during World War Two, but he was in the Philippines for his service. His brother, my uncle, was on the USS San Francisco; and so the

family had service ties. My mother's brother was in the Navy during World War Two, her father was in World War One, so we had a family that everyone who was able to go into the service was in the service.

Kiefner: As you were growing up, during your teen years there was a lot of civil rights activity going on in Chicago, what do you remember most about that time?

McNalis: That would be the time period of 1968, '66. I graduated from grade school in 1964 and then I was in high school from '64 to '68. One thing at this point, I was starting to develop a real strong interest in Chicago history, which I have to this day, so I was very interested in where things took place, what happened, and so I have very much a strong memory of that. The major impact would be, just before that would be, the Second Vatican Council -- which changed since I was in the seminary, changed a lot of our education and things that we were used to in the Church, along with the liturgy. So that had the first impact for going through some change for me, because after high school, or during high school, we had to take Latin. I do not have any skill for language, and thank God the church went to the vernacular (chuckle), because I would be in a different occupation if it was still in Latin. We had a priest in the parish who I had for... he was a Latin teacher. He passed me through, being very kind, because I certainly didn't have the grades to pass that language at all. Now, then, the Democratic Convention was here in the summer between my graduation from high school to the graduation, or to the starting of college. Martin Luther King

had been assassinated over the Easter break of our senior year at Quigley [Quigley Preparatory Seminary, Chicago, IL].

Kiefner: 1968

McNalis ...so that timeframe. We lived on Kedzie and Dickens, Kedzie is 3200 west, but 2100 North. The major problems for the race riots of 68' were on Madison and, oh, just a little bit further west, closer to Pulaski, so they were about two-and-a-half miles further south, and a mile west of us, but we could see the smoke from the fires in the air. But neither my brother nor I had auto insurance; we could drive at that time, but since we didn't have insurance, we weren't able to take the car and go out. So, neither of us went over to the west side riots to see them. Later on, we did a lot of fire department involvement, so that's why it's, at that time, you get some people to say, "Oh gosh. What's coming up later?" So that period of the riots during... and that was the senior year of graduation... they did cancel -- I don't know if we had school cancelled one of those days or not, uh -- I can't remember that issue, for that was during the... right around Easter. I don't know which ones were the school days and what were the vacation days already scheduled into the calendar. Then at the time of the Democratic Convention... for that summer, I was already forming my opinion. I felt that I was supporting the action in Vietnam. Most of the students that I was with were leaning toward opposition to Vietnam. That really developed when I was in college. I definitely was on the minority of the college at the seminary for while I was there. My nickname became Bomber, because

while I was in the seminary I built a model of the B-52. I enjoyed building model airplanes and I spent my time doing that, and I had already started a real strong interest while I was in high school, because the science project that I started. There was another student in my class when we were juniors who had a science project he did on aviation. He told me, he said, "Oh, if you write aircraft companies they send you all of these pictures." They have great public relations offices; and so I started sending letters out, and the first company that responded was Douglas Aircraft Company, which now is Boeing, going through the change to McDonnell Douglas. They had sent me a picture of the C-47, and that started it. And then the... I got from writing to Air Force bases' offices of information, they were a real good source also, for material. The first letter I got back from an Air Force base sent an article from the Air Force Association magazine on the F-111. I was building models of those aircraft at that time. Eventually I became a life-member of the Air Force Association and the Chicago Historical Society because of that information that I had received. I had stacks of photographs and information. I'd ask specific questions on aircraft units, for markings and they were always extremely helpful, and at that point, they didn't have any idea that they were strengthening my enthusiasm for the service. One time, I had written about how I would like to be a chaplain in the Air Force, and I had mentioned that in my senior year at the high school level seminary, and they sent me right off to the vocations director, and a spiritual director and, "Why do you want to go into the service?"

"Well I like it, they've been..." ...makes it very interesting. So I never really got much support from the priests at the school, but didn't get the opposition. The opposition developed as I got closer to actually doing...fulfilling the dream... by personnel in the diocese.

Kiefner: When did you make the decision to go into theology? When was that decision made?

McNalis: 8th grade.

Kiefner: Ok.

McNalis: The seminary system in Chicago at that time, had a four-year high school, where we didn't board at school, we came home every night, then it started at two-years on the college for philosophy level, and then changed to four, and then four years of theology. The school is Saint Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois, named for a previous cardinal from Chicago, George Mundelein, who built the grounds; so we just referred to it as Mundelein. So someone would say, "Oh, you went to Mundelein, well that's a girl's school, college [Mundelein Roman Catholic Women's College], but, no, Mundelein is among priests, "Oh, yeah, I went to Mundelein." I don't know if any priest that said, "I went to Saint Mary of the Lake Seminary." They just said, "Oh I went to Mundelein," and they all know where that is, but that's the four years of theology, and that would have been from '72 to '76. In the college level, from '68 to '72, we had some very...a lot of protests, and they had a strike against the Vietnam War and professors were letting anyone out, who wanted to go on strike out of the

final exam, and one subject I had was philosophy. I couldn't stand it, I thought it was useless, so I asked the professor. I said that I wanted to strike for the war, and I wanted to get out of the final exam...

Kiefner: (chuckles)

McNalis: ...and he just looked at me (chuckles), and I said it was only fair, that you're letting them out, so he said, "And I know you will," so, I think three or four other students joined me. So we got out of the final exam, that was my ultimate goal, I thought, "Hey, I got out of a philosophy exam." I was looking more of, I would never have gotten out of the exam to strike against the war, so I said, "Well I'm going to support the armed forces, and get out of the class because I didn't want to get out of the exam anyway," so it worked very well.

Kiefner: So the seminary was definitely supporting the protest?

McNalis: Oh absolutely, very much so. The faculty and everything, they didn't like when I came around, because they knew the position. There was one time I had written a letter to the FBI, and I was just interested in getting some information on the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], well you had a common mail room, where they sorted the mail and you just picked up your mail after lunch and...

Kiefner: The SDS? I just want to clarify.

McNalis: The Students for Democratic Society.

Kiefner: Okay.

McNalis: Well, talk about word getting around the school that I got a letter that had

the FBI return address on it (chuckles). They thought I sent in names for people who were in the protest, never did that at all, but I said, "Well, you want to believe it, go ahead!" (laughs) So they were really afraid that I was reporting action. To this date, there'll be some priests from my, say that "Oh yeah he was reporting names," and they'll still be saying that. They got that feeling. I never did it once; but I wasn't going to change their minds so why fight it? I just sit back and I laugh at it now, because how foolish the opinions that they had -- and they weren't true -- but I got a nice letter back from the FBI and the information, and I took advantage of that knowledge. It was also during the college years that I was really starting to develop, honing in for doing some other activities, and one, I became involved with the POW-MIA issue. I had seen a Johnny Carson program and he introduced the, telling people about the VIVA [Voices in Vital America] bracelet for the POWs.

Kiefner: And what would that VIVA bracelet be?

McNalis: Similar to the one that I have now -- I still have on now -- that had the POW or an MIA's name on. They were made out of nickel and copper and then they eventually went to stainless steel because of the nickel and copper turned your hands green.

Kiefner: So it was a cuff bracelet that you wore on your wrist...

McNalis: With the person's name and date of missing in action in Vietnam.

Kiefner: And VIVA stood for?

McNalis: I'd have to look that up now, I don't...Voices... something voices, I can't

remember I used to know...

Kiefner: An acronym?

McNalis: Yes it was an acronym. Well that got me interested in the POW movement. The Air Force Association had an article on the POWs. That's just when Nixon was allowing the National League [National League of POW/MIA Families] to take a voice instead of keeping it a secret. They were letting the families come out for the torture that was existing in the POW camps. Then there was a meeting, I had seen it in the newspaper, an invitation by the National League of Families, inviting anyone who wanted to come down to what was the old Naval Armory, off on Randolph Street that is. When they redid the s-turn of Lakeshore drive that Naval Armory got torn down. But I went over there, and I had put together a scrapbook, when people were doing scrapbooks, from newspaper articles. And there were a couple of family members there, from the early formation of the National League of Families and POWs MIAs in Chicago. After that meeting with them, their response was that "someone is doing something," that they didn't think that anyone else had an interest in... around Chicago. There were other people down there, but we became friends and made contacts, and I worked with them and I got involved with the Chicago VIVA organization. We were sending out POW bracelets for people who wrote in and then had a freedom tree planted where the band shell is. The tree was torn up and the plaque was lost. County president George Dunne [Cook County Board President] had the plaque put in. We honored the 53 Illinois individuals who were

missing in action, had the dedication at the Freedom Tree, right at the corner of Monroe and Michigan. That was one of the actions that had taken place.

Larry Stark who was a POW and civilian, he was captured at TET [Tet Offensive, Vietnam War], he had been released, and was present there for that day.

Kiefner: What year was this, that the tree was planted?

McNalis: That would've been in '73, the year before I graduated, '73, '74, right around that time period.

Kiefner: And it was planted right here, at Monroe and Michigan [Pritzker Military Library is located at Monroe Street and Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL]?

