

## **My Vietnam War: Oral History Project**

Narrator: Richard Hauser

Interviewers: Charlie Joseph and Nnamdi Oji

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### **TRANSCRIPT**

**Charlie:** This is Charles Joseph and—

**Oji:** Nnamdi Oji.

**Charlie:** Today is Wednesday, November 10th, 2021. I'll be interviewing for the first time, Mr. Richard Hauser. This interview is taking place at the Langson Library on UCI Campus in Irvine, California. This interview is part of My Vietnam War: the Vietnam War Oral History project for the class Vietnam War Seen Through Oral History at UC Irvine. All right, Richard, would you state and spell your name?

**Richard:** Richard Hauser, R I C H A R D H A U S E R.

**Charlie:** All right. Do you prefer Rick at all or Richard is fine?

**Richard:** Anything except late to dinner, that would really piss me off. Yeah Rich, Rick.

**Charlie:** OK. So when and where were you born?

**Richard:** Born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, about 13 miles outside of New York City on October the 27th, 1947.

**Charlie:** OK. So growing up, what was like the household that you grew up in, siblings and parents, how was that?

**Richard:** Nuclear family. Five children, two girls, three boys. I was a middle child and the next child up, which would have been a sixth child, Susan was stillborn.

**Charlie:** OK. What was your education like? What year did you graduate high school?

**Richard:** Public school system. The first six grades and then junior high in New Jersey is seventh, eighth, and ninth. And then I attended high school for 10th through 12th grades. Public school system.

**Charlie:** OK. What year did you graduate?

**Richard:** 1965.

**Charlie:** OK. When you were in high school, what type of career did you have in mind? What was your – what was your idea for making a living prior to Vietnam?

**Richard:** I knew I was going to college, that was integrated in us by our parents because I was in a nuclear family. Neither of them had a college education, so they wanted their children to have a college education, especially the boys. This was before women's lib [women's liberation movement], which came in in the '70s, which said everybody gets educated. The expectation back in the '50s and '60s was that the father would go out working, the mother would stay home. And that has changed since the '70s that both were out working and childbearing is put off by some women into their 40s. So it's no longer you get married and have kids and dad goes to work and mom keeps house.

**Charlie:** So after high school, did you get accepted into college and attend university?

**Richard:** Yeah, I was accepted into three schools: Bloomfield College, Uppsala, and what was the third school–? They lost my records at Rutgers, but probably so. And I think the other one was Fairleigh Dickinson. Those were along the coast of New Jersey. Those are three universities, liberal arts universities. Uppsala and Bloomfield were church-related where you had to show up on Wednesdays for a service. You physically had to go to the church. But I was Presbyterian, so it didn't bother me. People, you know, if they weren't religious, they made it into a study hall.

**Charlie:** So–

**Richard:** And I did one year at Bloomfield College and I was a business major.

**Charlie:** OK, so you attended Bloomfield?

**Richard:** Yeah, for one year. September '65 to June of '66.

**Charlie:** Alright and then after that, when were you– how did you end up joining the Marines and being sent to Vietnam?

**Richard:** Well, the story I tell, because you're trying to have a sense of humor about it, is that I like to talk and I was talking to this guy next to me and they came in and said, "We need two volunteers for the Marine Corps." Two people stepped forward and everybody but us two stepped back. So that's how I got into the Marine Corps. That's not. That's the story I tell. You know, I think going through high school I had a good time, but by my senior year I was kind of burnt out, I was kind of this dysthymic. And I really didn't have a forward focus on the direction. However, I had been working. It wasn't as if it was all slough. I'd been in student government,

ran cross-country, swam in high school. But by my senior year, I guess, kind of a form of depression just— there's just a lot of stuff going on all the time. So during my college years— and then I had a serious relationship and that went nowhere in college. So at the end of that year, the way the government needed people, they were looking into cities to get warm bodies for Vietnam, so they would turn everybody less than a C average into— and they'd go from 2S, which is student status, to 1A, which is draft status. And then you had to go and present your— to the whoever the draft board was to say, "Hey, I'm going back to school. I got a B average." And, you know, I just didn't push that issue because I thought in life if I was eventually going to be drafted and I probably could have stayed out until '69, four years of college, but I didn't. My attitude was, get it over with.

**Charlie:** OK.

**Richard:** And I had people that, you know, I was dating this flaming little redhead, green eyes, Cathy. And she actually came to Parris Island to see me graduate. But I said to her, I says, "I don't know where I'm going to be in a year. And you know, and I'm not getting married right now. When I get back—" But I was also in there for four years. I went in to be— wanted to go to navigation school, missed the pattern analysis test, so I ended up in electronics. So they just flip you down to the next category of need. Like when I got to Vietnam, they say "We don't need as many electronics navigators, we need door gunners" you know? So, this is what you got to hear because the Marine Corps in the Army basically operate the same way.

**Oji:** OK, so before, when you're in high school—

**Richard:** Yes.

**Oji:** It was during 1965. There was a lot of things that were going on during the '60s. You have the Bay of Pigs, you have the—

**Richard:** Nuclear crisis, missiles. Yeah.

**Oji:** You have the, J.F. Kennedy assassination, you have the racial protests in the South, protesting against segregation. So how in your high school, how were you able to cope with these events?

**Richard:** Well, my high school, we were a fully integrated male high school. We had females in the typing class and the language classes, everything else was male. So how we got rid of these energies was there would be fights after school and that's how we would work out our differences. Fisticuffs. But in reality, in the 60s, it really hadn't hit. It didn't hit 'till you started going to college and they could actually grab you after the age of 18. Now, if you didn't go to college, they could grab you right out of high school. You know, you get your draft number and you're not going to college you're draftable. There wasn't a lot of demos [demonstrations] on the

high school, and I was in an urban high school. Elizabeth, New Jersey, 220,000 people. So people were just not living hand to mouth. There was affluent parts of Elizabeth, but for the most part it was a blue collar city, you know. And then if you went up on the hill, Elmora Hill, then you had your professionals, your doctors, your dentists, and your Indian Chiefs. So say, was there a protest? No. Although I do remember distinctly I was in physics in— with Gardner’s class, I remember Norman Gardner’s class. When he came in and the man was in tears, he was a big man wasn’t a little squeaming, you know. Come in he was crying. Kennedy got shot. And I was in the 11th grade at that point. I do remember that succinctly. As far as the missile crisis I was probably out on a date. (*laughter*) To be honest with you, I mean, I’ve read more about the missile crisis than I remember. So in 10 days, the government took care of it and they weren’t talking about it until it was almost over. Of course, we could have been fried. But that’s a different, different discussion.

**Oji:** So before you got drafted, have you ever heard of a country called Vietnam?

**Richard:** I was read. I mean, I did my AP courses in the 7th and 8th grade. So I liked history in the 7th and 8th, so I would read things and— I knew that— if you want to hear my thoughts straight about Vietnam was we were part of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, SEATO and any nation that was in there that was invaded or, you know, foreign country, we pledged to defend them and all the people in SEATO said the same thing. We had Australians over there, we had Korean Marines, we had a United Nations of troops in Vietnam. And as far as atrocities are concerned. You know, I mean, [William] Calley should have been jailed and thrown the key away. But if you did that, to the Korean Marines, you wouldn’t even know there was a village there. You know, that if you’re sniped from a village they would doze that entire village. We didn’t, I don’t think, in the Marine Corps and we supported troops. I was in support of the 3-6 [3rd Battalion, 6th Marines] when I was on the aircraft carrier. I remember them going through operations, being in the paddies and nobody ever talked about killing civilians unless they were carrying a rifle.

**Oji:** But when you’re in high school before— I’m sure you had no idea you were going to get drafted?

**Richard:** I was aware that the selective service system at 18 years old, you had to register for selective service and from that emanated the draft. So you signed up at 18 and you were on somebody’s somewhere’s list. But I was going to college in the beginning and it wasn’t really bothering me a lot. When you’re 18, you’re chasing women and chasing the degree. And I’d been working since I was 11 years old, so I was somewhat aware of the world. I threw papers for the longest time and had a nice bank account. I mean, in today’s money, it would be chump change, but I made \$65 a week tax free. I started eleven and ended it about 15, paid for my first year of college. My father says “I’ll pay for it” and I says “No I’ll pay for it” and bought my own car and stuff like that. I was fairly independent.

