Timothy H. Brooks '64
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FARKAS: This is Sandor Farkas talking to [Timothy H.] "Tim" Brooks. It's Tuesday, March 15th [2016] in Webster Hall at Dartmouth College, over the phone.

All right, so can you tell me who your parents were?

BROOKS: My parents were John [W. R.] and Olive [Bradbury] Brooks. They were married in the 1920s and lived in Hampton, New Hampshire, which is where I grew up. My father was a sales manager for a car dealership owned by my uncle.

FARKAS: Did you have any siblings?

BROOKS: Yes, I have two older brothers, 10 and 12 years older than I.

FARKAS: Interesting. Now, can you tell me about your hometown?

BROOKS: Hampton is on the coast. New Hampshire has a very short coast [chuckles], but it's a—halfway between Boston [Massachusetts] and Portland [Maine] and kind of a small town but a suburban town. The trains and things run through there with [Interstate] 95—that does now, that sort of thing. So it's—so it's fairly suburban, I guess you would say, although in the 1950s it was a—it was a typical small town in a lot of ways.

And the main industry in town is tourism. There's—Hampton Beach is a thriving tourist attraction during the summer. So that's—and there a high school and grade school there, of course, but also, starting in 1958, a regional school that brought in students from the whole area, so that's where I went to school most of my—most of my youth.

FARKAS: Now, did your father or any—or your mother, for that matter—or any other relatives fight in World War II or the Korean War?

BROOKS: My brothers were both in the service. My father was not, nor my mother. She was—she was a part-time teacher but mostly a homemaker. But both of my brothers—as I say, they were 10 and 12 years older than I, so they were in the service as enlisted men during the Korean War. They didn't—they weren't on the front, but my older brother was in the [U.S.] Air Force, and he was stationed in Europe, where he met his future wife, and my middle brother, Peter [G. Brooks] was in the [U.S.] Army, and he was in Korea but after the truce.

FARKAS: So growing up, did you have a close connection with them? I mean, they were pretty significantly older.

BROOKS: Yeah. Well, they were kind of like adults to me [chuckles] by the time I was, you know, 8 or 9 years old; they were already in college or out of college, in the service or getting married and out of the house. I had a somewhat choppy childhood in a way because when I was 11, my father died rather—rather suddenly. And both of my brothers, as I say, were out of the house by then, so it was just me being raised by my mother.

And we—both my mother and father came from fairly large families, so there were lots of uncles and aunts and cousins and things like that, mostly in the area or the region, New Hampshire. So there was extended family. And my—and my father and mother both were very involved in community affairs and so forth, so they know a lot of people in town.

But it was, you know, kind of a shock to the system for a kid who had always had a kind of a secure little nest then suddenly the brothers were gone, and so was the father. And a year after that, my grandfather, paternal grandfather died, and he had been very much involved in the family and helped my mother make it through after my father died. And then he died, at the age of 80. And he was a businessman who lived in—up near Concord [New Hampshire], and had a—a business which needed to be run. It was a—he owned some property with about 20 small houses on it, which he leased out to people for low-cost housing. And that took a lot of management, so my mother, after only a year after her husband had died, was—it fell to her to manage that.

And so I was kind of shuttled around for a while. I stayed with a neighbor, boarded with a neighbor for a while, and then she moved me up to another school that was nearer to—to Concord, and it was a very blue-collar school so a very different kind of environment than I'd been in before. And so during those years, from 11 to the time I graduated from high school, the family unit was kind of disrupted, although there were, certainly, people around. My middle brother was still in the area, who—who helped out.

FARKAS: So one more kind of question about your brothers: What did they tell you about their time in the Air Force and the Army, respectively?

BROOKS: Not much [chuckles], not much. My older brother, [John B.] "Jack"—who was the one who was stationed in Europe, in the Air Force—he was really, you know, less connected. He was older and went off to—he got his degree at UNH [University of New Hampshire], and then he went to get a master's degree and eventually a Ph.D., and he moved out of town with his—with his bride.

My middle brother—so I didn't hear much from him. The middle brother, however, who had been in the Army as an enlisted man, was—was around a lot more, and he talked to some extent about his experience in the service in Korea. He—he was a very, very active—he's passed away now, unfortunately, but he was a very active guy. And he—he told me about a side of the military that I wouldn't have thought of otherwise, and that is that you were assigned to do something, but especially in a war zone or an active zone, that doesn't have to be what you do. There's a certain amount of ability to move around or get assigned someplace else if you want.

And he—he was an amateur photographer. Had a darkroom in the basement. He was very good at it. But he was assigned to I guess an infantry unit or something like that, and he got to this base—oh, and he also loved to fly. He—he had a private pilot's license. But he was assigned to the military, and it was boring, and he didn't like it, so he wandered over to the photography tent and poked his nose in and asked some questions, and the sergeant said, "Do you know how to develop film?" I said—he said, "Sure." They

gave him a test, and they said, “Well we need somebody,” so they had him transferred. So he was doing what he wanted to do.

And then they said, “Well, what else do you want to do?” And he said, “I’d love to fly,” and they said, “Well, you’re not qualified as a Army pilot, but we’ll send you up and you can do, you know, aerial photography, and that would be great.”

So here’s a guy who was assigned one thing, and by his own kind of industry, even with the Army structure, was able to wrangle a job he liked a lot better. And I always kind of carried that with me, that even though there are lots of rules around, that doesn’t mean you necessarily have to follow them.

FARKAS: So you said you went to two different schools, one of which was kind of a magnet school and one of which was more of a blue-collar school. Can you tell me how your plans for after high school evolved through that time? Did you always want to go to college? Was that an expectation?

BROOKS: It was—it was an expectation. Both my brothers had gone to college. I had a stellar high school career. I was top of my class. And it was—and I wanted to. [Chuckles.] So it was—it was never a question. The only question was paying for it because we didn’t have much money, but—but, yeah, it was assumed, as the—as the—I was the valedictorian of my class—it was assumed I would go to college. And—and that’s what I wanted to do.

In the—in the blue-collar school, when I was transferred upstate for a while, that was a pretty tough place. It was up in Pembroke [at the Pembroke Academy], and there were a lot of tough guys in that school. Now, I’m not a particularly tough guy, but I—I made friends with—one of the tough guys made friends with me [chuckles], actually, and kind of was my protector in the school yard while I was there. And we remain friends to this year—to this—to this day. You know, he came out of a family that never been to college or never had any intellectual pursuits, I guess, and he was the first one to do so. And not only did he go to college, he went on to get a Ph.D. In fact, I think he got *two* Ph.D.’s and eventually became one of the leading experts in criminal

psychology. He's written a whole bunch of books. So, you know, we had an effect on each other, I guess, even in a situation like that.

But, of course, all my friends were in Hampton, and the people I'd grown up with and my gang and all that sort of stuff, so I finished out my education back there.

FARKAS: So what interests did you have in high school? Did you have any sense of what kind of a career you wanted to go into?

BROOKS: As I say, I was very good at math. I even went to an advanced studies program up at St. Paul's School to study advanced calculus and things they didn't teach in my school, so I was very good at that. But it was never something that I kind of wanted to do [chuckles] particularly. I liked to write. I was very interested in the music industry. A lot of teens are interested in pop music and so forth, but we had a subscription to *Billboard* [chuckles] as a school kid and was interested in the charts and how it worked and so forth. So that turned out to be important to me later on as I was making my career choices. But I was interested in the music industry and—although we didn't call it that then—in entertainment and—and something kind of—either business or science oriented.

FARKAS: Interesting. Now, obviously, you ended up at Dartmouth, but can you tell me how that worked its way into your college applications?

BROOKS: Yeah. It was kind of a strange turn of events. You know, life sometimes takes turns you don't expect, but that can be a good thing. And I was assuming [chuckles] I guess, because both my brothers had gone to UNH, that I would go to the University of New Hampshire as well. It's nearby, just kind of the obvious place.

And as I got closer to making a decision in my senior year, I thought, *Well, maybe I ought to look around a little bit.* MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] seemed like a good fit, given my strengths, so I looked into that. I think I applied there. But I was approached by someone—and I wish I remembered who this was; it might have been a Dartmouth graduate in the area or a representative of the college, who

actually approached us, my mother and myself, and said, "You might want to consider Dartmouth," which I hadn't considered.

But once he brought that up, it sounded interesting, and particularly when I found out that there was a good chance I could get a scholarship, which I needed from Dartmouth. Then I decided to basically, you know, drop the MIT and—and—which was—which turned out to be almost too scientific for me. I wanted some liberal education, too, and go to Dartmouth instead. I had never been in Hanover, I don't think. It's on the other side of the state. But mostly because the college had a very good reputation, of course, then, as it does now, and also because—very crass, financial reasons.

FARKAS: So did you get a chance to visit the campus in Hanover before you decided upon going to Dartmouth?

BROOKS: That's a good question. I don't remember going there. It's possible I did. But I certainly was not familiar with what the—I mean, it was nothing like the Dimensions Weekend or the kinds of things we have now. I certainly wasn't familiar with, you know, the kind of environment that I would be in there, only that it was a very well-regarded college, nationally as well as in New Hampshire. Had a very good reputation, and people spoke highly of it. And it would combine the kind of interests I had in a liberal education because I was very interested in writing as well, as well as—you know, it wasn't a—it wasn't a school that had any kind of media program, but not many schools did then. So I was more focused on pursuing my technical knowledge.

In fact, I went in—originally speci-—not majoring—you don't declare your major, but—but working toward an engineering major with a secondary in English.

FARKAS: So can you describe your first impressions of the campus, what that first—those first weeks or months were like?

BROOKS: Yeah. It was a—it was a completely different environment than I was used to, but by this time I had been kind of shuttered around enough that I was used to being out of the

house [chuckles] and on my own, as I explained, so that didn't bother me particularly.

But, you know, I had to make a new group of friends, and there was a—I guess an Activities Day or something like that, when you first got there. It was in some sort of large room or—or ballroom or something, with tables all around, and the different activities were at the different tables, and the services—the Army, [U.S.] Navy and Air Force—each had a table as well.

First of all, I learned about the radio station, and I was drawn to that. That seemed to mesh with my interests in music and media and so forth, and I also—I might be getting a little ahead of myself, but I also was assuming that after college, I would go into the service because guys did that then. I mean, if you were healthy, you would probably either enlist or be drafted.

So I—I could see that looming at the end of my college—my four years, and I went to the three tables and found that the Air Force wanted a four-year service commitment if you took Air Force ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]. The Navy wanted a three-year commitment, and the Army wanted a two-year commitment. And I was good enough at math to know that two is better than three or four. [Chuckles.]

So I signed up—and I didn't want to be enlisted; I wanted—I would rather be an officer. Both my brothers had been enlisted. So I signed up for Army ROTC and then headed for the radio station to check that out.

FARKAS: Interesting. So you described the different commitments. Obviously, you had, I would say, strong math skills and other kind of technical skills. Did that make you—did that ever sway you towards the Navy or the Air Force? I mean, those seem like they might have been choices that were more in line with your interests, possibly.

BROOKS: Well, if—if they all had been equal, I might have opted—I don't think I'd opt for the Navy; I'm not that much of a sailor. But I might have opted for the Air Force, possibly, but four years versus two seemed like a no-brainer. [Chuckles.]

FARKAS: Yeah.

BROOKS: I had no thought of making the military a career, but—and it was assumed that I would serve in the military—I would—one way or another, or be drafted, so—so it was—you know, *What's the best way to do this?* And as I say, I wanted to be an officer. I thought it was worth the time that I would put into ROTC to go that route rather than the enlisted route as, as I say, my brothers had done. So the Army seemed like the obvious one.

Now, within the Army, you get to choose a branch. I don't know if that was at the first, when you first sign up, or later perhaps in the ROTC program. But when it came to choosing a branch, I chose the [U.S. Army] Signal Corps because that aligned more with my—you know, my interest. And that worked out. Also, I did not want to be in a—I don't know which branch you're in, but [chuckles] I wasn't particularly interested in being on the front line. Let's put it that way. [Laughs.]

FARKAS: Absolutely. So back to that activities fair.

BROOKS: Yeah.

FARKAS: When you signed up for ROTC, were you legally kind of committing to that? Did—you said the score—they gave you a scholarship, so did the Army also contribute in that manner?

BROOKS: No, no, there was—the school—from Dartmouth, I had a work scholarship, so I worked in the dining room—dining hall, and that helped pay—and I also had several scholarships, smaller ones, from—from high school. I had won a whole bunch of scholarships, actually. [Chuckles.] And none of them were particularly large, but when you put them together, and you put them together with the Dartmouth, you know, work program and, you know, with whatever money my mother could scrape together, that—Dartmouth wasn't as expensive then as it is now. That managed to get me through. I did have to work—I worked for my first three years. I didn't work in my senior year. But I

worked rather regularly in the dining room. But ROTC, no, there was no scholarship associated with that.

FARKAS: Interesting.

So going back to the other thing you signed up for that day, radio—

BROOKS: Yeah.

FARKAS: From the information you already provided, it seems like that was very important to you. You actually wrote a book on it. Can you tell me what enticed you about radio that day?

BROOKS: Initially, it was my interest in—in music, I think, and the music industry. I'd been making—and serving local record shops, even when I was in high school and doing, you know, high school top ten or something in the dining room, for the enjoyment or annoyance of my classmates.

So when I got to—so I headed over to the station. WDCR was a really big deal on campus then. There were only three radio stations in the market. WTSL in Lebanon [New Hampshire] was the other main one, and there was a dinky little station in—in White River Junction [Vermont] that had just opened, that no one listened to, so—

And the Dartmouth station had a full-power—a regular AM commercial license, so it could be heard throughout the region. And it was run entirely by students. There was no—no—no—no professor or no hired manager there, as most schools have. It was entirely up to students. President [John S.] Dickey [Class of 1929], the president of the college (I've learned this since) felt strongly that young men—because it was all male at that time—young men learned responsibility by having responsibility. And he would rather see them, you know, try and fail than be under somebody's thumb until they got out into the real world.

So he convinced the trustees to basically turn this Federal—FCC [Federal Communications Commission] broadcasting license, which is a pretty serious matter, over to the students to run. They were the engineers. They were the sales people. They sold time on it. They were programmers, of

course. They were the—they did everything. And that was a lot of independence.

And the station, as a result, had a really strong sort of feeling for—for professionalism in its DNA, which was passed along from class to class. It wasn't like fun—fun in a fraternity house or something; it was, like, "This is a business, and it's not dull, but it—it could be a lot of fun, as a matter of fact. But it's really up to you not to screw it up [chuckles], and you've got real responsibilities here, young man."

So that kind of attracted me to it. It was a welcoming place. You know, I'm a freshman, pea green with this little beanie on my head, and the upperclassmen said, "Sure, c'mon in" and "what would you like to do?" and that sort of thing. So it was very welcoming, and it became my fraternity for the—for the four years I was there, almost to my academic detriment, as a matter of fact.

FARKAS: So what *did* you do, coming into the station?

BROOKS: I initially volunteered to help in the record library. They had a big record library of LPs and 45s [respective record formats], which had to be organized, and there were new boxes of records coming in all the time, and you had to go—reach out to the record companies. And there was—what was it?—a Top 30 list, I guess, that was compiled every week for the disk jockeys to play. So I did that. I eventually took over as the record librarian.