McNalis: Honeysuckle. That was the best one for the pollution, and then we had the plaque dedicated for the POWs. They had given the information to Balzer (??), and he said he couldn't find the plaque; it's missing, but we had one there, for that was the POW/MIA Tree.

Kiefner: These activities were run from the Armory then, on Randolph?

McNalis: The Amory... actually our offices that we went to for the POW bracelets were in the old Red Cross one. Before they moved to the new building... are they on Ohio, that's the Red Cross building now? I think that's where I came down, and I take the "L" down and work several hours, or just pick up. At night, we'd come down and pick up all of the letters, and then take them home and mail out everything for the bracelets. I became very active and very interested with the POWs and following that activity and when the POWs were released I watched the program from the Philippines on TV,

and I recognized a number of the names and the bracelets that we had. Unfortunately we didn't... most of them were, in our family, were MIAs. I had James Young, a Colonel in the Air Force. He was released and received a letter back from him. My Dad had Jeremiah Denton, became - went to Congress. Everyone else in the family had MIAs and...

Kiefner: These were the names on the bracelets?

McNalis: On the bracelets, right. And then after I sent back the bracelet to James Young, I got a Chicagoan, Roger Ennis and he was later... they found his remains still inside an F-4 that had crashed in Haiphong, so he was never a POW, but the plane went down. That's the one I still have on and I didn't try to get any others. So I stayed very active. And then I had sent letters with stamp covers and had received a number of autographs of POWs prior to my interest of getting autographs of Medal of Honor signatures, but I had Leo Thoreson [Leo K. Thorsness, Medal of Honor Recipient] and Bud Day [George Everette "Bud" Day, Medal of Honor Recipient] as POWs, and not as Medal of Honor recipients, so very significant for that.

Kiefner: At this time, that you were active with the POWs and the MIAs, with VIVA, had you made a commitment to enlist in the Air Force yet?

McNalis: No not yet, because I still wasn't in the major seminary. I was still in college. The interesting part is though, when I was in college, that's when I turned 18, so I went to register for the draft and my birthday was December 6th and I had number 10, so I would have been in the draft. When going to register, and the person behind the desk, to this day, I know, goes

"Occupation?" I said, "Student". She looked at me, "You're one of those!" Oh! I was so angry, I said, "You have no idea what my opinions are and you're...lumped it in." So, obviously I had the student deferment at the 18th birthday and I would have been drafted if I didn't. I wasn't in the seminary, but going fast-forward, after putting in 23 years in the service, I think it made up for not getting drafted at that time (chuckles). Then by the time I was a senior in college in 1972, the Vietnam War was practically wound down. I knew what I had to do to go into the service. I had to complete one semester of the major seminary, then you could apply to go into the service as a chaplain candidate. So that's the high school and college years. Then I was active throughout my college years with the local Air Force Association, and went out to Washington for their convention. I went to the monthly meetings that we had for the Air Force Association, went on the tours that they had. I got to know the public relations officer at O'Hare and she finagled a way for me to go down to the Brass Key Air Power Demonstration at Fort Bragg, because I was interested in the service and always being active with the Air Force Association. I got up to Mundelein, the major seminary. The day after I finished the first semester of the seminary, by that time we were on quarters... it was quarters then, everything was semesters in college, but then we went to quarters at the major seminary, so that was only 10 weeks. The day after I finished the first quarter, there was a letter typed up and placed on the rector's desk that I wanted his permission to go into the Air Force Chaplain Candidate Program.

That would have been roughly November, early December of 1972. The rector at that time was Monsignor John Gorman. He's still alive at this time. He is auxiliary Bishop, although he is retired. He said okay, he'd send it in. It took until October of 1973 for all of the paperwork to go through. In October of 1973, I was sworn in as a Second Lieutenant for the Air Force.

Kiefner: At that time you were not ordained yet?

McNalis: No. I was ordained in '76. This was the purpose of the Chaplain Candidate Program. It was for all religious denominations that people who were interested in the service, while they were in the seminary, you could go get some firsthand information. It counted for good years toward retirement. What was really good, and looked back in hindsight -- I received the commissioning in October, which is also the beginning of the fiscal year, so I never had to worry about when I had to get my two weeks in, missing my annual tour between the fiscal year and my anniversary year because they were within a week of each other, so it was no problem.

Kiefner: How did your family feel about your decision to join the Air Force rather than go with a more traditional role as a Catholic priest?

McNalis: Oh no problem at all. My brother, he was thrilled, because he was for the Army. We had already done enough crazy things. By this time my mom had given up. My brother wanted to be either a police officer or a firefighter. We were going to fires in the middle of the night by that time, driving around the city and my dad said, "Well that's the service, if he wants to let him go." My dad had never said anything about my brother leaving

the seminary. They never pushed me to finish, or "Oh your brother left now you should, you have to stay." Our parents were completely... they supported any decision, but truly it was our decision. You could never say that we were forced to do something that was against our choice. Then in '73 I got the commission. When I finished second year at the seminary, I had the opportunity to go onto active duty and the service allowed us for, at that time, 90 days of active duty on an annual basis. Well, I had the entire summer off and I signed up for a tour and I was sent to Plattsburgh Air Force Base, upper state New York. The base is now closed. Also went to the familiarization course down to Maxwell during the middle of the summer from Plattsburgh, so I was flying from Chicago up to Plattsburgh, from Plattsburgh to Maxwell, back to Plattsburgh, so I had this wonderful time that I was going to be doing all of this flying, going somewhere for the entire summer. That year ended my time living at home. That was the last time, other than a few days here and there, that was the end of it. I was no longer at home. Home was either a parish or the service, where I went. Up at Plattsburgh at that time, they were flying FB-111s and I got to know some of the personnel from the chapel. One of the maintenance personnel said, "Oh I go out all the time at night, you're more than welcome to come out as uh." So we'd go out in the con-truck and watch the aircraft kick in the afterburners, and take off, and I was just fascinated. Here I'm right with the aircraft personnel. Then had an ROTC group doing their active duty and the active duty personnel were in the VOQ (Visiting Officer's Quarters) where I

was living for that summer. We were all cooking our own food that night and so you'd just get started talking, and "where you're from" and "what you're doing," and "just Chaplain Candidate," and everything. It worked out really nice that I would go out to see the ROTC people, because, just a couple of years older than they were, they're in college, and I was just two years older so...

Kiefner: So you were in the Chaplaincy Program with the Air Force?

McNalis: Air Force, correct.

Kiefner: And were most of the people you were surrounded by other chaplain candidates or they were general airmen?

McNalis: No, not at all. These were all Air Force personnel. Only when I was at Maxwell were we with the other chaplains. One time they invited me to join them... that the Cubs were playing the Montreal. So they took a bus up to, and they said, "Well you're from Chicago, you've got to come to the baseball game," so we went up to Jarry Park. We're out in left field and the guy said, "Well we're in a foreign country, Canada (chuckles), so we're going to cheer for the American team (chuckles)." So they were all cheering for the Cub fans, although, they were anything but (chuckles). It got announced over at WGN that there was a contingent from Plattsburgh Air Force Base of loyal Cub fans (laughs). They had sent a note up to Lou Boudreau. It got announced. So I heard from folks that, "Yeah they announced that they were Cub fans." Most of them were from all other cities, but they said, "hey we're going to vote for the American team." Anyways, so we had a real

good time up there. Then with the youth group, we camped in the Adirondacks. I had just a truly a great time. Then we went down to Maxwell Air Force Base for 21 days for the Chaplain Candidate Familiarization Course. We were the first class to go there. They had no idea what to do with us because we weren't ordained yet, didn't know if we were going to be in the service or not. So they developed the program around what they had been doing with the regular orientation, but we were an interesting crew for them. We had played one joke on the Commandant for the end of the year. We got together and we painted, guys painted a turkey similar to the colonel insignia, and on each of the tail feathers of the turkey we put our name, and so we were the Turkeys, "Gobble Ergo Sum," and we put that on the globe (chuckles). When he got it, he didn't know what he wanted to do with it. It was horrible (chuckles).

Kiefner: This would have been you and the other chaplain candidates going to school?

McNalis: Yes, yes.

Kiefner: Clarify for me. You said that you weren't confirmed to enter the Air Force after chaplain school? Everyone was not committed at this time?

