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**Transcript of an Interview
with Hank Fuller
by Kellie Pelletier
June 10, 1999
Lisbon Falls, Maine**

The following interview was conducted for the MAINE VIETNAM VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT. Tapes and transcripts of project interviews have been deposited at the Maine Folklife Center at the University of Maine at Orono, where they are available to the public in accordance with the Center's policies. Some restrictions may apply to the use of these interviews by researchers. The Maine Folklife Center should be consulted concerning fair-use guidelines.

Reference copies of the tapes and transcripts are also available in the library of the University of Maine at Farmington and in Special Collections in Ladd Library at Bates College, Lewiston, Maine.

Monique Leamon of Casco, Maine, transcribed the recordings.

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Accounts may include foul language, offensive slang, and graphic descriptions of battlefield violence including accounts of physical and psychological injuries, killing, death, dismemberment, suicide, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Some content may be sexual in nature and include discussion of sex trafficking.

Views and opinions expressed in these interviews do not reflect the views and opinions of the University of Maine System or its campuses.

Listener discretion is advised.

HF:Hank Fuller

KP:Kellie Pelletier

Tape One, Side A:

KP:This is Kellie Pelletier. It is Thursday, June 10th, 1999, and I'm in Lisbon Falls speaking with Hank Fuller about his experience in the Vietnam war. How are you doing today, Hank?

HF:Just ducky.

KP:Just ducky. You did have an interview with Craig Day that was recorded on April 19th, and what I'd like to talk with you about today is just following up on some of the information that you provided him with, and hopefully we can touch on a few things that I found I wanted to know more about.

HF:Sure.

KP:The first thing I need is your date of birth. That wasn't mentioned.

HF:Now, you sure you have to have this? I was born on December 14th, 1945.

KP:1945.

HF:Yup.

KP:And when did you move to Maine?

HF:Fifteen years ago.

KP:And what brought you to Maine?

HF:What brought us to Maine? I was born and raised on a tobacco and dairy farm. In fact I was the fifth, I was the sixth generation on the farm. It was in Connecticut. I've always had a rustic background and interest in living in a rural setting. My wife is from Maine. We, after I finished my masters degree some years ago, we finally got the opportunity financially to be able to move out of the Boston area, and we were looking in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine and it happened that we found the right house with the right amount of land. It happened that it was in Maine. It wouldn't have mattered to me if it were in Montana or Idaho just so long as there weren't a lot of people and there was a lot of space, and that's why, when we moved.

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KP: Yeah, Maine's a beautiful state.

HF: Great state.

KP: Absolutely beautiful.

HF: It's been a great place to raise my kids.

KP: Yeah, I agree. In your first interview you had mentioned that you grew up never questioning authority, but now you question it all the time. What exactly did you mean by that? How are you questioning it authority?

HF: Okay, I grew up post World War II, when you just saluted the flag because it was there, and you went to Memorial Day celebrations, and fathers and mothers were right and never wrong, teachers were right and never wrong. I just anticipated that someday I would go in the service. It wasn't, I just never questioned where my life was headed, wherever that may be. I just never questioned it. As a result of having been in Vietnam and feeling as if I got kind of duped by the system -- whether that system is the country or the political system, or my parents' generation, or whatever it is -- I felt somewhat duped by it and betrayed almost. So that now, when I look at an authority figure, I'm immediately skeptical or, even to the point of cynicism, and so if I hear that so-and-so is, you know, is the chief executive officer of a corporation or the head of a bank or the chief lawyer in a firm, positions that when I was a kid I thought were pretty special, now I start thinking, I wonder how you got there and who did you step on and who did you squish, you know, how did you get to that lofty point? That's what I mean. If, I mean, if there's a principal, if I, where I work in public schools, if I were to go to a, some sort of function and there were three or four teachers there that I didn't know and a principal that I didn't know, I probably would be more skeptical about the principal because he or she would be in a more authoritative position than my peer group, which would be the teachers. Does that make any sense? Does that, is that ... *[taping difficulty]*

KP: I think you had a hard time maybe trusting authority.

HF: That's exactly what I'm saying is that, and, that I do it, it isn't just authority. It's, it's, how do I want to say this? I am, I am, I think more for myself than I did. I don't know quite how to say it. If I'm at a town meeting and I listen to somebody stand up and talk about something, I just don't take it and swallow

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it. It's, you know, I'm just, I'm looking for the other side of things more often than I did. You know, I pretty much rolled with the blows growing up. That's why I ended up in Vietnam. I didn't, oh, okay, supposed to be in the service. Here I go.

KP:Do you think that's one of the legacies of Vietnam, that more after Vietnam a lot more people were questioning authority also?

HF:I can only speak for myself. I think that you probably could make some suppositions to that point. The legacies, I can only really speak about personal legacies, Vietnam. I think, I think that the whole Vietnam era and everything that went along with it has done an awful lot to shake America's faith in its political system. I would guess that much in the same way the Civil War shook things up a hundred and fifty years ago in America, a hundred forty years ago. But that's just a guess. I mean, that was to that point in time the most divisive thing that had occurred in America. Certainly the whole Vietnam experience polarized different groups and they really still haven't come away from that. But, really, I, that's, that's just my, me theorizing rather than knowing, knowing something. We can stop for a second [*referring to motorized sound in background*].

KP:Short pause for the vacuum cleaner.

HF:Custodian's in the next room.

KP:You had also said that you were a Johnson and Kennedy supporter. Why exactly, what made you support them?

HF:Well, let's see. I was, I didn't have much use for Barry Goldwater at the time. I had no use for Richard Nixon. I thought he was devious and deceitful and thought he was a liar and I had very little use for him. Hubert Humphrey was a politician who, like many politicians of the time, was damaged as a result of taking sides or not taking sides with respect to whether we should be in Vietnam and what we should be doing there and stuff. He was a courageous, courageous man in his own time.

Johnson could have been one of the great domes-, in my opinion, could have been one of the great domestic presidents of all time. But he got into the chess game, or the chess game aspect of the war, where to put the men, where to put the battleships, where to put the, you know, where to put the tanks and how to

maneuver his military pieces. And he really should have left that up to the generals. I mean, if you're going to do something militarily, you might as well do it with the people that are allegedly, anyway, the most professional and the most knowledgeable. And he got caught up in that trying to, trying to manipulate it so that he, he, his presidency fell apart. And a legacy that would have been, I think, a tremendous domestic legacy kind of was damaged. The great society didn't become the great society that he wanted. Well, there are parts of it, but. And so I, I followed them along.

My parents, my mother was an independent, my father was a card-carrying Republican, redneck Yankee Republican. Oh, maybe I was reacting to my parents, I don't know. But it was, that I, that's just an aside because I don't recall that being the case. I didn't like Nixon and I thought, bottom line I didn't care for Nixon at all, never cared for Barry Goldwater, thought well of John Kennedy and then, you know, Humphrey and Johnson were, came after.

KP:What were your friends' reactions to Kennedy's assassination? You said you didn't really pay much attention to that at that time?

HF:My friends' reactions?

KP:Yeah.

HF:Most of the guys that I was hanging around with in those days were more into playing collegiate sports and drinking beer and not going to class, which is pretty much what I was doing. I very well remember where I was. I came back to the dormitory, I was, and was planning to have some rum and Cokes one afternoon with some of my buddies -- jeez, I hope my grandchildren are going to enjoy this tape. I was, let's see, when that happened I, I was seventeen, that was 1963, I didn't turn eighteen for another month. I was seventeen years old in college and I wasn't any too mature. And we kind of, I remember when it happened I, we kind of, oh wow, and we watched TV and this and that and the other, but I didn't get, I don't remember being, you know, emotionally distraught about it. Just rocked and, how could this happen to a president of the United States? But I went on about my adolescent business. Not that I'm necessarily very proud of that but that's what happened.

KP:Now, you went to college partly to stay out of the draft.

HF:Absolutely.

KP:What other reasons did you have to go to college?

HF:Because my parents wanted me to go. I had the op-, I had had opportunities to sign professional baseball contracts, and my parents preferred that I go on to college, and I wasn't getting a whole lot of money from teams and that kind of thing. And again, it was the kind of thing that I grew up thinking I was going to go to college and that I was going to go in the service someday, and those were going to be just parts of my life. I didn't want to get drafted, I didn't want to go in the service then, I was seventeen years old and I wanted to drink beer and screw around. I was a country boy and wanted to get to the city and see the big city lights. And I was kind of a follower in those days, I wasn't much of a leader. And my father said to me that he was afraid, I told him that I probably, what I, I got kicked out of high school for three months prior to my senior year. And I was aware of the fact that I wasn't very grown up, to put it mildly, and I said, "Father" -- he was Father, not Dad or anything, he was Father. And I said to him I thought I probably shouldn't be going to college, and his response was, "Well, if you don't go to," he said, "I want you to go one semester." He said, "If you don't like it, you can drop out," and I was talking about going into the Marines then. I mean, if I was going to go in I would, if I was going to have to go in the service, I was going to plan to go in the Marines, but I didn't want to. And he said, "I'm afraid that if you don't stick with college, you won't." Looking back on it, he was probably right. I, there's a good chance that I would have dropped out of college and who knows what would have happened then?

You know, the fact that I managed to stay in and managed to graduate by the skin of my teeth opened some doors for me, not the least of which was, though I wasn't planning this, was to get a commission in the Marines, which I hadn't planned. I didn't know what an officer was from a private, I had no idea. And then it open-, of course it opened doors for graduate school and things like that. So who knows where I would have been after four years in the Marines and I, who knows? So that's

KP:Funny how parents are right like that, when you look back on it

HF:Yeah, it's funny how I say the same things to my daughters now and they, "Yeah, Dad."

KP:And then you can say, "You wait, you wait, you'll see."

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HF:They don't want to hear it, though.

KP:You'll be saying the same thing.

HF:I didn't want to hear it then, and they don't want to hear it now.

KP:Could you describe to me what it, what Basic School training is like?

HF:Yeah, there were really, now I'm not sure if you know what you're asking me.
We went into boot camp, and then we went to Basic School. You knew that.

KP:Right.

HF:Okay, so, in other words you understood that we did the ten weeks of boot camp, got commissioned and then went to Basic School?

KP:Correct.

HF:Okay. Is that from talking with Chris [Beam]?

KP:Yes.

HF:Yeah, okay, all right. Ah, so you [*unintelligible word*], we were commissioned but we were still students, so, though we were treated like students as we marched around from class to class and class to class, as off- we enjoyed the, all the privileges that, and pay that officers get at officers clubs and the like.

We lived in barracks. Well, they weren't, they weren't even barracks really. I was in a room with two other guys, we were pretty cramped. We had a Vietnamese, an officer from Vietnam who was, lived next door to us. There were three people in that room, three in ours, there was a hopper in between them, a place to brush your teeth and stuff. It was just cinderblock walls and bunk beds. I was also, one of my roommates was a, was a lawyer and he had, I'm not sure how they did it, but he had got his commission and gone to law school, and so he was a first lieutenant. In fact he made captain while he was in Basic School. He was a, he was a captain, Gardiner, his name was Dick Gardiner. Dick Gardiner? His last name was Gar-, no, Gardiner, yeah, Dick I think. And the other guy was a guy named Gerhold, I forget his first name, and he went into the artillery and he injured his back jumping out of a helicopter on the, in a

landing zone in Vietnam. I think they medievacced him home. He wasn't there very long. And we had a Vietnamese officer in the room next to us.

The, some days were just in the classroom. Some days we were going through various maneuvers out in the, in the tactical training areas. We had physical training just every day: obstacle course, double obstacle course, three-, four-mile r-, three-mile runs I think they were, piece of cake. You know, forget whether we did, I think we did the daily dozen, or was that boot camp? I forget, but we had a calisthenic regim-, regimen that we did. We had various billets that we had to handle within the company, you know, one day you were responsi-, you were the platoon commander for your whole platoon, another time you might be the company commander. We, we had a three-day war where we were out in the, in the Mock War, where we were out, towards the end of the training, we were out in the bush. Bush, well out in the woods, in the Virginia woods practicing different tactics and maneuvers and stuff. We had, we had a couple of great compass, there was a really good compass test that you had to, a map-reading test that you had to, land navigation I think is the term that was used, land navigation, you had a test that you had to pass. And there were guys, when I, when we graduated from Basic School, who were still there trying to, you had to pass this test in order to get out of the Basic School and go on to wherever you were going to go in the Fleet Marine Force.

Let's see, what else? Oh, we had, we did live, live fire. I remember one live-fire assault kind of thing we did, we called in artillery, mortars, we shot different kinds of ordinance, you know, different, recoilless rifles and machine guns, and we qualified with the M-16, no, M-14 and with .45 caliber pistol.

We got into Washington from time to time. I have some very fond recollections of Washington. That's where we went for overnights and leaves and stuff, and to the bars and chasing ladies. I never, I chased a lot, I didn't catch many.

And I also have some rather sad memories. I, I was, when I was in Basic School, I was the junior officer of the day the night that Robert Kennedy was killed. At the same time I was in Basic School, Martin Luther King was killed previously, and Washington was ablaze after that, after Martin Luther King's death, and we couldn't even go into Washington. In fact, they took Marines, enlisted Marines from Quantico in to deal with the rioting, I guess.

After that, Resurrection City was set up on the Mall in Washington, and that spring was very rainy and muddy, and black people from all over the country came to rally. And Reverend Abernathy, who was the head of the Southern Leadership Council, whatever, I can't think of the name, but whatever it was that Martin Luther King was head of, Reverend Abernathy took it over and he didn't have quite the charisma and the leadership and the, the, and the rain and the lousy weather turned the, turned the whole area into a quagmire. And I can remember going in and walking around it and, it was almost like -- and I hope this is taken in the right vein -- it was almost as if we were looking at animals. And I don't mean because their skin was black, but it was because, it was because, here are these people that were stuck in cardboard boxes and tents and stuff who'd come to rally for a noble cause in Washington. They're stuck in the rain, and all these other people are walking around looking at them on the inside, and there were comments made back and forth, and I was extremely uncomfortable with this.