I also wanted to be on the air, and I had to get rid of my New England accent. But when I did that, I passed the auditions, and I started doing on-air shifts as well.

And eventually I worked my way up—it was very much a meritocracy, too—worked my way up and became a part of the governing board in the senior year. So it was—it was kind of a course in media, actually, looking back on it. You learned a lot about how professional broadcasting works, the business of it as well the fun part, on-air part and so forth.

And, of course, I got *Broadcasting* [now *Broadcasting &* Cable] magazine and *Billboard* and all those publications

and so forth, so you really learned what was going on in the business.

And also, especially in the last year, when I was administrative director and part of the board, my main—major project was doing an audience survey, a really rigorous audience survey that the salesmen could then use to take to advertisers to show what a big audience we in fact had. And there were no Nielsens or Arbitrons or anything like that in the market, so a lot of the selling and the competition against us was done by personal connections and glad-handing people and so forth, and WTSL was very good at that.

So how did the kids compete with that? Well, we—I organized a telephone survey which involved, like, 30 or 40 staff members. The station had, like 150 volunteers [chuckles]—I mean, they had a lot of involvement from—from the student body. And they all had a script, and they made calls randomly, through the phone book. "What are you listening to?", "What's your favorite station?"—that kind of thing. And they compiled it all at the end, with charts and graphs and things, and produced a survey.

Well, that was—and I took—I went over to a Tuck School [of Business] professor to see if this was being done right, and he looked at it and said, "Yeah, it looks good to me." [Chuckles.] Later on, of course, I became a professional in that field for a number of television networks in charge of research, so it was—it was kind of a training ground for what would eventually become my business career.

FARKAS: Interesting.

So I also have heard that DCR, Dartmouth College Radio, did a lot of high-profile interviews in that era. Were you involved with any of those?

BROOKS: Not generally. The news department did a lot of interviews, especially in election years. Election years were a big, big deal, and the New Hampshire primary was a big deal, too. We had an Election Night, where we'd take over a ballroom somewhere and set up tables, you know, for different areas and have students posted out to polling sites and the

campaign headquarters, calling in results as they came in. That was a big operation.

And the—and the news department—I was never in the news department, but the news department would do lots of interviews with the candidates as they came through. There were also interviews—we had a lot of shows that were produced, to various interests. It was not a—a formatted station the way we have now, where it does one thing all day long. It—it—it was more segmented than that, so there was kind of easy listening music or quieter music in the morning, rock and roll in the afternoon, a big news block around six o'clock or so, because we had to—we had to program both to the campus and to the community, so there's some balancing going on there.

And then in the evening, when students weren't listening very much—you know, study time—there were specialty shows, and I did one called *Pick of the Past*, which was finding very old recordings around a them—like songs of World War I or something—and scripting it and building a show around that.

And the most popular show on the air was at 11 o'clock, called *Music Till Midnight*, which was another rock and roll show, which is when study time was done, and the guys just wanted to cut loose [chuckles], you know.

So it kind of varied through the day. There were interview shows in there. I did do an interview with [singer/songwriter] Johnny Cash at one point, which is on my website, I think, now. But by and large, no, I was not doing interviews so much as kind of running the station behind the scenes and doing some on-air shifts.

FARKAS: Wow! So a lot of information. Let's see, what was your taste in music back then?

BROOKS: Oh, I was a rock and roll kid, of course. [Chuckles.] I don't know if you have any courses on this or anything, but when was in junior high and so forth, when I was a kid, it was all [singers] Patti Page and Jo [E.] Stafford and that kind of stuff. In 1955, suddenly rock and roll just burst on the scenes

with [William J. C.] “Bill” Haley and then Elvis [Presley] and [Charles E. A.] “Chuck” Berry and all those folks.

And for the next ten years or so, ’55 to ’65, popular music was a real mix. About half of it was—was what we would now call early rock and roll, a lot of doo-wop in there, particularly around the time I was at Dartmouth, and girl groups and things like [Philip H.] “Phil” Spector, people like that.

And the other half of it was [Anthony Dominick Benedetto, more commonly known as] “Tony” Bennett and [Pierino R.] “Perry” Como and people left over from the early ’50s.

So we played both of those—and they had hits, too, so we played both of those on WDCR, and my interest was in both of them, and also kind of peeking behind the curtain to see how this business worked. I thought at one time maybe I’d go into the record industry, but part of my duties in the record library was getting records for the station that we needed. Since we were AM [amplitude modulation], we could get promotion copies from most anybody. However, they wouldn't necessarily just put us on their list and—and send them to us.

When it came to LPs, for example, we would have to contact a distributor, explain that we were, you know, a commercial AM station—we’re run by students, but we’re a commercial AM station. We can give exposure to your stuff. And we got a station wagon at some point and went down to Boston to pick up a station wagon load of LPs from the various distributors, new LPs that we would then put in the library.

So I got a chance to actually meet people who were in the business, and what struck me was, first of all, they were all in the seediest part of Boston, and out among the warehouses and so forth, and secondly, they all seemed to be middle-aged guys with their collars open and gold chains and pony tails, and they just looked like thugs and gangsters. I thought, *Well, maybe this isn’t the business I want to be in after all.* [Chuckles.] So I kind of veered away from that.

And then I thought, like a lot of WDCR graduates, that maybe I would go into radio. And I—I did some interviews for radio stations. Radio is a field in which, at least in those days, you—you tend to start off in very small markets—you know, work your tail off for very little money at some one-lung station, and maybe over the years work your way up to a larger market. Or maybe not.

But my first job was in television as a—as a junior promotion writer for the station, and I found that was a much more in some ways energetic business and one that it was possible to make upper progress in a lot faster, at least for me, so I wound up in television instead. But they're all kind of allied with each other.

FARKAS: So kind of a strange question here: You said you did this—this program of older music, and you mentioned, you know, a night of—or an hour of World War I music or other things like that. Was it in- —I mean, looking back, was it interesting to see what, for example, World War I or World War II music was like? Did you get any sense of a kind of—the military from the military music?

BROOKS: I wouldn't say there was much of a tie to the military there. The military was always in the back of my mind because, again, on the assumption that I would have to go into the service one way or the other, but, no, the interest in older music—I have a great interest in history, too. I've written books about *that*.

And *Billboard* had a chart in it which—they had their current Hot Hundred, the latest hits, but they also had Five Years Ago Today, and they would show you what the top five were or the top ten were then; Ten Years Ago Today, and they even a chart, Twenty Years Ago Today. And if you got this publication every week, you would see songs going up and down the charts twenty years ago, which—you know, 1940 or something like that. And I wasn't familiar with these, and I watched them go up and down, and I got curious about that.

So I got some of those records. A lot of the records that we played on that show were actually donated or loaned by local residents in the Hanover area. You know, they'd hear the show, and then enjoy it and then say, "I've got some old

records here. Are you interested?" And so we'd kind of get records, because the station didn't have a lot of them. We'd get records from locals.

But when I got back to 1940, which is as far back as *Billboard* went, you know, the next question was, *Well, what came before that?* So I did some research, went over to Baker [Fisher Ames Baker Memorial Library, now Baker-Berry Library], found some books and found my way back to the '30s and '20s and teens and so forth, and was interested in how the whole record industry had grown up over those years.

So that—that was kind of what was behind *Pick of the Past* and my interest in older music, as opposed to the military connection.

FARKAS: How did you get those records?

BROOKS: Well, as I say, many of them were either loaned or donated to the station by local residents. They were cleaning out the barn, or they had had a collection of—they were mostly 78s—you know, the records that came before 45s? I don't know how much you know about this business. But the kind of record that came before LPs and 45s, microgroove records, were ten inches, and they were 78 rpm [revolutions per minute] records. They spun very fast and had steel needles and stuff. And those had been produced since the turn of the [20th] century.

So a lot of this stuff—some of it had been reissued on LPs, but a lot of it we played from the 78s, and—and [Robert R.] "Bob" Gitt [Class of 1963] was the chief engineer of the station in my—he was one year ahead of me. He was a '63. And we worked together. He was very good at transferring these to tape and cleaning them up and making the sound presentable. Unless they were really beat up, he could do wonders with them. So a lot of the stuff, if it was loaned, he would tape it—you know, get a clean copy on tape, and we'd play it from the tape.

FARKAS: So you said you interviewed Johnny Cash?

BROOKS: Yeah.

FARKAS: What was that like?

BROOKS: That was a lot of fun. You ought to listen to the interview on my website. It's short. It's about four or five minutes. And there were—there was a show called *Hootenanny* on one of the television networks that was taping at Dartmouth. They would move around to different campuses around the country. And I think it was over at Webster Hall, which is now Rauner [Special Collections Library], I believe.

FARKAS: That's where I am right now.

BROOKS: Okay. Well, there was a stage there, and there was, you know, seats and an audience and stuff. Kind of a moderate-sized auditorium. And the TV crew set up there, and he was going to be the star attraction on it. The dressing rooms were down underneath the stage, so it was, like, down from where Rauner is now. And I was sent—I don't know why, but I was sent over to do an interview with him. We usually did do interviews with musical acts and celebrities who were passing through if we could.

And so I chased him down. I won't go into the whole story, but I chased him down. I had an engineer with me, [Frederick W., Jr.] "Ted" Gerbracht, who was also in the Class of '64, who was lugging a—tape recorders weren't very portable then, so we had these very big, heavy Ampex machines, which did have a handle on them, however. [Chuckles.] And if you were strong enough, you could in fact carry it around.

So he lugged that, and we sought out Johnny Cash in his dressing room, getting ready for the show, and strung up a microphone, and he was—he was the most cooperative guy. I now know—we now know he was in his drug period then, but he didn't show it. [Chuckles.] June Carter was with him, his wife, who, according to the movie at least, saved him from drugs. And it was kind of inconvenient because he was being made up and being prepared for the telecast, but he said, "No, no, no. Don't send the kid away. I'll—I'm glad to do the interview." And moved his chair around, and I did a short interview.

And he was very cooperative and nice about it. That—that was the thing about—I mean, obviously we were students, and we were a student radio station, but we also had a microphone. We had a pretty big voice for the area, WDCR did, and you could get the attention of stars coming through, politicians coming through. You acted professional, and even though you were young, you were often treated professionally.

FARKAS: Interesting.

So you also said that DCR was your fraternity. Can you tell me about the social side of your life at Dartmouth, your kind of—yeah.

BROOKS: Yeah, it *was* my fraternity. I never pledged at a fraternity. I was a little afraid I couldn't afford one anyway, because, as I say, money was kind of tight. But the radio station was a regular place you could go. You could hang out. You know, guys went out to dinner together and road trips together and things like that, as well as, you know, working at the station.

As a fr- —it was a very welcoming place. Some people took advantage of that. Some didn't. Some just came in and did their shift and left or whatever. But a lot of them really bonded. I've remained friends with quite a number from those years, as a matter of fact. And they went on to various careers, not necessarily broadcasting at all, but—but it was—it was friendly and welcoming.

Now, I spent so much time there—I should tell you in my freshman year, that I got very good gr- —we had three semesters per years. I guess you have four now. But we had fall, winter and spring trimesters, I guess they would be called. And in the fall, I got straight A's, and I thought, *Well, this is gonna be a piece of cake.*

In the winter, I got, like, a C or so, or a B or C. Well, that's still okay. Because I'm spending all this time at the station, instead of studying. In the spring, though, I got I think my only D while I was at Dartmouth, and my average plummeted, and Dean [Thaddeus] Seymour hauled me in and said, "Mr. Brooks, you need to make sure you know what your priorities are here. You—you won't be expelled,

but you could lose your scholarship if your grades continue on this kind of track."

And I—that was kind of a bucket of cold water in the face. So after that, I learned to balance my time a little bit better between studies and the college station, and my grades went back up. I frankly wasn't aiming to be the—the magna cum laude of the class. I mean, I wanted to do something that I cared about, and I was interested in and that meant something to me and that, you know, would provide a living, as opposed to be a superstar. So that's what I did, and the station provided that for me. My grades, as I say, were quite acceptable after that.

But it was not the kind of, you know, super-duper career I had in high school or, even later, in grad school for that matter. But it—it provided a very—looking back, it provided a very solid foundation for the career that I would eventually have. And even—something I wonder what it's like today, to some extent—even when there was something that had no immediate payoff, like writing the history of the station—I mean, I published the book now, but in—in the senor—in my senior year, I wrote a history of the station up to that point. it had been on for 20-some years by that time, founded in 1941.

And I got together all kinds of materials that were still in the files. A lot of it isn't there anymore, but—and did, like, 200 pages on the history of this radio station. That was not for credit. It was not a Presidential Scholar thing. I certainly didn't get paid for it. It was just something I wanted to do. And when I finished it, I left a copy with—at—at Baker Library. They were happy to have a copy. And left. [Chuckles.]

There was no credit for the big survey I talked about, either, although that had a use at the station. I mean, just do things that you believe in and things that, you know, you think you can gain from, whether or not the—whether or not the—the establishment or the system or the professors assign it to you. Just if it's interesting to you and if it's worthwhile, do it.

And I kind of learned that kind of independence of thought, I think, from this-from the environment there, too. And carried

it into the service, which is, as I say—even though the service has all sorts of rules, the service is open to a certain entrepreneurial spirit, too, particularly when it's in a actual combat situation.

FARKAS: So speaking of distractions from academics, did you have any relationships while you were at Dartmouth?

BROOKS: With—what do you mean? With—

FARKAS: With any women I know that students used to travel down to Smith [College] and Mount Holyoke [College] and other—

BROOKS: Not—not serious ones, no. I mean, because it was an all-male school—I wish it hadn't been, but because it was an all-male school, either you went on road trips to Smith or something, or you waited for Green Key Weekend or one of the weekends when—when girls would arrive by the busload. That was pretty much it. And, you know, my mistress was the radio station, in a lot of ways, so nothing any—nothing that endured. [Chuckles.] Let's put it that way.

FARKAS: Mmm.

So you said you were initially studying engineering and English, but—in the information you already submitted, you said you ended up majoring in economics.

BROOKS: Yes.

FARKAS: So can you tell me how that evolved?

BROOKS: Well, as with a lot of things, you—you try things out, and it's not involuntary servitude; if you don't like them, you can move on to something else. Because I had a adviser in high school who gave me some—the Minnesota tests or something and said, "Well, you're very well suited to be an engineer," so I went into that. But after I took a couple of courses in it, I decided this wasn't for me. It was a course where we were designing an on ramp for a super highway. And I don't know if you know anything about this, on ramps take a lot of design. They have to be a certain angle. They have to be a certain kind of tilt to them so the cars don't run off them, and all that kind of stuff. Lots of formulas and lots

of calculations. And I just decided I'd rather drive on an on ramp than design one. It just didn't seem that interesting.

So I cast around for a something else. If there had been a media major, I probably would have taken it, but there wasn't, so economics seemed like something where you're dealing with people and how they act under certain circumstances, which is, kind of a psychology approach, which I've always been interested in, too. So I went into that, and it's called the dismal science for good reason [chuckles], but nevertheless you talk about how economies move, you know, [unintelligible], various kinds of things. And that—that served as something that tapped on my knowledge of math and my knowledge of—and my interest in studying human behavior, I guess you'd say, while giving me a major that Dartmouth had.

