Walter O. Cottrell
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
The Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Taylor G. Mauney ’20

MAUNEY: This is Taylor Mauney on behalf of the Dartmouth Vietnam Project. It's February 12th, 2020 we're on the Dartmouth campus on the third floor of Robinson Hall and the Dartmouth Broadcasting recording studio. I want to thank Walt Cottrell for being here with us today. Thanks for coming. And just for the record Walt, could you just spell especially your last name for me please?

COTTRELL: C. O. T. T. R. E. L. L.

MAUNEY: Awesome. Outstanding. All right, so we'll start off. Where and when were you born?

COTTRELL: I was born in Detroit, Michigan on the 27th of March 1947.

MAUNEY: And could you tell me just a bit about growing up, your parents and what your upbringing was kind of like?

COTTRELL: I was a member of a nuclear family. My father was a chemical engineer and a native of Michigan. My mother was a nurse though she never really practiced. And my father worked for a period of time for Park Davis drug company and then was hired by the U.S. Army and was subsequently relocated to Frederick, Maryland where I grew up, for the most part.

MAUNEY: And at what age did you make the move to Maryland?

COTTRELL: Two years.

MAUNEY: You're two years old when you moved. And what was it like growing up in Frederick specifically? Any particular memories of that area, that town, neighborhood?

COTTRELL: Initially we lived on the military facility there, which was called at the time Camp Dietrich and later became Fort Dietrich and now as a cancer research center. I remember my parents being quite happy there and we had a lot of friends and it definitely had a military base flavor to it, which I wasn't sensitive to at that time, it was just a lot of fun. This was in the days before Frederick became the bedroom community for Washington [D.C.] and Baltimore [MD]. And when we lived in town we attended church not religiously, but not

faithfully, but we did. And that was a community in and of itself. And we had a neighborhood and there were lots of kids my age. And so it was I think a fairly typical growing up period. We were trusted to ride our bikes and go away from home and within limits. And there were lots of things to do there as well. And there were no real difficulties that I recall or particular high points. Although I became involved with Boy Scouts as a Cub Scout and then later as a Boy Scout. And there were lots of activities that really were focused on that act, that process.

And we moved in 1959 to Pine Bluff, Arkansas, where my father had a brief assignment before going to California where he was a fellow for the Department of the Army developing a life support system for a Mars flight at the University of California Berkeley. And that was a tumultuous year. We had not sold our home in Arkansas. And so it was an economically difficult time for the family and it, it developed some cracks at the seams. And really it was at the time eighth and ninth grade when I became sensitive to those things. And so, but many children went through the same thing, I'm sure.

During that time there was a cohort of young men that were two years older, or three years older than me, my brother among them, but others who were developing orientations towards the military and I was on the periphery of that whole thing, but became attracted to it and could see why they were doing that. And simultaneously at that time I was introduced to the concept of responsibility and duty, a lot at the Boy Scouts. And that made a profound impression on me.

The matriculation through high school years was interrupted at the end. My grandfather who lived with us for a period of years, passed away and there was a certain small amount of money that was available to send me to a private school for the last year of my high school education, which I did. And it turns out it was also a bit of a sounding board for a, or not a sounding board, but a prep area for the Naval Academy, which was again, a feature of this orientation towards the military. My parents decided to send me to the to this school, which was a boarding school, also in Maryland, but three hours away. And that was a learning experience and maturing experience. But I'm not sure I made the most of it. And the Naval Academy, it was quite certain, I hadn't made the most of it. And so, I did not gain admission even though I trooped the halls of Congress looking for a Senator or a Representative from any state who would consider appointing me. That was an unsuccessful effort, and the backup plan was to become a naval architect,

marine engineer. To this day I'm not sure why, except it seemed like a focus of study that was complimentary to the idea of being in the service.