I grew up in a, in a town where my father would have been considered very progressive. We hired Jamaicans and other British West Indians to work on the farm, and then sponsored them for citizenship and that kind of thing. And my father was a great supporter of Bill Russell when Bill Russell played for the, played for the Celtics, and was pretty outspoken about racial issues. My father was involved in getting him into town to speak and that kind of thing. So I was really uncomfortable kind of walking around looking, I can remember that, and that On Easter Sunday I happened to have been, we were allowed in town on Easter Sunday and I, I had ended up in a situation with a young lady where I left late in the morning, on Easter Sunday morning, and I was walking down Pennsylvania Avenue, nobody else but me and an army. I heard a noise and from behind me came an Army jeep with an M-60 mounted on the back of it, and you could look up at the White House and there were sandbagged machine gun positions there at the White House. And that's all because, because the rioting was happening just literally a few blocks away. And I remember that, I'm going, "Wow, what's going on?" It's a crisp, clear, and I'd just been off on a, on a toot for the night, and then you kind of snapped back into reality a bit. On the night, moving along, that was Easter

KP:In what year?

HF:'68. Favorite song at the time was *Sitting on the Dock of the Bay*. We used to go to a bar called the Gentleman Two, and there was an Irish bar, it is no longer there, that I tried to get into but it had been torn down. I can't think of the

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name of it. It was a bar that only Marines went to. Somebody who listens to this -- ask Chris, he'll know the name of it. I went back there a few years ago to see the Wall, finally, and tried to get into the bar and the policeman that was there said, "No, they tore" -- I almost had it -- in the middle of this interview I'll remember it and I'll blurt it out so put it in the place where it belongs. Anyway, and the Gentleman Two is the other bar we used to go to, in Georgetown.

Moving ahead, on Januar-, on June 5th I think it was, or sixth, when Bobby Kennedy was killed out in California, I was the junior officer of the day, and the night before we'd had our mess night, Hotel Company's mess night. And everybody was in dress whites, because Marine officers wear whites six months of the year and dress blues six months of the year. And it was the season for whites, and five of my buddies went into town to celebrate. I didn't go that night, although I was not one to turn those trips down usually. I couldn't, I was junior officer of the day.

And that night two of them were shot and killed in Georgetown at a White Tower, a little nickel-dime, nickel hamburger places? Maybe that's not a thing you're familiar with, but they used to have like a McDonald's little, it's a chain. And one of the guy's names was Lesnick. He was shot and killed. Can't remember the other guy's name, and a third guy named Cramer was shot in the head and the Marine Corps emblem on his cover deflected the round and it just, it put the neatest furrow. And I think it was Cramer's girlfriend was shot in the leg. There were five Marines there and a girl. And three black guys from, from Resurrection City came in to rob this White Tower. This came out in the newspapers and trials later. There was some exchange of unpleasanties between these five Marines and the three black guys. I don't know who started it. I'm sure it was racially based, a couple of these guys were, two of them that I know of were deep woods Southerners and probably there was some comment I was told at the time about looking like you're in ice cream salesman uniforms and that kind of thing. And words exchanged. The guys went out, got guns, came back and just started shooting. Shot and killed two guys and then ran out. And it just happened that a passerby got the license plate and these three guys were arrested twenty minutes later, thrown in the slammer, convicted. I think they got, I seem to remember they got twenty to twenty five years for whatever, whatever the charge was. And they were described, I remember reading the paper, you never know what to read, what to believe, they were described as communist agitators. Whatever the hell a communist agitator is, I mean, but that's what they were described, these three guys were

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described as. Two Marines dead, three guys in the slammer for a long period of time, two other people wounded over, what I understand, was just racially and, you know, comments.

KP: So you actually saw this happen?

HF: Oh, no, no, no. I was the junior officer of the day. I was in, I was in Quantico when this happened. That's why I'm, I'm telling you it as it was, as that was sort of the common understanding. I mean, these guys were in our company, you know, they were in Hotel Company with us. And Lesnick I knew pretty well. He was a quiet kid. I can't imagine him saying anything. But Cramer and the guy, the other guy who was killed, and I can't think of his name, I can see him, he was dark haired. He was a pretty redneck kind of guy.

KP: How long were you in basic training for? How long did that last?

HF: Oh, I, I went down there about third week in November for boot camp, was commissioned on February 2nd, 1st or 2nd. First, I think. Got up the next day, saw my shadow, Groundhog's Day, and I was a lieutenant, and then it was three years after that. So I was commissioned in, on February 1st, 1968, and I got out of the service in '71, February 1, '71, so I was three years and, three years and ten weeks.

KP: Now, when you were assigned to the Third Marine Division, you ended up in infantry and not tanks. Why was that?

HF: The SOP, standard operating procedure, at the time was for all ground MOS, military occupational specialty, all ground MOS, that the armor artillery and infantry, 03, 08, and 1800 -- that's what I was, 1800 -- for all ground MOS officers to spend at least three months with an infantry, with an infantry company. All Marine officers are trained as infantry officers first, even lawyers, so that I was qualified, as qualified as anybody else jumping off a Pan American flight, you know, from Okinawa is, I was as qualified as anybody else to do that, and that's why.

And then I met my first, my first platoon. It was pouring rain, cold, overcast and they were just, they were several clicks northwest of Khe Sanh up in the Laotian-South Vietnam DMZ corner, northwe-, the most, the northwest corner of South Vietnam on Hill, forget now, forget the Anyway, landed there and met my platoon there and they were a raggedy ass looking bunch of guys, I thought.

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Soon I was like them. And I left them in January of '69, so I was with them October, November, December, January, part of September. Four, a little over four months, and then I was with a, my tank unit about five and a half months until I got medievacced home.

KP:You had also felt that you felt the service was looking for bodies and that some people were pushed through training that shouldn't have been?

HF:Oh, yeah. Especially at boot camp. In my com-, in my platoon, we washed out over fifty percent of the people that started out in that first ten weeks before they were commissioned, and I think it was that much or more within the whole company. But, brother, there was still a bundle of people I thought, that I wouldn't follow across a football field to have a, to find a full keg of beer, let alone follow them across a rice paddy, or a, through a triple canopy jungle, or. There were some weak leaders, and the Marine Corps, you know, needed bodies, they needed people to fill in. Hell, I had in my pla-, in my infantry platoon in Vietnam I had two of McNamara's Project 100,000. Are you familiar with that?

KP:Yes.

HF:I had two of those guys. One guy's name was Mesque and one guy's name was Smith, and Smith was from Syracuse. I don't know why I remember that, I don't know where Mesque came from. And they were, they were just not very bright. I mean, I don't know how else to say that.

They, they, I'll give you an example. I'll give you two examples. I took a patrol out one day and Smith was on a listening post outside of our lines and you have to radio back and maintain communication with your own line so that you don't get shot at if you're coming back into your own line, so they don't, you know, a Claymore isn't, you know, detonate a Claymore on you when you're coming back in when they hear movement and stuff, or see movement. So we called and we called back in and established where we were coming in, this, that and the other. And it happened that we were coming right in by this listening post of mine, we were coming right back in to my unit, where my platoon had, was filling in on the company perimeter. We called back in and by, as we got closer to the listening post, which is supposed to be quiet, sitting down and listening, here's Smith jumping up and down, "I see 'em, I see 'em," jumping up and down. Well, yeah, you chuckle and it is almost comical ...

KP:But at the time

HF:... he was, he was a very f-, he was a funny looking guy, he really looked like Goofy, and that's a terrible thing to say. I'm no Robert Redford by any stretch of anybody's imagination and, you know, beauty is in the eye of the beholder and all that, but he wasn't very bright and he and Mesque -- Mesque had been shot in the rear end at Khe Sanh before I got there, had been wounded. And we were, oh, a week or two after this particular incident, we were moving out as a company through, we'd come down off from, out of the triple-canopy jungle and we were going through a whole flatter area and it was all elephant grass, and the elephant grass is eight to ten or twelve, or, I don't know, way over your head, twelve feet tall and you couldn't see anything, and you had to go in single file because you had to stay with the people that you are. When two hundred Marines had walked through one after the other, at, through elephant grass, you ought to be able to figure out where the trail goes.

Well, Smith and Mesque on two separate occasions broke contact with the people in front of them. I was the last platoon in the column, had to call up the skipper and say, "We've broken contact," and that just pissed everybody off because there's no need for it in the first place, and it slowed everything down and I was none too popular as a pretty green second lieutenant. I'd probably been with the company about a month then. So the second time it happened it's the only time I ever, ever did anything physical to one of my men over there. I kicked Mesque as hard as I could right in the ass, I mean, I booted him. He fell down on the ground, "Oh, Lieutenant, my wound," because I must, I guess I kicked him where he'd been wounded. And I was so mad I kicked him even harder, and he got up and he took off, he and Smith took off and they maintained contact from then on. And I could hear one of my, one of the sergeants who wasn't a squad leader but he was a assistant squad leader, I guess, saying, "About time he did something that got things moving," mumbling and grumbling something about, you know, words to the effect that it was, "About time you did something like that, Lieutenant." But I had, you know, I had guys like that.

I had another guy in my, in my, in my infantry platoon who was a, was Portuguese, and he was kind of a soldier of fortune. He went through the San Diego Recruit Depot, why San Diego I don't know, why he didn't go through Parris Island, I don't know, but he did and he got through it completely by, by pretending he didn't know English. So, and the Marine Corps was pushing him through. And he was able to do the physical stuff and follow directions,

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he just, but he, you know, if they really got on his, got on his case it was "no savvy," I suppose.

I had a gunner in my tank platoon from Fort Kent. His name was Boucher. I won't give you his first name because, I mean he comes from Maine, it's kind of a dirty trick. And I remember it well. He didn't speak English very well at all, he really didn't so that, and the problem here was not so much that he didn't understand to, to police up the area around if there was, you know, if there's crap around this hooch. You know, he didn't know how to clean his rifle or that kind of stuff. That wasn't the issue. The problem arose, he was the gunner on my tank, on my own tank, and when you gave him a target to shoot at, you had to tra-, he had to translate it. In other words, if I said, "Green tree line," that we're going to shoot at, you know. "The target is a thousand meters green, green tree line." He'd have to translate. He didn't know as, when I say green tree line to you in English, you have an image of what a green tree line is. He had to translate green, *verte*, what, I don't know, it's, French word, tree, I don't know what it is, but he'd have to translate it and it took him a minute to get on to target, and that was dangerous. The other thing is he shot at, he shot at the wrong target.

On one occasion we were assaulting a, Western Hill 162, the end of April that year, about '69, and he blew away four ARVN, Army of the Republic of Vietnam. He blew away four of them. At least I think it was he. There was so much shit going on at that time -- we were in a fire fight and we were trying to assault up on the hill -- that I'm not sure that he did it but I, you know, in a court of law I wouldn't swear to it, but I'm as sure as I'm sitting here that it was, that he shot the round, ninety millimeter round that hit the hill the ARVNs were on, and he didn't understand what the target was. And I had him as a, and really that's my responsibility. I mean, I feel, I can feel pretty guilty about that.

There are moments in my life when I can feel extremely guilty about the men that died in my platoon. I had eight of them that were killed. I can't even remember all their names, isn't that awful? I can't. And sometimes I can take, I feel as if it's totally my responsibility, they had nothing to do with it. They were just, it was fate, but they had, Fuller screwed up. And there are others times I go, no, that's, that's, that's bullshit, I mean it's, that's just what happened, that's all, and it's war. You did the best you could and so forth. So I vacillate back. I suspect there are an awful lot of veterans that feel that way. I don't talk with many very often, rarely, just don't know any that are, the guys that I was with around here. You kind of lose contact with them.

KP: So the Marines lowered the standards just to get bodies in there or they just pushed people through?

HF: Well, jeez, they, I, I've never seen any documentation of that. But it was my feeling that, you know, well, I'm not even sure it was the Marines, it was probably the government. I mean, McNamara did the Project Hundred Thousand, so that he took twenty-five thousand, put them in each branch of the service, people that wouldn't measure up, wouldn't pass the, you know, and I happened to have two of them in my infantry platoon. Yeah, the Marine Corps wanted bodies. That's, that's, that's I think the way of warfare since long before the Egyptians. Got to have bodies, you've got to have people to carry guns and carry ammunition and....

KP: When did you first get to Vietnam and what were your first impressions?

HF: Oh, I landed at the end of September 1968, yeah, '68, on a Pan American flight, and I, my stewardess said, "Well, good luck," as we're getting off the plane, and I thought, "Holy smoke," you know, I thought, "Wow, this is, this is bizarre." You know, this is surreal, this is something Jackson, I mean the Jefferson Airplane ought to be thinking, singing about. Because I just thought, I wonder how many of these hands she's shaken, or *[taping temporarily suspended]*.

We're at a public school that has a PA system. That's why we turned that off.

That was one impression. The other impression was, there is, there was a blast of hot air when they opened that door, and there was a smell that you cannot, that I stopped smelling, you know, twenty minutes or half an hour later once your olfactory senses get used to it, but it was, I don't know if it was garbage or cordite, a mixture of garbage and cordite and sweat and humidity and dust. It was a smell that if you gave me a hundred and fifty different smells in here and I could pick it out, but I can't tell you, I can't describe it, what it was like. And then the blast of the hot air, the blast of this hot air.

You know, we'd been on Okinawa and that was hot and humid, I'd been there for about a week and that was hot and humid. But I grew up, you know, I grew up in the Connecticut River valley that in the summer time was very hot and humid. That's why they grow tobacco there, it's very hot and humid. But Vietnam was just, ooph. That was my first impressions.

I was a little surprised that everybody wasn't getting shot at and, you know, but this was Da Nang, for Pete's sake. When I went on R and R some months later, at Easter time, the, in April of '69, we came down into Da Nang and, yeah, there was a, I saw *Bonnie and Clyde* in an air-conditioned PX or a theater or something. And all the, all the, there are, all the GIs, marines and sailors and everybody else that were in there, they were all clean shaven and, then they'd, and they went wherever they went, went out on patrol later or whatever, we came down from up north because we were the Third Marine Division. I didn't wear any insignia. You wouldn't have known I was an officer or, I looked like a private, I had nothing on, we didn't shave, we didn't bathe, we, you know, often anyway, and we came down and they kind of looked at us like we were weird, from the north, you know.

And that night, too, we went out to, I went to a, a, the White Elephant, White Elephant maybe. Somebody who hears this might remember the name of that bar, it was in Da Nang, and it was, it had round-eyed American women -- it's a slang term, and not very nice -- but that's the term that was used in those days. There were round-eyed women there who were either stewardesses or wives and sweethearts and daughters of financiers of one, people who were making money on the black market or with oil companies or with, who knows what was, who was making money in Vietnam. But they were in there, this air-conditioned bar. There were beautiful Vietnamese girls waiting on table, leather seats, air conditioned, and the thing that really got me was that there were a lot of, there were several correspondents walking around trying to pump stories out of the service personnel that were in there. One of them came over and talked to me, and I'd had a couple of beers and I was civil with him but very firm about the fact that if he wanted to find out a story, to get his fat ass in the chopper and go out to, to where it was happening and get his story and don't try to pump it from me. And I did say that to him, but I was, beyond that I was pretty civil with him. He didn't talk to me very long. I only saw two reporters over there the whole time I was there. We were out in the bush, you know, most, for the most part the press didn't come out in the bush. There were, and there are, there were any number of reporters that did, but where I was they weren't.