FARKAS: So—

BROOKS: Oh, and— and English—I should say, English as a secondary—looking back, maybe it should have been the primary because I've written eight books and I do a lot of writing now. But that was my secondary interest.

FARKAS: So you had mentioned that you were at Dartmouth during a primary? Were you very political at that point in your life?

BROOKS: Not particularly. I'm more interested in the process than—than the ideology. And the station, as I say, was—was very, very focused on being professional, and professional means—or at least meant then—that you're non-partisan, that you're—just the facts, that you're getting both sides of every issue. And the station—you know, through its history, even in the tumult of the late '60s and early '70s and the antiwar protests and so forth, had an absolutely firm rule that no reporter for the station could take sides, who could join protests. If they did, they couldn't be a reporter for the station. "We have to be independent. We have to be a neutral voice." And each side was mad at them for that reason [chuckles] because the antiwar students wanted the station to be an antiwar voice, and the—there were a lot of pro-war students, and they wanted, you know, the other.

But, no, the station didn't encourage that, and it wasn't my natural bent anyway—you know, ideological-based kind of thinking on politics. The campus was—I mean, it's sometimes said it was a very conservative campus then. I didn't really see it that way, but it wasn't terribly liberal, either. There were—as I've explained in my book, there were various incidents along the way, when [Alabama Governor George [C.] Wallace [Jr.]—you know, segregationist governor—gave a speech, and so there were protests against him. But it wasn't the kind of thing you get at [University of California,] Berkeley or at a school that's very ideological. It's much cooler than that, like the temperature. [Chuckles.]

FARKAS: So did you have much—were you very aware of the [Vietnam] War at that point? I know it was fairly early, so—

BROOKS: No. As a matter of fact—and I might have written this somewhere—in 1960, when I matriculated, most of us had never heard of Vietnam, or maybe we had heard of it. You know I was fairly aware of what was going on in the world. But it certainly wasn't on our radar. And even in '61, '62, '63, when we had advisers there and there were some battles in which Americans were killed and so forth, it was still a very peripheral event in the world. The big news was the Cuban Missile Crisis and the assassination of [President John F.] Kennedy and, you know, things like that.

In '64, when I graduated, it still was not a big deal, and I went into the service in '64, the summer of '64, with no particular expectation that I'd ever—that I would wind up in Vietnam. My brother would have gone to Korea, but after the cease fire, and the other brother had gone to Europe when they were in the service. So I figured, you know—you know, it was—it was not even particularly on the radar. Now, over '64, '65, that all started to change very rapidly, but not during the college years, not '60 to '64.

FARKAS: Were there any Vietnamese students or, for that matter, East Asian students at Dartmouth that you recall?

BROOKS: Not that I remember. It was a pretty white-bread school. [laughs.]

FARKAS: So ROTC. Were any of your friends or any other people from DCR also in ROTC?

BROOKS: No, I don't remember any that were. There might have been one or two, but none that were in my circle, certainly. Most of them—some of them were—were in—a fair number of them were in fraternities or had other activities. Some of them, like me, were kind of, like, all-consumed by the radio station. But I don't remember any others in ROTC.

That was a different group of people that—that I mixed with, and that was fine. The—the ROTC classes were, like, the ultimate gut classes. I mean, some sergeant would stand up there and read you things out of a manual, and here you are at Dartmouth College and you're taking fairly challenging courses in economics or sciences or whatever. And he's showing you how to put together a rifle. Well, okay. But—so it—it wasn't terribly challenging, at least not for me

And you did get out, and we—we would have practice drills, and we would go across the river and do a bivouac or something like that from time to time. But—but it wasn't difficult. And it was a different group of people, basically, from the radio station.

FARKAS: So—I mean, you mentioned a bit about what the classes were like. Can you tell me what different activities constituted being in ROTC?

BROOKS: Well, what I remember of it—and it's a long time ago, and it wasn't the center of my world, so the memories are kind of faint on this, but what I remember primarily are those classes, which were in a classroom, and it was taught by usually a sergeant, and, as I say, they were—they were—they were gut courses. And going down to the—the field once a week, maybe, to—to do some formation drills and—and practice some things, like assembling weapons and things. And an occasional bivouac out someplace.

But that was pretty much it. It was not—it didn't take a lot of time, either, as I remember. There might have been one ROTC course per year or maybe two per year of something, but it wasn't every semester, even, to take the courses. And—and there was no—

FARKAS: And do you recall—

BROOKS: There was no—I mean, there's a thread going on now online about war protesters. I don't remember anybody protesting it or, you know, expressing their disdain for military. I mean, there's some that had no interest in the military, of course, but the war protests hadn't begun yet, and there was no kind of negative connotation attached to being in the—in ROTC that I recall.

FARKAS: Interesting. Now, you said there was a sergeant. I assume there were other staff. Did they ever share with you, or ROTC in general, their experiences?

BROOKS: I don't remember that they did. I don't remember that they did. They had a—as the military tends to do, they had a very rigid and regimented course outline that I guess came down from the Pentagon, very generic, about what you were supposed to study and how you were supposed to study it, and it didn't particularly fit, I don't think, a Dartmouth student body. It was meant to fit everybody and therefore fit nobody [chuckles] very—particularly well.

But for us, it was pretty easy, and, you know, I guess they were friendly enough. If you wanted to talk to them, you certainly could. There were some members, now that I think of it, who were in ROTC who *were* aiming toward a military career and were much more interested than I was in learning about the military and—and getting ready to, you know, spend their professional career that way, although as—when I *was* in—in the service, on active duty later, usually those who want to make that career go to [the U.S. Military Academy at] West Point or go to [the U.S. Naval Academy in] Annapolis, rather than through ROTC. But—but there were some who were much more serious about pursuing it.

For me, it was something that I wanted to—well, it was a kind of mix of emotions. I don't want to denigrate it. It wasn't, you know, a scam to get off on something. I believed in it and, like a lot of Americans, thought that this is my duty, to—as my brothers had done and many of my uncles had done, to defend the country if—if need be. So it was something that you did, some time that you put in that, as a citizen, you

should put in. But it wasn't something that I wanted to make a career, so I didn't—I didn't focus on it that way.

FARKAS: So did you have any friends in ROTC, people you were kind of closer with?

BROOKS: Not particularly, much more the radio station. I can't even tell you now who the people were that were in ROTC with me. I—I think there were one or two that I knew from the dorms or something like that, maybe even one from the station that was also in ROTC, but it was basically a different group than the ones that I mixed with elsewhere.

FARKAS: Interesting. Around how many people were there?

BROOKS: It was a fairly small group. Now, remember, I was in Army ROTC, so there was a separate Navy and a separate Air Force ROTC, too, but in the—in the Army, I would say that it might have been, I don't know, 20, 25 people, something like that, I guess.

FARKAS: Interesting. And do you remember where the office was, or the classroom was?

BROOKS: I have no idea where the classroom was. The—the office and where we drilled was down by the athletic field, and I think there was an office down there somewhere, where the sergeant was headquartered or something. We didn't hang around there. That was just going down for, you know, some drill practice or something, or maybe to get on a bus to go over to Lyme [NH] and bivouac or whatever.

So I'm, like—when you're in the service, you know, you know where company headquarters are. You know, there's a sense of place. But there was no real sense of place for ROTC that I remember when I was there, other than the athletic field.

FARKAS: So were there any larger summer training exercises that you had to attend?

BROOKS: Yeah. Well, in addition to what I just mentioned, which were occasional, in your junior summer, I guess it was—this is the summer after your junior year—you had to go to basic

training, and that was at Fort Devens [Massachusetts], and that was for several weeks. I'm not sure exactly how many, four weeks, something like that. And that was a shock to the system, too, because that was—I mean, that was regular basic training. [Chuckles.] You know, that was—that was—it was hard work. And for people who aren't particularly athletic, like myself, I was—it put you through a regimen that you weren't familiar with.

Now, I'm not completely unathletic. My—my parents were both great hikers. They loved to go up to the White Mountains, and we climbed every mountain up there, I think. But in terms of the kind of intense physical activity that you get in basic training, it was—it was much more than I'd been accustomed to.

And—and some of the others who were there with me, ROTC, from different schools, largely—it was very difficult for them, actually. And some of them were very rebellious, and they didn't want to follow the rules. And, I—I—I tend to get into a situation like that and kind of look around, kind of observe it, see how it works, and kind of plot out the way—the best way to deal with the situation. Other people are more from the hip, I guess.

But I remember a sergeant at one point. Something—somebody had done something. I don't know what he'd done. But he had us all out in the—out in front of the barracks, all lined up, chewing us out, and said, "You guys have gotta understand, you don't fight the system. You can't fight the system. You make the system work for *you.*" That sergeant is smarter than his education might indicate. [Chuckles.] The Army, like—like many institutions, you know, has its rules, but that doesn't mean that it—it squashes some creativity. You just don't march up to the door and wave your first; you kind of find your way in the back, or you find a way to make things work for you and for them, that kind of thing. So there was some of that, and, of course, all the usual running and slogging through the mud and all kinds of stuff you do in—in basic training.

So at that point, you become a recruit, I guess. It's not a private yet, as I remember. So in your senior year—you've been at Dartmouth—you've now been through basic training

so that when you graduate in—in June, you can go straight into the service as a second lieutenant.

FARKAS: So do you have any other thoughts on your last year at Dartmouth, kind of your concluding time? Were you sad to leave? A little bit ready to get on with life?

BROOKS: You know, I was certainly sad in one sense. I made some real friends there. As I say, this radio station had been very important to me, and I was leaving it, of course. And, you know, I found Hanover, for all its freezing cold and snow [chuckles] and everything, probably worse then than it is now, to be a congenial place.

But—but there's a certain amount of getting on with your life, too, and—and now what happens? There's some nervousness associated with that, but some excitement associate with that, too. I knew exactly what the next thing I was going to do was, because I was committed to two years of active duty, so it wasn't a question. I could not go to grad school and put off my service at that time because I didn't have the money, so—so it was kind of a given that at least for the immediate future, it was set what I was going to do. I was going to go to col- —you know, into active duty.

So the senior year, which I found to be maybe less stressful than the first three years, in some ways—academically, certainly. You know, I—I was doing okay in my courses, and I'd reached a senior level at the radio station, where I was really in charge of some things and was learning about leadership and that kind of thing. That was kind of—pretty rewarding. You know—you know, commen- —graduation is always, you know, kind of sad farewells to people. We all promised to keep in touch with each other, and sometimes we did, and sometimes we didn't. But, no, I say I think it was probably more excitement about—the next chapter is inevitable. Let's see what happens and what we can do with it.

FARKAS: So did your mother and your siblings come for graduation and commissioning?

BROOKS: [Laughs.] Oddly enough, my—my mother, who had studied to be a teacher in the 1920s, but at that time they would not

allow a woman to have a four-year degree. (How times have changed!) So she only did two years, and therefore she could not get a full-time teaching certificate, so she went back to college. She went to UNH and finished her degree that she had started—teaching degree that she had started in the '20s, when she was a younger woman.

And she graduated at the same time I did, one week apart: me, from Dartmouth; she, from UNH. So I went to her graduation, and she went to mine. [Chuckles.] Which was kind of symmetrical, kind of fun. We both had our caps and gowns and that sort of stuff.

My brothers? I'm sure Peter came, my little brother. I was always close to him. I'm not sure if Jack came or not. He might have been out West by then.

Oh, and my aunt, my doting Aunt Muriel [F. Bradbury], my mother's sister, certainly came.

FARKAS: Interesting.

Now, graduation and commissioning. As you said, you commissioned as a signal officer, graduated. Where did you go after graduation?

BROOKS: There was—there was a gap—like, I graduated in June, and I was due to report I think in August. I could be wrong on that. Late July. But there as a month or so there that I was back home, kind of getting my stuff together.

Then I reported to Fort Bragg in North Carolina. I was assigned to the 518th Signal Company at Fort Bragg. So I went down to—to North Carolina, was a platoon leader, I guess, for the 518th. And for the next year, '64-'65, was kind of leading this platoon. We would have all kinds of exercises. We had a lot of maintenance going on.

I lived with two other second lieutenants in a house off the base. Fort Bragg is a big, sprawling base. I think it still is. And basically did that. I kind of learned a few things about the military that I hadn't fully understood before then. One is be very nice to your sergeant. [Chuckles.] Remember, he's your partner; he's not your subordinate, really. When you're

green and new, you've got the bars, but he's got the know-how, and he can—if you really antagonize him, he can really undermine you. On the other hand, he doesn't want to antagonize you, generally speaking. They see lieutenants come and go. So I—I learned the difference between command and leadership. Let's put it that way. Or at least something about it at that point.

I learned other things, too. We—we were based at Fort Bragg, but we went out into the field, in the North Carolina, South Carolina area, to do maneuvers. Sometimes as a signal company, we would set up a signal tower, and we provided the communications between the combat units. And so we went to a small town, someplace on the border, set up—we had a field that had been reserved for us, and set up our—our tents and things.

I was given the option, as an officer, of either sleeping in a tent out there or renting a room in town, so I rented a room in town and met a very nice Southern lady, middle-aged lady, who rented me the room, and I remained friendly with her for years afterwards. We exchanged Christmas cards till the day she died 20 years later.

So, you know, there were people you could meet then. I also had my first encounter with discrimination, in a way that I just didn't know existed because I grew up in New Hampshire, where there are very few minorities or certainly very few African-Americans.

And I'll tell you one short story. The—the—a group of us—me, the lieutenant, a couple of sergeants, I guess, and maybe a specialist or two went out for dinner in the town. So maybe there were five of us. And we went to this diner or restaurant, and one of the sergeants was black, and they said, "We don't serve blacks."

I said, "Wait a minute. Why not?" And he [sic] said, "He's a soldier, like I am." They said, "No blacks allowed." And I was quite incensed about that, and I said, "This is wrong. And I'll stand up for you here. We can't have this." And the black sergeant said, "No, no, no, no, no. I'm used to this. I don't want to get into a fight. I don't want any kind of scene here. I'll go eat someplace else. You guys go ahead." I said, "But

it's wrong." He said, "Yeah, but it's what it is." And he had no interest at all in any kind of push-back or confrontation. And I could very well push back if the person I was pushing back for was headed down the road. [Chuckles.]

And that—you know, a couple of experiences like that in the South were—were new to me and were eye opening. It's probably old news now, and certainly to anybody who grew up down there, but it wasn't to a New Hampshire kid who hadn't been in that.

So in addition to being in the Army and kind of doing all their fill out the forms and keep checking the tires in the motor pool until they go flat, that kind of stuff, there were other things that were very educational, I guess I would say, from that experience at Fort Bragg.

FARKAS: What was your own background, by the way?

BROOKS: My own background?

FARKAS: Whether—your family. Were they kind of an old New Hampshire family?

BROOKS: Yeah, we know a lot about my mother's family because in the late 18th century—or the late 19th century, around the 1880s or '90s, they commissioned a book to be written about the family history. And the book survives. This is something what a few middle-class families did then, apparently. So they had been in America and in New England since the 1600s, and then the guy traced them back from there over to England and Scotland, and they traced them back through the ages, back to the 1200s or something. So a long history, in America a long time and in New England a long time. That's on my mother's side.