My father was in the Navy and was on a submarine duty in Panama for much of it. And during the war. And so it was kind of an emulating orientation. I think wasn't really born of much actual thought. But nonetheless, I went to his alma mater, the University of Michigan for about a year and a half before the university, and I, both decided that our relationship should end in divorce. And so, but during that time I did meet with a guidance counselor. I can't remember ever meeting with a guidance counselor in high school, but in that environment I did. And he gave me some pretty profound advice. Which sounds trite, but it's to do what you can get up and do the next day happily. And also, to consider what part of your body you want to use. Do you want to use your mind and do you want to use your hands? Do you want to be physically exertive and so on? And so I did think that through, but the, I was on the crest of the wave and headed towards the military and it seemed like the right thing to do. I felt a blind, if you will, but certainly an unquestioning faith in my government and my willingness to serve it was a corollary to that. And so I went home after with my tail between my legs and my father sat down with me one lunchtime and said, well, it seems to me you have two choices. You can either go to community college here in Frederick and you can sort out more about what it is you want to do with your life and how you want to contribute to society or you can join the military because otherwise they're going to come and get you and your choices will be more limited with every step of the way. And I had some contemporaries who had joined the Marine Corps and as I looked around me, I realized that war was imminent for anybody in the service, at least potentially so. And I figured perhaps, again, without much serious thought that I really wanted to be trained by the people who could give me the best chance of coming back from that war. Now that displays a great deal of ignorance on my part, but that I believe was the dominant thinking at the time.

MAUNEY: And around what year were you making this decision to join the Marine Corps, do you recall?

COTTRELL: Yes, I do. I came home from the University of Michigan at the end of February, middle of February, end of February, 1967. And of course the war had been in full array for two years, at least in the public eye. And so it was not a secret to anybody that there was a conflict going on and who the combatants were, in a general way. So the decision was to join the Marine Corps and I did, and arrived

in Parris Island [SC]. I don't remember the day of the week, but it, or the date, but it was March of 1967. Parris Island was of course a wake up, as it is for anybody who goes there. And yet I found within myself the ability to respond. The average age of my contemporaries there was 18 and I was 19. And the average education level, which I think is true in the whole demographic of the war was the eighth grade. And while I had a year of college, year and a half, it really didn't make much difference in that environment. However, I was a person who had been away from home, whereas many of the people there with me hadn't. And so it could be that I was better prepared to roll with the punches and not be so overcome by the environment of stripping away our civilian ways and making us into Marines.

We had three junior drill instructors and two and one senior drill instructor. The senior drill instructor was very quiet. He was the good cop and he was a very you know, he had a lot of leadership capability. The three bad cops were also of different ilk. One of them was more talkative than the other, one of them perceived himself as quite mean. And one of them was a kind of a jolly fellow and the junior of the three. So anyway, that was not too different from everybody's experience. I'm sure we went through the whole process, qualifying at the rifle range running, running, running, learning in classroom settings the details of the weaponry and tactics to a certain extent. And then we graduated.

However, in the period of time just before graduation, everybody was interviewed. And I don't remember much of the interview, but I do remember they were, it seemed like they were trying to figure out what, how best to place you, although everybody who graduates as a rifleman first, we still, I got the flavor of, of some kind of process to help decide where we could be of best value to the Marine Corps and to the country. I graduated from Parris Island, went to what was then called infantry training regiment, at Camp Geiger North Carolina. We went through more training there. I was given an MOS or military occupational specialty of 0351, which at that time was a machine gunner. And even though I was slight of frame that's the Marine Corps way, they don't, they seem to delight in matching people up with challenges, shall we say. And then and as that training was going on with the 2nd Marine division there was a request, orders to come to the platoon headquarters. And myself and two other people were interviewed for the enlisted commissioning program. We were given a battery of tests and two of the three of us passed those tests and we we're subsequently shipped to Quantico under orders to go to Officer Candidate School.

MAUNEY: I have a quick question. Before we get to OCS. You mentioned that maybe perhaps your father, or your brother, were either in, an interest, or were in the military. Is that correct? And how did that affect you if that's the case?

COTTRELL: Well, my father, as I said, was an officer in the Navy and he was engaged in anti-war, submarine warfare in the Pacific not in the Island's campaigns, but on the coast of South America and Central America. And I really never heard him speak about whether they, I know they dropped a lot of depth charges, but I don't remember that there was ever any surface warfare. But I remember thinking of it as an honorable thing to do. My brother, two years older, was much more of an intellectual than me and had gone to Johns Hopkins and when he emerged from Johns Hopkins he joined the Army and he was stationed in Berlin [Germany] for the two years he was in the Army, or after training. And so we were, all three of us had served in different capacities.

MAUNEY: Did you have any other siblings or just the brother?

COTTRELL: Just one brother.

MAUNEY: Just the brother. And growing up did you hear, you mentioned a bit about your father and, and his experiences. So hearing his experiences, perhaps influenced you to think of it as a thing of honor, were there other people in your community would ever like coaches or Boy Scout leaders or other mentors that had been veterans themselves that maybe created this community sense of service?