KP: So when you got off the plane, what did you see?

HF: Vietnamese people. My recollection is not clear about that. There was, I remember getting off and seeing some choppers flying around, and you could,

as we came in, as you flew in you could see artillery batteries and you could see planes and, you know, there were jets and aircraft, fixed wing and non fixed wing sitting on the ground and, it was an airport. You know, I don't, I remember after Da Nang we got a hop up to Quang Tri, which was up north, about a hundred miles north of there, Quang Tri city, and Quang Tri combat base, which is where my infantry rear was. My tank rear was a Dong Ha, which was even farther north. And I remember we were in a C-130 and we landed on dirt and air matting and bounced and banged all over the place. When you got out you were just, you know, there were tents and buildings Seabees had made and all that kind of stuff around it which was part of the Quang Tri combat base. I don't remember, don't remember a lot.

KP:But it was a lot different that what you expected, you expected to

HF:I expected people to be running all over the place in full combat gear fighting off them nasty Commies the second I got off the plane. But I should have realized, but you're really naive and you don't know, should have realized that if Pan American airlines is going to drop us off in Da Nang, it can't be too awful scary. I think downtown Lisbon Falls on a Saturday night is scarier than that.

KP:When was your first combat exposure and what was it like?

HF:We, just a few days after we went down off the hill where I first landed, we went down and my platoon was rear guard as it turned out, because they had had the point that the, when they went up on the hill a week or so before. And -- it might have been two weeks -- and we came across North Vietnamese laying comm wire, and there was a very brief fire fight and we had a couple people hit, not badly hit, and we killed one of them and left him there by the trail and walked by him. That was the first exposure and that was probably, oh, I don't know, probably, couldn't tell you, seventy-five yards in front of me. There really, there were some rounds went over my head and that was about it. I think that the first time we got, we hit the shit, we got mortared and everybody, I remember how panicked everybody was. Everybody, they were, we were trying to get underneath the same log, we were on a trail on Mudder's Ridge, and I can remember trying to get under the same log another marine was and we were just fighting and kicking and scratching, and we took a bunch of casualties. Never saw them, never saw the other guys. They never fired any small arms at us. They just drilled us with mortars. That was my first, never even saw them, we didn't know where they were shooting from. There was a

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lot of that, though, you didn't see them often over there. You know, I mean, they hid pretty well and we just blasted and blasted and blasted areas and then we'd go in and....

End of Tape One, Side A

Tape One, Side B:

KP: You also said that you believed in leading by example. Do you have a specific instance when you showed this?

HF: Yeah, probably every day. And I don't say that like I'm a hero on the beach, either. I mean it's just, it's the only way really to get things done. But the, when I first got to my, I was probably more scared about not being able to do the job in an honorable way, in other words, without being a coward, than I was scared of getting hurt or maimed, killed or maimed. I wanted my men to respect me, I wanted that respect immediately. It doesn't come immediately, it has to be earned. You know, you can say all you want about a gentleman by act of Congress, an officer and a gentleman by act of Congress and all that. Well, that may be but you still have to earn the respect. So I went out on patrols from the first day I was there with my squads to let the men know that I was willing to do what they were, what they did. That I was willing to go through the same crap they did. And I continued that through the whole time I was there. Maybe that helped me stay alive, maybe it's why, when I got to the tank unit I was, my platoon was almost exclusively, the company broke up, the three platoons broke up, we had to go in different areas. My company always went by itself. We were more independent, we were more self-sufficient, we were. It may have been because I learned how to, at least I hope that's what it was, that I learned how to lead by example and people went right along with me. But it was, it was a daily thing, it was just, it's how you, I took a radio watch. Some officers I knew never took a radio watch. I always took a nighttime radio watch if I weren't out on patrol. I cleaned my weapons. I did maintenance on tanks when I was with the tank unit. I mean, it was just, it was just a daily, it was a daily thing. It got so you didn't even think about it. And now that you ask the question, it makes me sound like I'm blowing my own horn and I'm uncomfortable doing that....

KP: Oh, I'm sorry.

HF: Well, no, don't be sorry, that's my problem, not yours. And that's probably, I've never taken compliments particularly easily, at least since Vietnam. I'm not sure why. Probably because I'm still doubting, still doubting myself for having gone and done it, getting duped into doing it and then blaming myself for some people, some people's deaths. I don't know.

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KP:What do you think brought you to that point? Because you had said before that you...

HF:I was a follower?

KP:...were more of a follower, exactly?

HF:Yeah, okay, I was a leader in the sense that I was captain of every team that I ever played on. I was a class officer. But I was a follower in the sense, if there was a good time going on somewhere, I was with them. That's what I mean. I mean, I had, I guess, looking back on it, I had high school and collegiate leadership qualities, you know, that, the prototypical ones anyway, you know, on athletic teams and class officers and that kind of thing. I must have had some potential. And the Marine Corps teaches you to do things, you know, they give you the skills. And instilled some pride and made me realize that there were things that I could do that I didn't realize I could do, so you get a little more self-confidence, I think.

I mean, on some days I'm so proud of what I did, and other days I think I was a jackass. I'm very proud of the fact that I was able to hack it and do it, and I'm very proud of the fact, in retrospect, that I was able to do it, that I didn't, I wasn't a coward, that I didn't crack, that I was able to, to do my thing over there at the time that I was there. I think, thought that a lot better ways for people to learn about themselves than go to war. I just learned that way.

KP:Could you explain to me what a washout is, I notice that...?

HF:Oh, the Washout? That was just a, between con-, see, the tank unit I was with was split up between Con Thien, the Washout and Charlie Two, and those were outposts, those were U.S. and Vietnamese perimeters. Con Thien was the most northernmost -- that's repetitious -- the most northern American outpost in Vietnam. It's right on the DMZ, way, way up north. We used to look at the big garrison flag that the North Vietnamese flew up there on the Ben Hoa River every day. The Washout was several clicks -- a click's a thousand meters -- several clicks. Well, I'll show you, it was several clicks south of, I'll show you exactly what I mean. This, I'm getting my map out..

KP:We're looking at a map.

HF:We're looking at a map. This is the DMZ, okay. This is the red line of the southern part of the DMZ, east and west, north and south. That's, this is the Ben Hoa River I was talking about that split it. That's Con Thien, so it's three clicks, that's not even, two clicks, two clicks, two thousand meters. Fifteen hundred meters is a metric mile, okay, from the DMZ. This is Ch-, that's, that's Charlie Two and next the Washout? I forget now, Hill 162 is over here. Washout's right in there, so it was, it was right down route, I forget this now, but this was Route, Route One, I think. Anyway, it was right there, right on the, right on this, no, that can't be right. I've forgotten. That's Cam Lo, that's Charlie Two, and the Washout was right across the stream, yeah, it's right by that stream, it's right there. And it was a water hole is all it was, and so the people came down from Con Thien and up from Charlie Two to get water, and so you needed to protect the perimeter there, and that's where I was with my, a pretty lonely spot during Tet of '69. And we were completely on our own, we had a few grunts with us, marine grunts sometimes, and we had a few Vietnamese with us, and we had an army, what was that thing called? Quad, quad, yeah, it was a quad-50 machine gun thing on the back of a six-by that was with us.

If the North Vietnamese had wanted to overrun us, they could have done it any time they wanted. That's how scary that place was. Any time they wanted. We couldn't have stopped them. That's what the Washout was. It was a water hole.

KP:Thanks. You stated that, in your previous interview, that you knew the war was wrong on May 4th, 1969. You knew the exact date.

HF:Yeah, April 29th to May 4th.

KP:And you said at that time that you found out what you wanted to know about yourself by then.

HF:Yeah, that, I've mentioned that, that I could hack it,

KP:That you could handle it.

HF:...that I could handle it, that I was, I wasn't going to fold under the pressure and all that kind of thing, that I wasn't a coward. I think everyone wonders about that a little bit. That's what I meant, I, that's what I meant, with respect to that. I think I probably said in that interview, too, that if you compare these two

interviews, that there'll probably be things that I'll say in one that I won't say in the next, and that, because my viewpoint varies from day to day, week to week, month to month, hour to hour. I mean, I could probab-, I might say glowing things about Nixon. No, that's not, that's stretching it. But I might say more positive things about, tomorrow, about how I feel about my responsibility for the deaths of the men in my platoon, and an hour from now I might be so down on myself. I mean, I vacillate.

There are a lot of things that still haven't come to, I'm never going to come, really come to grips with it until I die. And I've, as I know I've said in the past to other people, I'm in no hurry to die so I'm not going to go out and jump in front of a bus, but the great equalizer with these guys is going to be my ultimate demise.

But why, why May 4th? Because, remember I said that my tank gunner blew away four ARVNs? Well, it was from that April 29th to May 4th period that we were, we were attacking, I'll show you exactly where it was. We're looking at the map again. This is Hill 162, due west of Charlie Two and right from where I was up there. We came out here, there's a hill there, and then just up, right. Must have been this hill right here is where we were attacking because it was about a thousand meters west of it. We attacked it from April 29th to May 4th, we left our own casualties up there, we left ARVN, we, there were a lot of dead NVA, I had a guy shot off my tank, shot in the neck, young second lieutenant who was a marine lieutenant who was green as they come and he'd just come in the country and he was an advisor to an ARVN unit. First ARVN Regiment was with us, and this was pretty thick shit. I mean, we, I had a couple tanks knocked out. I had nobody killed in this, in my platoon killed in this one, but there were a lot of other Marines who, and just people. That was the, that's why I knew the war was wrong, and it was, it was done, I didn't want to have anything more to do with it, I didn't want to see anybody dead. I didn't want to see any North Vietnamese soldiers dead, I didn't want to see any ARVNs dead, I didn't want to see anybody dead. Just sick of it. That was it.

I, the, the, whatever romanticism if that's the right word that I associated with that from the previous Sept-, end of September when I got there, so it had been October, November, December, January, February, March, April, in that seven months time, I cried once or twice prior to that, but I hadn't got to the point where I just flat had it. I don't want to see any more of this, let me out of here. That's when I, and it was that particular operation.

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We used to, Hill 162 about which I spoke, and I'm sure there are, ninety percent of the combat veterans, a lot of guys there, see, for every guy that was in the bush that did this kind of thing, that was in the, in tanks, and I saw a whole lot more, a great deal more firefighting in tanks than I ever did in the infantry, because we were mobile and we could get to things and so we moved out, and when somebody was in the shit we went out to get them. I never got wounded in the, in the tanks, I mean in the infantry, but I was as a tanker.

For every guy that's out in the bush, on the line so to speak, there are, I forget what the statistics say, but something like eight or nine logistical people in the rear to support them: clerks and logistics and supply and motor transport and communications, and there's all these other things in the back there to support. So for every guy that you talk to, there's nine of them that was supporting him. For every guy that you, I don't know what, who the guys are that you interv-, that you folks are interviewing for this, whether they're all combat veterans or whether, you know, they had varying jobs and stuff. Most people were in the rear, so to speak, predominantly. That doesn't mean they weren't out of range of artillery and mortars and, you know, they didn't have to move somewhere else and get ambushed and so forth and so on. But we, so that most of your, when I'm, I kind of digressed there, but that's my age.

Most guys that I know, the few guys that I have spoken to in the last thirty years who are combat veterans had similar experiences where they had a place, like for me it was Hill 162. I mean every time we went up on that damned hill we took casualties. Never saw the bastards -- excuse me -- I'm getting worked up. We never saw them, but they either hit us with mortars or they hit us with the 122s from the DMZ, or had the place so mined that we couldn't get away from them. Occasionally we would get, take some small arms fire. Never saw them.

We'd always take casualties, we'd dig in for a while, we'd medievacced out our casualties, we'd repair our tanks and armored personnel carriers or whatever else might have hit mines. We'd leave the hill. Couple weeks later, back up again and take casualties again. I never understood that, tactically. If you take something, it ought to be yours. It cost you whatever it costs you, you know, from a tactical point of view. It costs you lives and material and what have you. But dammit, now make them take it back and make them pay for it. No, we'd just go off and leave it and they'd come back and re-mine it. You know, they had every hill in that area, since the French were there, they had every one of them zeroed in so that they could drop mortars or -- and they were excellent

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with mortars -- they could drop mortars or, they could hit you any time they wanted to. Then we'd go up and take it, you didn't see anybody. You'd take casualties. It was such a damn game.

KP: So what was the importance of the hill? Why was there such a struggle about that particular hill?

HF: The hill that was west of 162? Because it was, actually 162, well it was a higher hill, it was place up above, and you want to take high ground and stuff, and so you always went through there. You tried to stake, keep, take the high ground. But where we got into the, this April 29th to May 4th period that I'm talking about, with that little, that smaller hill about a thousand meters west, actually west of Hill 162, we bumped into a, an ARVN regiment, which is a lot of bad guys. And we had everything but nuclear arms on them. We dropped, we sat on the gun target line. We would pull back to that Hill 162 because it was the highest point around, at night, you know. We sat there and from Charlie Two, as you can see, Hill 162 is right, where, where we were fighting, where we were fighting was right there, and the artillery that was being shot at it was from Charlie Two, here, that's where the artillery battery, so it was going right over this Hill 162, so all night long the rounds went over us, we were on the gun target line, which is where you want to be. You actually want to be over here when you, when, or over there somewhere, but not on the gun target line. Why? Because they drop short rounds every once in a while and the short rounds ruined your sleeping.

KP: You had mentioned in your first interview that you were in shape but a different kind of shape than being in Vietnam in shape. What exactly did you mean by that?

HF: Oh, it, the climate is so aversive that, I mean, I was on my platoon cross country team in, in, in, and obstacle course team both in boot camp, or OCS I guess it was called, and at the Basic School both, both teams, and so I was in pretty good physical condition. When you got over there, humping up and down those hills in the heat with the rifle and the pack and everything else, it took you a while to get used to that kind of, that kind of effort. I was surprised. That's what I meant by that. And gradually you got used to where you were, I guess. That's what I meant. That understandable?

KP: Yeah.