**Oji:** Let's talk about you joining the military. So there's the Marines, why not the Army? And the newly established Air Force? Or the Navy? Why do you have to go into the Marines?

**Richard:** I think the challenge interested me, just the challenge, you know, and they had good marketing, you know, and they had nice dress uniforms. I mean, the Army has stepped up and everybody's got their beret now, but the Marines probably had the best uniforms, the dress blues and stuff like that. But the challenge, you know, I think I was physically there already because I'd been running Cross Country and I swam since I was eight years old. But the emotional challenge to what they go through, a lot of people don't make it. We started out with a platoon I think it was [Platoon] 2022 and we had, oh, we must had close to 90 guys. By the time we were done, in 12 weeks, we had 75 guys.

**Oji:** Yeah, I was going to ask you about boot camp. So you got into the Marine Corps you have to go to boot camp. It was 12 weeks, right?

**Richard:** Yeah, 12 weeks, as I recall.

**Oji:** So how was it? How was your boot camp experience?

**Richard:** It was— what word would describe it to you? It was challenging, you know, but you can say a multitude of sins for challenging. You want to see if you can make the grade all the time. Like I remember, I had this senior drill instructor who had seen a couple of tours of duty. And I think he was a gunnery sergeant. So he was an E-7. And I didn't normally go along with the program. You know, I formed my own program. And one night I came in and I'll describe it to you. It's not a racial thing, I'll just describe it to you. This guy was maybe three times your size, an Afro-American from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and he's on the floor and they all had to dress. They didn't just dress in khakis like they show you in the movies. They were dressing in their summer tropicals. So they were always dressed up. They weren't running unless they were going on a 10 mile run with us or something like that. But when they were drilling with us, you know, running us around the field, they were in their dress, their dress khakis. And it's hot in Parris Island. And so to get back to the story, he's on the floor and he's doing fingertip push ups and he's a big man and he goes "Hauser!" And then they used some words puke or whatever, you know, descriptive words. *(laughter)* "What the f\*\*\* are you doing here?" You know, and you had to go bang on the door. You have to appreciate this, they called you and the doorsill you had to bang on and you had to be heard by them you didn't just go tap, tap, tap. You banged on the door. And they sometimes didn't answer, because they didn't like you hitting their door. And he asked me what I was doing there. And I said, "I'm there fighting for my country." Because if you say the wrong words, you're going to be out PT'ing around the area. You're going to be doing 2,000 up and on shoulders with an M14 rifle, not this plastic s\*\*\* they got now. So you say, "I'm here to serve my country, sir." You know, you know the answers. And meanwhile, I focus on the bookie's reading and he's doing fingertip pushups and he's reading abnormal psychology. So it's a weeding process. He starts talking to the guys that he thinks might not make it.

**Oji:** Like those mind–

**Richard:** I'm sorry.

**Oji:** It's like a mind game?

**Richard:** Yeah. Oh, well, a lot of mind games. One guy's girlfriend sent him a carton of cigarettes, and he said, you won't be smoking. There's no smoking lamp for 12 weeks. Well the guys were compulsive smokers. So this one guy and I think what was his name? Phishback. There are three or four guys you remember distinctly because they didn't make it. Phishbacks' girlfriend sent him a carton of cigarettes, and then with lips on the package. Well, this guy had to smoke. He couldn't smoke the entire carton, but he got a good part of it. And he was gone. I mean, he just couldn't handle it, but they made him one cigarette after another. They says, "You got the order right, no, cigarettes. Well, now you're going to smoke in front of the troops and smoke all those cigarettes." So he left, he was one of the 10. Another guy was Stibick, he was a team shooter on the rifle range. He was the best shot out of 250. He was clocking in at the 240 range. That means seven out of eight bullseyes. And you knew, he was going to be a sniper until they found out he was only 14 years old. You know, he's from the backwoods. Nobody kept records, you know, somewhere in Tennessee, somewhere in the hills. Stibick was his name. And there was another guy Laguna, drugs, Harlem. And we had a buck DI, young guy just came out of Vietnam, made buck sergeant out of Vietnam, decorated. And he would be like– you know, with R.W. Jones– I'm tall but R.W. Jones was, you know, you had to look up to him. Well, this guy was eye-to-eye. And he pissed off Laguna one day and he said something to him. And they were both black men, OK? And he said something racial to him and Laguna said "I'm gonna f\*\*\*ing kill you." Boom, he was gone. But he was gone because he was sent in– he got in the Marine Corps by a judge. The judge says you've got a choice of prison or the Marine Corps your choice. But Laguna just couldn't, you know, he just couldn't handle it. I mean, I don't know a lot about the man's background, but I PT'd with him and he had a real short fuse, real short fuse. So and then the drug addiction gets you too. You know, if you've been on drugs a lot of time, your brain just doesn't, you know. You come from a nuclear family, or you come from the streets, for instance. OK, I'm done.

**Oji:** Oh, but in boot camp were you like a high-speed recruit?

**Richard:** Hmm?

**Oji:** In boot camp were you like a high speed recruit? Or did you get smoked a lot? Were you a high speed recruit?

**Richard:** What's high speed?

**Oji:** Like the perfect prospect.

**Richard:** I did, as they told me, but I didn't make PFC [Private First Class] out of boot camp. There were six guys picked. And interestingly enough, half those guys were in the reserves, so they did everything to the tee. But they knew they were going to be in a reserve unit. They weren't going to Vietnam. That was the end of that one. I remember this one guy from the South, Timothy Dollar. A\*\* kisser, but he made PFC out of boot camp. Me, I was squared away, they didn't have to come and tell clean your rifle a second time or something like that, but I just wasn't exuberant about it. I just didn't **feud??(unintelligible) [00:19:22]**. I thought myself navigation school already until I took that test and then they go— and the kicker about the pattern analysis test was that, you know, they wanted 244 for me in the month of June and in month of July was down to 236. I could have been a naval navigator. If I was a week later coming out of boot camp. So—

**Oji:** So after your boot camp, how many other Marine Corps, or military specialty schools did you attend? I know you mentioned navigation school. What other school did you attend?

**Richard:** The way the Corps works, or did work, was you go 12 weeks to Parris Island or out here in San Diego, in California. And then when you get out of there, you go to Advanced Infantry Training. I don't know how advanced it is because even then we were firing weapons in advanced weapons that were no longer used. The M1 Garand, and that can chop your finger if you don't know how to put the clip in correctly. We used bazookas. You don't use that correctly and you get this burn on your face from the wires of the bazooka charge. And then what else did they give us? Did we have a Thompson submachine gun? We had .45s, they were still standard issue. And then we had, I think they had Thompson submachine guns. And what else did they use? Grenade throwing. And all this stuff is real great, but if you're not in the infantry, you're not going to see it again. You know, you're going to have a .45 and an M-16, and that's it. But they had to put you through tradition. We had a joke about the Marine Corps and it was like, I don't know what age, what birthday— it's 246 today because I'm going to get all kind of buzzes on my phone, happy birthday. It's 246 years, but we used to have it like it was 220 something, 50, whatever, 50 years ago— So it would be 195 years of tradition without— what did they used to say about it? Without advancement. They still were steeped in tradition and which is not bad. But when you give your budget back to the Navy, you say, "Hey, we don't need this money that you just gave us." You spend the budget, you get new weapons, you get— I mean, in boot camp, when we went out in the field, we were eating out of a can and that was made before the Korean War. So the Korean War was 1950 and we were in in '66. So it was good for roughage in your body, but the nutritional value was nothing.

**Oji:** So after AIT, Advanced Infantry School, what other schools?

**Richard:** Then I went off to AFUA [Advanced Flexible Use of Airspace], which is basic electronics. And both of the schools, I believe were in Memphis because I don't remember being TAD'd any place but to Jacksonville, Florida. TAD is temporarily assigned duty: TAD. So most

of it occurred in Millington, Tennessee, which I believe is still a naval air training electronics center just for the air wings of the Navy and the Marine Corps.