COTTRELL: Well, I think I mentioned that there was the cohort of youngsters who were about two years or three years older than me, who were oriented towards the military academies and, and were presenting it as their choice in life and it was worth, and that was a stimulus to contemplate that. As far as coaches and other authority figures I can't recall more than one or two. One when we lived that year in Arkansas had been in a bomber unit and had been captured and had a story or two to tell about that capture period. But they were, they were not things that kept me awake at night or made me look up books in the, in the more than I already did in the library. So, no, not too many.

MAUNEY: And you said you, you joined the Marine Corps in ‘67, correct?

COTTRELL: Correct.

MAUNEY: And so as you, I think you previously stated you were very much aware of the Vietnam War and very much aware of what was happening. Was that always the case growing up all the way up into 1967? Were you always very aware of current events and who was the president and were you engaged in that when you're going up?

COTTRELL: I would say not so much. I remember being very excited. My parents took us to Williamsburg [VA], which wasn't that far away because we knew President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower was going to be there and we did get to see him, although we didn't, you know, have any other interaction with him. But beyond that I remember being very impressed with President [John F.] Kennedy and profoundly saddened. I was in chemistry laboratory when the little seven-and-a-half-inch speaker on the wall squelched out that the president had been shot. And I remember being very mournful about that and the details of that as they unfolded all through. [Jack] Ruby and, and Robert [F. Kennedy] and all the rest of that did capture my attention but it really wasn't attached to the war, it was really more attached to the direction of the country. And yet Kennedy's message of self-serve, self-sacrifice and service certainly resonated.

MAUNEY: Do you remember having any thoughts on President [Lyndon B.] Johnson taking over and how he was handling the nation and perhaps the war during his administration?

COTTRELL: No.

MAUNEY: No thoughts on that.

COTTRELL: I can say the same thing about Nixon in case when we get to that year. That set of years.

MAUNEY: And so did you, when you were considering joining, you came back from college and you and your father had this discussion and the military was on the table, the fact that we were certainly very much escalated and in the war in Vietnam, when you were thinking about joining, was there any level of fear or reluctance or worry about that you were very much signing up for a war time Marine Corps?

COTTRELL: Oh, I think so. I don't remember lying awake about it. Clearly I think I already mentioned that one of the rationales I remember is that I wanted to be able to come home and I wanted to be able to survive. And my impression was that the Marine Corps was the way to go for that. Of course, you know, at that juncture I didn't really

realize what the, how the system worked compared to the Army and how much more likely I was to find myself in situations where I would need to survive.

MAUNEY: Did you ever entertain any other branch or meet with recruiters from any other branch or were you Marine Corps from the beginning?

COTTRELL: I never met with any other recruiters.

MAUNEY: And do you recall your meeting with him, with the Marine Corps recruiter was that a pretty smooth process? Was that, I don't know, easy? I'm sure they were looking for people, so.

COTTRELL: Oh yeah, I was his dream.

MAUNEY: [Laughter] I bet. And so you get into bootcamp and you mentioned the senior drill instructor and then the three more junior drill instructors. Was there anything at bootcamp that particularly stood out to you? Like an incident? That really stuck in your memory, a formative incident, perhaps?

COTTRELL: [Pause] A lot of it's a blur. I can't really say. There was a funny situation which matured to be funny later. One of our drill instructors his name was Massey, was possessed of a husky voice. [Speaking in Massey's Voice] "Recruits I got my orders." He said one day, and he said, "I'm going to Vietnam." And we thought, oh man, he's going to go ahead of us. We'll probably, you know, he's going, we're going. As it turns out, well, I think we're going to spend a lot of time on my time in Vietnam, so I'll save the rest of that for that. So that, struck me because it was a time, it was a wake up, you know, it was a reminder and in a fairly graphic form because those guys became you know, the dominant authority figures in our lives in a big way. But mostly we were focused, we were focused. I don't speak for everyone there, but I remember being very focused on possessing and making my own the skills necessary to be a Marine. And I didn't want to fail at it and for a number of reasons, but one of them was pride in myself and one of them was pride in the Marine Corps and one of them was of course survival.

MAUNEY: And you mentioned that you went to boot camp at Parris Island?

COTTRELL: Correct.

MAUNEY: Do you remember at all what battalion or company you were in at bootcamp?

MAUNEY: We were company C platoon 153.