On my father's side, it's a little less clear. Nobody ever wrote a book, so we don't know for sure, and some of my cousins have tried to trace it, and there, my father came from a large family, mostly boys, a couple of girls, maybe nine siblings all together. He was very industrious. My uncle—he was the second oldest—he went into automobile sales back when cars were first on the road and got a Ford [Motor Company] dealership franchise in New Hampshire, probably one of the

first ones, before World War I and founded this Ford dealership, at which he employed several of his brothers, including my father. And he was probably the only rich guy in my orbit. [Chuckles.] So he was a businessman, and that made my father a businessman.

Going back from there, the family had been in the Boston area, and we got as far back as the mid-1800s, and then—then the trail goes cold, and we're not sure where they came from before that. But all the family we know of was New England based, and basically middle or lower middle class.

FARKAS: Interesting.

So from Fort Bragg, where did you go?

BROOKS: Well, after a year at Fort Bragg, we got our orders to deploy to Vietnam. The—as I say, Vietnam was not an issue while I was at Dartmouth in '64. And '64-'65 it was just starting to glimmer and starting to emerge in the press, and I think the Gulf of Tonkin [incident] was—was the summer of '64, wasn't it?

FARKAS: Yup.

BROOKS: Or the early fall, something like that? And [President Lyndon B.] Johnson was elected, of course, in the fall. And after he was elec- —he didn't—he didn't run on a Vietnam platform, certainly. But after he was elected, that's when the build-up started, in early '65.

And once the build-up started and troops were being ferried over there in large numbers, they had to have a communications infrastructure to connect all of these bases. You can't just call up on the Vietnam phone; you've got to have your own reliable communications, which is where we came in.

My company, the 518th, was a microwave company, so we had portable towers, kind of like Tinkertoys that you could put up a tower very quickly. You put microwave dishes at the top of it, you aim them properly to the next base, you know, 40 or 50 miles away, which has its tower and its stuff, and

you establish communications between the two. Then you maintain those—those communications over time.

It happened so quickly in the summer of ’65, this build-up that was going on then, that they didn’t even have time to move our company headquarters and the whole company over there. They just took individual detachments and sent them over.

And in my case, my detachment and a couple of others were assigned to the 362nd Signal Company, which was already in Vietnam. Our company headquarters was still back in Fort Bragg, so I had—you know, it was kind of a loose detachment attached to this other company, which was in Nha Trang—no, where was it? In Trang, I guess. Or Vũng Tàu, I think the headquarters were.

I arrived at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. They flew us over. They were so anxious to get people there that we didn’t even take a ship; they put us on a commercial jet, leased jet and just flew us all over.

Landed in Saigon. Was assigned to a base in the Mekong Delta, the town or city called Vinh Long. This was a helicopter base, which obviously had to have communications, so the communication tower was already there. There had been another lieutenant there before me, I guess, who had cycled out. So I took that over as the detachment commander for that unit at the Vinh Long helicopter base.

I should mention that when I went into the service in ’64, they were accelerating the deployment to active duty so that in my case, they didn’t even send me to Fort Monmouth [New Jersey], which is the Signal Corps school. Normally, to go into a branch, you go into the school for that branch and spend six weeks or three months or something getting up to speed on how that particular branch works and the technical aspects.

In my case, they just bypassed that and sent me right on to active duty. So when I arrived in Vietnam, I had not had training specifically in electronics or the equipment

[chuckles] particularly. I was there to manage the troops, basically, and provide the link with the commanders.

And we had a specialist from Gates, I think it was, the made the equipment, that manufactured the equipment, a civilian, who was the technical expert. He was paid very well. And they had these all over Vietnam. They were hired contractors, and they were the ones who could troubleshoot the equipment if there was—was a problem. And they could live off base. They usually had a mama-san out there in a nice apartment somewhere in town, dressed in civilian clothes and so forth. But they weren't military, so they needed military, you know, to protect them and to do the day in, day out kind of meter readings and things like that and the very light maintenance. So that's what my team of soldiers did.

And it was probably a group of eight or ten, six or eight, something like that, had a sergeant and a couple of specialists and a couple of privates.

FARKAS: So rewinding just a little bit, when you realized there was the prospect of deploying to Vietnam, was that something you wanted to do, didn't want to do or were ambivalent about?

BROOKS: It was—it was just orders. [Chuckles.] It was not something—at that time—this is long before [the] Tet [Offensive] and long before Vietnam got, you know, all over the news as—as a bloody mess, so I didn't see it, and I don't think those around me saw it as a terrible thing. It was obviously going to a war zone, so that was, you know, not the best—and some people feel more—feel badly about that or feel scared by that. I didn't. And most of us didn't. I mean, you're twenty- —I don't know about you, but you're 22 years old and you're indestructible, you know? [Chuckles.] And this could be an adventure.

Also, very important, in the military you're surrounded by buddies who have your back, and you have their back. So it's not that you're going alone into a dangerous situation. So, no, I—I saw it as *Well, this is the next step. This could be interesting. "Keep Your Head Down Fritzie Boy." [Chuckles.] And try not to—*

My poor mother sat at home, watching [CBS TV journalist] Walter Cronkite, which only showed film of troops wading through rice paddies with their rifles over their heads and shells coming in. And thought, her poor son! Is he going to make it back alive? I was never in a rice paddy, and I never held a rifle over my head. The vast majority of soldiers in Vietnam were in support roles, anywhere from three-quarters to seven-eighths, the figures I've seen since. And we were one of the support roles.

It was not—you know, not cushy. [Chuckles.] Our base was shelled a couple of times, with mortars coming in and you're running for the bunker. I mean, obviously, it's not Hanover anymore. But—but it wasn't, like, hand-to-hand combat or anything like that. And, again, you're young, and you—you tend not to be as bothered by things that you might think twice about later on.

So the deployment? You know, it was kind of an adventure. It was—I wasn't exactly looking forward to it, but I wasn't pushing it away, either. At that point in my life, *Well, here's a new experience. Let's see what I can learn from this.*

FARKAS: So speaking of new experiences, you got off the plane in Tan Son Nhut, you said.

BROOKS: Yup.

FARKAS: And did you go into Saigon after that?

BROOKS: When I first arrived, I—I went to the 362nd Signal Company headquarters, the unit I was attached to there, to get my orders. And I seem to remember—I might have stayed a night or so in—in Saigon. But I—I pretty quickly deployed down to Vinh Long, to my new base. And later—and—and got to know the peop- —you know, took over down there, met the people there, understood what my responsibilities were down there and my reporting responsibilities. There was an occasional company commanders meeting in Vũng Tàu, so I would fly from Vinh Long up to Vũng Tàu to the 362nd company headquarters to meet with the CO [commanding officer], the captain.

But at that point, at the very beginning, I was pretty much limited to my base, with occasional excursions to company headquarters. But that was only at the beginning.

FARKAS: So what was your first impression of Vietnam, of Saigon, of Vinh Long, of the people, of the climate, of the culture, of the food, all that?

BROOKS: Now, the first impression was *It's hot and it's humid in this place. God, is it humid! Everything is sopping*. [Chuckles.] And I got to my base in Vinh Long and found—and I had, you know, officers' billets, which is a little straw-roofed huts with individual rooms in it for the—for the junior officers. And it had a wardrobe in it, which had a light bulb in it, which was on all the time. What's that for? That's to keep your clothes from rotting. [Chuckles.] The heat from the light bulb is enough to counteract what otherwise would be the stifling humidity that just rots everything it touches. So that's kind of what it was like. So there was a certain getting used to the climate there. Now, I've been back to Vietnam since, and that—that's in the south. That's in the delta. The whole country isn't like that. But the climate was the first thing that struck me.

The second was the people, I think. Part of what America was doing in Vietnam was trying to—I mean, part was fighting the Viet Cong, obviously, but the other part was trying to—trying to inject money into the Vietnamese economy by hiring Vietnamese, local Vietnamese for lots of tasks. And most of them where hired to be ditch diggers and things. You'd see them around the base.

But they also hired a young Vietnamese woman to be my secretary, Miss B or "Cookie" [Thi-Bé Lieu] And she was very prim and proper. She was probably about the same age we were, mid-20s maybe, and she would come in every day, and she was paid, and this was a way that the military would employ people. They put money into the economy.

I had absolutely no need for a secretary. There was very little paperwork to do, and she didn't speak particularly good English. She spoke better English than I spoke Vietnamese, but—but—but not very strong. And I would give her something to do when I could, but basically she sat most of

the day. Sometimes friends would come and visit her. And she was very pleasant and didn't strike me as anybody that I thought would blow the place up or anything. I guess you never know for sure, but just kind of—you know, the impression I got from her, from other Vietnamese that I met—

I did for a while volunteer to teach a course at a local Vietnamese Army base, teaching English to the Vietnamese recruits, who wanted to learn English. And I didn't know any Vietnamese, but they gave us a book which had Vietnamese text on one page, on the left, let's say, and the equivalent Ameri- —English text on the other page, facing. And my job was to read slowly and clearly and distinctly the English text so that they could follow along in their own language and hear the pronunciation, enunciation—you know, how English would be spoken properly.

And they were—you know, they were wide open. They—they were anxious to learn. I got a very strong impression that the Vietnamese, by and large, were glad to see the Americans there—again this is 1965—felt that they were here to—to help, you know, get them to end this war that had been dogging them for so many years and bring peace so they could go back and till their fields and live without fear, and the Americans seemed to be here to do that.

There was a lot of trust. They were—you know, there weren't suicide bombers. There was very little of that in 1965. And the people were—were pretty opening—open and welcoming, by and large. So it was a pretty—it was somewhat different than what you were reading in the papers or what analysts might say. I found that in many countries that I've been to since [chuckles], that the media doesn't necessarily represent really what the texture is when you go there.

So I had a pretty positive reaction to the Vietname- —and I would also meet Vietnamese, mostly soldiers or government representatives or something in various meetings, and they seemed to be genuine, and they seemed to be pretty welcoming of the Americans.

FARKAS: So can you describe kind of the day-to-day runnings of your post at Vinh Long?

BROOKS: Pretty boring [chuckles], actually. There were certain reports we needed to—to fill out and send in to company headquarters. We had to read the meters. There was—these were big, rack-mounted communications equipment. And for something serious or a real breakdown, we had Guy who was our contractor, the civilian, but for everything else it was basically, you know, monitoring, maintaining and reporting. And I was bored out of my gourd in no time at all with that.

So there was a—there was one officer each month who was designated to be the pay officer, who would make the rounds of all of the detachments that were assigned to this company, and they were all over the country, from—from Hué in the north down to the delta where I was, and all stops in between: the Highlands, the coast, everywhere. So we had maybe a dozen or 15 of these bases around the country. And once a month some officer, some unlucky officer would be the one who would have to draw the money—because the troops were paid in the local currency, piasters—and spend several days making the rounds of all of these sites, setting up a table and being the pay officer.

I volunteered for that. It got me out of Vinh Long, and I said, "I'd be willing to do this on an ongoing basis if that's all right." And the company commander said, "Great!" [Chuckles.] Or the sergeant or [chuckles] whoever did the assigning. He was just delighted not to have to coerce somebody into doing this every month.

So for the rest of my tour there, I was the pay officer, and that meant that once a month I got out of Vinh Long, hopped on a chopper or on a plane and made the rounds of the country. I had a very good camera at that point. In the PXs [post exchanges] you could get the latest Japanese high-tech cameras and tape recorders and things at very good prices, so I got myself a good Minolta camera, lenses and so forth and took pictures everywhere I went. And so that was—that was a great way to see the country, actually.

And the other thing I did is I was having withdrawal pains from radio. You asked about leaving things behind. Well,

leaving behind WDCR, you know, was beginning to eat at me. [Chuckles.] I really liked it. And liked radio. And it turned out that a very good friend of mine from the station had—was also in ROTC and had wound up as the assistant station manager at Armed Forces Radio Saigon. And I said, "Al, I'd love to come up and see—maybe even have a shift if you got one." And he arranged for me to have a Sunday morning shift on the station.

FARKAS: So what was his name?

BROOKS: His name is [Alan R.] "Al" McKee [Class of 1964], Al McKee. He later went into the Foreign Service. Became an ambassador, actually. But he was the assistant station manager, and he got me a shift in the morning. Now, this is totally without orders or without even the knowledge of my CO, but in a war zone, as I said, you could do lots of things. If I went out to the landing field and there's a chopper about to take off and they say—they say, "We're headed for Saigon," I say, "You got room? Can you give me a lift?" And they say, "Sure, Lieutenant, jump in." [Chuckles.] You know, just like that. I mean you don't need orders. I mean, you just—the way you want to go. I mean, you're supposed to be where you're supposed to be if something happens, but they're not watching you, and particularly as an officer, you' get an awful of latitude.

So I'd hop on, you know, a chopper. They'd fly me up on a Saturday. They would fly me up to Saigon, drop me off, and I'd check in on the officers' billets, which were open to any transient officers coming through. Again, you didn't need any orders or anything. If you'd show up and you're an American officer, they'll give you a room.

And then on Sunday morning I'd go over to the radio station to do my radio show, get my fix. Then I'd go down to Tan Son Nhut and find another plane. "You headed down to Vinh Long?" "Sure. Hop in, Lieutenant." And fly back, and I'd be there, you know, Monday.

So—so I was on Armed Forces Radio for a while, too, doing this weekly show, until—

FARKAS: What was your—oh, sorry, sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt.

BROOKS: Yeah, until one week, a company commander at Vũng Tàu announced there was going to be a meeting of detachment commanders. We all needed to be in Vũng Tàu on Sunday to meet with him. So the week before that, I recorded my show so they could play the tape while I was not able to come in that week. And I flew up to Vũng Tàu to meet with the company commander.

And as I was walking into the company headquarters, the company clerk had his radio on, and I walked by his desk and I realized it's me on the radio. If they ever make this connection, "Brooks, you're here. Why are you there?", I could get into hot water. So that was the end of my radio career. I decided [chuckles] that was maybe a little dangerous to flaunt military regulations quite that, overtly.

FARKAS: What was your show like? What—what did you do?

BROOKS: Oh, boring as could be. It was Sunday morning, and the format was to play very calm kind of hangover music, you might say, so it was a lot of Jo Stafford. There was, you know, folk songs, maybe the Weavers, things like that, no—no rock and roll on Sunday morning, but it was radio.

FARKAS: Now the Weavers. So—I mean,—

BROOKS: You remember the Weavers?

FARKAS: Of course I remember the Weavers. I grew up in New England, in Western, Massachusetts. So that is, I would say, sometimes on the verge, sometimes quite explicitly antiwar music. Was that cool to play?

BROOKS: The Weavers became antiwar. In the early '50s, when they had that first burst of fame for Decca Records, they were singing very generic folksongs, "Goodnight, Irene" and "So Long, It's Been Good to Know You" and "On Top of Old Smoky," things like that. They started as a—as a left-wing protest group in the '40s. They were called the Almanac Singers originally. [Peter] "Pete" Seeger, of course, is well known for his—his political views.

But when—when they got picked up by Decca and when they went on *The* [sic; *Your*] *Hit Parade* and had these big, million-selling records in the early '50s, it was all very straight-ahead folk stuff. There was no politics in it at all. Later on, according to whose version you read, they were blacklisted for their beliefs, even though the songs weren't political, or maybe their popularity just started to wane after a few years. But later on, they—in the mid '50s they were kind of in the shadows and outshone by other groups. Then they kind of returned to their roots and became much more political.