**Oji:** Is that where you got your MOS as an aviation electrician?

**Richard:** Initial MOS: 6211, 6221. That's the initial they give you with that. And then once you get to a duty station, they advance that MOS. Like you take more electronics training, or I went to Jayville, Florida and worked on a radar unit. So that's what gave me certification. And I was not a natural at electronics. Tracing electrons was not my mainstream American thought, chasing women was, chasing 'trons, doesn't work.

**Oji:** OK, so before you got shipped out to Vietnam, what was your first duty station?

**Richard:** Cherry Point, North Carolina.

**Oji:** Cherry Point.

**Richard:** And Cherry Point had two duties. One was an in air refuelers outfit, which I was assigned to. And this will tell you the age of the aircraft where before your father was born, not you born, your father was born. And they still have some of those aircraft in the Marine Corps. And the Air Force was using them, too, because they're so multi- they get into small spaces where they don't have big runways. It was a Hercules outfit C-130s, and they were KC-130s because they were gas passers and their mission for us in 262, VMGR-262, was to fly over the Atlantic and catch fighters that needed fuel in the air and hook them up and make sure they could get to wherever they were flying in the United States. And you just go out there and circle, take your favorite book and you keep on circling until you hear the- you could hear it in the helmet, you'd hear a crack saying, "Coming in, have X amount of fuel left" and they would know how to space them.

**Charlie:** So what-

**Richard:** And then the other half of that was- we had F-80s which were the precursors to the Korean War, where the pilots were training on for trainers in the Marine Corps. The Navy, I think, was flying A-4s which was their Delta Wing, which they used in Vietnam. But these F-80s they called shooting stars and they would fly from coast to coast and back. And that's how the Marines would get their- Marine pilots would get their time in on jets. So there were two squadrons there in air refueling and fighter qualifications school.

**Charlie:** What years was it that you attended boot camp and then later the infantry school?

**Richard:** They were all in let's see- I started boot camp in September of '66. And then two weeks to Advanced Infantry Training and 33 weeks in naval electronics school in Millington/ Memphis, Tennessee.



**Charlie:** OK, what was the technician school again?

**Richard:** N.A.T.T.C. Naval Air Technical Training— what’s the C stand for? Command.

**Charlie:** OK. In Tennessee?

**Richard:** In Tennessee. Millington/ Memphis.

**Charlie:** OK.

**Oji:** OK, now we’re going to jump in— your time in Vietnam.

**Richard:** Oh, you missed the one where I killed the general in the trees, in staging, and they made me— see I wanted to go home. I mean, I wanted to be done with this exercise because we were training for a country that did 110 degrees and we’re in the mountains of Camp Pendleton. You know how cold it gets in October/September? So they said “This is an exercise, this is who you’re going to exercise against, and Hauser you’re a sniper. What you cannot do, is kill the general or any of the company commanders” because that screws the exercise, everybody goes home early. Well, guess what Hauser did? He shot the general. He shot him dead. Says, “I’m sorry, I didn’t see the star on his shoulder. I didn’t see the star” and I think they made me walk barefooted back to their barracks or something like that.

**Oji:** How many stars did he have?

**Richard:** He was only a one star. I mean— he was in an infantry— he could be a brigade or divisional commander. But he was there to train us to get used to Vietnam. And I guess some of the stuff was good, but I mean— yeah there were mountains in Vietnam, but I landed on them I didn’t walk up them.

**Oji:** So what month and year did you get deployed?

**Richard:** November of ‘68.

**Oji:** November ‘68.

**Richard:** It was about this time, too. It must have been about the 11th or 12th because we were partying down for Marine Corps [anniversary] which is November 10th. So we had a party in California.

**Oji:** So I don’t know if you could remember, but can you give us a very brief description of your first day in Vietnam? Like the moment you got off that plane?

**Richard:** How about leaving California?

**Oji:** You can start from that.

**Richard:** Leaving California. So after we get all checked out and we get our overseas shots and stuff like that, gamma globulins— make your blood a little bit thinner. We got— the Company Commander goes, “You are aware that if you don’t make your plane— once you get your order and you don’t make your plane and you don’t get to Vietnam, that’s desertion in the face of the enemy.” So the Company Commander said that and then the XO, which is the executive officer, said that, and then the top sergeant, which I think was a first sergeant, said that. By that time we were all in taxi cabs to go to Tijuana because they were telling us not to go to Tijuana. So there’s four or six of us going to Tijuana. And, you know, obviously some guys got thrown in jail down there and they had to go down and get them, and that doesn’t look good on your record. But if you’re not going to be a lifer it doesn’t make a difference. But I remember going back in the bar and I got back early. I come from a Presbyterian family and they don’t drink. You know, our father used to get expensive bottles of wine and they ended up in the cellar and they turned to vinegar because he didn’t drink. Mom and grandmom were a little bit different, but they didn’t do it in front of us. So anyhow, we’re down there and I’m at a bar and I’m sipping a beer and I’m waiting for the rest of the guys to come. I think it was the Brooklyn bar, or the New York bar or one of those— they name them all United States bars. And I’m there with the taxi driver, I buy him a beer because he’s waiting too, you know? And one of the other guys comes in and we’re wondering where the other three or four are. But we’re waiting and over in the corner is one of the police chiefs of Tijuana and he was having a high old time. So they order beer and we still don’t have a complement of guys coming back and I’m sitting there and this gal— again she predates you guys, but Brigitte Bardot was the French flame way back when in the 60s. Blonde, long blonde hair down the shoulders, you could get the movies, Brigitte Bardot movies. And she she was more looks than actress, but she was a fetching young lady. So anyhow, this gal that looks like her, as I recall, looks like Brigitte. And she’s over there with my ear whispering stuff— little accent so I didn’t get everything, but the was idea what I’m going to do for you if you go upstairs with me. So I’m listening, I got nothing else to do, I’m a willing shill, as one would say. And then the taxi cab driver starts— because I was getting aroused, obviously, and he starts pulling on my shirt sleeve. “Señor, señor, señor, señor. Get away, get away, get away, get away.” And then he finally moves up right next to me because I probably am a little high and he goes, “She is a he.”

**Charlie/ Oji:** *(laughter)*

**Richard:** So that’s my tale before Vietnam. That was my cheap thrill. So going overseas, I don’t remember a lot of the flight, I’m thinking, I keep on thinking I was on Braniff [airline], but people tell me later on that Braniff didn’t fly to Vietnam, so it might have been Northwest. But we were flying over the top of the globe. So we stopped in Anchorage, Alaska to refuel— I don’t know, they were flying 707s at that time. And I remember guys running through a trench-like maze to get to a bar, to get a beer, to run back, to get on the aircraft. And that’s all I remember

the trip over how long it took and where we landed. We landed Danang, I don't know whether we refueled in between. I don't recall I probably was sleeping. But we landed— the base for us to land— a lot of people went south, but the Marine Corps was up in the I Corps area, or the One Corps area. So they dropped most of the Marines at Danang. And we were responsible to guard the gate from North to South Vietnam.

**Oji:** So you landed in Danang that's basically the northern part of—

**Richard:** The northern most part, it's in the I Corps area, in the southern— there is I, II, III, IV Corps that covered, all of [South] Vietnam. So it's the most northern area, but Danang and Hue, which was the ancient imperial capital, before they made the capital Saigon, or Ho Chi Minh City. Danang was along a waterway and there was a lot of commerce and stuff like that. But we had the airbases there with— the Air Force was there, the Army was there, Marine Corps was there. And it was— Marble Mountain it was called. We were on Marble Mountain, which, interestingly enough, Marble Mountain was at the end of the runway and it was actually a Viet Cong hospital, and they had dug trenches in the ground, not necessarily during Vietnam or tunnels in the ground where— that actually rehabilitate their troops that had been wounded and we never knew about it. Nobody ever mentioned that Marble Mountain was a series of tunnels. But we got mortared and rocketed enough to know that somebody was close enough to throw something at us.

**Oji:** OK, and based on what was put on your bio you were also stationed in the aircraft carrier Valley Forge and the landing platform helicopter? LPH?

**Richard:** Yeah, well, two were and one wasn't. One was an actual fixed wing carrier, which they were still using, which was the Valley Forge, which was a decent size aircraft carrier. Wooden deck on it and it was a big boat. The LPHs were probably about half the size of the aircraft carriers, or maybe three quarters. And they just handled only helicopters, they couldn't land jets on there.