MAUNEY: And you know, there's always this relationship, I think Marines across decades recognize the role of the senior drill instructor, perhaps being a more maybe like fatherly sort of influence. Is that your feelings towards the senior, did he have a mentor type role and was that something that you wanted to emulate?

COTTRELL: I don't think that he said much to us. He controlled the other guys and made sure things happened. There certainly were times when he spoke to us, but it was more like, and to you use your analogy, of father when he's telling you that you know, you've screwed up or you're not putting out enough, or you need to do something very differently as a group. He spoke to us as a group. It was uncommon for me in my experience to actually, I mean, I know I went into the drill instructor's office from time to time and I don't, I think they were pretty much peaceful missions, if that could be said about that relationship, but he did present a demeanor of maturity and leadership and I remember admiring it.

MAUNEY: Do you actually recall the famous moment when you rolled up in a bus? Maybe the whole yellow footprints?

COTTRELL: Sure.

MAUNEY: Do you recall that moment, what you were feeling and thinking and these first moments?

COTTRELL: Yeah, sure, I do. I remember thinking, okay, focus. You've got to do this.

MAUNEY: Right. Were any of your drill instructors Vietnam veterans already?

COTTRELL: No. The company gunnery sergeant was, well, actually I think the senior was, the other two we're not yeah, the three we're not. They had been like to the Dominican Republic or to Cuba, those kinds of campaigns. But to my knowledge, they hadn't, they hadn't been.

MAUNEY: In your selection during this time frame was it out of bootcamp that you were pulled aside for the enlisted commissioning program to become an officer?

COTTRELL: No, I was in I was in the Second Marine Division at Camp Lejeune [NC]. This was after infantry training regiment and while we were actually training as a Marine fleet Marine force division, platoon.

MAUNEY: Okay. Yeah. So I'll get to that, I guess in a second. So you go to Camp Geiger for your infantry school. Do you remember what that transition from a bootcamp mentality to an infantry training environment was like?

COTTRELL: It was looser. There was more personal responsibility, but in the barracks was different. But basically, it was classrooms and much more field work field maneuvers and tactical training and range, you know, the range.

MAUNEY: Do you recall those infantry school instructors at all? Did any of them leave a particular impression on you?

COTTRELL: No.

MAUNEY: And you were selected, you said your MOS was a 0351, which was a machine gunner. Do you recall anything in particular about once the job selection was made, the focus on your machine gun training in particular as opposed to some of the other infantry MOS like riflemen, or mortar men, do you recall that split?

COTTRELL: The percentages?

MAUNEY: Or just in infantry school did you guys start to focus more on your MOS and,

COTTRELL: Yes

MAUNEY: kind of make a split between MOS?

COTTRELL: Yes. I mean, and yet we still had to, you know, we were the machine gunners, integral part of the fire team and the squad and the platoon. So, but yes, we spent time at the range for instance, or learning about them, the function of the gun. While others might've been working more on their M14's.

MAUNEY: So you've now done bootcamp at Parris Island and infantry school at Camp Geiger in North Carolina. Did you leave infantry school feeling well prepared for the task at hand?

COTTRELL: That was a real, that's, I don't know if I contemplated it because I just assumed I had been given what I needed and I don't remember feeling inadequate because I didn't know what I might be missing.

MAUNEY: And once you graduated, what was the next step? What unit did you get assigned to?

COTTRELL: Just got on a bus and went about five miles and pulled into a barracks.

MAUNEY: And was that your actual battalion you were assigned to? That you showed up to?

COTTRELL: Yup.

MAUNEY: And which battalion were you assigned to at that time?

COTTRELL: It was the second battalion.

MAUNEY: And which regiment?

COTTRELL: Second.

MAUNEY: So, 2/2 or?

COTTRELL: Second, yea, Second Marine Regiment is, its home is Camp Lejeune.

MAUNEY: Do you remember any thoughts or feelings about that transition to actually being in a rifle battalion and then company and in meeting the Marines that you'd be serving with in your actual unit?

COTTRELL: You know, I think I just misspoke. It's Second Marine Division is, its home has a home at Camp Lejeune. The other Marines that I remember were just weeks or months ahead of us. In other words, we were back filling. There were no veterans of wartime situations. I'm sure that some of the staff NCOs were, and whether they were, I don't remember ever seeing an officer.