So the stuff I was playing by them would be "On Top of Old Smoky" or something that would not be political. We were allowed to play pretty much anything, but I think it was understood that you wouldn't—in 1965, there *weren't* that many protest songs, first of all. But you probably—you wouldn't play the "Eve of Destruction" or something like that.

FARKAS: Interesting. So the culture at—in Saigon, at the radio station, versus the culture in your unit—were they very different? Was there anything kind of specific you remember about the radio in Saigon?

BROOKS: Well, certainly in Saigon—I mean, those who were out in the field, even if it was in—in a base like mine in the delta—referred to "Saigon soldiers" with some disdain because they tended to have much more cushy accommodations. They had an office they went to, and they went home at night and had a nice place, and it was relatively safe. So it was considered a softer assignment.

And there were huge headquarters of the Allied Command there, the MACV [U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam], with lots of people running around, compiling charts and body counts and putting out press statements and all that sort of stuff. That's what Alan did. He mixed with a lot of dignitaries coming through and lived a pretty cushy life, which he freely admits today.

The rest of us, although we might not be—there's, like, a middle group, like me, that was at a base which could get shelled [chuckles] and we're in helicopters that could be shot down and that sort of thing, which did happen once in a

while. And then there were the ones who were really front line, and they were really in harm's way, particularly on the west of the country. Direct combat with the VC.

But that was a relatively small number of troops out of the whole that was there. So Saigon was looked on as a kind of a, you know, big city escape. Now, it wasn't quite like a big city that you would go to today. Well, maybe it's like Detroit [chuckles], but—but most big cities, you know, you feel safe in as long as you don't go to the wrong neighborhoods.

In Saigon, you got around in little taxis, these little yellow-blue Renaults, I guess they were? Little taxicabs. And the rule, for example, was that if the taxi stopped because of traffic or something and the driver got out, you get out too. Don't stay in the taxi because there could be a bomb. If you're going to a restaurant or something like that and you see a package by the side that doesn't seem right, don't pick it up. It could be a bomb.

There were terrorist—what we now call terrorist incidents there. The building where Armed Forces Radio was located—when I went there, I noticed the whole ground floor was, like, open. The building was on stilts. And they explained to me that the Viet Cong had bombed the building, tried to bring it down. They didn't bring the building down, but they did blow out all the walls on the first floor. So in order to protect it, they—they had guards around it, but they also left the ground floor open after that, reinforced, so they could see anybody down there.

So there—even in the city, you had to be careful because there could be incid- —and there were several like that, where a popular restaurant or bar was bombed or something like that or a soldier was killed.

When I went back just last year for a tour of the country, I saw all kinds of historical sites that I never could have gone to and didn't go to when I was there in the service, because if you went out and tried to explore the—the Imperial Citadel in Hué, for example—it's wonderful architecture and sculptures from—from the 19th century. If you went there during the war, I mean, there was a target on your back. You know, a—American wandering around these historic sites,

you know? [Chuckles.] All it takes is one bullet and you get another American. So you—you—you stayed together, and you stayed in safe places. You watched your back. But it wasn't as if, you know, you were in direct com- —battle at all time.

So going to Saigon was a relatively safe place. You go to the center of the city, but you did—you were cautious. You kept your eyes open. And they warned you to, and enough things would happen that you would know that you needed to do that.

I don't know if that makes sense.

FARKAS: So—oh, yeah, absolutely.

So during—I don't know if you had any time for rest and recuperation [R&R] or what you kind of called that, but did you spend any time off from—you know, off duty in areas that weren't Saigon?

BROOKS: Usually—usually Saigon was the place that you would go for, you know, nighttime fun, so to speak. It was bustling. It was full of Americans. Weapons were not allowed in the central city area. I mean, there were military police, and there were people around, but it wasn't like it was filled with people with guns on their hips. So it was safer.

There were a lot of bars, there were a lot of clubs, and there were a lot of Vietnamese bands trying to imitate American rock bands—you know, hilariously. [Chuckles.] So that—that was probably the—the best place. Most bases had something around them where you could go, but you didn't go off base a lot. Certainly in Vinh Long we didn't go off base, nor did the troops. It was too dangerous to go out into the—the local community and hang out, so you stayed on your base.

And there was an enlisted men's dining, you know, area. There was a, officers—a place where you could go with a bar and so forth, so you—you tended to stay on base, unless you were in Saigon. In Saigon, you could go out, at least within the central area. And there would be MPs [military

police] around; you would see them on the streets, so there was some protection there.

Of course, once a year, once during a year's tour, you were entitled to a week off of R&R [rest and relaxation], and a lot of guys went to Thailand or maybe to Japan or something. You could—you could take a flight and go and spend a week away—or maybe it was two weeks—no, I think it's a week—away from Vietnam.

I was having so much fun traveling around the country—snap, snap, snap pictures everywhere and seeing all these places that I really didn't feel a need [chuckles] to—to go elsewhere. I thought about it, but I stayed in country my whole tour because I was kind of touring the country, so to speak.

FARKAS: So to get to that in a moment, but just a couple lingering questions about—about Vinh Long and Saigon. You said in Vinh Long you didn't get off base into local town much or at all?

BROOKS: Not much. I did go in a few times. As I said, I went to this Vietnamese Army base and taught English there for a while, but—and I think we had a couple of meetings where I and the base commander and a few other officers met with Vietnamese Army commanders and had a dinner, ceremonial dinner. We'd all raise glasses and clinked to each other's health and that sort of stuff. So occasionally we'd go into town, but usually on official business of some kind.

It's kind of strange—

FARKAS: So—

BROOKS: I remember—if I could just add—I remember Vinh Long as a town specifically, not a city. When I was there last fall, we went through Vinh Long, and they said it had 700,000 people! So either it was a lot bigger than I remember it, or it's grown an awful lot in the years since, because it certainly was not one of the principal cities of Vietnam when I was there.

FARKAS: So what kind of food did you eat? Did you eat U.S. Army—the wonderful U.S. Army style rations? Did you have kind of more American style food, or did you ever try Vietnamese food?

BROOKS: It was very much American food, and the military made every effort to bring in familiar food for—for the troops, so every base would have a, you know, a snack shop or something. You could get a milkshake, you'd get a hamburger, stuff you're familiar with from home. And that was always available on any military installation or bases, and USOs [United Service Organizations], too, in Saigon, for that matter. So it was mostly American food. I think on occasion, particularly on these ceremonial dinners that we'd have once in a while, we would have Vietnamese cuisine, but, no, it was—it was overwhelmingly American food.

FARKAS: Interesting. And when you did kind of take some time off in Saigon or after you had done your radio show and—or possibly hang out with your peer from Dartmouth, did you do much, as you said, night fun, go out to bars or anything like that?

BROOKS: I did a few times with friends of mine, but I'm not really a bar crawling kind of guy [chuckles], so not a lot of that. I wanted to see the sights of the city to the extent I could, within the safe area. And, in fact some of the pictures that I took then of street scenes and—well, one of the central parts of the city is—is the opera house, opposite which there is a long, verdant boulevard, very French in appearance. And I remember taking pictures of that. It looked like Paris. And, of course, it had been French for many years, and the French built the city to look like Paris in a lot of ways.

So when I back last year, I was going to some of those same places to see what they look like today, so there was a certain amount of exploring of the—of the sights of the city that way. And sometimes out to clubs. And as I say, there tended to be—the Vietnamese wanted to—part of this helping economy was to, you know, before—have Vietnamese rock bands. I've got a couple of records, actually, that were made by Vietnamese bands, kind of imitating American bands. They're terrible, but they're trying.

[Chuckles.] So we'd go out to clubs and do that. I'm not a big drinker, so I didn't do a lot of that, though.

FARKAS: Interesting.

So traveling around the country, where did you go? I suppose that's a place to start.

BROOKS: Well, as I say, I was in—in the delta, in Vinh Long, so I would fly up to Saigon—and on the—on the pay runs, they would have a plane for you. It was usually either a single-engine light plane or a chopper, a "Huey" [Bell UH-1 Iroquois, or HU-1]. And I would fly up to Vũng Tàu and fly to Nha Trang, and we would go up into the Highlands, Buôn Ma Thuột and Đà Lạt, Pleiku. There are—there are cities in the Highlands that are very different. It's almost like being in the mountains back in New Hampshire, in a way. Much cooler, pine trees, lakes and things.

And then on up to Quảng Ngãi and Da Nang and up to near the North Vietnamese border, in a way. Or I think we even went to Quảng Trị. Obviously, we didn't go to Hanoi [chuckles], but anything south of the border, south of the North-South Vietnamese border. We did not go much to the—the west, where—the heaviest fighting was in the west of—of Saigon, out in the northern delta, I guess you might say. And for some reason, we didn't go out there, but we did go to other areas.

And some of them were—some of these stations were pretty remote. I'm trying to remember which city it was. It might have been—it wasn't Nha Trang. Quy Nhơn, perhaps. There's a—there's a beach and a fairly narrow strip of land, and then some very towering mountains right behind it, this strip of land. And the—and the signal site was on the top of one of these mountains.

So we flew into—to—let's say it's Quy Nhơn, got out of the single-engine Piper or whatever the plane was, into a chopper, and the chopper took off almost vertically. If you know anything about choppers, they don't take off vertically; they usually go at an angle to gain altitude. It really stresses the engine to go—but this thing went up, banked and headed toward the top of the mountain.

These are Hueys, HU-1 choppers that are so familiar from Vietnam, with big doors on either side, and they would keep the doors open because, you know, if they took any fire, they needed to fire back quickly. They had machine guns mounted on either side. And so if you're—and some of the seats were facing out, where that door would be, except now with that door open, you're kind of facing out over open space. [Both chuckle.] And all that's holding you in is a seatbelt.

So the thing—and I've got a huge satchel of money between my legs because I'm a pay officer, holding on tight. And the chopper takes off. It banks. Not only am I facing open space, but I'm facing *down* into open space, with all this money behind—between my legs, holding on for dear life as the things goes up the side of the mountain.

That's kind of exciting, actually. [Chuckles.] Either me or a whole lot of money would be on the landscape down there if the belt gave way. But there would be that kind of experience. And nobody thought much about it. We got up to the top, landed up there, the top of the mountain, so it was very cool and misty and everything, set up our table, paid the troops. [Chuckles.]

You know, they could either get paid in—in piasters or they could have it put away, or they could by [U.S.] Savings bonds. I was always trying to sell them Savings bonds, which I was supposed to do. And then get in the chopper and back down and on to the next area.

So there were—there were quite a lot of experiences there. Sometimes the base—the air field would be quite some distance from the base, so you jump in a Jeep with a driver there, waiting for you, and you go bumping over the roads, and they said, "Well, they had some VC activity along this area. Nothing recent, so we think we're okay, and, you know, we'll take a gas." And fortunately, I never got fired on, but there were—there were areas that were less than safe.

FARKAS: Now, you—as you've related, it sounds like you got a great opportunity to see a lot of different types of Vietnamese towns, kind of a lot of different aspects of the war. I mean, do

you have any—any additional kind of things to say about that, the contrast between different places? Yeah.

BROOKS: Well, the impression I got was the same as I've related to you from my experiences in Vinh Long. That the—in 1965 to 1966, when I left, the—the Vietnamese that I encountered, that I did business with—and I would meet them at these—at these sites too—they would be, you know, helping out there in various positions—was that they were—they were very friendly to the Americans. You have to remember, they had been at war since 1945, or actually since World War II, when the Japanese occupied their country. And then—then there was a French war, and the French killed a lot of people and they killed a lot of French until [the Battle of] Điện Biên Phủ in the mid '50s.

And then there'd been continuous wars since then as the country was split between north and south and *they* were fighting each other, under [Ngô Đình] Diệm and others. So for most of them, all they'd ever known in their lives was war and—and the havoc and their sons and dau- —their sons being killed and the daughters being raped and their towns being overrun and that sort of stuff.

They were not—they were not political. They were just simple people, and they wanted to till their land and have a decent life for the children, like most people do. And they seemed to see the Americans, after all of this turmoil of the Japanese and the French and before that, historically, the Chinese, which were—who would invade them from time to time—

[The would] see the Americans as people who did not want to conquer the country, did not want to take it over the way the French did, had no interest in doing so and were there for their own kind of mysterious political reasons but were, you know, as—as invading armies go, fairly—fairly good to them. [Laughs.] We weren't going around massacring people, certainly not in '65, '66. And therefore were glad to see the Americans there, in the hope that it might bring an end to this—these decades and decades of conflict.

Now, we all know how it turned out, but in '65, '66, the atmosphere that I heard and saw was very much along

those lines, that—that the Vietnamese, themselves, were—were pretty friendly. And even the Viet Cong, oddly enough, who were the enemy [chuckles] of—I asked at one point how this base had been set up, the station that I was assigned to, because it was only a few months earlier.

And the explanation I got was that this equipment had been flown in—big communications equipment and these rack-mounted bays and everything—had been flown into Saigon, to Ton Son Nhut. And rather than flying them down to this smaller base in the delta, the military, the Army hired a Vietnamese trucking company to take them down in their ramshackle trucks.

They also gave the Vietnamese truckers enough money to bribe the Viet Cong, who would certainly stop them on the way. And might kill them. And the—but the Vietnamese truckers were willing to take that chance for what they were making for it, so they set off. And sure enough, they were stopped by the Viet Cong at a—at a roadblock. And, "What do ya got in the truck?" And they saw that it was all this electronic equipment. And they knew that they could kill everybody, destroy the equipment and take the money. They could do that, but if they did that, then the Americans would just start flying stuff in, and there wouldn't be any more money. [Chuckles.]

So the Viet Cong, sensibly enough, took the bribe, let the truck pass and waited for the next convoy to come. They're real pragmatic people [chuckles] in a lot of ways.

FARKAS: Interesting.

BROOKS: They had no use for all this electronic stuff. But they could use the money, and they wanted it to keep coming, and so it was kind of—

The Vietnamese would do those deals with each other. You would think they would be blood enemies, but in fact they're people that know how to get along.

FARKAS: Did you carry any firearms at all? Did you receive any kind of defense training?

BROOKS: Oh, yeah, yeah. Every—every member of the military has arms training. I don't know about the chaplains [chuckles], but everybody else certainly does. Maybe they do, too. So, yeah, I had—I had marksmanship training, at which I was terrible.

And every unit has a TO&E. You know this? That's a Table of Organization and Equipment. You still have that?

FARKAS: Probably not called the same thing, but something similar.

BROOKS: It designates by position what every person is assigned to have. And in my case, as a detachment commander, my official weapon was a M14, which is a big, heavy rifle, at which I couldn't hit anything. Maybe if I threw the rifle at them I could hit them, but [chuckles] in terms of hitting a target, I was not a good aim. And this thing—especially when I started doing my rounds as the pay officer, it was just—it was just an impediment. It's so big and so bulky and so awkward. But that was my assigned weapon.

I quickly learned that there was an active black market in weapons, which the military winked at in the war zone, and lots of other weapons that you could buy from a American who was cycling out of country. So I found a officer who had a carbine, very light rifle.

FARKAS: M1 carbine?