McNalis: No, if we left the seminary, even though we were second lieutenants, we had no commitment for the service. As a matter of fact, you lost your commission if you left the seminary. It didn't transfer over, that you went to another school, another college. It was tied to you being ordained and then receiving an endorsement from your military religious institution giving an

endorsement on to the service. So it was a win-win situation for everyone. And then I didn't have to have a summer job because I received second lieutenant's pay, which was a lot more than I was making in a summer job. So the Chaplain Candidate Program, so we were the familiarization course, so we started calling ourselves the turkeys. And that continued on until they redesigned the library down at Maxwell, and all of a sudden, several other classes afterwards were also known as the turkeys, and they got rid of everything. No one knows what happened, they just.. I don't think they liked the idea of using that terminology. So they just threw everything away and that's completely wiped out of any existence of the familiarization course. I don't even know if they still have that aspect of the program, but had just really met a lot of good guys, other priests, other seminarians who became priests, guys who didn't, other religious denominations. I just had a great time down there. One thing that we learned very quickly, that you never walked against traffic -- you didn't want to have to salute a general's car -- so down at Maxwell everything is manicured grass and everything, so we always made sure that we had our backs to the oncoming traffic. Oh, we learned real early what to do, but then we'd go to the pool, and then five o'clock had to get out of the pool for when they retired the colors. Driving the car, you had to stop. If you weren't undercover, salute. So you learned some of traditions and things back there. Then I went back up to Plattsburgh. As I said, I had a real positive experience. At this time, back at the seminary, the rector had changed. A different priest was the rector, and

we didn't get along very well. He did not like my desires to go into the chaplaincy, and he just made times miserable, and stated that I had to have an evaluation, after I came back -- that they wanted the priests that I was at the base to send an evaluation of my work. I said, "That's fine, but I don't want you to ask for it until after I finish at Maxwell. I want to be there not under any judgment, doing what I want to do." Well, when I'm down at Maxwell, I found out that they had already sent the letter. I get a call from them, "What's this letter from there?" I hit the ceiling. I called the seminary and said, "You promised. What'd you do?" And they had nothing to say to me, because they knew that they had promised, and they sent it anyway. After I went back, finished at Plattsburgh, not one priest was given the evaluation that I got from the chaplains at Maxwell, because it was good. I did a lot of work and really enjoyed everything and that wasn't passed on. Now if it was a poor evaluation, everyone would have received it and stuff. They wouldn't give that information of how well I fit in.

Kiefner: So it was rector at Plattsville?

McNalis: The rector at the seminary who didn't pass on the information from the Air Force chaplains that I was with at Plattsburgh.

Kiefner: Okay.

McNalis: And they were real nice, *real* nice guys. So it went back, and then the next time that I had an assignment would be... Now, I was ordained a deacon the following year. The present time, there is a different order of ordination. We were deacons for a year, now you're only a deacon for a couple of

months. But what's significant is that, as a deacon, I'm an ordained minister and still can't do anything as a priest yet. I'm not a priest yet, but I can bless fruits and nuts, and that's pretty much what everyone is. So that's about the only thing that you could do. (chuckles)

Kiefner: You were in the Air Force at this time, ordained as a deacon, but not as a priest.

McNalis: But I am still a chaplain candidate, because I wasn't a priest yet. So I'm still wearing a Second Lieutenant. So my assignment that time, we'd go out, I had to go to a parish. But then I had 30 days before going to the parish, so I decided, "Hey, I'll take a tour," so I went to Lowry Air Force Base, out in Colorado. Had an excellent time there and eventually, one of the priests that I was with was Dick Higgins. He is currently now a Bishop of the military ordinariate, the Archdiocese. He retired and they ordained him a bishop. He was a character. Higgins, a foreign born Irishman. He had a wit, but he was a pixie. He never got caught with the stuff that he pulled (chuckles). But oh, he had a... there was one priest while we were up there that was leaving, a change of assignment and Higgins got a wheelchair at the airport to wheel him to the plane (chuckles), so that he was handicapped. So he pulled off all of these little, devilish little things. And the two of them went back and forth with each other. So he survived, and he made it through his career in the service, and now he's a bishop (chuckles).

Kiefner: That's funny.

McNalis: Then, when, in 1976, when I was ordained a Priest. Before I had to report to

a parish I decided, “Well let’s take another tour.” (chuckles) So I end up going down to Hurlburt Field, the auxiliary base at Eglin [Eglin AFB].

Kiefner: And where’s that at?

McNalis: Special forces on the panhandle for Florida. And that was really up my... I really enjoyed that assignment. But I was still a Second Lieutenant. Here I’m a priest. That’s where they had the biggest joke, that all priests are captains in the service automatically. Oh, and I’m a Second Lieutenant. And I couldn’t yet wear the cross... oh yes we could, at that point, I could. That was the first time, since I was ordained. But they had just a blast with that. But there was no other priests there, so I’m having all the masses. I was actually useful at that point, that they needed a priest. I wasn’t an extra finger. I had the opportunity to go on a flight on an AC-130, and the pilot apologized afterwards. He said, “Oh if you were on active duty we could have had a wet-firing, but since you’re still in the reserves, we couldn’t do it.” So I didn’t get to see the firing the mini guns.

Kiefner: So you were actually in the reserves. They considered, going through your chaplaincy training, it was the reserves prior to your active duty?

McNalis: Correct, building up the time towards retirement.

Kiefner: So you were ordained while you were in the reserves.

McNalis: Reserves, right.

Kiefner: Oh, okay. So you were taking tours, but you had not been commissioned and assigned?

McNalis: Well I had been commissioned a Second Lieutenant, but that was it. So I

wasn't set up as a chaplain, but I was taking these annual tours which gave me the points for every year. All the training points that I needed to get a good year, that you had to have the 35 points, and then they gave you the 15 points. If you had 50 points you had a good year, so I was, right from the very beginning, I knew how to, I kept my own records, and make sure that you didn't lose any of this time. But I really enjoyed it, and I came back to a parish, and I had already been saying mass, had baptisms. I was preaching, before guys had taken time off, I had been working. I come to the parish and I had that actual income. Then it took a couple of years between writing to Cardinal Cody then, to allow me to stay in the service. My dad wrote, and I wrote, and each time Cody would write back, I would send him another letter, so I never received the letter (laughs).

Kiefner: So the Cardinal did not want you to stay in the service?

McNalis: No he didn't -- right -- he didn't give me the endorsement, but finally he relented to let me stay in the reserves. That would have been about 1978. Uh, pastor that I was at, he had no objections to me being in the reserves, so then I started my reserve tour at O'Hare.

Kiefner: What was Cardinal Cody's reluctance to let you stay in the Air Force as a chaplain?

McNalis: They were afraid of losing priests from the diocese. Here I'm newly ordained; he didn't want someone to go and then not come back. So it was that key thing that they didn't want to give up the priests who had gone through the seminary system. They wanted you to be ordained for the...

Kiefner: But you had also gone through the Air Force Chaplaincy system as well?

McNalis: Right, right. And then when I went back down for the orientation course -- down at Maxwell -- it was the same thing as the familiarization course, and that's when we really had a couple of the guys that I had been with were back down there, so we had an opportunity to continue where we left off (laughs).

Kiefner: At Maxwell?

McNalis: At Maxwell, right.

Kiefner: So was Maxwell your first assignment on active duty?

McNalis: On active duty... right, because I was doing the tours and so I also went to the courses too. My first active duty assignment was Scott Air Force Base. But when I was down at Maxwell then, one time I just decided to go over to the options, see if there was anyone flying for the weekend. I had the weekend off, and a Pilot said, "Yeah we're going to Rees Air Force Base. We're going in a C-7 Caribou." Before the Army had taken, had just gotten those, before they retired them. So I went off for a weekend, came back Friday afternoon, went back when they were taking off and got on board, and flew the whole weekend, and came back Sunday night. Guys said, "Where'd you go?" I said, "Oh, to Texas." "Well, what for?" "Just to fly." (chuckles) Then when we landed at Reece there was no room. The pilot took care of me and I got the VOQ for general's room at the base.

Kiefner: Now VOQ being?

McNalis: Visiting Officer's Quarters. They put me in the General's room to sleep (laughs). So, and I just had a good time flying that weekend and it killed some time for the hard traveling, and then while you're down there with nothing to do on the weekends, (??) a trip.

Kiefner: So tell me about your first active duty assignment.

McNalis: First active duty assignment was interesting that I was stationed at Scott Air Force Base, Belleville, Illinois, and the... maybe the first thing... the personnel at the base -- absolutely fantastic -- I'm still in touch with people from Scott Air Force Base. The staff, especially the senior Protestant Chaplain -- absolutely miserable -- and he is the reason that I never stayed on active duty. I stayed only for three years and then left the service. His name was Ron Carlton. He forgot that I was in the chaplain candidate program when he was an instructor down there. He started talking about other priests and other chaplains in a derogatory way. I'm the new chaplain I don't know that, well I knew these people because I had been with them at different bases. I had been in the service for five years and I was doing the tours. So I had come across some of these people that -- someone brand new wouldn't know any of this -- but he had forgotten that we had been together, at this point. He was an individual. He was the youngest full-bird Colonel, and he wanted to become Chief of Chaplains, and he thought he had it made. It would have been the worst move that Air Force did make a wise decision not promoting him to BG, but he was an individual that anything...

he had the ethic of a workaholic for other people, and anytime he came up with an idea it meant we had more work to do. He didn't participate in any of it, he just had the idea and then our work, our accomplishment made him look good. He had a private practice going on and he had his secretary, who was paid by the government, do all of his interviews typing. Instead of her work, he was using her to do his private work. Eventually it worked out while he was in Japan and he got fired, sent back to the States by the base commander. So it finally caught up to him, but he had ruined me on the OPR at that time, now they are the...

Kiefner: OPR?