MAUNEY: Hmm. Interesting. And how long were you with that unit and how long was the pre deployment training cycle and do you have any memories of that time period and anything that stuck out and any particular trainings or moments?

COTTRELL: It was small unit tactics right out of the handbook. And it wasn't until Officer Candidate School and The Basic School that we really got to see, we got to hear about, and learn about tactics appropriate to Vietnam compared to basic tactics. In other words, the focus was for you to know what's in the handbook and be able to do what you're told when you're told and understand all the signals, all the requirements and to be able to perform them.

MAUNEY: So when you arrive after infantry school and you're more of like a replacement or a backfill, and most of the, or if not all of the junior Marines were junior and had not, were not combat veterans, are not veterans of Vietnam, were you assigned to a specific battalion and company while on Camp Lejeune or was it more a general environment where you guys were going to train and then be sent to units in Vietnam that were more specific? I guess you could say.

COTTRELL: That's a little bit about both of both those things. We were not in training companies. We were in actual TO [Tactical Operations] companies. And and yet those were the days, one of the lessons of Vietnam was to allow people to train and learn about each other as a unit and send the unit and bring the unit home. That only happened once or twice in the Vietnam conflict if I'm not mistaken. And so we really were just fillers. I mean, you know, we learned what everybody learned the same things to whatever degree they could to staff NCOs and NCOs were charged with making us learn that and being sure that we did. And in the end we would be, we would leave the Second Marine Division and go to the third which was the, or the first.

MAUNEY: And just, just for the sake of my timeline orientation, do you remember what month that you graduated bootcamp at Parris Island and then what month Camp Geiger completed, kind of that time or that general timeframe? Like the middle of 67 or?

COTTRELL: [Pause] I left Parris Island in July or in June. And Oh, I'm sorry, I'm trying to put it together. I don't remember. I don't remember thinking, Oh, this is the 14th of, of May, it had to have been May because it was quite nice weather still. And then we went to Camp Lejeune and, or Camp Geiger first. And then Camp Lejeune for the summer. I got my orders, took me from Camp Lejeune to Quantico [VA] in November.

MAUNEY: In November.

COTTRELL: So I was training in the Second Marine Division for three or four months, five months.

MAUNEY: And this is all in 1967?

COTTRELL: Correct.

MAUNEY: Do you remember that process of being selected for a commissioning program? How did you get picked and, and what was the criteria and what were your thoughts on it at the time?

COTTRELL: Well, I think the criteria was having some college or one of the things that puts you on the roster was having had some formal training or education so that you might be a candidate able to take on the other learning obligations of a leader. The other criteria of course, was to be a warm body. And I don't think there was anything about our conduct, although I was a PFC out of bootcamp and I was a Lance Corporal subsequently. And so having achieved rank might've been a criteria, but it was never explained to me that way. The process itself, as I said, mostly revolved around taking the test. And then we waited around. We were actually put on casual duty for a period of about a month, which was excruciatingly boring. We picked up a lot of cigarette butts and did a lot of labor but waiting for an opening as a new class of officer candidates was formed. And so that happened in November and we shipped out.

MAUNEY: During any of these time frames, whether it's the end of boot camp or infantry school or during this time when you're on Camp Lejeune, did you get any leave to go back home or did your family ever come to see you?

COTTRELL: We had some leave. I don't remember how much there was. It was a pretty long trip to get from certainly from South Carolina, but from North Carolina, it still was a long poke, particularly if you're hitchhiking like I was, but we would get a pass every now and then.

MAUNEY: And you said, yeah, how did you get from the Carolinas back home? You said hitchhiking there?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: Was it literal thumbing? Along side of the road?

COTTRELL: Yea.

MAUNEY: And is.

COTTRELL: I mean, sometimes there was, there might be somebody who had a vehicle and you could all pile into the vehicle and everybody get dropped off where they were intended to be and then picked up again. That did happen, most certainly. And in fact, I had a good friend who I had been in bootcamp with who also was selected. I think I mentioned that. And somewhere in that process he did bring a car back. And yet we didn't get that much time off.

MAUNEY: Right. Do you recall any, was there anything interesting ever in these travels, whether it's with friends or hitchhikers, is there anything that stood out or just kind of easy, smooth sailing?

COTTRELL: It was pretty easy. It was a different time of course, in that regard. I had one, I got picked up by one guy who wanted to stop at a bar in the middle of the day. And of course I was anxious to keep moving but I went along with it cause he was going almost the whole way. But it was my first exposure to somebody who drinks in the middle of the day. Anyway. Beyond that, not too much.