BROOKS: Yeah. Ah, No, it's—it's well, generically it's a carbine. It's a small rifle. I'm not sure. I think it was a civilian rife, actually. Much shorter barrel, not nearly as heavy, but a long barrel. And I was much better at hitting things with that, actually. And so I paid him 20 or 30 bucks or something. He was cycling out of the country, as I say, and you can't take weapons home with you. So he had to sell it to somebody. So—so I bought that, and I had left the M14, the big old M14 in the arms room, and I carried the carbine around with me, and that was much easier.

During my last month there in country, I was talking to the sergeant in the arms room about this, and he said, "Lieutenant, you should have come by. I'd have assigned you out a .45 [caliber pistol]." I said, "Well, I'm not assigned

to have a .45." "That doesn't matter. You want a .45, I'll sign you out a .45." [Chuckles.] So I could have had, you know, a sidearm and carried that around, even though my assigned weapon was supposed to be this big old cannon. Again, that's kind of how the Army works in—in war zones like this. There's a lot more freedom of—of action and doing what you do, as long as you stay on mission.

So my—the short answer is yes, I always had a sidearm, and it was, for most of my travels, that carbine.

FARKAS: Did you practice much in theater?

BROOKS: No. I can't remember ever going to a firing range while in service. While on active duty.

FARKAS: Interesting. So—huh! So—I'm sorry, one more question about the carbine, just because I'm interested in that kind of thing. Was the firing mechanism somewhat similar to the M14? Kind—

BROOKS: Wow, that's a good question. I seem to remember it as simply. I think the carbine, which took larger bullets and took a bigger magazine and so forth. As I remember—

FARKAS: The M14 did.

BROOKS: Yeah, M14, later replaced by the M16 [rifle], but the M16s hadn't really spread yet when I was there, was—I think it had a more complex loading mechanism, but, you know, frankly I'm not sure. I don't remem-—When I left the country in the summer of '66, of course, I sold it to somebody else who was just coming in or wanted one, and it got passed along that way to who knows how many other hands.

FARKAS: Interesting.

BROOKS: I don't think I ever fired it. [Chuckles.] It was there for protection if I needed it.

FARKAS: Yeah. Interesting.

So you also mentioned going to a lot of meetings. Just in general in your work at the radio station, what kind of information did you come into contact with and pass along?

BROOKS: Information. You mean behind the scenes or on the air or what?

FARKAS: So if you're—if the purpose of the radio station was transmitting information, were you ever privy to that? Did you ever get involved in kind of personally transmitting that information?

BROOKS: Well, the—the—the purpose of the radio station was to entertain the troops.

FARKAS: Oh, I'm sorry. I—I meant the radio—not the radio station but rather the post you were assigned to, Vinh Long, the whole installation.

BROOKS: Oh, you mean the communication stations.

FARKAS: Yes, yes.

BROOKS: No, the content of what went out over the air—well, not over the air but from—from microwave tower to microwave tower was originated by the headquarters or whoever was—needed to make a phone call to some other base. Sometimes it was encrypted. And—and we—were were like the phone company. We ran the equipment. We did not listen to or originate the messages ourselves. Somebody didn't come to our office and say, "I want to send this message." They picked up a phone to the company headquarters and, you know, where/how they got there.

Our company also operated troposcatter, tropospheric scatter for sites, which were big dishes which sent a signal up to the troposphere, which is, what, a hundred thousand feet? Or something like that. Very high up in the air. Bounce them off the troposphere down to the United States. They could carry for very long distances. This is before satellites were prevalent. There were a few satellites up, Telstar, but there were very few communications satellites then. And, again, the military had to have reliable communications, not

only within country but from Vietnam back to the—Washington and—and the states.

So these troposcatter sites, or these big dishes would send the signal up, bounce it off the troposphere and then it would reflect down to the continental United States. We operated those as well. I didn't have that installation at my base. I was strictly microwave, which was in country communications.

But both of those were the infrastructure that others used, commanders mostly, to make calls. There was very little opportunity, unlike today, for individual soldiers to call home. You couldn't Skype, obviously, so the only way to communicate back to your loved ones is by letters. And so we weren't carrying personal communications, to any great degree.

Sometimes, you know, we would originate—if we had to call our own headquarters or something like that, we would use the same system to—to call up to Vũng Tàu or call up to company commander.

And it was military-grade equipment. I would say some of it seemed like maybe Korean War era equipment, as opposed to very recent or high-tech—you know, troposcatter was high tech, and some elements of it, but they were—they were still ramping up on their technical—the level of technical expertise.

So if you needed to ring a phone at the other end of a line, for example, you had to hit a certain tone, which would then set off the ringer at the other end of the line. And that's kind of hard to do. You know, the ringer might not be on exactly that tone. So what do you do? You—you whistle down the tone, so you start and—you might want to take your ear back a little bit—like this. [Emits sharp descending whistle.] And if you do that with a whistle, at some point in that sweep, you'll hit the right tone and it'll go RING at the other end. [Both chuckle.]

So it was this kind of—kind of make do and improvising that went on sometimes with the equipment, to—to make it work in an unfamiliar situation like this.

FARKAS: Interesting.

So before we kind of leave Vietnam, are there any other things that happened in those roughly two years that you want to relate? Any anecdotes or particular incidents?

BROOKS: Have you seen my write-up in the Class of '64 book?

FARKAS: Yeah, so I was going to move to that next. Do you want me to kind of—

BROOKS: Well, I'll just say that I wrote about some things—

FARKAS: Yeah.

BROOKS: —in there. You know, the mystery of "Cookie," Miss B, whatever happened to her. [Chuckles.] There's kind of an interesting addendum to that story, actually. She was the secretary I was talking about before.

FARKAS: So—before—

BROOKS: All right.

FARKAS: One sec. Before we go into that, I just kind of, for the purpose of the recording: So you came home after Vietnam.

BROOKS: Yes, I mustered out [cross-talk; unintelligible].

FARKAS: Was that—were you given the option to extend that tour, or did you—in other words, did you really want to leave, or is that just kind of what you were told to do?

BROOKS: Well, the standard tour was a year. But in fact, after ten months, I think, if you kept your nose clean and had done a good job, you could cycle back before the end of the year. I remember that—[I was] talking to my company commander, and he said, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "You know, I'm willing to stay for another month. Is that all right?" And he said, "Sure." So I stayed for 11 months instead of 10 months. Or eleven and half or something like that. So I didn't stay the full year, although I did extend a bit.

Why? Because I had no real prospects when I got back yet, and I was getting regular pay, which was welcome, while I was there, and saving and so forth. And I enjoyed it enough that I didn't mind staying in the country for another y- — another month. But I knew I was not going to make the Army a full-time career. And normally, I don't think they let people extend indefinitely. After a year or so, you're expected to cycle out, so it was only a matter of months anyway.

So I did that. I stayed a little longer than I needed to, mostly because—accumulate a little more savings, but then came back. Of course, they gave me the big pitch about, you know, staying in the active service, and I did not want to do that, and "the Army is a great career."

They had to—in fact, I had to do this later on as an officer, too, try to convince unwilling enlisted men to make the Army their career. [Chuckles.] They didn't—they weren't hearing it, and I wasn't believing it, either. [Laughs.]

FARKAS: [Chuckles.]

BROOKS: So that—that wasn't something I was interested in doing. I had fulfilled my commitment now of two years. I was a first lieutenant now, and that was fine. And I knew that I had still an obligation for—to be in the Reserves [the U.S. Army Reserve] or the National Guard [of the U.S.] beyond that, too. But in terms of staying on active duty, it never crossed my mind.

FARKAS: So can you tell me about the trip home?

BROOKS: Yeah. The trip home, again, was on a jet. This time it wasn't my unit that was going back; it was me and a whole bunch of other guys in a similar situation. And it was a commercial, chartered jet. It was very nice to get on that plane because it was so cool and dry [chuckles] after a year of, you know, drenched Vietnam.

And as I remember, they had stewardes- —it wasn't even military personnel manning it. They had stewardesses, and they were nice to see, and they were very nice to you, so it was a pretty uneventful trip. A long trip, but it was a good trip back and on that you're always thinking, you know, *Now*

what? [Chuckles.] Because after all, this is—I'm 24, I guess, at that point. Have no job prospects. I've got a Dartmouth degree, but what am I coming back to? So it's all thinking ahead. *What's my next step gonna be?*

FARKAS: What was your reception at the airport and at home like?

BROOKS: When I got home?

FARKAS: Yeah. What was—I mean, I know later in the war there were, you could say, mixed perceptions in the airport—

BROOKS: Yeah.

FARKAS: —on arriving home, but a kind of this side—earlier in the war, what was the reception like?

BROOKS: No—no problems at all. My mother came to pick me up, I guess, at the airport. There was no welcoming crowd or anything like that. When I got back home to Hampton, New Hampshire, my mother, you know, was so glad to see me in on piece, back, obviously, but she—you know, I saw all of her friends. She was in a number of clubs and things. She wanted to see the pictures and things, so I put together a slide show of—of sights of Vietnam and so forth. And they were interested in that, and, "Oh, Timothy, that's wonderful."

I got the impression that nobody was particularly fixated on the war, at least in this town in '66. It was something that they saw on the news that was going on, but it was still pretty distant. And the protests hadn't really kicked in yet, either. They were just beginning at that time. And they didn't listen to the radio and hear "Eve of Destruction." I mean, that wasn't their kind of music anyway. So they—you know, my mother's generation and those people—they knew me, and they knew my family, and they were glad I was back safe and sound. They were interested in what I had to say about it.

But I never encountered anybody who, you know, debated—at least at that time, who debated politics—and it might have been just the group that I was interfacing with at that point. One of my closest friends in high school had not gone to college or he did one semester and dropped out. Had gone

to Boston, to Cambridge, and became a war protester in the mid-'60s. So there were people of my generation who were already up in arms about the war, but they were distant. You know, they were in a big city somewhere, and, "Oh, look at that on the news."

Certainly in my experience—and I—I—I encountered no—no negativity at that time.

FARKAS: So—sorry, alright—let me just make sure—cool. Sorry about that.

So the—the letter. If you want—if you want to kind of introduce it, I can then read it off for you. I have your essay right here, and then I'd love to talk about it. So do you want to kind of explain what that was and how that happened?

BROOKS: Yeah, sure. As I mentioned, Miss B, known affectionately as "Cookie," was our secretary, and everybody in the unit knew her. There was nothing going on sexual that I'd ever heard or knew. She dressed very properly and was very polite. And when I left in the middle of '66, she came out to the field, and I'm getting on the plane to leave or something, waved goodbye and that was that. Didn't make much of it.

When I—when I got home to New Hampshire, it was there for a while, maybe six weeks later, the package arrived with no return address on it, and it was from her, and it was a Vietnamese doll, about an 18-inch-high Vietnamese doll, dressed in traditional—áo dài, they call it, the very long, collar-buttoned dress that Vietnamese women wear. Very demure. And there was a letter with it. This was for me. And it was a very heartfelt letter, and you can—you have the text of it there.

FARKAS: Let me—do you mind if I just read it for the sake of the recording?

BROOKS: Sure, go ahead.

FARKAS: Cool.

Dear Sir Brooks,

> Some days later, you'll come home. I want to offer you this small gift for the times you've been here—that is, my country. Sir Brooks, I have worked with you for months, but I feel to like you. You were very nice and serious. You were kind in daily business to me. For some time, I didn't understand, I think, if you liked me. I am very sorry I can't write well. When you go to home, I am sad and sorrow after you. I am also worried if the new second lieutenant is as nice as you. I hope he'll be nice.
>
> Before remember when you walked into the aircraft, good journey to you, and I wish you are happy. I never could see you again.
>
> Lieu, Thi-Bé.

So, I mean—

BROOKS: It was very touching and very emotional, as you can—as you could tell. When I received that, my first instinct was to write back, but there was nowhere to write back to. I suppose I could have tried to investigate and, you know, contacted the new lieutenant there and see if she was still there or try to track her down somehow, but this was at a point where I was trying to get my life together [chuckles], frankly. And not only didn't I have a job, I didn't have a career, and I wasn't sure what I was going to do next. I was very busy, you know, tracking down leads and doing interviews and trying to figure out where I am I going to go from here.

So it was not the right time in my life to embark on an adventure like that. And I didn't. Maybe I should have, but I didn't. And I—you know, I showed it to some people. I packed it away, but that was the end of that for many years.

When I went back on this trip last year, the first time back in the country, with a group of classmates, or we were all from the same era—you know, I had a picture of Miss B that I'd taken while I was there, and I asked the—and this is not in the book—I asked [Edward G.] "Ed" Miller, Professor Miller, who was with us, his advice, how I might track her down. And he sent me a very, very thoughtful e-mail.

Do you know Professor Miller?

FARKAS: Ah, yes. Yeah.

BROOKS: He teaches a course on Vietnam, of course. He said, if I wanted to do that, he would—he would help. He would try to locate someone on the ground that might investigate for me, something like that. But he said to think about a couple of things. First of all, if I wanted to do this, I couldn't do it kind of on an afternoon on the tour. I'd need to stay in country for a while, so I might have to extend my three-week tour into another week or something. But more importantly than that, he said, "There could be unintended consequences to this kind of thing. I'm not telling you not to do it, but I'm just saying think about it."

"First of all, is she alive?" [Chuckles.]

"Second, if you start asking or having someone ask around, you will find the Vietnamese will be very anxious to—to give you a lead, to take your money. [Chuckles.] You're—you're an American. You're rich. You know, at least in their view. Here's an opportunity, and you may get false leads.

"If you find her, she may not want to be found." The Vietnamese—we've learned this—who worked for the Americans prior to 1975 were outcasts in that country and continue to be to this day, to some degree. They were not honored like civil war veterans were here or, you know, veterans of an unpopular war, necessarily. A lot of them were put into reeducation camps, but even those who weren't were denied jobs. They were shunned. "She worked for the Americans, and she may not want that that. Even if she is still alive, it might be quite embarrassing and uncomfortable for her.

"And finally is the issue of a young American and a young Vietnamese woman. What really went on? And that could bring shame to her, too, even if nothing happened. It doesn't matter."

So he said, "I'll help you. I'll be willing to. But consider there could be unintended consequences." And I thought that was

very wise advice. Don't open doors if you're not sure [chuckles] what's on the other side or if there could be serious unintended consequences from pursuing something like that.

And some of my friends really wanted me to pursue this. They wanted a Hollywood ending. You know, the music swells, and they embrace each other, and united after all these years. But life isn't always like that. It can be quite different, actually, and particularly in that country, in that situation it can be—it can be a mess for all involved, and particularly for her, if she's even alive.

So for all of those reasons—and I don't think I'm betraying any confidences here, but for all those reasons, I thought his advice was very well—very thoughtful. He knew the country well. He knew its customs. And so, although I did take a picture with me on the off chance that I'd encounter somebody who would know something, I didn't really pursue it. So she's—she's now a memory.

FARKAS: Thank you for sharing that.

I want to go back a little. So after you got home, you stayed in the Reserves. For that first kind of few months being at home—those years, you were in the Reserves? Were you working? What kind of jobs did you have?

BROOKS: Oh, yeah, yeah. The agreement was and the official line was that you had to serve another eight years? No, another four years, I think it was, in the Reserves: 2 years active, four years Reserve. That was the rule.