McNalis: Officer Proficiency Report. I was only there a year but he had just marked it enough that it was a killer for that early in my career you could see. At that point I just, one other priest said, "This is a terrible one," he said. "This is going to kill you." It didn't kill me to make up to major, which is the rank that I retired at. But then I decided that I saw what was going to happen, how they could be very cleverly... We had the prayer breakfast, and I had no problem when, there was a big hup-de-do and (??) didn't want to do the prayer breakfast. It's just a way for the higher brass to, they give the First Lieutenants to do the work and then they get all the credit, well this is the way Ron Carlton was. He was a micromanager. I was doing more work in the parish and handling more money than the cost of the breakfast that he had, but he didn't do any work but micromanaged everything that you did because this was a very important event... it was... it worked.

Kiefner: How many other Chaplains were at Scott Air Force Base?

McNalis: At that time there were a total of three priests, Carlton was the senior chaplain, and I think there were three Protestant chaplains including Carlton. Then we had the Air Command and you had two priests there but they weren't attached to the base. So one priest that was down there is now deceased. The other one left the priesthood and he got married -- I'm still in touch with him. The one priest that I was with, he had a foul mouth, my dad even remarked when he came down he goes, "Who is that guy?" He was really unimpressed by his language. When a person meets someone you think you're up in your best manners and stuff. Those were his best manners and that's how my dad was unimpressed by him. The Protestant chaplains were really nice. We did have one who was a rogue chaplain -- retired while on active duty and he did nothing. The one system that was a real problem at Scott was being on call. Everything was split 50/50, but that's not how the work worked out. One week a Protestant chaplain would be on call, but then a Catholic priest had to back up to be available for any Catholic calls. Well then the next week a Catholic priest was the primary chaplain and then a Protestant was the backup. Well the problem was that the Protestant didn't need any backup because people never called anyone. So we were constantly on call either as the backup or the primary. Well, when I went to Wright-Pad they changed that around, said, "well you get most of the calls all the time, so we're not going to put the priests on as the primary." So we only took the back up, so that we were on only every three

weeks, not the other times. And that's where it worked out much better -- different leadership style at different bases. Carlton then also had the idea that we had to say goodbye to the C-9 Nightingales when they started their flights at five in the morning or six in the morning, but you had to get to the base before they took off, so you had to be by the planes by 5:30 just to go in and see the passengers who had no interest at that hour in the morning -- their patients going to other places. But this was something that he was able to write down, that all the chaplains visited all these aircraft and stuff.

Kiefner: You say patients?

McNalis: We had a major hospital at Scott and they were moving them around the country on the C-9 Nightingale, the Red Cross aircraft. Well while I was I decided, "well let me push the envelope." You know I had come in at 5:30, so my duty day is over at eight hours later. So I wanted to leave at one o'clock, 1:30, and oh that started stirring something that other chaplains agreed. They thought this was the right thing that we shouldn't have to stay the whole day, and that upset Carlton, because then guys... But that went through because he was requiring us to be there, because you couldn't go back home at that hour you had to go in... so that worked out. The other thing while I was at Scott where you're out running, and doing the mile and a half run, and all the physical fitness, and I ran every day and enjoyed it.

Kiefner: So were the requirements different for a chaplain then a general airman as far as that training, like you said, you know the running, the fitness?

McNalis: No we were on the exact same schedule, the only problem was that airmen

was 18 years old and we were in our late 20s and early 30s, (chuckles) that was the only problem. The other chaplains were running too, so I had no problem with it just as long as I stayed in shape. I had to always watch diet and careful along those lines. I allude to the fact that, again at Scott Air Force Base, I'm still in touch with people and this past year I went back down for a priest who celebrated his 35th anniversary of ordination. Then I was down at the base because he's in that local area and people who are with him are retirees from Scott. We went back to Scott and I saw the C-17 for the first time I'd seen one of those because they haven't been up here in Chicago, came in for a landing so I got a picture of the C-17 coming in. So we went around the chapel and the base, where it's changed, because after O'Hare closed the tankers at O'Hare went down to Scott. You had the guard and the reserves out at O'Hare. I was with the reserves, the 130s the 928th but then the tankers went to state and they went to Scott.

Kiefner: What was a typical day like at Scott, with your duties as a priest there? Did you have your own parish?

McNalis: Well that's the one. That's why I've always loved the Air Force. It is an actual parish and because of the infrastructure of an Air Force base, we're not in a tent. My prejudice towards the army (laughs). So you had a chapel and you had the daily functions, and once folks got to meet you and get to know you, that you're the new permanent party, PCS [Permanent Change of Station], they were just thrilled to see that first weekend that I had mass at Scott a couple came up and said, "Are you going home for Thanksgiving?"

I said, “No I’m going to be here,” because this was September. They said, “Well come over to our house for Thanksgiving dinner.” So I had that holiday already marked off the first week that I’m there and I go, “They didn’t know me, but welcomed ya right away to make sure that you weren’t going to be left out on your own.” That was really, really special for them, and their son was at the Air Force Academy at that time too. The duty day was eight o’clock, during the good weather, and Scott is really humid with St. Louis so it was tough. I tried to ride my bike to the base but my uniform was just soaking wet afterwards so ended up I didn’t do much cycling to the base. It was easier to drive because of the nighttime assignments and the roads weren’t well lit. Riding a bike on a highway back home wasn’t the safest thing so I found it easier to just drive and I’ll run for the exercise even though I would have enjoyed the cycling. From what I can remember, I think eight o’clock was the beginning of the duty day, until four o’clock. We had Monday, if... Carlton was off, so that was a great, just relaxing, everyone was really happy with that. Then Tuesday we had a staff meeting and they just went on for... on and on and on, so it used up the whole afternoon, absolute... or if we had it in the morning, we had 11:30 mass and that’s what broke it up, “Oh we have to leave for mass,” and we’d all kind of celebrate (laughs). Even some of the Protestants wanted to celebrate so they could get out of the meeting.

Kiefner: What was you mentioned, that the head was, he was Protestant...

McNalis: Yes.

Kiefner: What was the general breakdown of the base, the denominations of the servicemen on that base?

McNalis: Belleville is a very Catholic area it's German, they try to avoid sending Catholics out to Hill because that was Mormon. There weren't any base, but the needs of the Air Force can't always go according to denomination. You had, I think, a higher percentage of people were Catholic at Scott because they had they had the ability to go to churches in the community. So, I would say that there was, it was at least 50/50, it was a decent split. We had... I'm trying to think of how many masses we had... one in the hospital chapel, I think three, a Saturday mass and two on Sunday. We had enough masses that everyone was saying at least one mass and if priest was off on leave then we were saying two masses for a weekend.

Kiefner: Did the Catholic priests and the protestant ministers share the same chapel and this was all in one church?

McNalis: Yes, all the time. My second assignment was to Wright-Paterson and there we had a Russian Orthodox Catholic, and we had an off-base Rabbi came in, and we had the Protestants. So we were really tight since they had individuals for all those denominations recognized, they had chapel time, we shared that. It got problems with the calendar sometimes when Passover was the same as the Christian events, and then with the Orthodox it happened, it doesn't happen all the time, but Easter sometimes is the same for everyone (chuckles) and they keep trying to bounce schedules around there. That was a different situation. In the morning what generally, at the

beginning of the week, I had a baptism over the weekend or filling out the monthly reports that had to go to the military, I did that the first thing on Monday and to this day I do all of my sacramental work. A lot of priests will give that to the secretary, but I said, "The secretary was not here over the weekend. They do not know if that person showed up and I do know because I either had it or they didn't come. If they didn't come I have no work to do." But I would do all of the paperwork and send everything in the first thing on Monday, whatever had to be done for over the weekend for reports, and then I kept a constant date, I would already fill them in so that I didn't have to go back on the calendar at the end of the month counting up the stuff that I did. "Alright I had two masses this weekend," so I'd mark them as, and just keep track of that. Then... you might have someone, an airman call once to see you, that didn't happen that often, but. We didn't have a morning mass at the chapel, but we had an afternoon mass, and so the three priests, we all kind of celebrated, took turns who would be the main celebrant and who would preach, and then talk to the folks who came to Church, to the chapel. Then the three of us, we'd meet if the command chaplains were in town, we'd go over to the club for lunch, and then we would sit down with other people. It was really a social gathering because we didn't eat by ourselves. If anyone from the chapel, another officer... because we went to the O-Club, it wasn't open for enlisted personnel, if there was another officer at the mass, they sat down and joined us and we just talked and had a good opportunity to be, if there was a commander and

they invited you to come somewhere to something, you worked on your calendar and said, “oh yeah I’ll be there for you,” and everything else, or “why don’t you come over to the office and I’ll show you around.” You always took advantage of that because you had personal invitations so you wanted to do that. Then in the afternoon Ralph (??) was the hospital chaplain, he did all the visitations to the hospital. He was excellent in covering the personnel, and Scott wasn’t a real big hospital, but it kept you going. In the afternoon I’d walk around doing some visitations and then we had a number of night parish meetings. So sometimes I would go back to my apartment to eat or most of the times then I would just, at the end of the duty day, I would cook something to eat in the hall and just wait until the parish meetings and then go home afterwards. Because people came early and you’d sit around and talk and try to, you know, read or something like that. On Sunday that was the different group there, a couple of young children, they’re both married and have kid themselves but, this one family, we all gathered and we went over to the NCO club after the morning mass.