**Oji:** So how are you able to rotate the stations from Danang to LPH to the aircraft carrier?

**Richard:** Well the Navy needed to refuel and rearm and the ship would take off, but the Marine Corps, with all its hubris, said, "You guys are over here to do a tour of duty. You're not over here to be on liberty." So they would offload everybody, except some pilots and some crew chiefs who needed to pick up spare engine parts and stuff like that. So the people that were in supply and about half the crew chiefs got to go to Subic Bay in the Philippines, Korea where they picked up their supply parts that couldn't be brought into Vietnam physically.

**Oji:** OK. You deployed to Vietnam in November of 1968.

**Richard:** Yes.

**Oji:** In that year there was the Tet offensive.

**Richard:** Yeah.

**Oji:** So when you landed in Danang were you able to see any scars?

**Richard:** Oh, there were scars all over the place.

**Oji:** Especially like in the air base?

**Richard:** Not so much on the air base, those bases were heavily defended. It was mostly in the city areas where there were built up buildings where people could hide and stuff like that. And I never really heard a lot of conversation, but I knew that if they said all hands were being hit on the base, then everybody grabbed their helmets and their rifles and their flak jackets and headed towards one of the perimeter bunkers. But you got to understand that these air bases they're not a Dallas airport, but they were quite large and they had security around them. They had people. In fact, you're going to interview— if you interview Gomez, or you interview Max Steward. They were air police. They were air policemen, so they could tell you about the security around the bases. I mean, we were never called out. I was on night crew most of the time fixing helicopters and we got hit, but we were never called out in a full— you know, they just told us, “Go to your go to your bunker near your hooch where you lived and just don't get killed because we need you for work tomorrow.” So I don't recall ever running out to any of the perimeter bunkers and manning the gun or stuff like that. I mean, those were done by— they had ground troops around us. You got to figure Vietnam, although I saw a different figure in that book. For every one man in the field actually going out and searching and destroying, there were 11 men behind him, 10 men behind him, supporting him. Whether you were in the air wing, whether you were in the hospital, whether you were a cook. So there was about a 1:10 ratio. Not to say that the other people weren't in harm's way. I mean, when I was doing my flight time, hey, we got shot at. You know, that's what we get the medals for.

**Charlie:** Yeah, I was going to move on to specifically ask you about the, I guess, the environment of Vietnam.

**Richard:** OK.

**Charlie:** You arrived there and you could tell, you know, it was, I'm guessing, like dense jungles.

**Richard:** It looks beautiful from the sky. You'd want to go there, take your girlfriend, take your wife, you'd want to go there. Once you get down in it, it is so thick. I mean, I flew a couple of Cambodian runs, dropped guys in there, you know, the long range reconnaissance. And it is— they say “Oh, you can hit the Ho Chi Minh Trail with bombs.” You can't even see the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They could run a trailer truck down there and— The canopy was such, until they

started really putting Agent Orange in there and really defoliating. You could not see. And when you were out on ambush from the guys, the grunts in the infantry, you cannot see in front of your face at night, so you better hunker down before it gets dark so you can have a field of fire.

**Oji:** OK. So when you're in Danang. It was how many miles from North Vietnam?

**Richard:** (*sighs*) From from Danang to Hanoi— I never flew into Hanoi, I flew into the mountains, the mountains were to the west of us and Quang Tri is probably the northern most, but we— the thing about Tet and Quang Tri, those things occurred before I got there. So those were actions— they call it the hot war between mid— I think it was late '66 and early '68. That was when they were— troop build up. We eventually built up to 600,000 men a tour. So in any given time, we had over a half a million men in Vietnam. And they still outnumbered us. We used to think that we dominated them in numbers, and we did our vertical envelopment insertions, that we were encircling a smaller amount of troops. And that wasn't true. I mean, in the *Stars and Stripes*, they say, "Oh, in such and such a battle, we only had 109 casualties." Well in my own helicopter squadron, which is 16 birds, we must have took 7/800 people out of the action that were wounded or dead. So a lot of times we jumped into a place that we didn't know about.

**Oji:** Yeah, but you're facing enemy that's coming down from the north? And also facing the Viet Cong, which is embedded in the south. So you're fighting like two types of warfare, conventional and unconventional warfare? So what was your point of—? How would you describe the enemy?

**Richard:** Well, there was a professional enemy who wore uniforms and there was the Viet Cong that wore black pajamas and conical hats and carried a rifle. And that's why we had free fire zones in that— they said, "If you're flying and they're carrying a rifle in such and such area, you're allowed to shoot." So if they had a weapon, but you had some people— (*coughs*) What was the movie that so much showed that? Oh, *Full Metal Jacket*. When they're flying up in a [CH-] 34 [helicopter] to go to their base and they're interviewing the crew chief and he gives his name out and everything, and all of a sudden the action stops. He points his M60 [machine gun] at the ground and starts shooting at people, not troops, but people. If you want an idea of the Marine Corps— and not the Mickey Mouse songs and stuff like that, and the buildings are nice, but I never saw buildings that size in Vietnam. But if you want an idea of Vietnam, it's somewhere between *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket*. That gives you the ambiance of what went on. *Platoon* was from Oliver Stone's point of view, and he was a grunt over there, and now he's a film director. And then *Full Metal Jacket* was about the Marine Corps, but it was an anti-war— it was actually an anti-war movie if you see it. Because it makes fun of the situation. And it wasn't funny if you got shot.

**Oji:** So were you able to work or coordinate operations with the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam], the soldiers from South Vietnam?

**Richard:** That was more— my job was a little different. Coordinating with the ARVN— we flew with some of them. And the problem was we kind of respected the Cong as much as we— and ‘cong’ as you know, in the language means the people, the Vietnamese people, Vietcong. We kind of respected that they were fighting for a cause. Where the ARVN had a problem, because they were commanded by province chiefs and according to which way the wind was blowing, they were going. They were not necessarily troops that you’d want to depend on. And I’m not saying all, they had their special forces, which were cracks special forces. But we in the Marine Corps, and I forgot what time we began doing that, but it had to be in ‘69, we stopped flying them. We stopped dropping them in zones because they left— they’d leave some sort of dynamite or grenades on the helicopter. So I don’t know whether it was the whole armed forces or just the Marine Corps says “We’re not carrying ARVN troops. We’ll give you the aircraft, but we’re not carrying them.” What else was I going to say about them? A technical point was after Tet, which was— what February ‘68? After Tet, the Cong were kind of rendered inoperative because we killed so many of them. I mean, we killed a bunch. That fight was a grueling fight, especially in the Hue area. It didn’t come really into Danang, they never overran Danang. But they overran Hue, which was the ancient imperial capital. And they had to go— Marines had to go space by space, but they couldn’t knock down certain buildings. And of course, they knew it, so they stayed in those buildings. They couldn’t bomb them, they couldn’t 155 [155mm artillery shell] them, or anything. So they had to go like— it was a house by house action. And probably the only thing they could do is use grenades if they had to throw it into a room, but they couldn’t knock down the structure. Well, that killed a lot of U.S. personnel, and in Hue it was the— Marines took the beating.

**Oji:** Let’s talk about, but—

**Richard:** So the Cong didn’t— we were not really worried about them, other than them setting up booby traps. But we had to deal with the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] and General Giap, who was the supreme commander for the North, of him running large number of troops. But he would never engage us in large actions because of superior naval and air power. You know, you get an open— the French tried it, too. It’s called the set piece battle where you get them in an open area and you can just overwhelm them. Well Giap figured it out early on fighting the French that, hey, we’re going to hit and miss, we’re going to knock out your front troop carrier and your back troop carrier on a mountain trail and then we’re going to annihilate you from the sides because you can’t move back and you can’t move forth. You’re in a fixed area.

**Charlie:** I wanted to take a break here.

**Richard:** OK.

**Charlie:** Sorry I’m— let me pause it.

[BREAK]

**Charlie:** Alright. So also, I wanted to clarify with you Rick.

**Richard:** Sure.

**Charlie:** Your role was— or your MOS was aviation technician, but you were aboard the helicopters that dropped off troops? Correct?