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HF:I thought I was in gr-, I thought I was in great physical condition, I guess I was, but it was very different. I'll never forget the first patrol I went on where we got stung by hornets in the, in the jungle and coming back up the hill, 632, it might have been Hill 632. Probably could look, that just seems to ring a bell. If I had my, if I had my little diary that I wrote that had the first three months I was there it would tell you exactly which one it was. But coming up that hill afterwards, after we'd been out for six or eight hours patrolling, it was v-, I remember it was very tiring. That's what I meant about being in shape.

KP:Do you think that maybe you weren't really prepared to be on that kind of terrain?

HF:Well, theoretically I was. I mean, we went over the hill trail and everything else in Quantico and, plus I ran and I, you know, I was an obstacle, I could do the obstacle course in under a minute and I ran on our platoon cross country team, you know, for the, whatever the field day was we had. I don't know. I knew it happened to other guys. You didn't straggle, it was just, it was hard. Maybe I didn't get enough sleep the night before, maybe, I don't know, seriously.

KP:Maybe the weather conditions, too...?

HF:Well yeah, the humidity and the, and everything. It was hot. And there were all kinds of little, what do they call them, they were, they were a little mine that we dropped, a little tiny mine and I've forgotten what they were called, and we dropped them out of airplanes and stuff, and they were just designed to blow your foot off. You know, we'd drop them in areas where the North Vietnamese were known to be, and of course when they got wet they didn't work any more and you kind of had to, I remember having to dodge them and looking down at them, what are those? I remember that about that particular patrol. Saw them a lot after that, but that was the first time I saw them.

KP:Why did you use those particular weapons that just wounded?

HF:Why?

KP:Yeah.

HF:The whole, you know the basis of military tactics is not to kill the other guy. It's to, it's to get him so bolluxed up with the logistics of fighting a war, from taking care of his wounded to moving supplies to all that stuff, you would

them all, then you've got to have somebody to take care of them. If he's dead, he gets buried and that's the end of it, there's a very short detail. Theoretically that would be the best thing to do is wound everybody on the other side. And these mines were dropped out of, they were dropped by us, the Air Force or whoever the heck was, whoever was flying around up there. I for-, I, and I can think of the name of them, they were about this big. Little packets that you stepped on and they were just enough to blow your foot off.

KP:What were the attitudes toward the ARVNs and the Vietnamese civilians?

HF:Yeah, I saw very few Vietnamese civilians. In fact I'm not even sure I ever saw a Viet Cong because the area I was in was not the towns and cities and what have you, the hamlets. The area predominantly, the area that I was in was predominantly triple canopy jungle and elephant grass. When I was in tanks we moved into the towns some, more, because we were more mobile, but we were also out in Leatherneck Square which had been pretty much defoliated and, and that area out west of the Washout, Leatherneck Square was out east of the Washout. The Hill 162 area that I speak of and Hill 124 and some of those other places. That area was rolling hills but there were still no people out there, no civilians. If they were roaming around out there, they were bad guys. So I really didn't see the, very much of the South Viet-, you know, the South Vietnamese people. I did, from time to time we'd see the women squatting along the side of the road, going to the bathroom, grinning at you with black teeth. They chewed beetle nut. Their teeth were ebony shiny black. And going through the village you'd see them and, but I didn't have a whole lot to do with, again, I'm repeating myself.

Attitude towards them? Probably pretty snotty. You know, we looked down our noses at the, the South Vietnamese. They, they, one of the things that, one of, there are a couple things that were unique to the people over there that are different in the West. One of them was that they have, they think very highly of the oldest people in the village, whereas here in America, the older you get, you become useless. Sad, but. They put a lot of stock in the knowledge and the wisdom that has been developed over many years. So if you went into a village and you had to try to speak to somebody in the village and you couldn't figure out who the head man was, you spoke to the oldest person you could. It was just a matter of courtesy.

You never put your, you know how in America we tap kids on the head and ruffle their hair or tousle their hair and that kind of stuff? You wouldn't touch kids'

heads over there, it was, and I don't even remember the reason why that was but that was considered very poor practice. If a farmer had a rake outside of his house, and he leaned it up on the outside of the house, and he used that rake in the rice paddy or whatever it might be, he had a tool, left it up against the side of his house, then any one of his neighbors could come along and use it. But if something was inside of the house, that meant you weren't supposed to touch it and that was stealing. If something was out where you could get at it and it wasn't put away, then it was fair game for anybody to use. If it was under cover in some way, it was considered yours and you didn't want to, and stealing over there was as bad as killing somebody because if you stole something from somebody, you make life hard for them. It was like killing him. Just make his life harder on earth. That was the, I think that's the thinking behind it.

Well, if Marines and ARVNs, the ARVNs that I was with, usually we were with the First ARVN Regiment, they were pretty good. Sometimes were with the PFs and the RFs, the Popular Forces and the Regional Forces, the soldiers by, the farmers by day, soldiers by night kind of, you know, they just came up and they patrolled for a while and then went back and did their farms. They weren't very good and they, they usually made as much noise going out in the bush as they possibly could, I think to let the other guys know we were coming so they could scatter.

But anyway, we didn't have much use for them. The First ARVN Regiment was pretty good. But anyway, to get back to my point, to get back to my point about your worldly belongings, if we were in the same area with ARVNs and we went to take a, go down to the stream to take a bath or, and left and walked down there in our boots and our helmet and with our rifle and with some security and stuff, but left all our clothes and our wallet and our watches and that kind of stuff by our foxholes and an ARVN walked by, he'd look at it and say, "Well jeez, if those people don't care enough about it they must not want it." So they stole it, what, what was, what we thought was, what we termed, and in our ethical, legal or moral background would be stealing, they just took it because they figured, "Well, if he left it out there it's anybody's property, and besides, they're rich Americans and they can probably afford another one if they can leave it out like that." And that created hard feelings, because there were those, those issues of what I'm putting in italics as "stealing." That really ticked off some people, as you can understand.

KP:I can imagine.

HF:You can understand that. You come back and your wallet and your watch is gone and, and some ARVN non-com is fifty yards away with it.

KP:Yup, and then what do you say, I mean, the cultural difference...?

HF:The ARVN, the First ARVN Regiment with respect to combat on that, during that particular April 29th to May 4th time was the time that I was most involved with them, and they lost beaucoup casualties in that, and they had, they took their guys that had run under, under fire, and they stripped them of helmets, they just left them in their utilities, the soft cotton stuff and no helmet, no flak jacket, they had boots or Ho Chi Minh sandals, whatever they had on their feet, and splashed red paint all over them and made them litter bearers on the battlefield. Made them go all kinds of places that were dangerous, very dangerous. And some of the older -- I watched this one -- I would guess he was some sort of staff NCO, ARVN staff NCO, shooting his men in the feet because they wouldn't come up over the, my tanks were up on the objective and we needed infantry up with them, and the ARVN was the infantry that was supposed to be with us, and we're sitting ducks there without ARVN, without infantry security. It was really easy to knock a tank out in that kind of situation. We were sitting there and these guys wouldn't come up on line, they wouldn't come up and stay with us, and this ARVN NCO was shooting these guys in the feet until they moved. So I think, I think there were good units and bad units, and I think it had to do with leadership and morale and all kinds of different things. Who knows?

That particular unit took a lot of casualties on that operation. The major that was, he was a Dai Wi, which is, I think that's Vietnamese for Catholic if I remember right. But I thought he was a major, no, I guess, I guess a Dai Wi can, a Dai Wi was a captain and a Vietnamese captain could command a battalion. In the Marines you have to be a major to command a battalion. Dai Wis had life and death, they had life and death powers over their own men in their units, which is something that we don't have. This guy spoke excellent English. And the last day when we finally got up on the objective and we took it, and we had, we had the North Vietnamese dug in on the reverse slope of the hill, and then we had them on the incline of, in front of us, that we couldn't get at because of the jungle. We had a whole, there were a whole bunch of bunkers in there, we were just firing point blank over about a hundred meters, over the top of the hill. He was directing fire and he, he sat right on my tank and told me where to shoot and he had his, he had his ARVN troops out in front of us, because we

couldn't go any farther at this point, we were stuck now because there was no pl-, it was all jungle, you couldn't get the tanks into it. And he directed fire based on what his men were radioing back to us. He had excellent English, very well educated man. Pretty impressive guy really, because he was, he coordinated the tanks, he coordinated the air over, you know, the air and the artillery and his own men and stuff. Pretty good officer.

KP:I noticed that you had some photos of the children, Vietnamese children. Did you have much contact with them?

HF:That was for a brief period. Those pictures were taken in Cam Lo village which was between, it was north of Dong Ha which was our rear, and south of the Washout where we were based most of the time, and Charlie Two and Con Thien. And we went down to My Loc for a while, March I think of '69, and we, we, we had a fairly tame time. We had, we did road sweeps up out of My Loc to Route Nine to meet the supply convoys that came out of Dong Ha each day with the mine sweeps in front of them, through Mortar Alley and out. And one day, the little guy, the little guy there, with the, a couple interesting things did happen there. The little guy there with the hat in the, he, he spoke pretty good English. I think he might have been five or six years old, and he warned us about an ambush that was being planned, and we went around behind them and flushed them out on the way back. He was right. That was very nice.

The other thing that I remember, and I don't know if I've got a picture of her, there was a girl about fourteen there. Vietnamese girls grow up very quickly. They are beautiful, beautiful women and they look very old very quickly. They're beautiful at fourteen and elderly at thirty. It's a hard life, I'm sure that's part of it. Anyway, she had, she had, I asked her one day, it was in March and so I was describing what snow was like back in New England and that kind of thing and we were talking, we were just sitting on the tank there. And I was describing what it was like in the United States where I came from and so forth and so on, and I said to her, "Wouldn't you like to go back there and see it?" you know, and she thought for a minute and she said no. She said, I thought this was pretty interesting, she said, "no," she says, "all my friends," and she was fourteen years old, or fifteen years old, "all my friends are here. I know where they live, this is where I was born, this is where I'm going to die, I just as soon stay here." Those weren't her exact words, but that's what she was saying. She says, "but would you take my little brother?" In other words, before he had got so indoctrinated by where he lived, you could get him out of it and get him to somewhere else which was, which was a, again in quotes, a

better place. It was pretty neat. I mean, she, she was a pretty worldly teenager is what she was. I think, I think whether there'd been a war there or not, she'd have been a worldly teenager just because that's the kind of lives they lived. Tough climate, you know, all kinds of disease, famines and, you know, of one sort or, you know, problems with the rice harvest one year and not the next year. And then just the hot climate, all that kind of things, it was probably a hard life. But then you throw the war, the pressures of the war in on top.

KP:It was mentioned that you, there was use of World War II weapons and that the Army had better stuff than Marines. And in your first interview you sounded a little bit annoyed by that.

HF:Very much so. I, I went into the Marine Corps thinking it was, you know, I believed all the Marine Corps hype. They do, the Marine Corps does a tremendous job of selling itself. They have the best ads on TV, you know, the, with the swords and all that kind of stuff, you know, pulling them out of the stone and all this stuff they do now, the Marines are looking for a few good men and all that kind of crap. And their history is such as it is and their uniforms are the best and all that kind of stuff. And it's, it's a PR kind of thing and the Marine Corps does it the best of all of them, of all the branches of the service. And they talked me into it. I figured I was going into that branch of the service that was the best. Well, yeah, I think in many respects it was. But we weren't supplied the best.

The Marine Corps was, is the, is the ugly little brother of the Navy. The Navy gets everything. The Marine Corps is part of the Navy and what the Navy doesn't want the Marine Corps gets, gets. The Army gets all first-class stuff. I can give you a whole bunch of examples. We used to have armored, Army armor units, armored personnel carriers and tanks come out in the same areas around Hill, especially around Hill 124 and 162. Well, there were just mines all over the place, and everybody hit mines out there. If the Army did it, they would take out whatever they wanted, out of the tank or the armored personnel carrier, then blow it up, go get another one. That's, that's what they did. They, they'd, called it, blow it in place, and so they, they'd disable it or they'd put something, they'd put a grenade down the barrel of the 90 mm gun to, so that you couldn't use it any more. They, they disabled whatever they had and leave it there, the hell with it, they'd go get another one. The Marine Corps would go out there and they'd put everything back together, risk men and other machines to put, to jury rig their tanks that hit mines to get them back to the

rear where they put them back together and sent them back out again. That's one thing.

The Army had the long range patrol rations, which were much better than the C-rations that I ate all the time. They were, they were just dehydrated stuff you dumped water in. They actually tasted pretty good. I'm not sure I'd like a whole diet of them now, but they, they were, when you could get your hands on them they were pretty good. The Army had rucksacks that were, that you'd thought they bought at L.L. Bean, they fit so well and so comfortable. The Marine Corps had this old web gear, old green canvas gear that had been around since World War II, but we used that stuff for six weeks after I got there and it was starting to rain hard up in that part of Vietnam, that northern part, because I guess, my understanding is the monsoon goes through in different places in Vietnam because there's three hundred fifty or four hundred miles difference from the DMZ down to Saigon, so I mean there's a long, I mean, I was only in a very small area up near the DMZ. But it rained there from October to March, and I was there, I got there at the end of September and we didn't have rain gear for the first six weeks I was there. Now that's dumb.

We were the Third Marine Division, we were farther away from Da Nang than the First Marine Division. The First Marine Division was down around Da Nang, Third Marine Division was up north based in Quang Tri, in Quang Tri province and out of Quang Tri combat base. So what the Nave didn't want that came into Da Nang, the First Marine Division got. And what the First Marine Division didn't get, eventually trickled its way up to the Third Marine Division. So we really didn't have, I don't think I'm over stating this either. That was sort of the commonly accepted folklore, if that's what it was, of those of us that were in the Third Marine Division, in 1968 and 1969 when I was there. Now it could have been very different in '65 and '66 or '67 or in '71. I can only speak during that, you know, that time I was there and what my own personal experiences were.

KP:Do you think that had an effect on morale?

HF:Oh, sure. But what had an effect on morale, though, was casualties. Had a big effect on morale. I mean, you, you learned to put up with the heat and the lousy water and the bugs and the rats and the, you know, snakes and mosquitoes and all that kind of crap, flies. God, I had a, I had jungle rot on my arms so badly that I finally had to get penicillin shots, but there were great huge, all jungle rot is just cellulitis, it's just a breakdown of the skin tissue.