Kiefner: The NCO?

McNalis: The enlisted, Non-Commissioned Officer.

Kiefner: Non-Commissioned Officers, ok.

McNalis: And we’d have the breakfast at, you know, 10 o’clock and we’d be still there until 2 o’clock in the afternoon. Well that pretty well took care of your day. So we had fun with the kids. I just enjoyed it because that’s the one thing that I had missed from the parish. You got the kids on Sunday but

you didn't have the school or anything else during the week, but you made up for it on the weekends and something. We had a very good arrangement. If a priest had mass on Saturday he didn't have mass on Sunday, and if he had on Sunday, uh, he didn't, or if he had it on Saturday he didn't have it on Sunday. So we got at least one extra day that you could do something, so I would take tours around Southern Illinois, and then we went over to the baseball games, the Cardinals. Went into St Louis a lot as individuals with different families being so close. I was never... you always had something to do, you had a lot of walk-ins. In that time period where people wanted to set up for weddings or, the one problem... we didn't have too many funerals, but there was always the problem, and I don't know if it still exists, I don't see how it could get away, with the retirees. Retirees do not have any rights at all to the chapel. Even though they lived there at a base for 20 years and are the backbone of activities, if it comes for the needs of the Air Force, and so they didn't have a right to have a funeral at a chapel. And that always caused a real heartburn and constant arguments of well, "the retirees are asking too much." You know it could easily have been handled differently, but this was determined to have it the confrontational way. So they had a couple of priests come in, scripture scholars from off base to offer presentations. I went to those. We were invited as being at Scott to participate in activities that parishes in the Belleville area and so we did, and that's how I got to know some of the priests. At other base, at Wright-Pat, we never got any invitations to go to other parishes, so we didn't do that.

Kiefner: So you met priests at parishes outside of the Air Force Base?

McNalis: And so we participated with that, for lent and penance services. So you were doing things more, but I was only there a year and then I got transferred. I was due to go to the RADAR sites up in Alaska, but then they went to contract and then my assignment got changed from... I had had so much of Carlton I was ready to get out and so the commanding general said, "Well where do you want to go?" And he offered me and I said, "Well, I'll go to Wight-Pat," and so I got assigned to Wright-Pat and I was at Wright-Pat for two years.

Kiefner: And how long were you at Scott Air Force Base? One year?

McNalis: One year.

Kiefner: And then on to Wright-Paterson?

McNalis: For two years.

Kiefner: What were some of the differences when you got to Wright-Paterson from Scott, aside from you mentioned more denominations? You had a Rabbi there.

McNalis: Well we had three chapels, it was a huge base. You could drive nine miles and still be next to the base. It was just a huge base. They had the Air Force Museum, so the first weekend I was there I went to the museum that Sunday, that was a big joke for, I just was there every time I had an opportunity I took advantage. Whatever assignment I had, wherever I was, whether I was in a reserve weekend, I made sure that I was out. I didn't stay in the hotel, I didn't stay in the cue, I didn't stay in my apartment, I was

doing something, taking advantage of learning something that, well I might not be back here again, I might not have six months from now to do it. I went out and enjoyed, took the opportunity, I hadn't been to a base that I said, "Oh I wish I had done that." I made sure that I travelled around and visited people. At Wright-Paterson they had a folk group and you had a lot of Air Force Academy grads come to Wright-Paterson because they were the scientists, the non-pilots, their first assignments were to Wright-Pat because they had just finished, and this was all of the testing and putting their skills to work and a number of the cadets, former cadets, were active in the church and they were in the Folk Group and, well I had...

Kiefner: What was that group, you said the...Folk?

McNalis: Folk Group. Musicians for mass.

Kiefner: Ok! Folk Musicians, ok, I just wanted to clarify.

McNalis: And so they sang the choir and there was one gal I got to know, she was an electrical engineer, and our friendship has stayed on that a couple years ago I celebrated her wedding up in, from 83', met her in 83, and eventually celebrated her wedding and such so, you're still in touch with those people. She sent, she and her husband, sent Christmas notes this year. I'm still in touch with folks from those two assignments. I go, "Thank goodness I didn't have a career at 20 bases." (chuckles) Just the two bases I'm still in touch with, calling people, sending emails to this day. Wright-Paterson has the Air Force Museum but it has three areas, chapels A, B and C. I was at the C chapel for most of the time and it was... you're away from everyone.

But during the week we went up the hill, in one of the offices they had a daily afternoon mass, and you had people who would come from the different labs for the mass, and it was a great opportunity to see those folks that they wouldn't have had the time to get over to the chapel because the distance for traveling, and just they didn't have that much time because they still wanted to eat lunch. We didn't do as much socializing during the day at Wright-Paterson, we did more of the priest, in the evenings, but one priest lived off base and one lived on base. I lived off base and we were a lot further away so we didn't have the same opportunities. Scott was smaller and the priests were closer to, where we lived and everything, so it was easier to get together. You weren't putting on a lot of miles. At Wright-Paterson it was really a much more relaxed atmosphere and I was really involved with the religious-ed, religious education for the Sunday program. We had just a good program. I did a retreat program that I had been involved in in the parish, Teens Encounter Christ for seniors in high school. We had never, it hadn't been done at any Air Force Base, it wasn't that big of a program, they were doing it down at Scott in the local parishes so one of the priests said, "Well, why don't you do one here?" And how that worked was that the families...

(Scratching noise)

McNalis: Um...

Kiefner: No, that's fine.

McNalis: Ok. We brought, families came in and cooked for the teenagers for all the

meals. We used the base after-care for our sleeping bags. The base commander opened up the gym so they could take showers for the weekend. We just had a... it worked really, really well. The one thing in the service, to get money for the chapel, it's amazing how much pre-planning you have to do. You have to submit a cost, then you have to go to the fund council with your anticipated needs, then they have to cut the check, and then you have to spend it in a certain period of time. So it took you about three months so that you could have the money for the event, then you had to go and shop and buy the food. Well the president of the fund council, his son went on the first retreat one that we had, and he and his son weren't getting along really well, a teenager -- father's in the service, son didn't really want to be in the service (chuckles) -- but he was stuck in the service. And so after that weekend he hadn't talked at all, he didn't want to be here. Well he was at the table with this one gal that I knew, and she said, "We're not leaving until everyone says something." Well he was the one who didn't say anything, it just went on and on, and finally he said, "I had a good time." She got up, threw the pillow at him, and said, "We could have been out of here an hour ago if you had said that!" (laughs) He was sky high, he was enjoying it. Well he got home and at the next parish council his dad said everything had changed with his relationship with him, and when we talked about doing another one of the retreats the father said, "Whatever you want, you've got it. I know this thing works." So that was a good experience. There was a chaplain book about the history of the Air Force Chaplains and they have a

small article, I had submitted that we did a tech-retreat program at Wright-Paterson, and it's in that history of the chaplaincy. And then one other fellow who was on the tech-program back in 83' is now five-out to be Brigadier General of the Air Force (chuckles). So those programs, it works and had good relationship with it. When Lucy had a fun time, I told her that make-a-list.com was her nickname.

Kiefner: Lucy was?

McNalis: The officer in the Air Force and then I celebrated her wedding. She's an electrical engineer, but she made a list of things, and it was a two page list for the reader to read one reading at her wedding (chuckles). But she had it absolutely detailed out. Part of the ceremony from the Catholic services is light a unity candle, the three candles you light one, well Lucy practiced lighting her candles before the wedding (chuckles) that's how prepared... well she burnt down the candles and they wouldn't light the unity candle. Well her husband, who wasn't an electrical engineer but a retired major, took the one candle stuck in on top of the other one. It looked like a rocket (chuckles). So we just said, "Well there's a way to fix something, that's going to do it," but those are the memories that you have that go back from 83' to, now we're 2012 and we're still in touch with people from both sides. So then after the two years that I was at Wright-Paterson I decide to go back to the diocese and stayed in the reserves. When I left the Air Force there wasn't a slot available at O'Hare so I ended up going into the Army National Guard, which I spent five years until I made promotion, and I have

absolutely no pictures of me in an Army Uniform. Absolutely nothing. No Army uniforms. No Army patches. Nothing!

Kiefner: What were some of the differences between the Army and the Air Force chaplaincy?

McNalis: Civilization. (laughs)

Kiefner: Tell me a little about...

McNalis: Well, we were in a building (laughs). I had hot meals.

Kiefner: In the Air Force?

McNalis: In the Air Force. You wore blue shirt, blue pants, shoes. In the army you're in a tent, camping overnight, cooking overnight, in mud, dirt, dust and very few people who are Catholic, because we were with the National Guard out of Chicago. So artillery units, really there weren't Catholics so there was not a whole lot to do for mass, they didn't know what mass was. So you had the services. I went to Fort Monmouth, I spent more time. I enjoyed going to the chaplains' schools for that part, but as far as the... It was a CAT-A assignment, so it was once a month so you made it do, but I was Air Force. So the first opportunity I had I got back into the Air Force and then finished up my career in the reserves at Grissom Air Force Base [Indiana] and back to O'Hare. So came full circle from, started at O'Hare and ended up at O'Hare and I retired in '97.