**Richard:** Yeah.

**Charlie:** OK. And then tell us, I guess from there, your role in the Operations Meade River and Bold Mariner.

**Richard:** Yeah, and again, I can't be specific as to when those operations occurred. I knew I was on one of them and— you know, it was just bringing in troops and taking out wounded and bringing in munitions and supplies, and that— most of those things they called, they were vertical envelopment, which means you dropped into a zone and you tried to encircle the enemy. So a bunch of helicopters with a bunch of troops, we could carry about a dozen troops on there with their fully packed. And they would surround the enemy and try to annihilate them. And they call that vertical development. And then if things went bad, we went back in and got them and get the hell out of there.

**Charlie:** And then how much action, I guess, did you actually witness? And then like, what was some of the worst instances of fighting that you were involved in?

**Richard:** Hmm. In the beginning when we first got dropped off in Danang. We had heard that on an earlier flight, a sniper had taken out one of the stewardesses greeting the— taking troops off their, you know, “Bye have a nice trip”, whatever they were saying. And one of them got it. And that kind of like— I was on a little bit on the progressive side, but then your brain says, “If I'm going to survive this thing, I've got to get off this progressive thing and get the job done”, or at least my job done. And the rude awakening was about probably three days/ a week later. I was up in the nose of a CH-46, a Sea Knight helicopter, which is— they call them Marine Medium Helicopters. So it was— M.M.H.s? H.M.H.? One of those things, and I was in— oh it was HMM-164: Helicopter Marine Medium, the squadron was 164. We had sister squadrons of 161/62/63 and there was another, which wasn't in the one sixes, so there was about five of those helicopters squadrons. So I was up in the nose and I was fixing an antenna in the nose of one where you just put— your head is up there, it's not a big— it might be this wide and the hatch is about this wide. So you hear a siren go off, and this was about a week into Vietnam, you're still getting used to things, you're still happy that you can get a sun tan. And you haven't been mortared yet, you haven't been rocketed yet. And there's no sounds of gunfire around there's no— you know, it's not an imminent thing, you're not out in jungle. And the siren goes off and somebody says to me, “Uh oh, something's going on.” So I says “Like what? I don't hear gunfire.” And he says “Helicopters and trucks.” So this helicopter comes barreling down. I mean,

he wasn't going around and— just going to land, and he was moving towards the medical tent. And— basically I was, you know, the runways, you're on both sides of runways with your air wings, you know, the Air Force, the Army. So he came in and landed and the sirens were actually fire trucks and then the hospital truck, which is— they don't use them anymore, I don't know what they used, in fact. But all the troops get out, and these are ground troops and then they get two stretchers in there and they take two bodies out. And then the fire truck goes in with the hose and hoses the blood out of the floor of the helicopter. And what I was told was: the guy was going out of zone, a hot zone, and he didn't have enough— he didn't have enough power just to keep going, so you've got to dip your nose and pick up some more air, and during that time, the helicopter got chewed up by automatic weapon fire.

**Oji:** OK. Well, we're going to talk about your fellow Marines.

**Richard:** Mmm hmm.

**Oji:** How were they like to you? How was the camaraderie?

**Richard:** It was like a fraternity, a big fraternity. To be honest, I mean, basically by the time you got to Vietnam, you were kind of settled into what you were doing. You knew what you were doing and it was— the people that were the real techies they liked doing TACAN [tactical air navigation system]— and if you're going to ask TACAN it was, it was the super-duper radio of the times that were in the airplanes. And they were in the intermediate maintenance level, we weren't back at some base fixing radios. We were the forward group that put Band-Aids on them and installed them in the aircraft so they could fly. So we weren't back there doing— it's like the difference between going in and taking your car in for an oil change and tire rotation, or taking your car in for its 60 or 90,000 mile check. We were there for the oil change. We weren't— in the shop we could change parts, but what we basically did is: take one radio out and put another radio in, test it, it worked, all the dials worked when the radio was turned on, the navigation system worked. Made sure all the antennas were operable and the pilot didn't land with the antenna extracted and break off the antenna, and stuff like that. So when I was on carrier, I was basically on the flat top to see them land and come back. And then if they're short a guy in the shop they'd call me downstairs, but I told them I couldn't get a suntan downstairs. I could only get it in the [safety] nets. And what was really funny about that was— I was in the nets reading the *New Republic*. I don't know whether you guys ever read the *New Republic*, but it's not the mainstream American thought. But the flight officer saw me in the nets— and I guess, you know, if you're drunk and you fall into the nets, that's what they're there for. But you're not there to put on suntan screen and sit there and read your magazine. But we had little else to do. I mean, I could go down in the shop and say, "Where's the next radio?" Or I could wait on the deck for the next helicopter to come back. Basically, my station was: be on the deck when the helicopter landed. There was about four or five— engine guy, hydraulics guy, radio guy. And they would go in and say, [to] the pilots, "What's going?" And meanwhile, they'd be refueling, especially if it



was an operation. They would be refueling the helicopters same time. Sometimes they shut down, sometimes they didn't. And if they needed to get back out there, they did.

**Oji:** So while you're in the middle of fighting in Vietnam, also towards the end of your tour, how did you feel about the war? So do you think that America was making progress? Or do you think it was doomed to fail? Like what was your feeling about the war?

**Richard:** Hmm, interesting. I know, I opted for— extend my tour of duty. But that was more personal not— if I went back to the United States it was— the Marine Corps was the land of chickens\*\*\*. There's three levels of s\*\*\*: elephant s\*\*\* was the other one? But the bottom was chickens\*\*\* you know. It was being squared away in your uniform all the time. And you're back on a base where you're miles out. I mean, you're not going to see civilians, but they were very much in the spit and polish even when the generals— there was no I.G. Inspection General coming through, they were there for spit and polish. Over in Vietnam, we flew with— we had a pair of combat boots, socks, shorts, not a bullet bouncer, that's another story, a flak jacket, and a helmet. And that's what you flew with because it is hot! You know, it is— when those blades aren't turning, it is hot. So I opted for a second tour of duty just to be out of the chickens\*\*\*. And they said, “Are you a crew chief?” And I go “No, but I'll train as one.” And they said, “Are you a pilot?” And I go “No.” And they go “We don't need you over her.” Come November '69 was the drifting from 600,000 down to, I don't know, 120,000. So they were taking troops out at that point, even though we lasted to '73 or '75, according to which they were taking troops out. They saw— they were negotiating in Paris, and when Paris didn't negotiate, they bombed the hell out of them. It wasn't running big operations anymore.

**Oji:** So you said '69 is the beginning of the drawdown.

**Richard:** Yeah, they're doing the drawdown. They started drawing down at that point. They weren't coming with 600,000 people.

**Oji:** So you couldn't like re-up for another tour?

**Richard:** Nope, they didn't need our numbers there. We left our— as it turned out, we left helicopters, tanks, jeeps, aircraft, everything over there. We just— I mean, we're a consumer country. We go on how much we consume. If everybody tomorrow says, “I'm going to stop shopping”, this country go into a depression.

**Oji:** OK, so because of the time. In very brief, how would you describe your tour in Vietnam? Did you enjoy it? What was something that really stands out during your time in Vietnam?

**Richard:** Something that stood out.

**Oji:** Yeah.

**Richard:** Going on R&R. *(laughter)* Marines were not allowed in Thailand. They were banned from Thailand when I was there. And I don't know what went on in Thailand. I think the VD [venereal disease] rate was too high for everybody, so they were kind of tempering down to Bangkok. And we ended in Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. And it was just like Thailand. It was set up that there were brothels and all that good stuff; they were mostly in the hotels. And a good time for seven days, some guys went AWOL [Absent Without Leave]. Went touring in the countries. I always like learning more about the country, so I did a lot of tours when I was in Malaysia. Things that stood out well, obviously the first time you get rocketed or mortared and it's the dead of night. It's jet black, you use tiny flashlights because light will bring— they can see where you're at and shoot at you. And we were right next to the fuel pits. So I guess the first couple of times we got rocketed or mortared, that kind of was an eye awakener. And I also remember coming out of the camp library— and I think, totally it was— during the day you were with people, but at night you were basically on your own, doing your job. When you're on land. And that was in Danang and in Phu Bai, South Vietnam. I walked out of the library and there's lights, probably yellow lights brighter than this. And you walk out, and your senses totally go in a different drive. I remember walking out the first time— because everything's blackout status and this is midnight/ one o'clock in the morning. And I guess I finished what I was doing at the avionics shop and I come out of the library and it is just jet black. I mean, no sense of light anywhere. No stars. I don't even remember stars, but I just stood there for a minute. I mean, in New York City, you'd be run over. But it was just the sense of, you know, where am I at and what am I doing here? And then your eyes adjust and you begin to see shapes again.