You'd get cut by elephant grass so they just wouldn't heal because of the climate, and would gradually just kind of get worse and worse and worse. And you'd look down, there'd just be flies walking around there, and there was nothing, you know, I see the look on your face, it is revolting, I'll grant you. But when you haven't bathed in a week or two or shaved, I didn't have a toothbrush for the first six weeks I was there, five or six weeks, you just, you know, you just get used to doing what other people do and it doesn't seem that bad. Obviously you'd look down, oh jeez, I've got flies, and you'd shoo them off but, pretty repulsive really. And that kind of stuff, with respect to morale, had some problems with morale, you know, had an effect on morale. But, you know, I think most of us would have walked around there for our twelve and twenty if, and, if we knew we were just going to walk around for twelve and twenty and not get shot at or step in any mines and said, "Yes, sir, thank you," back to the world.

KP:What other problems did you have with, you said at one point that you had inaccurate maps?

HF:Oh, World War II things, I had another thought, we'll get back to that. I had an M-, I had an M-1 carbine in my tank which was, it was supposedly banned by the Geneva Convention or the Paris Peace Talks or something, I don't know. But it was a short little thing like this, and I could pull it in and out of the hatch of the tank as I went in and out. I went in and out of that fast a few times, and needed to. That was World War II, but I liked that. And I also liked very much the M-14s when we carried them. They were replaced, we had them, all our M-14s replaced by M-16s, and the M-16s didn't always work that well and none of us really trusted them that much. But the M-14, you could take a, you could take mud and concrete and bananas if you had them, and stuff them into the, into the chamber of that, the breach of the, that M-14 and that bolt would just keep hammering home. It would just keep shooting and shooting. It didn't shoot as many rounds as fast, but it didn't matter as long as it shot. It was a tremendous weapon, I thought. And what was that, I kind of got off...?

KP:The inaccurate maps you had...?

HF:Yeah, now this map, the map that I've got there, that wasn't bad. If you got in the DMZ, I took two patrols into the DMZ when I was with the grunts, I would say it was November, December, November-December '68, and the Paris Peace Accords had said that we weren't supposed to be in the DMZ, that nobody was supposed to be in the DMZ. So if we got blown away there, my folks

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would've never known that I'd been in the DMZ. Just like, you know, there was a time when we weren't supposed to be in Laos and stuff, and I'm sure there were a lot of guys killed in Laos as part of the Vietnam conflict whose folks never really knew they were killed in Laos.

I took two combat patrols, I was, there were a number of different kinds of patrols. Combat patrol meant that you went in, you didn't do anything, you went in full combat gear, in other words you had, you had your flak jackets, you had helmets, and some, some patrols you went with soft covers and you didn't wear a flak jacket, you were just out snooping and pooping and trying to be quiet and trying to sneak around. But a combat patrol, you went out, you had extra ammunition, you had forward observers with you, and you went out and you, the idea was to make contact and hold it. You didn't, you didn't move away and you held it. We were always a little bit more tense when we did those things because they ex-, we were going to be expected to make contact, keep it, and get whatever in there we could to finish the job if we could do it.

And anyway, I took two of those patrols into the, into the DMZ, and we didn't know where the hell we were. Rivers were on it, the mountains were on it that are hills, fingers and different top-, different topographical features that we couldn't find on these maps. You know, I mean, those maps might have been done, who knows when they were, when they had been made and how recently they had been updated? Fifty years ago, who knows? I mean fifty years ago then. I don't know. Maybe during World War II. I really don't know.

We, I remember one time, on one of those, we came into a bunker complex and we were well into it before we even realized that we were in it, and we would have been toast if, if they'd been there because they'd have, we wouldn't even realize what happened and we'd a just been scrambled. But what it was, it was some sort of R and R center or hospital or something. We found a bunker full of old rice wine bottles, or old wine bottles, I imagine they were rice wine. They were empty so nobody could, and some bunks and stuff and it looked as if this was kind of a hospital R and R. It was just, just, actually this wasn't on one of those patrols, it was just we-, just south of the DMZ and we'd gone, we came into this as we were proceeding on this, on this patrol into the D-, into the DMZ. And there were vine ladders up into the, up into the trees where they'd go up and watch. There were vines all the way down to the streams down below and steps dug out of the hill so they could get up and down and stuff. I mean, it was their country. They fought with tenacity.

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KP:What did you do on R and R?

HF:Did you see the picture of Theresa there?

KP:Yes.

HF:Theresa was a nurse that I met when I was tomcatting out in California on my way to Vietnam. She was a, she worked at San Die-, she was in the OR, she worked in the OR at the San Diego State University Hospital, I think that's what it's called, and in fact the night before I went to Vietnam she and I went to Disney World of all things. I remember going on the jungle ride at Disney World. I thought, I wonder if this is what's it's going to be like over there. And the next night we were, we flew from San Diego to San Francisco to Travis Air Force Base, and then from there across the pond. Originally she was going to meet me in Australia but we decided not to do that, I forget why, and she met me in Hawaii and we decided to go to Hawaii because you, it was an extra day. And we, without getting into the nitty gritty of it all, we hung out for six or seven days, whatever it was, six days and seven nights, no, seven days and six nights, something like that.

KP:So what did you see while you were there?

HF:Bars, swimming pools, bedrooms. Not a whole lot. We went to the, we went to the, we rented a car and drove around the back side of the island, we stayed right in Oahu, went to the World War II Memorial, to Pearl Harbor, went to the beach occasionally. Oh, I went to see Earl Grant, the guy that sang [*unintelligible word*], who's the guy that does [*sings*], "Tiny Bubbles." Don Hoe, we went to see Hoe, good grief. Pretty much we enjoyed each other's company and that was the, you know, that was, I'd a been happy going to Rumford. When the wind is blowing from the wrong direction and all the stacks are blowing right down your nose, I'd a been happy in Rumford then.

KP:So when exactly did you go?

HF:Easter time, 1969. And it was, it was a week or two before, it must have been a week or two just, it must have been a week or t-, it was in April or end of March. I'm not sure when April fell, you could, I'm sure you can look that up and you'd know exactly because I was there Easter Sunday. But it was before the April 29th - May 4th fiasco that we were involved in after I got back. When I got back from R and R, the picture of me with the purple heart and the,

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I, in fact I think that was April 1st. Maybe it was in March, maybe Easter did fall in March because I think my first lieutenant's warrant was Ap-, was dated April 1st. Well, I probably go it after that, and I got my first lieutenant, I went ov-...

End of Tape One, Side B

Tape Two, Side A:

KP:Okay, Purple Heart?

HF:Yeah, I got, I got my first lieutenant's warrant and my Purple Heart on the same day, it was the day I got back from R and R, which by the way was very easy to return from. I had this, I had this sense of calm. I remember being shocked by it. Okay, let's go back to Vietnam and finish up what I got to do and get the hell out of there. Of course that was before that April 29th to May 4th period of time, which was the roughest four days that I spent over there. But I remember feeling very at ease, I just, calm, and I can't explain why. I didn't know why then, I just remember feeling that way.

Oh, you want to know about the Purple Heart, is that? I was hit in the head and the neck above the, right in the middle of my forehead, and, came along here along my, the left side of my neck. You can't even see anything, I've been hurt worse, I've got slivers in me that have hurt worse, that's not true really, with shrap metal from an RPG -- rocket propelled grenade -- it's an anti-tank weapon like what in World War II was called a bazooka, and it was fired at the tank and it missed, and it hit, I happened to be looking where the round landed, I was just, on my, half of my body was up and out of the tank and I looked where, I happened to be looking right where it exploded and so I got some of the back blast in my, into my face. And the shrap metal, all four pieces were probably no bigger than my thumb nail. I was scared because I kn-, I, the explosion pushed me back, blew me back, it was very hot. There was a little blood. I was very lucky, the piece that stuck to my forehead I couldn't quite pull out, it was just stuck in the bone, a corpsman got it a little while later, and the three pieces that went in my neck, the piece that stuck in my forehead was the biggest of the four, and it could have hit me in the eye, I suppose, and the three pieces that went in my neck just missed the carotid artery, they just went right along. And I was just really very lucky. Flak jacket soaked up a little, I had a flak jacket on, and one of the vision blocks in the cupola of the tank was pretty well smashed. Now they're probably that thick, glass, stop a 50 caliber round. For it to be pretty well smashed suggests it was hit pretty hard and I suspect whatever that was would have disemboweled me, so I was lucky. Without trying to sound like a, the war hero that I'm not, I had several other situations that were a lot closer than that. I just didn't get hit. But that's, that's the Purple Heart, such as it is. I wasn't hurt very badly.

KP:When did you return from Vietnam?

HF:I was medievacced, you probably want to know that story, too. This is kind of humorous. And for those of you that are paying for my, for my disability, don't laugh too hard at this story. I ca-, I was medievacced out of Vietnam on July 13th, 1969, to Yokuska Naval Hospital. At that very sa-, the same day, during the period of time just to put a historical perspective on this, that I was in Yokuska Naval Hospital, and I was there for a week, we landed on the moon. One giant step and all that kind of stuff, and Ted Kennedy drowned what's-her-name in Chappaquiddick. The same thing happened. Are you familiar with, Ted Kennedy had a, had a, it was at a party on Martha's Vineyard and driving back from it he, his car went off the road and the girl that was with him drowned. It ruined all his aspirations for the presidency. But those two things happened at that time, big historical events.

I was sitting on the, now you have to understand, I was sitting on the shitter when this happened. We got hit by 122s. We had just built an outhouse and we'd also built a shower. Now I never had those things when I was over there, but we'd built them because we were back at Charlie Two which was one of those, remember I said, there was Con Thien farthest north, then there was the Washout, and then Charlie Two was another company size perimeter with artillery and so forth in it and we were there for, oh, two, three weeks in mid-summer of 1969. So we built an outhouse, and every morning I took the four to six watch, I always took it. If we got hit at night, it was al-, it was almost always after midnight, and it was usually closer to dawn, so I wanted to be awake in the first place. In the second place I wanted my men to know that I'd take a radio watch, so I always took the four to six. And I was down there with the radio in the outhouse doing my business, when we got hit by 122s. And I got up and I ran to the bunker and two more came in. They're, they're flat trajectory weapon, they came very quickly, you had four or five seconds to get under cover when you heard the, when you heard the report because they came this way, straight, whereas a mortar was something that was lobbed up in the air so that when you heard the tubes pop in a mortar, you might have twenty-five seconds to get under cover. Mortars went in after you, that was the problem, and I hated them.

Anyway, I hadn't even got my drawers up and I was running to this bunker and two more came in. I hit the deck again. They, the first two had been fired a little bit short of us, the second two were a little bit long. In artillery what you try to do is fire one long and one short, and then you add or subtract to get the middle and you fire for effect, so in other words they had us bracketed. I knew this, I

mean, now I'm really [*unintelligible word*] out, and as I got to my, to the bunker, I jumped in and everything in the world blew up, and my leg went on fire, and I thought, Jesus, and I'm down then. Of course there were several guys in the bunker and when you're taking incoming everybody is awake and aware and is, and I come crashing in through the top and holding on to my leg and I didn't even want to look, I figured it, it was cut off, I just figured that from the explosion, the concussion and everything that I, that I was really badly wounded. And finally when I did look at it, there wasn't a scratch and I didn't have, there was nothing wrong with my, there was nothing torn in my, in my utility trousers, there was, I had no blood, no nothing. My leg was on fire.

And what had happened is that, come to find out, it's why I have a disability now, I tore the ligaments and cartilage both in my knee, it was if I was playing football I guess. And, I'd caught it somehow at the top of the bunker when I jumped in, I don't remember this. All I know is when I landed in a heap on the bottom, my leg was on fire. I've had five operations unfortunately since then, and I'm twenty percent permanently disabled. They medievaced me home and started, did the first operation, I really scrambled the knee up, sadly. And that's why, I was sitting on the crapper, for all you people to pay me my twenty percent permanent disability ever since. It's kind of hum-, it's almost humorous looking back on it now, but it was scary.

I got, I asked when I was, because they sent me back to the Third Medical Battalion, and they did something, they slapped me in a cast, which was what they did in those days, from, God, I think it went up to my hip practically, a whole cast, gave me crutches, and I asked if I could go back out and see my, see my men. I mean, I'd spent ten months of my life with these guys and I felt like I was deserting them. I went out to see them and there were some real sad goodbyes and they put me in the back of a jeep, and I never rode jeeps over there. I hated jeeps because if you hit a mine with a jeep, that was the end. But I rode this jeep back and they sent me down to Da Nang and some bozo down there took my K-bar and my boots and some hospital REMF took them and I never took them home. And I was gone. And it was, that was the end of it. I never saw those guys again. I wrote to them some, they wrote to me, but that's kind of dissipated, you know, it just did. It was too bad, I'd like to find those guys. One guy in particular, one corporal wrote me for quite a while, then he got badly wounded and he was in the hospital out in California someplace, forget where, and then that kind of, yeah.

KP: So when you got home, what was it like?

HF:It, now how s-, when do you mean, when I got home? Because I was in the hospital, you know, I mean, I really didn't, when I got home to the....

KP:Oh, how was, how was your care in the hospital...?

HF:It was all right, you know, I mean I guess they, they didn't know as much about knees then as they do now. They wouldn't have done all, or not done all the stuff that they did then. But it was the, it was the top-shelf surgery of the times, it was a cheap, Chelsea Naval Hospital is a cheap teaching hospital. I remember when they did the -- you'll get a kick out of this -- this anesthesiologist came into the room, he says, "Lieutenant, I'm Lt. Commander So-and-so, blah-blah-blahblah, blah-blah-blahblah, blah-blah-blah, I'm going to be the anesthesiologist tomorrow, yak-yak-yak-yak," on and on and on. And then he says, "Oh, by the way, you're going to have a spinal tomorrow." Well, I came right up out of the cover, "You're not going to need any blankety-blank-blank-blank spinal. I don't want to get meningitis." I mean, I didn't know what I was talking about, but I had some, you know, ignorance is not a very good teacher. And I just figured that if I was going out, I was going to, why would I go to Vietnam and do this, that and the other, and you got to come along and give me meningitis, yak-yak-yak, rah-rah-rah-rah. About ten minutes later, and he kind of backed out. And there were three other guys in the same room with me, one of them was a chopper pilot, Army chopper pilot and he was on a, one of those beds that rotates because he'd been pretty well shot up. And they were all laughing at me, and I'm just really exercised. And about ten minutes later this gorgeous blonde nurse walks in, "Oh, hi, I'm Lt. whatever her name was. I understand you're having a little un-, the OR nurse, I understand you're having a little problem with, you know, your spinal tomorrow." "Oh, no, no, no, it'll be fine, now, tell me what's it all about," you know. She just had me, and he knew exactly what he was doing, that, the doctor did. He sent this, and this nurse came up and just soft-sold me.