Kiefner: What were some of the challenges that you faced belonging to two different institutions, both the military and your religious institution? Was there any conflict between those two roles?

McNalis: No, I didn't have because I didn't have... I so much wanted to be in the service and I was so... I wasn't brainwashed but I was committed to the service. I was committed to, I supported our country, so I had no problem with... there was any conflict between what the church said, and I had more problems when I was in the seminary working with the administration when they still had your hand over you. As a matter of fact the day I was ordained, the Rector put up a letter inviting anyone who wanted to go into the chaplaincy to let him know and a couple guys said, "Can you believe this? What they put you through?" And then he puts, as we call, the day we're ordained, the day we're ordained, inviting anyone who wanted to be in the service (chuckles).

Kiefner: Why do you suppose that might have happened?

McNalis: Because I was stubborn enough to make it through.

Kiefner: But you think it might have opened their minds then?

McNalis: Yes. Now Cardinal George is very open. He still allowed a lot of guys to go into the service. Most of them, I don't understand why, but they go into the army. I can't understand that. When I was trying to get, thinking about going back into the service, and I couldn't keep the weight off because I was in my 50s then. It's a lot harder then. He just asked, "Well why do you want to go into the service?" I said, "It's the best." He just looked at me. He couldn't understand and I said, "I just can't see why anyone would not want to go into the Air Force. It's the best." One night we were getting ready for the Congressional Medal of Honor convention and Alan Lynch was there,

he's standing next to me and he's singing Junior Blooper. The Army Air Force ties. I got along with General Morley (??) a lot better (laughs).

Kiefner: What was the military's attitude toward religious freedom? You went in as a Catholic priest, would you say that as an institution they had any bias or preference?

McNalis: No, that was... While I was in we also had the Bishop's paper against nuclear weapons. At that time I wrote a letter to President Reagan and told him I didn't agree with it (laughs). So I was, I was opposed to what the bishops had written on that, and then the Vatican under John Paul didn't like the independence of the bishops writing these papers, and so they put an end to them because the last one that they had in the US was the economics one, but we don't have that thought pattern anymore, that independent thinking. I miss that aspect because the bishops are too much of a... they didn't want to give them that independence to do those types of rights so it's not done anymore. There were never any problems with the service, but even through my entire priesthood I have never used the pulpit to do political thoughts. I was subject to that when I was growing up, and just horrible arguments that we would have at home, and everyone agreed with each other, but you never talked about politics or religion. And I said, "I'll never have people sit in church and harangue about something that I don't know what their political thoughts are but give my opinion" and just, it irritated me. When I was in the service, and to this day, I only go with scripture and I try to make it in a positive aspect that, "You're here. Feel good about

today and take something,” and so when people left church, you didn’t challenge them to something’s going on around them in this world it’s, no go home and enjoy your family. So I never had a problem where, you know sometimes you’ll have a base commander will have to complain about a chaplain for saying something. Well I never would have given them a chance to because I wouldn’t say something that would threaten their authority and at the same time was never told what you had to say either. We had more people at Wright-Paterson who were in the upper ranks who were Catholics than we did at Scott, because at Scott I think they went off base. Never had anyone question it. I don’t know what any of the things that would have been a problem with us for... at this time. And it was such a short period of time for the three years because we had a chapel at O’Hare and I was at Grissom and we had the chapel there too. But no, I had real positive experience because no one ever said anything that you can’t say that I wanted to say something. I never put myself into that compromising position that would open myself up, that you’d have to be reprimanded for crossing the line that...what you did. Now we had workshops at Wright-Paterson. Wright-Paterson was what you had your second doctorate in. Really brilliant people at Wright-Paterson, and they were very concerned about, that Bishops’ Pastoral Plan, but we brought in people and went through it and on a very educated level. I think the people on the base were better educated than people in civilian communities, because it was such a controversial issue, but it was accepted and now it’s not even, that’s way in

the past now.

Kiefner: Tell me about some of your tours to bases outside the US.

McNalis: I had more assignments outside when I was in the Reserves, never went on active duty. I've been to Yokota and Rhein-Main, Ramstein, and then spent two weeks in February at Hickam Air Force Base.

[Yokota Air Base, Japan. Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany. Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.]

Kiefner: Tell me a little about each of those where they were and...

McNalis: What happened was that, being at O'Hare we had the opportunity to... the senior chaplain made sure that each priest, every chaplain had a flying unit that he was assigned to. So we visited those flying units, or all the units on, they were only there once a month, so that one weekend you went out on Saturday and Sunday and you made sure you visited your units. Everyone was committed to doing it who were there, and we all did and we had a chart that we marked off and stuff. Obviously each chaplain got to know their people and we were always asked for our two weeks if you wanted to go with the unit, and so I got to go with the units that went to Hickam, Yokota, Rhein-Main, and Ramstein. So a month, that's four years of travelling.

Kiefner: Hickam Yokota would be in Japan?

McNalis: Japan, right. So we flew to those bases and we went commercial to Hickam and Japan. One trip to Rhein-Main was commercial. Ramstein we went 130s across the pond.

Kiefner: So you were in the Air Force Reserves, stationed at O'Hare

McNalis: With the Reserves.

Kiefner: And the Reserves flew commercial airline...

McNalis: No, no. The units went on commercial aircraft but only one of the trips that I had crew orders that I flew over with the 130s. Of the 14 days I think we were flying eight of them.

Kiefner: Okay, but you flew commercials?

McNalis: You got a TR, a travel request, to go to the base, and we spend our two weeks at the base. It was nice when we went to Hickam. We got in there on Presidents Day so that was a day off (chuckles). Leaving Chicago in February, it was really difficult to tell the parish that I had a hardship assignment coming up (chuckles), that I really would rather stay here in Chicago in February but I do have to go, so I usually didn't say anything. Just I have to do my two weeks assignment. But it was really hard to say that I was going to Hawaii for two weeks in February (laughs).

Kiefner: To put things back in order, after your five years with the Army National Guard, you went into the Air Force Reserves...

McNalis: I went back into the reserves and had spent five years at Grissom Air Force Base, driving over there. That was sometimes really tough because that was a CAT-B assignment and it was less training, but the hardest part was the moment I got up and got on the road it was already an hour later because they were an hour ahead.

Kiefner: And a CAT-A, a Category A assignment, what would that be?

McNalis: A CAT-A assignment was a weekend a month, plus the two. So you trained

with the unit and you really got to know the people much closer than with the CAT-B assignment that I was just assigned to the base and you just came in there, you did your day and I would try to do a couple of days so I didn't have to go back. You still had to get through 12 drills but you only got your 12 points. Where if you had 12 drills with a CAT-A you had 24 points.

Kiefner: And Grissom was where?

McNalis: Peru, Indiana. Peru, Indiana used to be Bunker Hill Air Force Base and they used to have B-58s there that did the sonic boom test over Chicago in the 60s. So that made it interesting when I went there, that I already knew the history of Bunker Hill but then it's Grissom. They had A-10s there and then they had, is it an E-3 aircraft, 747 Whitebird, one's in the air all the time.

Kiefner: So when you were not on duty at Grissom during your reserve time, how did you spend your time?

McNalis: Well then I was in the parish. Just did the drills onto the calendar trying to get over there to make sure that I had the number of... watching the points, number of days that you could get, and then do your, without taking too much time away from the parish. That's when you had to really balance that you didn't overdo it, and made sure that you didn't leave the other priest up on the weekend that he was planning to go away and now you did, but I used my drill, the two weeks, as my vacation. The priest in the archdiocese could get a month off, so I counted my two weeks as a vacation and I didn't take any additional vacation for that, so I kind of balanced that out. The

money that I made on the two weeks was more than I was making in a month as a priest, so there wasn't any real, you just couldn't talk about it. I was making more money than other priests in my class and pastors in parishes. When I would go away for two weeks I was coming back really well. My first assignment as a priest in '76 we got \$250 a month. That was the salary. So when I went away for a two week tour I didn't come back with \$250. So it was a financial advantage, big time for me.

Kiefner: During those two weeks were you performing your duties as a priest still?

McNalis: Oh, yeah.

Kiefner: But when you would take these travels you would be supporting your unit that you were assigned to?

McNalis: We would be attached to the chapel and that's... they would let someone know that we were coming and we had a priest, and so I would get in right away and would offer whatever, if someone wanted to take some time off, to take off, they were surprised I did. When I was down at Maxwell I went over to the main base and said, "Well I'm here at the chaplain school, if someone wanted to say mass, if you wanted me to go up." No one used to ever come over and they would be happy and say, "If you want to say the morning mass, one of the masses," and I said, "Sure, I'd be happy to do it," and stuff. And one time I had finished mass and I didn't get the person's name, but as we walked out the officer said, "I'm one of the men you prayed home." I look at him. He had been a POW and seen the bracelet and he was at Maxwell. And I would never have had that experience if I had gone

over to the regular chapel, if I had just stayed with the...