**Charlie:** Unless you had anything else to add, I was going to talk about your return home and the public's perception. So how—?

**Richard:** OK, but even a more— the public's reception is, probably with a lot of vets— again, going over and coming back, I don't remember a lot, but I didn't have any problems at the airport, but I can't tell you a war story. But I can tell you a war story about me going on fire watch. Everybody's got to do their KP [kitchen patrol] and fire watch. And fire watch— walking around a multilevel aircraft carrier at night gets boring because there's not that many fires and most people are sleeping. But there are always card and dice games going on. So I'm down about three decks and it was a card game, and some of the guys got up, they were out of money. Get out of here, you don't have your money anymore, we're not taking your IOUs, you know. So I sit down into the card game and I'm there, and I'm winning and I forget about fire watch. And there's people that check, different posts at different times. So I guess I was more than 15 minutes into this card game, and winning, that either the Sergeant Major or somebody— and this one, Sergeant Major was a royal pain in the tuchus. I mean, he wanted to make— I don't know what he wanted to make, he was already a Sergeant Major, and he was young guy too. He couldn't have been more than his early 30s, but anyhow, he captured me. And he was going to have an Article 15 going and— office mass and Article 15, and “We're probably going to bust you for this.” I says “Sarge there's nothing going on”, I could see the entire carrier from where I was

at. But anyhow, I end up in front of the— either the XO or the CO, because they were taking it real serious. And you know, I don't remember the precursor, I remember the post, but I don't remember what they— they might have been wanting to make an example of me. So anyhow, I get to the captain's mass, or what is the equivalent in the Marine Corps, and they're talking about an Article 15. And they say, "You have anything to say?" And I said, "Before you put this all on my record, could you do me a big favor? Or could I make a call?" You know, like when you get arrested? And they— "Yeah, well, who do you want to talk to?" And I said, "Can you dial up Harrison Williams' office?" Well, he was the U.S. senator from New Jersey. U.S., not state senator, U.S. senator from New Jersey. He and my uncle Joe were drinking buddies, my great uncle. So that mass ended quickly. I mean, the Article 15, if I brought my DD 214 [Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty], there's no Article 15.

**Charlie:** OK.

**Richard:** Nothing. But I picked up every s\*\*\* detail for the next two months. I was KP'ing. When I wasn't KP'ing, I was on guard duty. When I wasn't on guard duty, I was master of the garbage, making sure the garbage was— all the lids were on top of the garbage, for two months. And then right after that I went on flight stints. So I was boom-boom-boom— I was not bored anymore. I was not bored. And then they said, "OK, you're flying." And they said the operation, and it's interesting that I blank the operation. I don't remember when I was dropping troops on that hill. And you don't remember a lot about the operation, either. I mean, they say on— they have it in the cruise books what went on. Because the pilot, or copilot, has to make a log of what happened and stuff like that. All I remember was coming in after the operation, and there was blood all over my arms. And it's from the aircraft— they're aluminum aircraft, and you get perforated with automatic gunfire. You're firing, they're firing. And you don't remember it because you're in a— it's like you're automatic. They say you have muscle memory and stuff like that. Well, your brain's a muscle, and your brain just does what you're trained to do. So you're just high adrenaline and you're firing a .50 caliber machine gun. You know, we were out somewhere around the rock pile and we were getting fired at.

**Richard:** Coming back was— I don't remember having problems— I saw the, what do they call them? The Hare Krishnas.

**Oji:** Hare Krishnas.

**Richard:** And they were dancing— uh on, we got a lady outside. Hare Krishnas were dancing around.

**Charlie:** Mmm hmm. (*Oji exits*)

**Richard:** And they weren't really harassing the troops, they were just dancing around the airport. And I think I landed in Travis [Texas], but then I got on another airplane and went to

North Carolina. So what people remember about going back to hometown and stuff like that—hometown was blue-collar. But there was nothing that I remember that people got spit on and they're screaming, yelling baby killers. (*Oji returns*) I have no memory of that. I got off at Travis, grabbed another civilian airliner, and I think I immediately went to North Carolina, went to Jersey.

**Charlie:** OK.

**Richard:** But there was no— just the Hare Krishnas, I found them interesting. They were in gold robes and stuff like that, tambourines. But there was no spitting, baby killer stuff, I didn't witness that.

**Oji:** OK. You came back from Vietnam.

**Richard:** Yeah.

**Oji:** What— I'm sure you saw most of the protests and demonstrations that was going against the war?

**Richard:** Yeah, there were demonstrations, yeah.

**Oji:** So, what made you come back from your deployment from Vietnam and made you to an anti-war protestor?

**Richard:** Well, to the degree that I was never pro-war. You see, we trip across things in the interview, and this is something that tells you about me, individually, not the Marine Corps. But when I was flying, I like to personalize things. So on my flight helmet and of course, when I was done flying— it's a universal helmet, they don't fit helmets for them. But stenciled on my helmet: "War is big business, and business is good." So people laughed at that until the colonel or the lieutenant colonel saw that. The pilots don't give a s\*\*\*, they're doing their tour of duty like you're doing and you're protecting them and they're making sure you don't— you're making sure they don't crash the helicopter. So I don't know who came up but slapped me on the back of my helmet, I mean rattled my brain and got in my face. And when you're over there, it's kind of like "So what." I mean, other than getting arrested. And the officers that were really jerks, the 90 day wonders, they fragged their hooches if they were really stupid. And it wasn't Marine Corps as much as the Army. So he slaps me on the back of the helmet and he said, "What do you mean by that!?" Something like that, you know, caught me off guard. And I turned around and looked at him, and I didn't answer him right away because I had to find out who he was. You know, if he's wearing eagles on his collar—

**Oji:** (*laughter*)

**Richard:** That could be hurtful. You know, he could say, arrest that S.O.B. and let him sit. And he said, “What do you mean by that!?” And I looked at him straight in the eye and I go— then he goes, “What do you mean by that and whose side—!?” And I said something to him, “Yes sir” or whatever. And he goes, “Whose side are you on!?” I looked at him back in the eye straight and I go, “My side.” And there was no long philosophical conversation. And he says, “Get that s\*\*\* off of there!” turned on his heel and walked away. That was the end of the conversation. Of course, he might have known the Harrison Williams thing. You know, don’t want to play those games because— I mean, if he’s a colonel, he’s in there to retire from the service, so he wants to make one star. So he’s not going to mess around. He’s going to walk away from it, give you s\*\*\* detail, and be on his way. You were small potatoes.

**Oji:** So you joined the Veterans for Peace.

**Richard:** I came back and I had residue from the war— which people say I still have. They say I have a short fuse. And I’ve been divorced twice, so they say that’s critical. And I go out and I check my gates at my house at least once a night now. I used to check them three times. And when I’m in a restaurant, I will sit on a wall. I’ll never sit with my back to the front door. And I think those are all things from traumatic stress. People don’t normally do that. But people that I know well will say— they’ll ask me, “Where do you want to sit?” They’ll actually say, “Where do you want to sit?” And back to the wall facing probably the exit. The first year I had enough credits to be a sophomore at Kean College in New Jersey. And I spent the time in a library reading and doing my work and probably not doing anything. One of my buddies was in a fraternity. He said, “Come back to this school, I’ll set you up.” And he became a superintendent of schools for one of the counties in New Jersey. He said, “Get in this major.” But my first year was kind of quiet and I don’t think I met a lot of people, other than people I already knew. And then this one, she was a special ed major— Jill Farren, she noticed something wrong. And she would bring me out, you know, get me into conversations. And then things flowed on from then, and I dated her for a while, but she was really the VA [Veteran’s Affairs] for me. She was the miniature VA. A lot of fun, her mother was a drunk.