And the next day, then they gave me something the next day that left me up, I think I could be a drug addict with this stuff. This was unbelievable stuff, I mean, you just felt great, you felt way up there, very talkative. I can see how people, you know, it was a prep-, prep-, preparatory drug to whatever the, to the spinal, and I think it was probably to calm me down because they knew that I was going to, I had the potential of being kind of a bozo. So then we get into the OR and of course you're naked, and I always feel naked when I'm naked, if you will, and, and, and I didn't have my glasses. So even if that, the, that, and the nurse

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was all gowned up and, so I couldn't see her because she was all gowned up with a mask and everything, and I couldn't see her because I didn't have my glasses on, I'm blind as a bat without my glasses, and I was higher than a kite, I was up above them anyway. She never came back and saw me ever. I saw her, I saw her, I was down in the, I was in an orthopedic situation, but I spent a lot of time with the am-, with the amputees, we were all in the same, and we're out on the lawn one day and she walked by and there's a lot of oohing and ahing and I just looked, you know, there she goes. I knew I'd been had.

KP:Exactly.

HF:You know.

KP:Exactly. So you spent a week in the hospital.

HF:I was in Yokuska Naval Hospital for a week or so, then I was at Chelsea Naval Hospital after the operation, in-patient, out-patient, I don't know. The opera-, you see, by the time they got me back to the United States, it was the end of July probably. They might have operated, I'm going to guess, I don't remember, the operation was probably around the first of August, '69. It was about a six week recovery on that, in-patient, out-patient. Maybe it was eight weeks. I think it was eight weeks because in those days they opened your whole knee up, it wasn't done with the scopes that they do now where they just go in and do a little tweaking around. And I've had two of those done and it was a piece of cake. I was, twenty four hours later I was walking around. But they just, they opened the whole joint up and, it was quite a recovery and quite a bit of physical therapy. That's how I got interested in being a therapist, or that's where my initial interest was, or started.

I lost my train of thought. We were talking about, what was your question, what was the question you just gave me?

KP:About how long you were in the hospital?

HF:Oh yeah, okay, then I, so I was, right, then I was awaiting orders. You know once they, once they had done the, once I had recovered, then they put you in for orders and stuff, and I got my orders which I had to report on November 15th I think it was, so I really had from the first of August to the November 15th that I was attached to the hospital, even though I was in-patient, out-patient and for a part of it, and for part of it I was attached there awaiting

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orders. And I went home to my folks' house and screwed around for a while until I got my, until I got my orders. And they were for, I went out to Buffalo, New York, for the next sixteen months and I was the casualty assistance officer for the Marine Corps in the western New York State area and that meant that I went out and notified next of kin when somebody was killed or wounded or missing in action. And I made the initial notification before they knew anything. I knocked on the door and told them what the deal was.

It was awful work. It was, it was, it was like rubbing your nose in what you'd just been through, and watching people break up and crack up. I did a lot of drinking then. Of course the bars were open until three in the morning in New York State, or four or whatever it was, and I was twenty-five years, twenty-four years old and I had some, I don't know, I just did a lot of drinking. It was an awful hard job. I, and I got good at it, I got so callous that I could, I could walk up and tell you what I had to say, and then I presented the flags at the funeral and ran the honor guard and the taps and then I presented the posthumous awards, medals and what have you, and death gratuities and insurances and whatever else. Ran down personal effects. I was the, I was just the liaison between the Marine Corps and the families. And I had all kinds of awful things happen.

I look back at that, you know, I look back at that and wonder how the hell did I do that? But you get callous. It's like anything else. It's like, it was like Vietnam, you got callous too. You just, I cried over there once that I can remember, and that was about a guy that was wounded, over a guy who was wounded. He lost his face at, at, it, shrap metal from a mine just cleaned his face and eyes and nose and, the kid looked like Paul Newman. He sure didn't any more. And I remember crying about that, but you didn't let yourself do that, you know, you just, you just, I don't know, you just stowed it away. And I stowed it away for a long time.

I stowed it away until, and I don't remember exactly when it was, but it must have been about 1980 or '81, in there, or '82. And I started dreaming about Vietnam, and it wasn't about fire fights and the guy whose name I can't remember now who lost his face, and his arm was just, one of his arms was just completely riddled. It wasn't about stuff like that, it was, it was what the Beatles would call a day in the life. You know, I could remember patrols, just walking along, how hot I was, how miserable I was, the sticks I stepped over, what a banana tree looked like, a specific banana tree. I don't just mean banana trees generically. And when I woke up from this, I was still thinking

about it in my, as I was conscious. I was preoccupied. I'd go back to sleep and I would continue the dreams. And this went on -- this was about Christmas time -- and, I don't know why that, why it just happened to come out then. My father died two days before Christmas a few years before that, I had four men killed, of the eight men that were killed in my platoon about two weeks before Christmas.

I don't if any of those things, whether it was the anniversary date and it was, I don't know. But I do know that it started to happen to me and I guess I got withdrawn. I was working as a, working as an occupational therapist and coaching football and track in high school in Arlington, Massachusetts, at Arlington High, and I guess I was getting withdrawn because I wasn't talking to anybody and the principal stopped me after -- I knew this was going on, and I knew I was being very quiet -- but I had control, you know, that's how I felt about it. It's the macho way the Marine Corps teaches you and the way you're brought up post World War II, a male in America and all that kind of stuff, I had control. And the principal said to me, "Hank," he says, "can you step into my office a second?" "Sure." So I walked in and he says, Marie was a second grade teacher and a friend of mine, "Marie says something's wrong with you." And something clicked when he said that to me and I said, "Bernie," I said, "I'm preoccupied with Vietnam." He says, "You were in Vietnam?" I mean, nobody knew, I just kept that under wraps, it wasn't anything that I was proud of. And I said, "Bernie, yeah, yeah, I'm a Vietnam veteran." I says, "I'll take care of this."

And I left his office and I went downstairs and I had a phone in my office, I was in Mass-, you know, I was outside of Boston, I've got a lot of money, like Maine. And I called the Vietnam Veterans Outreach Center in Brighton, Mass., and I went in there that afternoon I think, and I went there once a week for eight or nine months and just talked about things. And as a result of that, I began reading about Vietnam and seeing some of the bullshit movies, I mean, *The Deerhunter* and the, and *Platoon* and the rest of them. They're not, they don't, they weren't what I ha-, not what I went through, not the way I went through it. There are some little bits and pieces of them that might be realistic to me, but, for eight or nine months, and as a result I can talk about it now and obviously I am here. And I talk now to high school classes and things like that and I, I know it's more cathartic to me than it is informational for them. I guess it was healthy. I was embarrassed.

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Every time I walked in there, it was embarrassing for the, for me, who, Marine combat veteran, male, you know, father of two, post World War II, brought up, to think that I couldn't take care of myself enough. I needed to go see a therapist? Jump back, Daddy Rabbit.

But it, it helped. Certainly I'm no longer preoccupied with it. I will say that I think, to the degree that I was then. The preoccup-, the legacy, we mentioned, we were talking about legacy earlier and I forget in what context, the legacy for Vietnam for me is that I can't ever forget it, and that every day I think about it. Here, this day and time, we're talking about it. But everything from cloud formations to tree lines to music, the Doors, when I hear the Doors, that's war music. I love it and hate it, but it's macho stuff to me because it's very meaningful, take me back to my youth which I almost lost, and a lot of guys that I knew did lose their youth. They're forever eighteen or twenty-one or whatever they were, never to grow any older. So that's the legacy, that I can't ever get away from it.

KP:What were people's attitudes towards you when you got back to the United States, your parents and other people?

HF:When I was stationed in, my parents were wonderful. The older generation was fine. It was my peer group that were bozos. My peer group considered me intellectually inferior for getting sucked in by the whole thing. How could, didn't you know that, that, I had, I was engaged to a girl when I was in college, wonderful girl. And she was my age, I was young for my, for my grade. She was ol-, in other words I graduated from high school when I was seventeen, she was well into her eighteenth year when she graduated. So I was a senior when she was a sophomore in college, but we had dated since she was a freshman and I was a junior, and it was serious. And we had sort of agreed that, that her junior year she'd go abroad, she went to England and studied for a year, and I would do my Marine Corps training, once I got to that point, once I decided to go in the Marines, and for that, of course it was about a year's time, I think it was nine or ten months, whatever the total training was, and leave and travel and all that kind of stuff. And then during her senior year I would do my tour in Vietnam. I would get home in the fall which would have worked out if I would have got home in October, I'd managed my whole tour without getting hurt. We'd get married and I'd get embassy duty in Spain and we'd fish for trout outside of Pamplona and run the bulls in the spring.

Unfortunately, she decided that she didn't believe in the war and that I did, which wasn't true. I didn't believe in the war, I believed in duty, I believed in doing what I had to do, and I, and I still do. I would feel extremely guilty if I thought somebody had to die in my stead. And that's not meant to be macho, that's not meant to be heroic, it really isn't. That's just how I f-, how I, I guess I felt that way without really knowing it when I was twenty-one years old, and I definitely feel it now. So she shit-canned me. You don't, you believe in the war and I don't, therefore intellectually we'll never get together. And that hurt. I needed, at that point in time I needed somebody in my own peer group to be on my side. That, I digress, I digress.

KP:No, that's pertinent to the question.

HF:But, well, it was, but the people, when I came back, most people, I had, one of the other things that I did when I was stationed out in Buffalo was I had to go around to the VA hospitals and check with all former marines that were in the VA hospitals once a month and see how they were doing. One of the VA hospitals was right next to the University of Buffalo. The University of Buffalo was a hotbed for political discontent at the time. The English department was, in the, in terms of those days, radical. Whatever the heck that is, communist, whatever the heck that is. And so when they saw my Marine Corps vehicle, U.S. Marine, U.S. Marine Corps on the side of it, green, green Marine Corps vehicle, they threw stuff at me, flipped the bird at me, lay in front of me on the road, swore at me. I, one time I was in a bar in August of 1970 and, make a long story short of it, I was sitting there and some guy came up to me, he says, "We don't like your kind in here." I'm sitting there minding my own damn business, I don't think I'd been in there ten minutes, and it was a bar, a dating bar kind of place that I frequented with many of my friends, male and female. And this just happened to be a middle of the week night, I just happened in there, and I wasn't in uniform, and I looked at him and he gave me some more crap, and I just cold-cocked him, I drilled him. And I'm not, I'm not beyond fighting, but I, physically getting in fisticuffs, but I was not the toughest guy around. I stayed away from it as much as I could. I wouldn't back down, but I, you know, I, I stayed away from it. I drilled him, and he went down, whoosh, and the bartender jumped over the bar and he picked the guy up, threw him out, came back and bought me a drink and says, "My son's in the Air Force, nobody should be treated like that." And what he was referring to is my hair was so short, "We don't want guys like you in here." So, I mean, that kind of stuff happened. And I'm glad I hit him, and I'm not, I can tell you the times in my life when I hit people and I wasn't glad about it.

You know, I got in fights in high school or college or something, over nothing.

KP: So you said that your parents were, were great when you got home?

HF: My mother hung a flag up. Now, the American Legion will tell you that you don't, unless it's illuminated, you don't leave a flag out in, after dark, you know, and that you don't leave it up in inclement weather and all that kind of stuff. She put a flag up on a little flag pole at home on our farm, and it stayed there until I came home. She wasn't going to take it down. She wrote me every day when I was in Vietnam. My father never wrote me, never wrote me once.

I, I saw my father cry twice in my life, and one time was the day that I left on the plane to go, fly from Hartford, Connecticut, out to the West Coast. He turned, he wouldn't even shake my hand, he just turned and walked away. I understand why he didn't write, he, my mother wrote every day. She used to send me candy over there from, it would come, sometimes it had been sitting in LZ somewhere, landing zone, in the sun and melt. I was, boxes of chocolates, you know, couple pounds of chocolate, wonderful chocolates from a little place at home that made hand, hand-made chocolates. It would be all melted together, sometimes full of bugs, you know, worms and things. We'd eat around them. Oh, yeah, the chocolate's all right, the worms hadn't got to it yet. But we did, you know.

KP: Did you have any siblings that...?

HF: Yes, I have an older brother, a younger brother, a younger sister. My older brother went to Harvard on a full boat, worked for the, at the time he was teaching, just recently got married. My younger brother was at Kenyon College out in Ohio, dropped out of college, became, truly became a hippie. I'm very close to him now, he and I are very close. He went to, he lived in Haight Ashbury, believe it not, for a while. Grew his hair long, managed to get a lottery number that kept him out of the draft. My sister went to Bryn Mawr, one of the seven heavenly sisters, and she and my younger brother are not close to my sister at all, for reasons that I won't, don't need to discuss here I think. Not pertinent really. She and my younger brother marched on both candle light moratoriums on Washington in September and October of 1969 while I was in the hospital, at least during the first one. And at the time I didn't understand it. I grew to understand it very well. "At the time, how can

you do that? I'm your brother, your brother Henry, me. I'm in this hospital bed, I'm okay, but I might not have been." Yeah.

KP:How did they react to you when, after you got home?

HF:Fine, there wasn't any particular problem. I was still their brother. My older brother Sam didn't, he wasn't, I don't think he felt, though he was very involved with race relation, his wife is black, very involved in race relations stuff, I don't think he was that, I never heard him speak that much about Vietnam. He wrote me. My younger brother Woody, we've always been tight. I think he respected me for what I did, and I had respect for him that he was willing, he, I have respect for anybody who's willing to go to jail, which he'd a done.

A guy's that, you know, that fled over the border or worse the guys that I can remember when I went to get my initial physical, there must have been ten or fifteen guys standing there with these clutches of doctors' reports saying how physically unfit they were. And of course the, they got turned down. I didn't have any use for that kind of thing at all. If you've got the courage of your convictions, whatever that conviction is, it's all right with me. If you've got the courage of it.

KP:How come you didn't want people to know that you were in Vietnam?

HF:I wasn't very proud of it. It was, at the time, I wasn't. I mean, I was involved with killing people and I'm not real proud of that. I'm still not. I just wanted to be left alone. I just wanted to melt back into society and just let me, I wanted to forget it. I didn't want to go through the hassles of explaining and fighting my way out of situations where people get pissed off about Vietnam and stuff and people who were there. I grew my hair long, smoked dope. That didn't last too long, that, a year, a year and a half, two years, I don't know exactly what it was. I just wanted, I just wanted to forget, you know. I guess, I mean, I'm just telling you what I, what I, tomorrow ask me the same question, I'm not sure I could tell you why because I've never really come to grips so that I know that this is why I did A, B and C. But my guess is, I just wanted to put it away. It was, I know I wasn't proud of it, and I, I am now. I think I said that earlier, that, but I, but I'm still ambivalent. That's another legacy about the damned thing.