MAUNEY: When you would go back home on leave, did you travel in uniform or civilian attire?

COTTRELL: Uniform.

MAUNEY: Did you ever encounter anyone's opinions on the military or the war or anything because you were, in uniform traveling?

COTTRELL: No, I think most of the people who picked me up were sympathetic.

MAUNEY: And where were you traveling to? Remind me where your parents were living.

COTTRELL: Maryland.

MAUNEY: Maryland, in Frederick?

COTTRELL: Yes.

MAUNEY: Did your family, or your parents, ever articulate to you that they noticed a difference in you once you had become a Marine and completed bootcamp or any sort of training?

COTTRELL: Well, yes. They did. And I think they had pride in what I had done and I think that they saw that I was becoming a different person than the kid that left. We didn't talk about it too much. But I think they appreciated the effect.

MAUNEY: Did your father or your mother, especially in this 1967 timeframe, ever express any concerns or thoughts about what you could assume would be your deployment to Vietnam?

COTTRELL: Well, my mother was beside herself. But she had had a long time to get ready for that. I mean, they came to graduation at Parris Island of course, and they never visited me at Camp Lejeune or Quantico

for that matter. But there was really no place for them in those situations. We weren't really encouraged to have parents there except at graduation type moments.

MAUNEY: Were there any Marines that you became close friends with or kept in contact with from the enlisted time before you went to OCS and TBS?

COTTRELL: Well, I actually ran into two of the drill instructors at a later time and there was only a brief passing of the time and the fellow I mentioned who came back with an automobile who lived in Massachusetts and I stayed in contact until the graduation from The Basic School.

MAUNEY: And did he as well go to officer training?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: The one that had the car?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: Now when you go to OCS, that's like a new bootcamp of sorts?

COTTRELL: That's correct.

MAUNEY: How was that, kind of doing a second bootcamp? Did you feel prepared or was it an annoyance?

COTTRELL: Oh, we were prepared. I mean, it wasn't that long ago that we were in there, in Parris Island. And so the regime, the you know, it's a much more gentle approach though, because I mean there was still a lot of PT, there was much more PT actually. And there were much more of a classroom setting until towards the end when you got actual field opportunities. But we hiked and hiked and hiked and hiked and hiked. I mean, we ran, but we mostly took long, long hikes. When I got to Officer Candidate School in November, I looked around the room. Of course, we were not to say anything. And we were all sitting there and I looked down the row. And there was a fellow that I went to high school with who had joined the Marine Corps, unknown to me. And we intersected there. And we both graduated. There weren't too many who didn't graduate. And then we all went, we went to The Basic School and then went to our different MOS.

MAUNEY: And if I'm not mistaken, you still have drill instructors at OCS?

COTTRELL: Yes. Right.

MAUNEY: Were they more senior drill instructors, like gunnery sergeants and things like that, or?

COTTRELL: The platoon commander was a captain. The drill instructors were Staff Sergeants or a Gunnery Sergeant. E-6/E-7.

MAUNEY: Do you ever recall in any of these trainings, anything that was a particular struggle or challenge for you?

COTTRELL: Yes. The hikes, the boots they gave us were jungle boots and they had very hard rubber soles. They were some of the first cleated boots and, they were not well suited to icy trails. The rubber became hard instantly and it was very easy to slip and fall. And, so it was just kind of a melee. It was important, in the sense that it was more difficult for some than others and it was difficult for me, but those, there were those for whom it was much more difficult and they needed, you know, support maybe sometimes carrying their gear, that kind of thing, so that we could all move along. And, so that was true, all through the process of OCS.

MAUNEY: Do you recall what month and year we are in when you graduated OCS and then went to TBS?

COTTRELL: Graduated from OCS, in December. We got there in early November and we graduated in late December. And, we had leave for the holiday and then we, reported to The Basic School.

MAUNEY: And what month did you report to The Basic School?

COTTRELL: Well, let's see. It would have had to have been January.

MAUNEY: And at that time, how long was the basic school?

COTTRELL: Six months.

MAUNEY: Six months. And was there anything about the basic school that stood out to you where, and were you getting selected or competing for particular MOS or anything like that?