**Oji:** OK, are they still waiting outside?

**Charlie:** No, I was going to say something. So interacting with civilians after you returned home— was that a difficult thing for you to do? Did you feel disconnected from a lot of the public when you would—?

**Richard:** When I came back home?

**Charlie:** Yeah, when you would just talk to someone?

**Richard:** We didn’t talk about the war unless I was asked, specific to it. And I would talk about it, it wasn’t as if it was so traumatic. And again, in my squadron while I was over there— didn’t

have anybody die in the squadron and the guys that were in the tour before me, they only had two die. And if you guys— chance look at the book, there's torn up helicopters in the book there, so you can actually see that. But we didn't have any deaths in the squad, we had crashes, but everybody lived. You know, guys, they lost engines and they would bring the helicopter down and—

**Charlie:** A lot of serious injuries or like any—?

**Richard:** It was more the bodies we were carrying that would give you post-traumatic stress. You were in a body bag. And if the body bags laid out in the field for 24 hours, they blew up because of all the gases in them. Well when that bag breaks, it's something you don't want to smell. And a lot of that stuff— it would go down. The bottom of the helicopter, the floor, was not sealed, so you just didn't wash it out and it went down into the guts of the helicopter. So you were always having this smell of Vietnam, the land and the jungle, and also decayed protein in that helicopter. And they couldn't get it out, there was nothing— or nobody cared about it or what, but you had that constant smell. And when you smell it and you're in the United States, you say, "What died?"

**Oji:** OK. So, for a peaceful guy—

**Richard:** When I came back, the adjustment was fraternity. So my buddy, **Lou S?? [01:12:26]** said, "Take this major, you got good enough grades." And in fact, I was in a major that was new in the school, so I helped write the curriculum. So I wrote the curriculum, and then I got into student congress because I had political background, Senator Williams. And then I was elected Vice President of my student government in my junior, senior? Senior year of college. So I became fraternity treasurer in my sophomore/junior year? No junior/senior. Sophomore year was spent in the library. Junior, senior I got elected. And there were war demonstrations there and I did speak. But it was it was neutral. I mean, I was anti because of the policies, but you can't be anti because of the troops. And it was a blue collar college, so it wasn't like Berkeley. It was a commuter school. 8,000 people during the day came to the campus and then went home and went to a job or something. And then the older people that had families, et cetera— 12,000 at night came in for study. And most of this was education and teaching. It was a teacher's college even though I became a social worker. There were other majors you could take, but when I was there it was majority of teachers. And you know— having Jill, going back into the dating scene, being treasurer of the fraternity. It kept you off the mind of your military experience. Like, I'll give you an example, I was doing— as a social worker back in the late '90s, '94 to '98. I was next to a guy that was maintenance chief over at the VA. He ran a maintenance crew of, I don't know, 150-200 guys. And at night he was a nurse over in West Anaheim Hospital. As soon as he retired from— I don't know whether it was the VA or nursing, where he couldn't keep his mind off the war because he was a corpsman overseas. He went completely— I mean, he had to be in a mental ward. He was 100% PTSD, suicidal, blah blah blah. I mean, I knew the guy to say hello to him,

but I was next door and I was dealing with paralyzed veterans. I was this way, he was that way, but we'd see each other— coffee and stuff like that. And nice guy, never had any symptoms, but as soon as he retired, completely bonkers. Suicidal, and they locked him up, you know, locked wards and everything.

**Oji:** So you have to keep yourself busy.

**Richard:** Yeah. One of the symptoms, you ought to Google in PTSD symptoms, physical. A lot of the vets look like old men. I mean, I'm an old man, but I'm 74. But a lot of them really look like your grandfather. And the reason for that is they're constantly pumping adrenaline. They're constantly— it's fight or flight, fight or flight, fight or flight, fight or flight. And you've got to do meditation, and you got to— there's a lot of courses at the VA that if you take them, it'll be more lifelong and you can function better.

**Oji:** So keeping yourself busy and do VA.

**Richard:** Stay out of stressful situations.

**Oji:** Stay out of stressful situations did help you in tackling the— your post traumatic—?

**Richard:** Yeah taking your mind off it, being distracted.

**Oji:** So for a peaceful guy as yourself, you got yourself arrested during the '80s. Why?

**Richard:** Oh, Veterans for Peace. They were my downfall. *(laughter)* No, they weren't really my downfall. Now this is 19— I'm trying to think, the one that comes to mind, '87 or '88. I know I was in Cuernavaca, Mexico in '88 because we took my parents down there, I believe. But it was either '87 or '88. I was with the Long Beach Veterans for Peace, and they were concerned about nuclear testing. So we went out to a test site in Nevada. Now you're going to ask me the name and I'm going to go what the f\*\*\* over it. But we went out there and they basically said, "You cannot come across this line, you cannot come on the compound." And we said, "You're doing illegal stuff." You know, you're testing above ground, or you're testing underground nuclear energy. And they're still 50 miles from Vegas. If you see the lights all go out in Vegas and it's still light, it's because of all that nuclear waste that's out there. And we crossed the line and we were arrested and they said, "OK, you're arrested, now go home." You know, "If you stay here, we're going to incarcerate you." But we made our statement, got the press release, and we left.

**Oji:** So it was more about making awareness of the nuclear waste outside Vegas?

**Richard:** Yeah that they were— American public in general, didn't know they were still testing because there was a nuclear test ban supposedly out. And that was with Kennedy and Khrushchev. They actually did the nuclear test ban with— I believe, was Kennedy. I could be wrong about that. I mean, in court, I won't raise my hand on that one. But they were doing stuff

illegal and they still do stuff illegal. And you can read from the many different people in this book that, you know, some chose to go to Canada and some went to Vietnam.

**Charlie:** Were you made aware of, or did you know if this existed, that they tested nuclear weapons with live troops like in like Nevada per se, or something like that?

**Richard:** Yeah, that was published. That was actually in *Life* magazine and stuff like that.

**Charlie:** Is that something you were actively trying to protest against?

**Richard:** It was, I think that was not in the '70s though.

**Charlie:** OK.

**Richard:** My thought is, I could be wrong, you know, I won't raise my hand. Is that was '56, '59 when they were doing the atom bomb testing. I don't think they did any— the test ban treaty was on and they went underground, except for some island in the Pacific, which was in the Marshall Islands. And that place is just one— you can't live on it anymore and you'd back there and—

**Oji:** At the Bikini Atoll?

**Richard:** Bikini, might be that place, yeah. So they really— they did the above ground testing there. And it's probably strategic in that we could show Asia that we're capable of.

**Charlie:** And then I guess back to your social work after the war. I think you mentioned you worked with some pretty significant political figures? Tell us about that.

**Richard:** With social work?

**Charlie:** Or—

**Oji:** In your bio it says—

**Richard:** Well I'll tell you. It brings to mind, thank you for jogging one's memory. My first graduate— after I left Columbia with my MSW [Master of Social Work] in 1976. It was the 200th anniversary of this country, and I was getting married for the first time to **Donna Anne??[01:19:52]** And I had been in graduate school with a gal, Susie Prebble, and I lost track of her in North Carolina. And we became fast friends when we were in graduate school, it was four of us that were tighter— if you got drunk, you would stay in the apartment and stuff like that. I commuted from Jersey, which was a 13 mile trip so— but when we had projects going on, we'd stay at school with her. (*coughs*) Especially when I was at LESEDAC: Lower East Side Economic Development for Cooperatives, which was a community organization placement. Which I did, because I was not only a casework person, but I also had administrative social work. And that was the first or second year. I don't remember anymore, but LESEDAC was to



help families that were not well off in New York, to get apartments, to have a credit union, and to— what else? Credit union, get apartments. But this thing was a socialistic type thing, a commune type thing. And they still have them in the United States, not a lot of them. But LESEDAC was one of them and it in New York City. And it was run by a social worker, so that was my placement— my professional placement for one year. Now what did we want to say about? What did we want to say about me getting married, going to New England, Hartford, Connecticut. What was your question?