KP:Are you...?

HF:You come up with these questions. These are awful.

KP:What do you mean, they're awful questions?

HF:I mean they're probing. That's good.

KP:It's my field.

HF:Tell, tell, I know, tell Chris you did a good job.

KP:Oh, thank you. You made some rubbings from the wall. Do you want to tell me a little bit about some of the people?

HF:These are just some of them. [*Going through rubbings*] Terry Penseneau bled to death on an LZ. He was our platoon honor man, just a tr-, all-around great guy. He was our platoon honor, I mean our company honor man at both, at OCS and at Basic School.

Albert Gates was the, was a, I never knew him. He was a pilot, a chopper pilot who was shot down and was missing in action, and I went to notify his wife, and I had, I had trouble finding her. It was out in a little, little town east of Buffalo, little country town, and she was living with her parents, which had her maiden name, but gave me the address and I couldn't, you know, and I'm driving up and down this country road in my green Marine Corps car. Everybody on the road, on that country road, knew what it was. I mean, we'd go to make those notifications, you stop at a little post office and, to find out where somebody lived and then everybody in town knew that that little green Marine Corps vehicle was there, and people died in towns around there just as they did all across America. Anyway, when I walked in the door, she was screaming bloody murder. I mean, she was screaming, she'd just given birth to their first son, only son, and she was packing to go and meet him in R and R. And I was supposed to not tell a soul except the next of kin what had happened, but she was out of control and I had to tell her mother. She didn't, the, Tracy, Tracy wouldn't come out of there, she was just screaming in the other room. And I had to tell her mother, and her mother had to go tell her. And I wasn't supposed to do that, I mean, I was not following orders, but I used my common sense, I guess.

Odd thing about all that is some months later I went to present, he won a Distinguished Flying Cross and some other stuff, I went to present medals and, it was quite a few months later, and she was getting things together and I just, we were the same age, you know, and I said something to her about, you know, how was this going, she, well her cousin had taken her out to a dating bar but she didn't like it and she knew she had to get back into the, things, it was six or eight months later, but she was really having trouble. And I says, well, if you want, we're having a party at our, at the, this, Labor Day, and we were having a pool party, end of the summer, at the apartment complex I worked in, she was welcome to come. So she and a friend of hers showed up and one thing led to another and I dated her for six or eight months after that. She was a great kid but, man, her life was ruined, absolutely ruined. I've lost sight of her, lost, but that's who, I did that because of her really. I wouldn't know where to find her now.

Chauncy Whiteside, Corporal Whiteside, he was a black corporal from, a squad leader of mine from, was killed.

Steve Dowdell was a private in my tank unit and was killed in July '60. Another one of Whiteside [*referring to rubbing*].

Duncan Sleigh, Duncan Sleigh was the first guy from my platoon, from my company at Basic School to be killed. He was a Dartmouth graduate and he lasted, I don't know, three or four, five weeks in Vietnam.

Eric Barnes was a fraternity brother of mine, Marine captain. Jeep hit a mine.

David Schwartz was a machine gunner in my, in my infantry, in my platoon. First, Lima Company, First Platoon, Lima Company, Third Battalion, Fourth Marines.

That's Corporal Hine. This is sad. He was another, he was a corporal I guess finally when he was killed. This is pathetic, this breaks my heart. He had done a tour in Vietnam, he was a gentle soul, he'd done a tour in Vietnam with the grunts, gone home, got ca-, busted smoking marijuana. The Marine Corps gave him, he got busted by the civilian authorities I think. Anyway, and they threw the book at him, and then the Marine Corps said, "Okay, we're going to give you six, six and a kick, six," that's six months loss of pay, six months hard duty, and a bad conduct discharge. This is, this is for a guy, just for smoking dope. And, or you can go back to Vietnam. So he opted, he opted to go back to

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Vietnam and he made it through his second tour, about seven and half, eight months, and he was killed in an ambush. And he had around his neck his girlfriend's nylons. He wore, he put them on there and they never came off. And I always thought, boy, if that isn't, if his life isn't a monument to what double jeopardy is, nothing else is. He was a great kid.

Ron McLean was Jimmy Stewart's son. He was my bunkie. We were in the same battalion in Vietnam. He was, we found him hand tied, shot in the back of the head.

Mike (Wanch) was my last company commander, who was killed with an RPG. He was a Naval Academy graduate. He was a tremendous CO.

Everett (Reepy), he was another machine gunner, was killed the same time Schwartz was. There were two other guys, and I can't remember their names, killed. One was red headed. Those are only a few of them. I've got a whole, I've got tons of them at home. I don't know why those are in there, how they, that's just a few of them, but those are, some of them were with my unit, some of them were friends.

I went down there at that wall and I could have rubbed there for, I know I've got thirty or thirty-five of them at home. The Wall's beautiful. I never wanted to go to it, but I'll tell you that once I went to it and saw it, it helped to, it really did, and I never believed that crap. I know that's your field that you're studying for and stuff, but I never would have believed that that kind of thing would really be soothing and healing. I cried and cried and cried.

Wouldn't, we went down over Veterans Day, let's see, it was my, Sara's senior year in high school so, she's a junior in college, so that was four years ago, three years ago, four years ago, whatever, and I didn't even want to go to the Wall with my family. I didn't even want to go down there with them for fear I'd wreck the four or five day trip that we'd planned. But as it turned out, it didn't. I, I'm a runner, even with a bad knee, I hobble around, and I'd run down there, a couple miles down there in the morning, get my rubbings and, and they went with me one night. But it's a beautiful, beautiful memorial.

Now, if I have a regret with respect to things that I haven't done since I got home from Vietnam, one of them was not being there the day that wall was dedicated. The night they dedicated that I happened to be in a bar in East Cambridge, Mass., and there were a bunch of us hoisting, all of a sudden

people came out of the woodwork, it was one of those few times in those days that you bumped into, that you let your, that I let my hair down with respect to the fact that I was Vietnam veteran.

KP:You had also mentioned in the last interview that you felt that, you mentioned a couple legacies this time about. Well, I mean, there's a million legacies about the Vietnam War, it was a big turning point, but it, another legacy was that now you're skeptical of the government and now you're more politically involved. What are you involved in?

HF:That has something to do with questioning authority and stuff. I'm more politically involved in that I vote every chance I get, even the tiniest little election in the little town I live in, Woolwich. I am a junkie for whatever's going on politically, you know, I catch McNiel-Lehrer. I listen to National Public Radio. I even watch *Crossfire* once in a while. I read editorials I read the op ed page, *Newsweek*. I just, I'm, I try to be as informed as I can now, but I never used to be. Well, you heard what I had to, you heard what I had to say about Kennedy. I don't remember much about that at all other than, but if that happened now, that would be another matter.

KP:You had also mentioned that you felt that the whole war was a waste and you were disgusted with the display of bringing home the POWs. What exactly...?

HF:Well, because it was a show. It was like, it was like parading, they brought home those POWs and it was like, Vietnam was such a screwed up mess that America had been trying to make itself look good to itself ever since. And one of the things that they did was to parade these poor POWs home who didn't, I think John McCain would speak to this now, they paraded them home like they were, like they were the Big Ten all-conference football team. And brought them out, they haven't even, they hadn't even got a chance to get used to the fact they were out of the Hanoi Hilton, and it was all to make America look good to itself. I mean, hell, look what we've done in the, since then. We've bombed Granada because, because Reagan lost face when he had the Marines killed in Beirut or whatever the heck that was. One of the alleged legacies of the war against Saddam Hussein over there in '91 was that now we got our honor back. Bullshit.

KP:I so remember that.

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HF:That just, that just, I don't know. And that's what, that's what bothered me about, not that the POWs themselves were, were wrong to be getting off those planes. Quite the contrary. It was just, they were being used, their lives and their, what they stood for and their families who were being prostrated, prostituted out in front of them, in front of Amer-, America and, and it just made me sick. It's all, it, see, the thing is, the thing that bugs me about is that it's all image. It's not, it's not the, the, the sustenance, it's not the content of what Martin Luther King would call the content of your character. You know, it's what you, what America wants to make itself look like. It's all image. There's nothing meaty to it, and that's what bothers me about it.

KP:In that, I wanted to have you explain, you made an eloquent statement in the last interv-...

End of Tape Two, Side A

Tape Two, Side B:

HF: Yeah, well, I must have read that somewhere because I've never had an original thought in my life. Eloquent, I....

KP: What, that was good.

HF: I appreciate the plaudit, I'm not sure I agree with you, but then I told you earlier that I don't take a compliment very well anyway.

KP: When did you return to graduate school?

HF: Nineteen seventy-three.

KP: What made you decide to go back?

HF: Because I was having too much fun being a bum. I, I, I guess I needed time off, and I collected unemployment and I was playing semi-pro baseball for a team outside of Boston and playing a lot of golf and living on a couch. Just generally screwing around, and I was really enjoying it. And I didn't know what I wanted to do but I knew that I, being in limbo was, was just that, it was being nowhere, it was being limbo, and that I had to make a decision to do something, anything, because that was better than being in limbo. And that if, even if I made the wrong decision, it was better than being in limbo, because I always do something else. So, I decided to go back to graduate school and get a degree in occupational arts. Actually, I wanted to be a physical therapist but I didn't think I could do the sciences, so I decided to be an occupational therapist. Found out very quickly once I was in graduate school, we take all the same sciences, exactly the same ones, so all the neurology, neuroanatomy and anatomy and physiology and all this stuff that I was scared to death of, I took to be an OT just as I would have to be a PT. I don't mind, I mean, my career as an OT has been fine, but it's interesting that I, how naive I, how dumb I was.

KP: So what are you doing now?

HF: I'm an occupational therapist. I work with handicapped kids here in the Lisbon-Durham school system, and I coach varsity track and varsity cross country, spring track, at the high school.

KP:And what got you interested in moving away from actual physical therapy to...?

HF:Well, it's, it's just that I didn't think I could, I didn't think I could, I didn't, you mean, the physical part? No, occupational therapist and physical therapist are two, two different disciplines. I had originally wanted to be a physical therapist for what I had gone through when I was in the hospital. But I didn't think I could pass the sciences. So I decided that I would go be an occupational therapist when I got accepted for graduate school and so forth and so on. And stayed as an occ-, I mean that's what my degree is in. I did it because I didn't think I could pass the sciences, and what I was saying was kind of ironic was that I took the same sciences as a PT does. Then as other, there's places where physical therapists go out along a particular course of study and then OTs branch off in other things and when that point came I branched off just like all the other Ots did.

KP:So, going towards special education?

HF:Oh, how did I get into special education?

KP:Yeah.

HF:Oh, I see. I had some, when I went to graduate school, I had some notion, not well defined at all, about -- sports have always been extremely important to me -- about trying to combine therapy with physical education. And I got lucky enough to study, Public Law 94-142 was just being enacted, the federal law, the special education law, was just being enacted. And there were no Ots in the public schools in those days. I happened to be lucky enough to intern with a woman named Jean Sanders who was, to the best of my knowledge, the first O-, full-time occupational therapist in any public school in Massachusetts, and Massachusetts was on the, the cutting edge of hiring Ots way back when, and I got to work for her as an intern and that turned into jobs and recognition and so forth and so on. So I stayed in the public schools since then with a brief respite where I ran a department, the occupational therapy department at Nashua Memorial Hospital in Nashua, New Hampshire. And then for about a year, not quite a year after that, where I pounded nails just to get away from the therapies. I didn't make a very good living as a carpenter so I had to come back, but it's been fine. I'm very pleased having come back to being an OT about fifteen years ago.

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KP:How did you end up getting into the special education aspect of it with children?
What got you interested in wanting to work with this level, elementary level?

HF:Because that's where the kids are, the elementary level?

KP:Yeah, or the high school level?

HF:Well I work through the whole district so it, it's just I liked, I got in, I worked with an occupation therapist, Jean Sanders, who was in the public schools and she works as required by the special education department. And those are just, those are just the kids that we work with. They're in special education.

KP:Sorry, I get confused.

HF:Oh, no, that's all right. I probably didn't explain it very clearly.

KP:What do you like most about what you're doing now?

HF:What I like most about what I do right now is that it has provided me a working schedule and calendar that has coincided with the calendar of my family, so I can watch my kids grow up. I have two daughters, one who's a junior at the University of Vermont now majoring in geology, and another one who's going to Union College out in Schenectady this fall. They're both real good athletes. My older daughter Sara dives at the University of Vermont, one-meter/three-meter diver, and my younger daughter Beth will play soccer most likely, and will be a hell of a good diver out at Union. Doesn't know what she's going to major in. But I like watching them grow up. It's been the best part of my life, without a doubt. It's gone awful fast. You watch that six year old, that eight year old and the years....

KP:It does. It goes by real fast. If there was one thing you'd like to teach your children about the Vietnam War, what would it be and why?

HF:Humph, well, there's, now there's a question that I'll give you seventeen different answers on seventeen different days.

KP:What's today's?

HF:So for today, June 10, 1999, well, now let me think. The one thing. Hmmmm.
Boy, there's so many things that pop into my head. Limiting to one, I, I don't

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know whether to tell you something very patriotic which comes into my head, or something a little blacker,...

KP:Tell me, *[unintelligible phrase]*.

HF:...and the, the blacker, the blacker thing was question authority. Don't get, don't get, you don't have to be a jerk about questioning authority. You can still have your own self-respect and have social decorum, and still question authority. You don't have to be beating doors down and swearing and, or whatever might be, burning things down to question authority. But just look before you leap, think. That would be, that would certainly be one thing. The other thing is that, no matter how wrong we were in Vietnam and no matter how wrong I think we are to pounding away over there at Kosovo, and no matter how wrong I think we were to say that we were over blowing Saddam Hussein off the map to save Kuwait, which is a crock, we were over there, we were over there because of the oil and for no other reason. And I think no matter how wrong I think we were about those things, and probably I think it's wrong because I just think war is wrong, remember that this country's still the best. It is still the experiment in democracy that is the most profound, and don't take it for granted. Vote, get involved, question authority, listen, think. Most of all get involved.