Kiefner: The base?

McNalis: The base. With the school, you wouldn't have had that experience. Whether I'm going to go to mass or say the mass, I'm still there, so give someone a break and that's where having a lot of... I enjoyed that type of stuff. People know if you are happy or unhappy, and if you're happy than whatever you do is, "Ok, fine, let's do that." The sense, it's easier to smile than frown. If people are happy that day let them have a good time.

Kiefner: So what would you say your inspiration was during all these years as a chaplain in the Air Force?

McNalis: Inspiration, hmmm that's a good one...

Kiefner: What motivated you?

McNalis: First of all is to make it a career. From day one I wanted to finish twenty years. That wasn't an individual person, but I always saw the service as a period of time, so I wanted to do that. And then I, had always been inspired in the early years by Robbie Risner, Bud Day, those individuals, for what I had read about them as POWs, and obviously their Air Force too, so (chuckles) that didn't hurt. When I'd had that experience of, wrote to Robin Holtz (??) and got some of these individuals that, were people who did these fantastic things, and then I got notes back from them, it just made me all the happier. And I would write them a note that I'm in the service and the reserves. I had written to Jimmy Stewart and he congratulated me on my time in the service, and I go, well I had seen him in the movies, and he's in

the reserves himself. Those were things that kind of inspired you, more of a montage instead of one specific individual, but the montage that developed that created who I thought, for being in the service you're part of that montage. For Desert Storm One I had sent in a letter requesting to go, and I had talked to my dad beforehand, my mom had died, and he said, "Well, no problems" but I wanted to ask him because I was safe in the retriium (??) in Chicago, no problem at all. And he said, "Well, if that's what you want to do," and I said, "Yeah." I sent a letter but then they said that they weren't taking anyone. They had taken people from CAT-A but not CAT-B assignments and I was at Peru at Grissom at that time. If I was at O'Hare I could have gone. Then when the next one came up I had a conference... next opportunity I had a conference in Colorado for the chaplains, and I got orders to go to Brooks Air Force Base, that's when Desert Storm finally came through, the other one was the buildup. They said, "When can you report?" Well Monday I'd leave and on Friday I'd go back from the conference, they said "OK." This was on Tuesday and on Wednesday the orders were cancelled because the war went that fast. I never got any paperwork to change the orders, but Tuesday night I started making lists, I had a baptism on Sunday when I came back, I had to call in to cancel it and had somebody else, because I was making the list, because I was to start driving down to Texas on Monday morning. The one thing is that I'm glad I didn't have to go, because Brooks was the burn unit and that would have been a lot of seriously injured personnel. Those orders got cancelled and

that's the closest I got to being called up for any of the desert actions.

Kiefner: Did you put in a request to come back to Chicago, how did you...

McNalis: Well, Chicago is my home. I was ordained in Chicago. There's a process that a Bishop has to let you go, and going into the service I was temporarily released, but I'm still a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago. For me to have left Wright-Paterson and stayed in Dayton or go down to Florida, I'd have to have gotten permission. I'm automatically brought back to Chicago, so coming back to Chicago wasn't a problem. To have gone anywhere else would have been... difficult. I would have had to had permission. When I finished active duty my father and my brother were still living in Chicago along with my grandparents, now I'm the only one. My brother's in Florida and everyone else has died. That's the problem. So Chicago doesn't have the same ties now, and I'm 61. When I'm 70 and I can retire I plan to go to Florida, that's where my brother is, and then work for the mouse in retirement. I have some papers here, see if this would bring out some other things (paper shuffling).

Kiefner: So when did you return back to Chicago from Grissom?

McNalis: At the time that I was assigned to Grissom I was on the west side of Chicago at a Parish, at Peter Kinnish's (??), which has since closed, and this was a CAT-B assignment so all I did was travel over to Grissom to do my two-week annual tour or the 12 days. So I tried to make about three trips a year, tacking on the regular tours to my annual two weeks and then had that time. Grissom was the least difficult assignment to get away from because the

Parish that I was at didn't have a school, and since the parish is closed it wasn't a very active parish, you weren't cutting the person, it wasn't adding a lot of work for the short time that I was gone, so that's what made that assignment work quite well. There was one priest who was at Grissom, Tom Doyle. He's a Dominican Religious Order priest. He's caused problems for the Diocese because of the work he has gotten involved in after his priesthood. He was a canon lawyer, and he was very upset over the cover-up by the church of the sex abuse, and he knew the canon law, and so he has supported SNAP organization who's trying to uncover the cover-up and he's been very supportive of that group. [Survivors' Network of those Abused by Priests]

Kiefner: And SNAP is?

McNalis: The group that is opposed to the sex abuse by the priests, and the dioceses do not like Tom because he has shaken them up and shown where they've covered up the abuse. So he's a person that I really admire because he's really been, he's a faithful priest, and the dioceses really have screwed him.

Kiefner: And he also has been a chaplain in the Air Force?

McNalis: A chaplain, yup.

Kiefner: Okay, and so that's how you're affiliated?

McNalis: I got to know him, so he made his 20 years too. So, we were together at Grissom, so we got along very well (chuckles).

Kiefner: So you were living in Chicago even when you were in your reserve duty at Grissom?

McNalis: Correct, correct, and I was in Chicago really all my time in the reserves except for those three years that I was on active duty. I travelled more in the reserves than I did on active duty, Scott and Wright-Paterson on active duty and the assignments around the country, or around the world for the reserves.

Kiefner: Were you with the same parish in Chicago during most of this time with the reserves?

McNalis: No. A parish assignment in Chicago is roughly five years as an associate, so I've been to several parishes during the assignments. That was always difficult, you walk in you're looking for an assignment, well I'm also in the reserves. Once they finally get used to you, well it's time to leave, then you've got to convince the other guy that, uh... and this wasn't something that I was going to give up. I was in one parish, a pastor, and I was just a long line of associates that he didn't get along with, but I had been involved with the fire department, a chapel with the Chicago Fire Department also, and actually he drove one priest to resign from the priesthood because he was so cantankerous with him, but one Christmas he said that he wanted the masses, and so for a priest he took me off of all of the Christmas masses. And that's a, here I don't get to celebrate Christmas mass, that might get someone upset. Well yeah, it got me upset. Well I went down to the firehouse and we had Christmas mass at the firehouse and I said he wasn't going to ruin Christmas for me. So I went down to the firehouse and they had the families there and we had a great celebration. He always like to

mess me up for, he wouldn't tell you when he was going to go on vacation, I said well I can do the same thing and he put down for a whole schedule and I had gotten in touch with the priest who was in charge of the military assignments, that I knew. He said, "Oh yeah, we need someone in Florida." So I went down and crossed off my name on the blackboard and said "Out of town," and I went away for two weeks with the Air Force to, I think at that point was, uh... down in Florida... it was either, I went to Eglin... I think it was Eglin Air Force Base that I had the assignment with. If someone wants to play hardball I didn't roll over and say "Oh please, let me do this." I'm old enough and I could, I knew some other people that could get me to do something I wanted.

Kiefner: So you were in the reserves from O'Hare, you also had your parish obligations in Chicago. When did the Chicago Fire Department chaplain... when did that begin? Did it overlap with the Air Force?

McNalis: It did, yes. I've been involved with the Fire Department since 1973 also. Right now I'm the backup, there's one full time priest who's assigned and I cover when he's not able to... when he wants some time off or he's on some other duties and stuff. We go to the extra alarm fires, hospital calls, and wakes. I'm pretty active but it started as a sideline with the interest in Chicago history, but the fire department is now really, I'm a major historical part for the fire department with the record keeping. So that's become a sideline, but it's allowed, at least the fire department when you're at the fire, I can say mass and help them there, and I'm at some of the events or the

wakes and stuff, but I also can help them with the information that I've gathered so it's a really good interest. It keeps up my one interest in the fire department as a historian and then as the pastoral aspect which is why I've enjoyed the fire department – the military, not much of a difference between the two. The terminology, the battalions, divisions are in the fire department. Rules of captain, and lieutenant, officer – same things that are with the military service. So the two have worked out very well and in this day and age since 9/11, the respect that you have as first responders, fire department, but then I also have the background having been in the service, so that you stand for both. When they ask for those who've been in the service you stand. Any first responder you still stand. So you're in both of them. It's a win-win situation.

Kiefner: So really there was no actual transition, they both really kind of evolved together?

McNalis: They evolved together because, ordinations, the (undistinguishable), one I became a priest I could do them all (chuckles). If I wasn't a priest I couldn't do it. That's the thing that got me in, that I wouldn't have been a chaplain in service if I didn't get ordained. I wouldn't be a chaplain with the Fire Department if I wasn't ordained.

Kiefner: Right. Do you see any changes in the role of the clergy, or the chaplaincy in the military changing?