**Oji:** OK, you met people, or you worked for people like George McGovern.

**Richard:** Like?

**Oji:** George McGovern. George McGovern.

**Richard:** McGovern. I worked on his campaign. But with Connecticut, the pull was— if you want to see the intertwining of politics, you're talking about presidential candidates. But I met Susie Prebble, we were friends. Charlie Cohen, Pete— I forgot what Pete's last name is now, it's slipping. But the four of us did projects together. We almost glued— and we were all community organizers. And Pete was actually in LESEDAC with me. But Susie Prebble— the political orientation for mother and father of Susie Prebble was: he was the president of Hartford National Bank, CEO or president. And Susie's mother, who got me my first job, my first graduate job. Lenore Prebble was on the National Board of RNs. And the job I got was supposed to go to Susie, but her husband moved south for his job, so she had to go to Jersey. So we had interviewed— I interviewed in Jersey initially, and she had interviewed in Connecticut. So when we found out that I liked New England and her husband was going to be working in Long Island, it wasn't going to be. The commute would have been ridiculous— traffic, it's like the 405 [freeway]. So we switched placements. We bought into our placements that we were going to be placed at. And I said, "If you really like my game, you ought to try Susie." Because Susie was bright. I mean, she was so bright, her eyes constantly twitched. It was like a stoplight, almost. And so she got a job in New Jersey aging, and I got the job her mother had gotten her the Title One program, which was infants and children. The Title One program— and that was based out of Hartford, Connecticut. And where that went was— Title One was the Kennedy program because of sister Katherine, who had been institutionalized. And they said they're going to ensure that kids from conception to age six would have all the health services they could get to make them a functional citizen. I'm simplifying it, Title One is probably a lot more. And since it was the Kennedys, and now we were in the Carter/ Reagan administration, '70s. There was a lot of politics going on, Ella Grasso was governor. And in Connecticut, the hot button was abortion because in '73, the Abortion Act had gone through— the right to life. It was '73 right?

**Oji:** Roe v. Wade?

**Richard:** Yeah, Roe v. Wade was '73. And this is circa '77/ '78. So I had two directors, one was— she had M.S., Jesse Parkinson and Stuart Wolf. They were the directors of the programs and they were in the East?? [01:24:50]. And they supervised three hospitals and the health department. As far as women, infant, children program— Title One program was concerned. So Stuart Wolf— make a long story short, didn't want anything to do with politics, visiting hospitals, or anything like that. So he knew I had a gift for gab and keeping people happy. And he says, “Don't promise them anything, but keep them happy” because we were the fund givers for this federal program. We were the ones that said how many thousands of dollars you get. So they had me actually testifying in in the state capital, which was Hartford. And I'd go out there and I'd give speeches vis-à-vis, why people needed to abort sometimes— rape, incest, et cetera. And the funny thing was, Susie's older sister was anti-abortion, so we would be testifying. It is just a funny thing that we— day we be sitting there reading speeches, and at night we'd be at somebody's party, not laughing about it. But we never picked on each other because I was friends with her mother and her father. And to beat on the daughter because she thought wrong— and I don't know how the parents thought. I guess the mother, a visiting nurse, was pro and dad was probably anti. But it was just funny to testify during the day— and it didn't happen every day. But then you'd be at a party and you'd say, “Oh yeah, that was a good point you made. I saw those people really start writing” and, this is before computers— taking notes on it. So that was the real, political of my social work. My politics was mostly back in Jersey, when I was in school, and I was a young Democrat. And I would help the city out, get the vote out for the mayor because he, Tommy Dunn, was a Democrat. The councilman— we got our summer jobs over at Anheuser-Busch Breweries in the summer, because one of the councilmen was in the administration of the brewery. So all of us guys would show up for shape up and make \$11 an hour, and that's the best money we ever made. And we had free drinks while we're working. And you can imagine guys riding around on Hi-Lows, high. Because they're carrying beer barrels and stuff, and they'd be turning corners and the Hi-Lo would go this way and the beer barrels would go that way. But yeah, and the politics of it was— my job they told me in the fraternity, “You're in this house, not because you're Italian”, because most of the guys were Italian, most of them were jocks. And I was neither one at that stage of the game. They say, “You're here, this is your mission: You get a free room. You don't have to pay rent. You got to stay in the house. You can't be going to and from another place.” You know, when you're not going to class, or not out on a date, you're in the house. That's your address. “You and the house mother have to keep that house from getting burnt down.” So that was job number two. Job number one was: you were going to buy the house. So it was my job at age 22 to buy the fraternity house. But since I knew Tommy Dunn, and I knew his attorney, who gave me freebies— I mean, his hours were basically free. He wrote up the paperwork to purchase the house. And once the house was purchased, I had to pay the bills. And I had to make people sometimes upset with me if they didn't pay dues or they didn't, you know— the financial part, it went like this on the executive board. I said, “I'll take the job.” And I told Louis this even before we discussed it for treasurer. I said, “I'll take the job, but I don't like a lot of s\*\*\*. And if they really piss me off, I'll tear off their head and s\*\*\*

down their neck.” And he says, “I understand you’ve got this thing.” And so I said, “When we’re in on the board meeting, everything’s one man, one vote for six officers. When it comes to money, one man tells you what it’s going to be”, the cost of keeping a house. And we lost the house three years after I left because they wanted to party more than toe the line. And then for three years, you know, or two and a half years, I was– they didn’t like it, but they understood it. Even Joe **Dovish?? [01:29:22]** understood and didn’t like it, and he **toddled??** into the wall this plaque and it said, “D\*\*\* Hauser before he d\*\*\*s you.”

**Charlie:** Was the fraternity called?

**Richard:** Sigma Theta Chi, EOX.

**Charlie:** OK.

**Richard:** Sigma Theta Chi yeah. And the joke was– with the fraternity, we were the brother fraternity of “I felt the thigh.” And if we were in Hawaii, we’d stay at the frat house of “come on, I want to lay you.” Those are jokes. You got to laugh at those.

**Oji:** So this might be our final question.

**Richard:** OK.

**Charlie:** Yeah, we’re going to probably need to wrap up.

**Oji:** OK, we’re going to wrap this up really quick. You look at Vietnam, where you fought, and you look at all wars that are fighting today. Like, you know, we just pulled out from Afghanistan recently and there’s also Iraq. Do you think that America has learned its lesson from Vietnam? Or are we just still going to continue with this course of waging prolonged wars, and not having a foresight for it?

**Richard:** That’s a multi question. I guess I’ll answer the first one, and they can repeat the rest of it. As historians, you want to read Eisenhower’s parting speech about the military industrial complex. Since the 1950s, I wouldn’t say our economy depends on being at war, but we have been a military industrial complex since 1952/53. And today people can stencil on their helmets “War is big business and business is good” because that’s what’s going on. And whether we’re helping that country, I don’t know. You know, I got to be honest with you. I mean, we haven’t been invaded, but how many–? We only go to war when we’re invaded, and you guys gotta remember when’s the last time we were invaded?

**Oji:** Well if you count Pearl Harbor, but–

**Richard:** Well, yeah, that’s war. Yeah, but the real invasion of continental United States is the War of 1812. So we continue, we hate to say it, but– and then they’ll say, “Well, where else are

you going to go? If you don't like this country, love it or leave it.” There's all these sayings back in the '70s. So it's a good country, but if you're really going to be political, you got to be on your congressman's tail, but we're a plutocracy now. We're not a democracy. I mean, we're stated to be a republic, we're not a democracy. Greece was a democracy. So the point of it being is: we're a plutocracy. And a plutocracy, or a corporatocracy, is not run by your senators and your congressmen. It's run by corporations. Period, end of quote gentlemen. Hate to lie to you and you probably already know about it.

**Oji:** OK, sir, thank you for your time.

**Richard:** OK.

**Charlie:** Yeah. Thank you. Appreciate it.

**Richard:** Good. Good. Good. Good. One more thing. *(to Oji)* You're going to be in the Army, you're going to be an officer. When you put your hand out you grip it and hold it. Don't break their— don't break it, but give them firm grip.

**Oji:** Yes, sir.

**Richard:** You know why you always shake with your right hand?

**Oji:** It's your dominant hand?

**Richard:** No. That you don't have a weapon in it, most people are right-handed. So it goes back as far as the Romans that— if you had your hand out, you knew you weren't going to get cut by a sword.

**Oji:** Is the recording still on?