I'm not sure that, you know, I'm not sure, you know, after you see how those poor people lived over there. They didn't care, I mean, they were happy with their fish and their rice and they wanted to be left alone, they didn't care whether they were Communist or capitalist. But their, you know, the mortality rate in the kids was unbelievable. I forget what it was, fifty percent of kids one to five die. I thought that, and I, God, I'd hate to be quoted on that. Whoever's doing research on this, don't take me as the authority on, but it was some astounding statistics like that. Because they're so, they're, there's some other statistic about the number of tropical diseases, ninety percent of them are found in, of known tropical diseases are found in Vietnam. You know, I, don't quote me, you know what I'm saying?

But it's, you come back here and we just, well, look what we've got here, look at this. Cars and jobs and nobody's fighting next door. Oh, yeah, there's a problem with violence in the streets and things like that, maybe that will escalate in time, I hope it doesn't, I hope that succeeding generations get a handle on that some how. It's not the same thing as having somebody flying over you and dropping napalm on you, or dropping ordinance on your house in Kosovo. Got

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an awful lot to be thankful for. There are an awful lot of people who, who, especially the World War II generation, who fought to, and died, for this country. I'm, I'm pretty profound here, but I feel pretty strongly about that.

KP:I thought that was great. That would be my mes-, I mean, to get involved, I mean, I think that's such an important message for young people today anyway, to....

HF:What I tell kids, you don't know how lucky you are that you don't have the draft breathing down your neck. God, and yet I feel very strongly that every single male or female should do something for this c-, for his or her country here. And I don't care if you work in a, in a AIDS hospice in Birmingham, Alabama, or you are a paratrooper or you harvest corn to feed somebody somewhere, but do something in this country, or sweep streets in Madison, Maine, if that's what helps out for, but do a couple years for your country. Similar to the way things are done in Italy, I mean in Israel and Sweden. I think it's Sweden, maybe Switzerland. Anyway, and I feel very strongly, because you don't, you don't learn the worth of something just by listening to anything that I have to say or by saluting the flag every day in school. It doesn't do anything. You've got to go out and be active, you've got to go out, and I feel, I feel that I can criticize something if I've done some-, if I've done something in there, I can criticize Vietnam because I've been there. I can criticize a politician if I went and voted either for him or against him. If I didn't, I better shut my mouth. You've got to get involved.

KP:I volunteer at my daughter's school [*unintelligible phrase*], you know, and I am very involved. I'm in everybody's face.

HF:That was not a lecture directed at you.

KP:I know, but I'm in total agreement with you on that aspect of it because it is really, really important. Do you want to go back to Vietnam?

HF:Yup, absolutely. I don't want to get, I don't like flying at all, but I'd go back in a heartbeat. Someday, someday I will. I want to go back. I, yeah, I definitely want to go back.

KP:Do you think it might help you with some sense of closure or just...?

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HF:I'm telling you, the only thing that's going to, the only closure I'm ever going to have is to die, and that's a closure I'm not looking forward to making just yet. Help with the healing perhaps. Closure, no.

Going to the Wall helped with the healing, going to that, going to, going to speak with that therapist that I, thank God I had enough smarts to go see him. I didn't think he was much of a therapist, but he must have done something all right. I thought he was maneuvering me around and manipulating me and I didn't care for that, but it, I could feel it, I could, I knew it was happening. But this is healing, this discussion. This is, this is, I'm telling you, this is of more value to me, this couple hours or whatever we're spending here, than all the people that listen to this and, over the years. If there is anybody that listens to these over the years.

KP:Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

HF:Oh, sure, but who knows what it is? Come back another time. This is, no, thank you. I'm glad you guys got a hold of me.

KP:Oh, thank you, Hank. This has been, this had been great. And I'm sorry for all of the mishaps that occurred while we were doing this but I thank you.

HF:No problem, any time.

End of Interview

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Albert Henry Gates, Jr

Captain

HMM-263, MAG-16, 1ST MAW, III MAF

United States Marine Corps

East Greenbush, New York

September 01, 1943 to March 07, 1970

ALBERT H GATES Jr is on the Wall at Panel W13, Line 92

See the full profile or name rubbing for Albert Gates



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John Curtis Whiteside

Corporal

CAP 1-3-7, CACO 1-3, 1ST CAG, COMBINED ACTION, III MAF

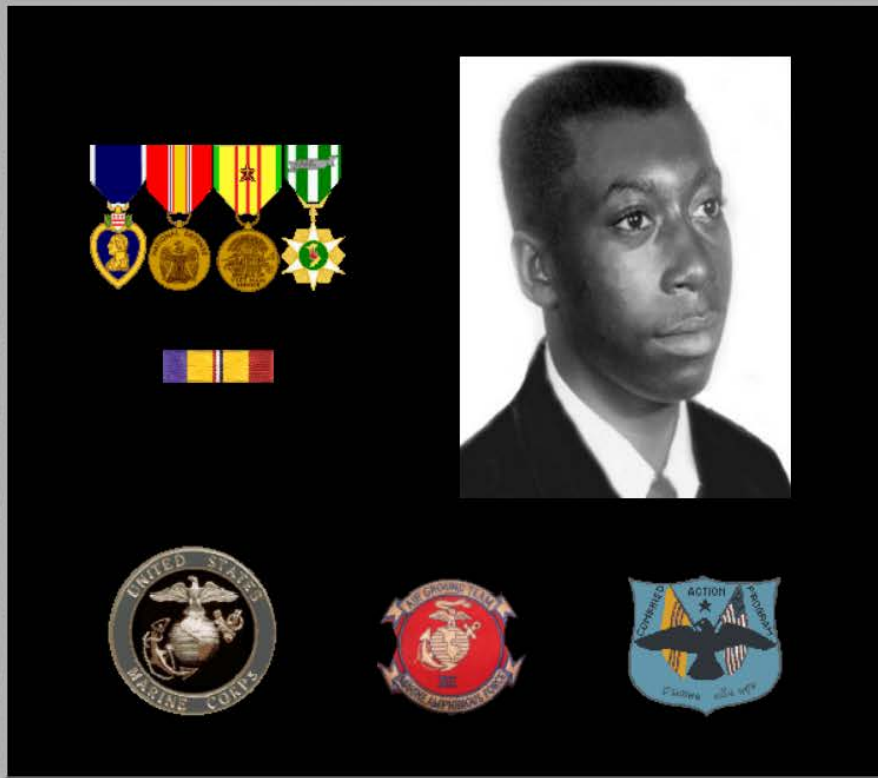
United States Marine Corps

Fayette, Alabama

May 02, 1946 to August 13, 1969

[JOHN C WHITESIDE](#) is on the Wall at [Panel W19, Line 36](#)

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Eric Marvin Barnes

Captain

1ST FORCE RECON CO, 1ST RECON BN, 1ST MARDIV, III MAF

United States Marine Corps

Windsor, Connecticut

May 04, 1942 to March 25, 1967

[ERIC M BARNES is on the Wall at Panel 17E, Line 41](#)

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Stephen Dowdell

Private First Class
A CO, 3RD TANK BN, 3RD MARDIV, III MAF
United States Marine Corps
Alhambra, California

December 14, 1948 to July 28, 1969

STEPHEN DOWDELL is on the Wall at Panel W20, Line 64
See the [full profile](#) or [name rubbing](#) for Stephen Dowdell



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David Earl Schwartz

Lance Corporal

L CO, 3RD BN, 4TH MARINES, 3RD MARDIV, III MAF

United States Marine Corps

Sacramento, California

July 10, 1946 to December 06, 1968

DAVID E SCHWARTZ is on the Wall at **Panel W37, Line 53**

See the [full profile](#) or [name rubbing](#) for David Schwartz



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Duncan Balfour Sleigh

Second Lieutenant

M CO, 3RD BN, 7TH MARINES, 1ST MARDIV, III MAF

United States Marine Corps

Marblehead, Massachusetts

April 13, 1945 to November 06, 1968

[DUNCAN B SLEIGH](#) is on the Wall at Panel W39, Line 30

See the [full profile](#) or [name rubbing](#) for Duncan Sleigh



11 Feb 2004



2ndLt Sleigh with his mother just before leaving for Vietnam

He died as he had lived,
putting others before himself.

One minute he was smiling that so familiar smile and then he was gone forever...
but not from the hearts and memories of those who knew him.

From a friend in combat,

Notes from The Virtual Wall

The President of the United States
takes pride in presenting the

NAVY CROSS

posthumously to

Duncan Balfour Sleigh
Second Lieutenant
United States Marine Corps

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

For extraordinary heroism as a platoon commander in Company M, Third Battalion, Seventh Marines, in Quang Nam Province, Republic of Vietnam, on 6 November 1968. The company advanced in a sweep operation south of Hill 55 where it encountered a large North Vietnamese Army force and sustained heavy casualties at the first bitter engagement. The well entrenched enemy kept the company pinned down with rocket propelled grenades and heavy small-arms and automatic-weapons fire, making evacuation of casualties a hazardous chore. As the company pressed the attack, the wounded and dead were moved toward the rear where Second Lieutenant Sleigh was directing the establishment of a landing zone. Taking charge of the critical situation, Second Lieutenant Sleigh strategically deployed his men to return suppressive fire and at the same time maintained control of the evacuation. Two helicopter landings were attempted, and on the second effort a rocket propelled grenade landed near the wounded who were being treated. Observing the danger to the wounded, Second Lieutenant Sleigh crawled to one casualty and lay huddled over him as a shield when another rocket propelled grenade landed less than a meter away, instantly killing Second Lieutenant Sleigh. He thus absorbed most of the shock with his body, not only saving the life of one Marine, but also preventing injury to others near him. His valiant leadership and courageous fighting spirit inspired all the men of the company who observed his last brave act. Second Lieutenant Sleigh's heroism reflected great credit upon himself and the Marine Corps and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

Mike Company, 3/7 Marines, lost eight men on 6 Nov 1968 in an engagement south of Hill 55, about 8 kilometers northeast of the Liberty Bridge:

- 2nd Lt Duncan B. Sleigh, Marblehead, MA (Navy Cross)
- SSgt Raymond G. Skaggs, New Boston, OH
- Cpl Gerald C. Mullin, Mount Clemens, MI
- Cpl Gerald R. Peterson, Quincy, MA
- LCpl William G. Camp, Fresno, CA
- LCpl Rafael Soler, New York, NY
- PFC Edward D. Henry, North Clarendon, VT
- PFC James M. Timmons, Groveport, OH (Navy Cross)

PFC Timmons responded to the RPG fire as did 2nd Lt Sleigh - and he died in exactly the same manner as 2nd Lt Sleigh.

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John Charles Hines

Corporal

3RD PLT, M CO, 3RD BN, 7TH MARINES, 1ST MARDIV, III MAF

United States Marine Corps

Cohoes, New York

February 22, 1947 to August 24, 1970

JOHN C HINES is on the Wall at [Panel W7, Line 1](#)
See the [full profile](#) or [name rubbing](#) for John Hines**11 Jun 2002**

John was killed in action on August 24, 1970, while serving with Mike Company, 3/7 Marines. Before his death he was decorated for his efforts in the rescue of fellow Marines caught up while crossing a raging river. He is survived by his wife and son Randy.

Sheila Shover
sheilas@mdmgr.com

A Note from The Virtual Wall

The 3/7 Marines' operations log for August 1970 contains the following entry:

241810H 1032 M Co, 3/7, F(AT982327). M3 while on SP, hit a B/T in the middle of trail. The B/T was a m-26 buried in the deck with a can pushed down on top of it. The 4th man kicked the can and three seconds later B/T went off. Result was three WIA. Medevac called and completed.

Corporal John Hines died from injuries received in this incident, which occurred about 11 kilometers northeast of Hiep Duc village. As far as is known the other two men wounded survived their injuries.

He is remembered by his comrades in
[Mike 3/7 Marines](#)

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Ronald Walsh Mc Lean

First Lieutenant

2ND PLT, A CO, 3RD RECON BN, 3RD MARDIV, III MAF

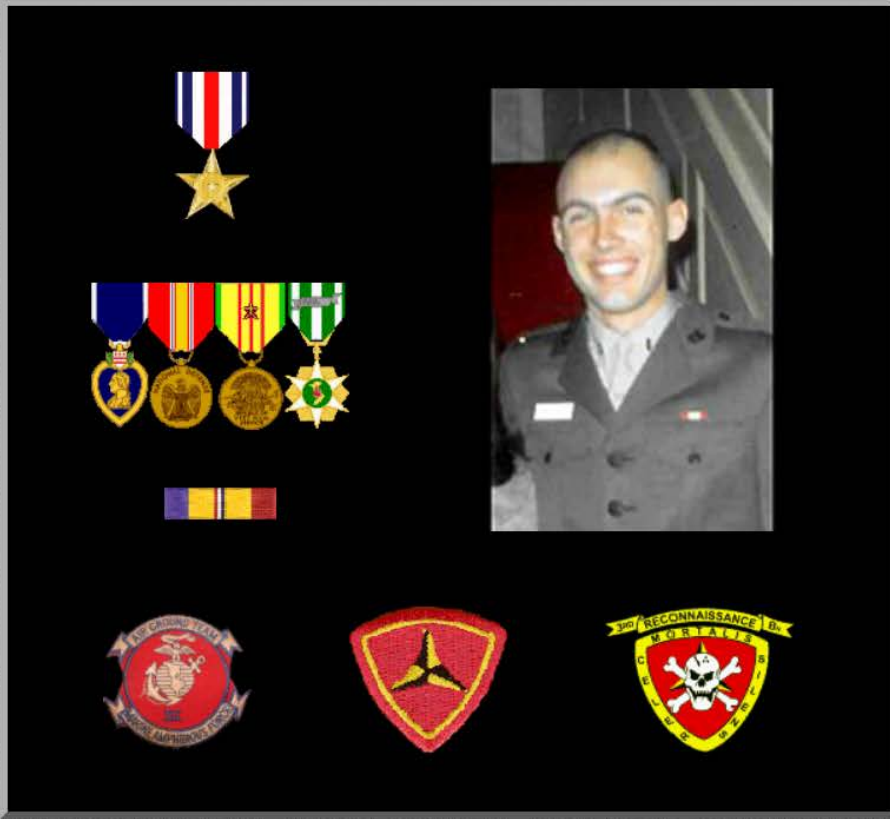
United States Marine Corps

Beverly Hills, California

June 19, 1944 to June 08, 1969

RONALD W McLEAN is on the Wall at **Panel W23, Line 113**

See the [full profile](#) or [name rubbing](#) for Ronald Mc Lean



1LT RONALD WALSH Mc LEAN

STEWART TO GET DEAD KIN'S MEDAL