McNalis: Yes. One of the biggest problems, and I don't know, (clears throat) excuse me, I don't know what impact it's going to have, if they're even looking at it

right now. In Chicago, and I can't speak for other dioceses, they are bringing in a lot of foreign priests, foreign seminaries, so they are not US citizens, so they cannot go into the service. They're coming from Africa. They're coming from Poland. Those are two of the largest areas. We used to get some Vietnamese, I don't know if we've been getting that many seminarians. Do they want to join the American military? They're not even from our country, so you're going to lose the military interest there. The second part is the delayed vocations, the people who are getting ordained are getting close to being 40 years old. That is the maximum age you can be to go into the service, or 42, because they want to you to retire. So they don't want to take you on at 43 and then you can't retire.

Kiefner: Why do you see the later ordainment?

McNalis: Because people have been doing other work and we don't have the feeder schools anymore, the high school for the seminaries, so the vocations are delayed vocations because people have done something else with their lives. They had always wanted to be or thought about being a priest, but did something else and now they've been in the business world, and they still have the calling for priesthood, so they decide to do it now, but then they're older. So that's eliminating that group. I was ordained when I was 25. It was hard enough to do the stuff I had to do in the service at 30, and I found out I couldn't do it at 55 (chuckles). I think if the guys are going in, they're ordained at 37, they have three years, four years to make a decision if they want to go into the service. You're not getting that younger person who by

the military standards is old now.

Kiefner: What are your thoughts on possible causes for bringing in so many foreign priests?

McNalis: Smaller families in the US and the lack of vocations. Individuals are not becoming priests. Celibacy is obviously the one, but the church won't allow you to talk about or think about alternatives, so you just have to accept that and so you don't. Priesthood is, I get 800 and, what is it, 27 dollars every two weeks. That's my salary. So there's not much of a motivation in an economy that up until a couple of years ago you were making a lot more than that. I have a Master's degree. I have business experience running a parish. So you can make a lot more in the other world, you could be married and have children, you might be successful, you might not be, but priesthood doesn't have the same offerings and then I think the sex abuse has hurt. You know a lot of priests are not happy and why would one want to join if these guys are grumpy? They're old guys that are mad at everything and why would I want to join that? I think there are some real serious problems and they don't have the solutions because I think some of the problems are caused by the leadership and I'm not one of those leaders so I'll talk about just the problems that they've caused and not the solutions. But I think that that's going to have a major impact of trying to get a priest from this country to be in the service. You don't have any problem finding the different Protestant chaplains who want to go in, but those restrictions are going to make it very difficult, and that will hurt the Catholic service

personnel.

Kiefner: Is there anything else that you would like to share with me today or any questions that I didn't ask that maybe you thought I would?

McNalis: Oh because I didn't have any combat experience, that's a major part of the service, I didn't have the... all of my TDY assignments were my choice.

Kiefner: TDY meaning?

McNalis: Temporary Duty Assignments. I wasn't being moved to another base because of military actions as the service personnel have now and I think those experiences are something that I have not had. Yet those are the key things that are so important, the disruption of the families and what so many have had to go through since the wars, in Desert Storm, in Iraq, and Afghanistan. That's an entirely different um... person that I think would share with. The other story would be to get what those assignments were. Now I had it real easy, as I said I was in an apartment building. I was in Belleville, Illinois, Dayton, Ohio, on a road that I didn't have to worry about snipers or explosives, I drove to a chapel, we wore BDUs once a week. So, I'm truly the peace-time soldier, the weekend warrior, and yet today, someone who is in the guard or the reserves has now been called up to active duty and has seen combat.

Kiefner: Have you had experience serving the religious needs of some of those now who have come back? Even though you are no longer in the Air Force, but?

McNalis: Yes, in a couple of parishes where you've had personnel. I retired in '97 so you gravitate towards those individuals. It's easier to talk to those

individuals. I have not had anyone come in to want to talk about post traumatic problems or anything of that situation, but I have had other vets talk with. It's just that these ones that I have contact with don't have the problems where they're in touch with... I've been very fortunate, the ones that have had the heavy combat because I know more the Army than the Marines. The Marines have been hit the hardest with the recent ones.

Kiefner: Going back to some of your experience with our parishioners outside of your role as Chaplain, more as your traditional role as a Catholic priest in Chicago, have you had much experience with, you know veterans as your parishioners?

McNalis: Yes because of my interest in the service, it doesn't take long to know that your... because I'm very proud of having been in the service and my hair length isn't (chuckles), has kept up with the same time, I think it's shorter now than when I was in the service because I could let it go and now you don't. When I was in one parish a fellow that I knew, maybe just backtrack... My first assignment was to St. Gabriel Parish in Chicago, by the stockyards, and I went back there as a pastor 20 years later. Obviously during those two time periods some of the families I knew right from the very beginning and now, they were children and now they have families. There was one family in the St. Gabriel's that I knew prior to the gal getting married and then over the years I celebrated her and her husband's marriage, as her children were growing up, just stayed in contact with them all of the years. When I came back to the parish the middle son

was in high school and so I started giving him my Air Force Association magazines and he had a strong attachment - he was brilliant, he is brilliant - to go to the Air Force Academy. He did (chuckles). And the first thing his mother said after he graduated from the Air Force Academy, that I could not give her other son the Air Force Association magazines (chuckles). He's finished pilot training and I went out to the Air Force Academy, he asked me to give him the oath of office and we've been in touch regularly, so I've had that connection. Neither of his parents have had any active military service, but they fly the Air Force flag in front of their house. Canaryville has a veterans group and a very strong group... we commemorated, Memorial Day was very significant at those times, but it was also an activity for the Fire Department, Memorial Day, remember the fallen firefighters, so I'm drawn between the two there. Gabe's is also a very patriotic parish in the city, so I had no problem fitting in with my interests in the Fire Department because it's the 11th ward, so Bolser is the alderman. You can see why that would connect, and then the connection here with the Pritzker and the different activities just keep kind of blending together. Which one, where's the line end? It's kind of a chalkboard that you've started erasing and it just keeps connecting somewhere else. So I think that with the vets, I was saying mass at the VA hospital as supply and doing the visitation there when it was the west side, not west side - lakeshore, before they tore it down. So I've had that contact, but to say where is it, it's just because I was in the service that it continues and all sorts of opportunities open up because

they don't have to test you to find out whose side are you on. You're already with it. One time I rode with some police officers, a ride-along program. One of the cops was at the bingo at the parish and we got in and his first comment to his driver, he says, "He's ok." I wasn't there to check on them, and then they pick up a prostitute and put her in the back seat of the car, and wanted me to do some counseling, so they pulled some stunts because they knew that you were good and I think that's what allows, that I don't even think about... but because of the experience it's easy to talk to people, because they don't have to figure out, well are you going to be interested? What do you even know? And there are some things that I haven't had the experience of, but I do know about the service and so you can talk to the people about any problem.

Kiefner: When you reflect back on your life and your decision to join the priesthood and the military, the chaplaincy, is there anything that you would have done differently along the way if you were to do it over again?

McNalis: The one thing that I didn't complete was Air Command and Staff and so I had to leave after major. If I had finished Air Command and Staff and had started it earlier then I could have stayed have stayed in the service longer.

Kiefner: Air Command and Staff is?

McNalis: A course -- the course that you need for LC, and since I didn't have it then I couldn't make LC. Now that's at the very end of my career so that's the most recent thing. Could I have stayed? Sometimes I said that, well with the parish commitment after 20 years it's hard to keep going because

parishioners say, “Well you already have your 20 years why do you stay in?” That’s the only regret that I have, that I didn’t make it to full-bird.

Kiefner: You’re saying the diocese wants to keep you in the parishes?

McNalis: Right, right. So I didn’t finish that one course which would have allowed me to stay in the service. That’s the only regret that I have. The other one, the advice that one priest gave, he gave, I took it a little bit too late. When I was in the service on active duty there was a priest who ran into some problems with the command chaplain and I went to bat for him, and then he didn’t follow up on it. I had put my head out on the chopping block and it got chopped off. And this one priest said, “You don’t have to do the work for him, you just have to show how to do it.” And he said, “What you should have done was tell him about writing a letter to the command, Chief of Chaplains, but you don’t do the letter.” And that’s where I made the mistake. You can give the advice, but you don’t have to do the work, and so I should have just given the advice of what to do. Could have still supported him, but I shouldn’t have taken the action. And I think that’s the, I followed up on that since. It was a little late for the one area and I may have stayed in the active duty longer if I had taken that advice a little bit earlier. But other than that I can look at my face in the mirror and I don’t have any regrets where I’m upset or that I let someone down or I feel bad about something I did that was dishonorable or foolish or an embarrassment that I shouldn’t have done. I don’t have those experiences, anything like that haunting me, or hoping that someone doesn’t open the closet and find the skeleton. It’s

been a good run. The experiences that I've had, the people that I've met, have been just great. So no, other than those two little minor glitches... I'd go back to 5th grade, maybe I'd wish I knew how to spell better, (chuckles, then coughs) excuse me. It's been a good life and I have no regrets about the time that I spent in the service and have met really good friends... and it's been an extension, being down here, with the opportunities that you see with the people that you bring in. You know some of these people that they're talking about, because I've had the chance to have met them in other situations and it continues, and that's why it's good.

Kiefner: Well thank you Father McNalis for sharing your stories and thank you for your service to our country.