Later, I learned that a fair number of my compatriots just never sought out a Reserve unit and just didn't do anything, and the Army never did anything to them, and they just never served anymore. The Army never followed up on it. You didn't receive any orders sending you anyplace. It was up to you to locate a Reserve unit or a National Guard unit and sign up for it. But if you didn't, apparently nothing happened.

Well, I didn't know that [chuckles] in 1966, so I—like a good young boy, I—I found a local National Guard armory and

went in and explained. They said, “Oh, yeah, we’ll be glad to take you in.” By that time, I had located a job with Capital Cities Broadcasting, which owned a television station in Schenectady—no—yeah, in Albany, New York, the Albany, Schenectady, Troy market, but it was actually in Albany.

It was a CBS affiliate at that time, I believe. And my job that I got was as a promotion writer. As I said, I like to write, and I’d taken some English courses and so forth, and the pay was, you know, bare bones, but it wasn’t all that expensive to live in Albany, so I—so I moved there, took this first job in the fall of 1966 and sought out the local armory and signed up.

They had an opening. They needed a platoon leader, so I became the platoon leader there. Now, by this time, I was a first lieutenant with a Vietnam patch, of course, so that gives you some standing. And I served with them while I was in Albany, which was for the next two years. They went on summer maneuvers to Camp Drum [now Fort Drum, New York], I think it was. So during the summer for two weeks, I’d go off and do maneuvers up—up at Camp Drum, bivouacs and things.

My job at the—at WTEN television, the television station, was simultaneous, and any employer had to give you time off for National Guard or military service. I think it was in the law. So it didn’t interfere particularly with my—my career that was starting at that point. And I worked there for two years and then went to grad school.

FARKAS: Interesting.

So—well, let’s go—we’ll start with before grad school. What was it like being involved in the media, in the Army and in the Army, and being—having served in Vietnam in that period of time as things began to escalate, not just in Vietnam but in kind of—on the home front?

BROOKS: Right. Well, from—from ’66 to ’68, while I was in Albany at this station, it was becoming much more on the news, and you certainly heard about all of the protests and the escalation of the war. The Tet Offensive, which was a huge deal, was in early ’68, which seemed to be—it’s ironic: it was

not a military defeat, but it was certainly a public relations defeat of major proportions, where we were supposed to have everything under control, and instead our bases are being overrun everywhere, including the base I had been at in Vinh Long. The sergeant major was killed, and the place was blown up.

So—so all of that was going on. I wasn't there, of course. I was in Albany. There was—the fact that I was in the military was not evident. I mean, friends knew about it, but I didn't walk around in uniform or anything, so people didn't know necessarily that I was connected with it, so I was not the target of anything, nor were there any major demonstrations that I remember in Albany per se, at least not at that time.

So I didn't—I didn't feel any personal reaction. There were—I would certainly talk to people, and they would talk to me and ask questions about what was it like, and what's really going on over there? I remember getting interested in the background of this war. There was a book called The Vietnam Papers or The Indochina Papers or something like that, that gathered together documents that traced the whole time from the Japanese invasion to the French Indochina and the Điện Biên Phủ and how all of this—and [Vietnam President Ngô Đình] Diệm and his assassination—all of this stuff, how it had unfolded.

So I was learning more about the county and about the political background of what had caused all of this and perpetuated it than I had known when I was there. So I was getting more informed on it. And—and I did have a lot of conversations with friends. They were not antagonistic conversations; they were more like, you know, "You've been there. What—what was going on?" Kind of conversation.

FARKAS: At that point, did you have an opinion about the war?

BROOKS: Yeah, my opinion, was with most, was that it was a just war, that the domino theory was real, or certainly could be real. There was a major confrontation, of course, that I'd grown up with between communism and the free world, and it was scary. I mean, the—from the—from the shelters of the—the bomb shelters, the atomic bomb with the '50s, the Cuban Missile Crisis or—it looked like the world might blow up. I

mean, even seeing a movie like *On the Beach* scared the bejesus out of you. [Chuckles.] I mean, *This could be the end of everything!*

So confrontation of East and West was very real and very scary. I won't say I hid under the covers, but it was real. And Vietnam was part of that struggle or at least seemed to be part of that struggle. If in fact North Vietnamese, which was backed by Russia and China at that time, takes over South Vietnam in 1965, what happens to Indonesia? What happens to Cambodia? What happens to Thailand? All of those countries are right at the cross hairs. If you know anything about history, the Chinese in particular have had designs on domination of that part of the world practically for their whole history. And they're at it again, by the way, with, you know, the South China Sea.

But—so for Russia to occupy and rule—brutally, and have terrible weapons—much of Europe and the West, and for China to rule and occupy—and they by then had terrible atomic weapons, too—rule that part of the world, it was not a—it was a scary proposition. I sometimes think that we look back at these things knowing how it came out and—and kind of don't give proper weight to what it was like at the time.

So—so I think during that period, I was still—now, I would have preferred a negotiated settlement, of course [chuckles], like a lot of people, but—and leaders who didn't lie to us so much about what was going on over there, but the basic reason for the war I think was pretty well supported—I would support.

And I would mention that when I was doing the research for my college radio book, the Dartmouth radio book, I went through *The Dartmouth* microfilm stuff, and all through those years, looking for stuff about the station largely. But I also found in '65 and '66, polls that were taken of Dartmouth students and faculty about the war. And there was overwhelming support for the war in '65 and '66. Even the faculty was in favor of it. Very few were—wanted to withdraw.

By the fall of '66, it was down. The support wasn't as strong, but by the fall of '66 there had been a tremendous amount of

media attention to war protests. If you—if you read—if you just read the papers, you'd think the whole country was on fire because the media does that. They tend to focus on, you know, conflicts, obviously.

But even then, the majority of Dartmouth students were—over 50 percent were in favor of continued military action. Like, 10 percent were in favor of getting out. The rest wanted to negotiate. So it really didn't hit the Dartmouth campus full force until '67, '68. And then '69—of course, the occupation of Parkhurst [Hall] or something, it was like a fever pitch.

But it—but those years, to be very specific, in '66 and '67, were still very transitional years, and there was a lot of support, still, for the war. And I think—and I was part of that. As time went by, it seemed more and more hopeless, of course, and, you know, I, like, many others— "Look, we gotta get outta this. It's just a dead end here. But how do we get out?"

And so politicians said, "Real simple. Put 'em all on a boat and bring 'em home." But that's simplistic, and that wouldn't work at all. They'd be sinking the boats as we went out—out of the harbor. You had to reach some kind of accommodation. And in retrospect, you know, that in fact there was a lot of military reason: They were losing troops a lot more than we were. But it was—it was a propaganda fight at home, really. So I—I gradually shifted—I never became an antiwar activist, but I was less supportive as time went along.

FARKAS: So next, you went to grad school, you said, at Syracuse University?

BROOKS: Yeah. While I was working at WTEN—I should tell you this short story. I was—I was writing promotional copy, right? In a back room somewhere. And I saw that the program director, the sales manager got very excited when—when a little book came in, and they would run in the corridors and say, "We got a five! We got a five!" Or next month they would—a guy would slink out of his office and say, "We got a three." "That's terrible." And I couldn't figure out what it was about a three or a five that was driving these people to such paroxysms of [chuckles] excitement.

So I got a hold of a little book, and it was a rating book, and the—which I'd never seen before. Remember, we didn't have them at the radio station. And those rating books always had in the opening—the beginning of the book, the definitions and how the survey was conducted, the front matter and some of the back matter too, and then in the middle they had all of the results.

And all the—all the sales manager and the program director knew was the numbers in the middle. They knew a five was good and a three was bad. But I studied the rest of it, and I became the research expert just by reading that book for the station. The station did not have a research department, so "this Brooks kid in the back, who we hired to write copy, can tell us where the—where the numbers are coming from. Can he tell us how to get a five instead of a three?"

I told them, "Well, you know, considering how these numbers are calculated, you can find out a lot more than the five and three; you can go into the original diaries that people are filling out and find out more about where the markets are strong, that kind of"— "That's great! How do we do that?"

"Well, if you let me go down to Beltsville, Maryland"—which was where the research company was headquartered—"where stations subscribers so they'll let us look at the raw materials." "Great! Go down to Beltsville."

So I went down to Beltsville, and I went through the books, and I found out that sure enough, the station was having a problem with its signal, apparently, in the Berkshire [Mountains] area, which is part of the coverage area. But it was doing well in other parts of the market. And that was reported in the book.

So I came back, and I brought it forward, and "so there seems to be some problem up there. People are even writing in their diaries, 'I can't get WTEN.'" "Really?" They sent the engineers out with their little truck with a pole on top of it, and stuff, and sure enough—so they fixed the signal. And the ratings went back up.

Well, I was the hero of heroes [laughs], you can imagine, at that point. So they loved me. And after two years there, I was doing my regular job and I was advising them on these radius matters, too—after two years, I decided that I didn't want to make my career in Albany. I wanted to go to New York. I wanted something better, bigger than this. And make more money.

And they tried to keep me. They said they would increase my pay from $100 a week to $110, and, "Boy, you can make a lifetime here, son." But I didn't want to do that. And I felt that in order to really get ahead, I probably should study broadcasting, which I hadn't done at Dartmouth formally.

In Syracuse—I applied to several schools. Syracuse had a very good program, media program, and a scholarship, which helped. And I was getting G.I. benefits by this point because I had active duty. So putting all those pieces together, I could, you know, pay for a year and get a master's at Syracuse. Almost. It wasn't quite enough money, but I figured I'd go and figure it out when I got there.

And so I, you know, I accepted the—I was accepted at several schools, but I—I—I went to Syracuse in '68, and there was a '68 to '69 program, a 12-month program, to get my master's degree in television and radio. The television station I had worked at was so pleased with me that they were willing to give me—consider me a consultant and pay me some money to do some analysis for them while I was at Syracuse. So I made a little bit more money that way, too.

And when I graduated, "Won't you come back?" "Sorry, headed for New York." [Chuckles.] So that—that was why I went to—to Syracuse at that point, '68-'69. Got a master's in TV. And then—you know, in this business, as with most, it's a matter of contacts, and I had been in contact with the sales manager at WTEN. He had gone on to work for WCBS-TV in New York, and he knew me, and he knew my work, and he was my ticket to get a job there.

FARKAS: Hmm. So going back to Syracuse, though, were there any protests, antiwar protests during your time there?

BROOKS: Definitely. Definitely. It was—it was like a different world, certainly, than the world I'd experienced at Dartmouth. I stepped onto campus—Syracuse is a big school, of course, about 30,000, I think, there. There were protests. There were, you know, clenched fists. [Chuckles.] There were—there was a lot of marijuana. You could go into a theater and almost get high just breathing.

And there were a lot of very intense protests going on there. I had taken a leave from National Guard for the year that I was there. They let you do that. So I was not going to military duty while I was literally at Syracuse. I rejoined after I left, after I graduated. So I wasn't in uniform, or anything like that, so they didn't know that I was a Vietnam vet or something like that. Again, close friends knew, and I talked to them about it, and the people close to me have roomed with a guy that I've been friends with ever since, you know, off campus. And he was antiwar, but not violently.

And when you know and you're personal friends, you tend to indulge that kind of thing anyway. So—so the people close to me had no problem with it, who knew. And most people didn't know. I mean, you'd walk out on the campus, and be one of a huge group of people.

I remember distinctly one demonstration in front of the administration building, I think it was. And there were news—there were cameras there from all the TV stations, filming it. And I—and I saw it on the news that night, and it looked like the whole campus was aflame. I mean, it was up close, and they were waving their fists, and they were screaming—you know, "Johnson, the baby killer" and all that kind of stuff.

I'd been there, and it was a small group of people with other students just going across the green and going to class and paying no attention to them and so forth. But you focus the camera tightly enough, you know, that's all you see, and you think it's a bigger deal than it was.

So there was some—some of that. There was some of a very intense group that made a lot of noise, and the media loved to focus in tight on them and make them seem that it was bigger than it was.

Now, that's not the case in the March of Washington [for Jobs and Freedom, May 1970] or some of the big things that happened in '69 and '70, but that—that happened. I saw that with my own eyes at—at Syracuse.

Yes, there were demonstrations there. There were very angry students protesting. They were a minority, but they—they were certainly there.

FARKAS: How did that make you feel when you were there?

BROOKS: Part of me wanted to argue with them. Part of me thought that *there's no point*. I mean, people who feel that strongly about something—nothing you say is going even be heard. You know, you're something to make their argument to. [Chuckles.] That's true today, unfortunately, in politics.

So I—I didn't generally engage in—in back-and-forth with them, even though I felt, *Look, by this time, I know more about the history of this country than most of them do because I've read up on it, and, although, you know, this is a war we've got to find a way to end*—I think that's pretty much where I was at that point. It's not a simple matter of Johnson as a "baby killer" or "put 'em all in a boat and bring 'em home." It's just not that simple. There are big, big issues here. And if you want to know what fear is, look for a mushroom cloud. I mean, this is a dangerous world, and—and this is part of that.

But, you know, if you try to have that—I mean, they wouldn't hear it, it's clear they wouldn't hear it, so I—I—I didn't—I didn't engage them particularly. Oh, I had discussions with my friends, with Frank, my roommate, for example, about it. You know, we knew each other, we liked each other, but, you know, we had different political views, and we'd go back and forth, and—that's what you did in the '60s.

I'd ask him, you know, how it was like at Woodstock [Music & Art Fair], which he went to with his girlfriend. (I wish I had gone to that.) But not—in terms of engaging with it, no. Only—only with close friends.

FARKAS: Interesting.

So I have some questions about—like, basically one or two questions about how Vietnam played into or how you can reflect on Vietnam, having had the career you've had, but obviously, for the benefit of the interview, could you just very briefly describe what the career you've had is?

BROOKS: Yes. After I got my master's from Syracuse, through the good offices of this sales manager that I met at WTEN, I got the job with WCBS-TV in New York. New York was the center of the broadcasting world. That's where you wanted to go. Everybody's reading the—you know, the job section of *Broadcasting* magazine. *How can I get to New York?*

So I got a job there. After just a few months there, I got an offer for a better job across the street, at NBC [National Broadcasting Company], so I went across the street. And I spent the next—most of the next 18 years there, working my way through the research hierarchy, first working on their research for their local stations that they owned and then working for the network.

At some point—I did take a detour for a while and worked for Westinghouse [Broadcasting Corporation], another company that ran television stations. But I became, you know, quite well versed in television research: how to analyze it, how to make recommendations. And I found after a while that what most management wants is somebody who can make sense out of the numbers for them. They're good sales people, and or they're creative people. They don't really understand—sometimes they don't believe the numbers that Nielsen [Media Research] is printing. But they have to live by them, so they need somebody who understands the number and understands English and understands how to communicate and how—how to put it in—in terms of the decisions they need to make.

And I found I was pretty good at that, so I became an analyst. And I worked my way up from analyst to senior analyst to manager to director and up through the chain in the research world, basically getting as close to senior management and being their interpreter of, you know, what these numbers mean in terms of the decisions you might make now.

Eventually, in addition to analyzing Nielsen ratings, I was testing pilots for shows, too, doing surveys and focus groups, things like that, which is interesting. Puts you close to the creative community.

And at about the same time, I started writing. My first book came out in 1979, and that was the book on—called *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network TV Shows* [sic; *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows, 1946–Present*], which is the first big encyclopedia of television programs. So I knew something about the history of it, too.

And I watched the shows, so it wasn't just numbers. I kind of knew what the shows looked like and why they might be producing these numbers, what kind of reactions people had to them, and all of that kind of fed together to—to produce a rather—you know, a good career at NBC.

NBC was taken over by GE [General Electric] in 1986. GE, run by [John F.] "Jack" Welch [Jr.], came in, immediately focused on reducing the staff by about 50 percent. There were about 8,000 employees; they wanted four thousand. Now, this is the beginning of the kind of modern era of business. [Chuckles.] And I stayed for several years, but eventually they got around to deciding to eliminate my department, too.

And so I was out of work, but I was well known in the industry by that time, and I got a job at a major ad agency, N. W. Ayer [& Son] as their senior research guy, and I was there for about a year and a half, until they hit really hard times and they started cutting back, too.

But I left—I was able to get another, better job at the USA Network, which was an independent network at that point. And while there, in the '90s, I helped launch the Sci-Fi Channel [now Syfy]. I was very involved in that. And I stayed there until the end of the '90s and then moved to Lifetime television.

By that time, I'd been doing this long enough that it was becoming repetitive, so to speak. I'd written several other books during that period, on the side. But Lifetime was

different. That was network television for women, and it was a very branded network, and it had a very different kind of approach to its audience than a general network like USA has. So I learned things there, and they're very smart people running it, and I was their interpreter, and I rose there. Started as a senior vice president and wound up as executive vice president.

And also very active in the industry. I was chair of several industrial organizations and committees, the Media Rating Council, the Dodd's Nielsen. So I was really kind of out there and quoted a lot in the media press.

So—so I had a good career. In some ways, you could trace it all back to that radio study for WDCR, I guess [chuckles] or maybe looking inside the ratings book at WTEN and becoming their expert just by reading the boilerplate. But wherever it started, it was a good combination of data analysis and sort of psychological analysis of why people do what they do, why they say they're going to do things and what—what—how that translates into—into their actions.

And I'm still involved, actually. I retired from Lifetime in 2008, but I've continued to be a consultant to the industry, to numerous companies, and work on several industry committees, still, because we're in a very different media world today, and it's exciting, frankly, all these—over the top and the digital platforms, the current platforms, social media, how that interacts, all those sorts of things.

So—so it led to a very good career.

FARKAS: So one thing I've been interested in, especially given your kind of deep knowledge of why people make certain—certain programming decisions, decisions in kind of broadcasting—the depiction of Vietnam in the media, in television and films, in other kinds of broadcast media—do you have any thoughts on that, given both your kind of extensive experience in broadcasting and your experience in Vietnam?

BROOKS: Yeah. This is—this is something that Professor Miller and I had long discussion about [chuckles] during our tour, and he and I don't entirely agree on this, I don't think, although you could ask him his opinion. His—his premise—I think I'm

being honest—fair about it—is that it wasn't the media that lost the Vietnam War for us, that the media was actually quite balanced in its reporting. There were as many favorable stories as there were unfavorable stories about it. Even after Tet. And the majority of the stories were—were balanced.

FARKAS: Hello? I seem to—sorry.

BROOKS: Yes?

FARKAS: Sorry. One sec. I lost you for a second there. You said—you said, "Even after Tet," and then the call cut out for a second.

BROOKS: Okay. Even after Tet, the reporting—if you analyze the stories, it was pretty balanced, okay? And there have been studies of that, that is the case.

Can you hear me all right now?

FARKAS: [No audible response.]

BROOKS: Can you hear me?

FARKAS: Yep, yep.

BROOKS: Okay. And there's a book written about that—

FARKAS: Oh, yeah. I can hear you great. It is—am I not coming—

BROOKS: No, you're fine. You're fine. I just want to be sure.

I feel, from my experience in the media, that it's not just a matter of counting stories or counting how many were pro or how many were con or how many gave both sides, the media itself has a irresistible pull toward confrontation, toward violence, toward dramatic video. And even if you have, you know, five, ten stories about American troops helping orphans and—and giving water to villagers and you've got one story about the police chief in—in Saigon shooting a prisoner in the head, nobody remembers the ten stories. They remember the one with that dramatic picture.

It's just the nature of media. That media wasn't present in World War II. It was barely present in Korea. But it was, really, in—in Vietnam. It was our first television war. And because of the nature of media coverage—that is, if it bleeds, it leads (as they say in the business)—means that irrespective of how many you count, the violent, the confrontational, the brutal will—will always dominate.

And unfortunately, if you rely on media for your world view, you think the whole world is—is ISIS [Islamic State in Iraq and Syria] beheading people, or that kind of thing. When you go to some of these places—you know, I've been to China, and I've been to Russia and other countries—as you say, you learn different aspects of this, and maybe it's not quite like that or those are the exceptions. Maybe where all the cameras run to, but it's not—

So I think that—my view is that the war was misrepresented in the media, but it wasn't because of intent by reporters to skew their coverage; it was because of the very nature of this immediate, totally without context kind of reporting that we are awash with now. By its nature, by the way it's constructed, by the immediacy of it—leads to a world that seems to be full of violence and confrontation, when that may not be the case.

And as an example of that, he showed us the front page of *The New York Times* on the day after Tet began. Now, Tet, if you—I don't know if you're familiar with this, but it was a coordinated, mass attack by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops against South Vietnamese and American military installations. It was planned very carefully. It was all timed to be simultaneous, and it caught the Americans and the South Vietnamese by surprise.

And they overran a lot of places, they killed a lot of people. A lot of them were killed, too. But—but it's—after a couple of years of our leaders telling us how everything was under control and things were better and there was light at the end of the tunnel, suddenly everything was being overrun.

And the front page of *The Times* the next day had that famous picture of a Vietnamese—a Viet Cong being shot in the head by the police chief of Saigon, kind of illustrating the

incredible brutality. And below it, all of the bases that had been overrun and the people that were being killed—in the early reports.

All of this was, like [snaps fingers], instantaneous, the moment it happened. We now know that what happened after that is the Vietnamese were pushed out of all of those places. They lost something like 200,000 troops in that to, like, 20 or 30,000 or something for the—for the southern forces. It was a military disaster for the North.

But none of that was apparent on Day Two. And that's the way media reports. And to this day, it's often cited as the reason that—what really turned American opinion toward the war, this horrible defeat. But that's the nature of media. It's—it's without—you see it today if you turn on CNN [Cable Network News] or something and something's "breaking." They're guessing. They're making things up. They're not sure yet. They haven't got the facts. They don't know the context yet. But "Bringing you the news" the instant it happens.

And that unfortunately, I think, has led—and that, combined with the fact that the military had decided to allow reporters complete, unfettered access with no censorship or anything like that—led to a portrayal of Vietnam in the media as much more hopeless and even brutal than it in fact was. That doesn't mean we should be there or it was a just war or anything like that, but to your question about how it was portrayed, I think that kind of immediate, without context kind of coverage fed that.

And later on, when more becomes available, then that doesn't have the same impact that those first reports had, so it's kind of something we have to deal with. It's a different way that news is being reported to us, and certainly colored that.

As far as movies go, there were a variety of movies. Some of them had very strong political leanings. [Chuckles.] No question where [W.] Oliver Stone stood on the war, but then John Wayne made a movie that made it, like, a bunch of heroes, so—movies are much more the creations of their

creators and the creators' views, or sometimes just popcorn movies. So you get much more variety of opinion there.

The portrayal of the war? Movies, too, will tend toward the dramatic, of course. But I think they have more time to fill in the nuances than a news report would have, so—so movies I think are probably—if you watch enough of them from enough different viewpoints are a better representation of what war is like, which is pretty bad, then the news reports are.

FARKAS: I had one specific question about a movie.

BROOKS: Okay.

FARKAS: *Good Morning, Vietnam*, which depicted something which, with—you're—you know—

BROOKS: Yeah.

FARKAS: —involved in. What did you think of that film?

BROOKS: Well, it was a comedy film, of course. Dark comedy, but it was a comedy film. And—and not only was I on the radio at that same radio station [chuckles], but the real person on whom *Good Morning, Vietnam* was based—what was his name? I'll think of it in a minute. [Armed Forces Radio DJ] Adrian Cronauer, I think it was. I think that's right. Was there.

Now, I never met him.

FARKAS: Yeah.

BROOKS: Al McKee, my friend who got me the shift there, did and knew him and says that he—it was an exaggerated portrait of—of him. He was kind of a wild guy but not that wild, but that's only second hand. I don't know him personally. But in terms of a movie that was kind of riffing on Vietnam, as I remember it, that's fine. I wasn't offended by it or anything like that.

FARKAS: Interesting.

So kind of in conclusion, I know you went on the trip with Professor Edward Miller to Vietnam. Just for the sake of the interview, Professor Edward Miller is currently a professor at Dartmouth. He's an expert on the Vietnam War and very involved in scholarship on the war, and led a trip of—was it just your class or—

BROOKS: It was just our class.

FARKAS: —was it other classes?

BROOKS: It's unusual. It was—the idea came from, among other people, our class secretary, [Philip C.] "Phil" Schaefer [Class of 1964], and his idea was actually Class of '64 veterans, just that narrow group. And most of us on that trip were—there's only 22 of us on the tour—were—we were all Class of '64, and most of us were veterans who had been in the service during the war, not all in Vietnam but in the service at that time. And wives.

So it was a very collegial group. He was a wonderful, wonderful tour guide. Not a guide. He was—he was like the lecturer. He gave several lectures over there and filled us in on the background. A lot of what I learned about Vietnam when I was there was because of his perspective. So—so he came along. And he's been involved in going to Vietnam for 20 years, I think. He's an adviser to several cultural institutions over there: The Presidential Palace in Saigon, for example. He advises them. So he's very knowledgeable about the country. And, of course, he wasn't *in* Vietnam. [Chuckles.] He's younger than that. But he knows a lot about its political history.

I should mention, maybe—we had a—

FARKAS: So I guess I have two questions—

BROOKS: I just want to mention that of all these veterans, some were not in Vietnam; they were in other theaters, countries during the war. There was I think only one who was act- —on our tour who was actually in combat in Vietnam. So it was very enlightening to be with someone my own age, my own class, who had literally been on the front lines there at one of the major battles, of Khe Sanh.

FARKAS: Interesting.

So I guess my two questions—well, the first of my two questions was: Do you agree, generally, with Edward Miller on a lot of his ideas about Vietnam? Did you find that there was any kind of conflict between how you had perceived the war with how he had perceived the war? I know you talked about that a little already—

BROOKS: No. I think we—

FARKAS: —kind of beyond that.

BROOKS: I mean, he knows a lot more about the—the details of the—of the political ins and outs of—but—but—the general—as I say, I kind of studied this back in the '60s, and I've tried to learn more about it, especially after I got out of the service. So—and he's—he's very reasoned, and he's very reasonable. He's easy to talk to. And in terms of the French occupation in Dien Bien Phu and the Diệm regime, I—I—I think we're in agreement. He knows more about it, but I don't see anything that I would disagree with him on there.

The only point at which we had some debate was the effect of the media, and maybe that's because I'm a media guy. [Chuckles.] But—but generally no. And he tends to be very balanced in his presentations, too. I don't know if he does this in class, but I suspect he does. It's not that "Here's my point of view, and here's what I want back on the test" or something like that. He can shoot both sides, even, whether he agrees with them or not. He tells you—he knows a lot of controversy then. There were people against the war. There were people for the war. As I mentioned, in the surveys that were done on campus—and he explains why each side felt the way they did.

So he's a good historian in that regard, in that you need—I think as a historian—to remove yourself at some distance and be an observer, not be—when you're writing a history, you have to understand why people do what they do, not just condemn the ones you don't like. And that's been my whole career in research, and I think that's what he does as historian, and I really respect him for that.

FARKAS: Wait, sorry, one sec. I just want to make sure this is recording, a little bit of a recording difficulty. Can you say something?

BROOKS: Testing one, two, three, four?

FARKAS: [Pause.] Huh. Cool. Thank you. It appears that there's a bit of a delay on both ends, so I apologize for that, but this is the—I guess the last question. So going back to Vietnam, I mean, what was that like emotionally for you? Did you see it in a different way?

BROOKS: Yes, yes, I discovered a part of Vietnam—I thought I knew the country pretty well, certainly the South Vietnam part, from all those travels that I was on when I was there, but I realized in going back that there's a lot more to that country that I was not able to see then: the cultural and the historic Vietnam in particular. So, whereas in 1965 or '66 I drove by the Imperial Citadel in Hué, this time we spent a day there, walking through it and so forth, which, again, you couldn't really do as a soldier in a war zone, cause you'd be a target.

And we went to—and, of course, things had happened afterwards. We went to the Mỹ Lai [Massacre] site, for example. That was very affecting. So, I found out a lot more about the history of the country. I found out that what we call the Vietnam War, they call—what is it? The American Years or something? It's just a little piece of their history. It's a big piece for us, but for them it's part of a thousand years of invasions and take-overs and warfare.

Much of it coming from China. So, to them, those ten years from '65 to '75 are like the blink of an eye, and they—and some of the museums spend more time on, you know, the Chinese invasion in 1065 or something because, you know, that conquered the north of the country and held it for 200 years or something.

So our pa- —and the French. The French were there much longer than we were, and they were conquerors. I mean, they ruled the place and exploited it, so, you know, the—Vietnam is—I learned a lot about how Americans experience fits into their culture, and it's just this one little part of it.

I found out, I think, that the people are very friendly. They're open. They have no animus that you can tell towards Americans coming back. Most of them weren't alive then. And compared to all these other invaders, we weren't—certainly weren't the worst thing that happened to them.

And the government, however, has a—has a government point of view, which is very rigid and is very—almost simplistic, almost like a comic book version. But nobody really pays much attention to them. [Chuckles.] I mean, it's a—it's something they say, that "evil Americans came, and their evil collaborators from the south, you know, fell under their spell and did terrible things, and they're all horrible. But, by the way, welcome to our hotels, and we're glad to sell you souvenirs, and everything's safe here now."

So there's a bit of a disconnect there, from what the government says and what the people say. It's an authoritarian government, but not an oppressive one. It's a very capitalistic country. I learned that. Much like China. So they're able to have both communism and capitalism at the same time, and the people like that because capitalism means everybody gets a motor bike now, everybody's fed, nobody's starving. It has improved their economic situation enormously.

And so if the government wants to put up posters saying, "God bless Hồ Chí Minh" or—you know— "That's oaky. Let 'em do it. Things are safe, and there's not much street crime, and there are very few beggars on the street" and so forth. So, the lot for the ordinary Vietnamese is—is—Is much improved. And they appreciate that, and they're willing to have an authoritarian government if it gets them food on the table, at least as long as it's not one that's murdering people, which it's not.

So, there is nuances that I would never get out of *The New York Times*, never get out of any of the media, which focused on silence, again, on confrontation. A very—very—very worthwhile trip. Enjoyable for its historical aspects and very informative for its current sociopolitical view of the country.

FARKAS: Well, thank you.

BROOKS: Okay.

FARKAS: I'm going to stop the recording.

[End of interview.]