COTTRELL: No. There's no competing for those MOS, there were some people who were adamant that they wanted to fly for instance, but otherwise people talked about it. But we knew that the way of the Marine Corps is to go where is to send you where they need you and that involves putting you in the MOS that they need. So that

was out of our hands till days as it were before graduation. We all learned the same thing. It's like becoming a rifleman. You have to learn to be a platoon leader. And um, we started, it was like graduate school. Not that I had any experience with it at that time, but now I can say it's like that because you know, you were getting people. All, every instructor had been to Vietnam. Two of our, two of the other platoon commanders who are again, captains, were twin brothers, their name was [LtGen. Paul K.] Van Riper. They both went on to be generals, as an example. And they were hard. They were, real leaders and knew their stuff and had been there so they knew what worked. And what didn't work. And they knew the traps and pitfalls and they were generous with their knowledge and they were hard on us if we didn't pay attention. And that was only fair.

MAUNEY: And when you completed TBS, was that, I guess around maybe June or July?

COTTRELL: June.

MAUNEY: Are we in 1968?

COTTRELL: We are.

MAUNEY: June of 1968. And then what's next after that?

COTTRELL: They gave us 30 days leave, but, before deployment, I mean I was an 0301 at that point, a 2nd Lieutenant and infantry, others got leave and then went to their various schools or might include flight school. It might include Fort Sill, Oklahoma for artillery school and so on. Not unlike enlisted folks, you know, you leave, you get some time off and to be with your family and then it's showtime.

MAUNEY: And then so once you get back from leave, do you, come back to a particular base or do you immediately deploy to Vietnam?

COTTRELL: We had our orders.

MAUNEY: You had orders?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: And so, and that means to go to Vietnam?

COTTRELL: Vietnam.

MAUNEY: So right when you come back from leave, do you show up somewhere and immediately fly out or was there any type of, not downtime, any type of, in between time at all?

COTTRELL: Well, I mean, the leave was the downtime and, when the leave was over you were expected to contact the, let's see. I'm not even sure who it was, but you, know, they, helped you with flight arrangements. And then my parents drove me to the airport in [Washington] D.C. And I flew to the West Coast and then I flew to Hawaii and then I flew to Okinawa [Japan] and then I flew in.

MAUNEY: Do you recall what airport on the West Coast that you flew out of? Was this a particular base or, and did you use civilian flights or military flights or how did they do it then?

COTTRELL: It was a civilian flight from a civilian airport. One of my friends in the brief time I had at the University of Michigan's father was a Marine Colonel and he was the CO [Commanding Officer] of El Toro air base. And they put me up for a couple of days before my flight left and they took me to the airport. Which airport, I'm not quite certain.

MAUNEY: Knowing you were about to go to war, to go to Vietnam, whether it was at home on leave or in these flights or any period in there. Was there a particular moment when that realization set in that this, like you said, it was, go time and was there ever a moment that it really locked in for you?

COTTRELL: I think that that happened at the end of leave. I was engaged to be married to a woman I had met while I was in Officer Candidate School. Actually, it was during [The] Basic School and so the two of us had spoken quite a bit about it and the reality just got more and more pronounced as the days as the final days of leave went on. If in part you're asking about mortality, I think that I can say with some assurance that I came to grips with the idea of dying, long before that, I think during bootcamp and then during, the time in the training after bootcamp, that all got resolved in my mind.

MAUNEY: Did you, or do you recall kind of saying those final goodbyes, whether it's to family, mother, father, siblings, and then you had a fiancé at the time. Does anything about that process stick out to you in particular?

COTTRELL: Well, it was just extremely emotional. I mean, it was easier for me to accept where I was going and what I was going to do than them. They had no idea how well I was trained or what odds I might be

facing. And that part I wasn't so sure of either, but it was a more known entity for me than it was for them.

MAUNEY: And, in what month, and it was '68, I assume, but what month were you actually finally deployed to Vietnam?

COTTRELL: June.

MAUNEY: June. How aware were you of the events in Vietnam at the time, especially for the Marine Corps? Was there any news stories or major battles that stuck out to you? And did you have any thoughts on them?

COTTRELL: Well, we had become aware of Khe Sanh of course, you know, that was, a siege that went on long enough and was so pivotal, in the operational mission of the 3rd Marine Division that everybody was tuned into that. Beyond that, no, when I got to Vietnam, I was, we were briefed by a Major, who was sort of flippant actually, as I recall. And his talk was, could have been titled winning the hearts and minds. And that's what I did for, the first, not quite a month, in the Southern part of Vietnam. Below Da Nang, with the 27th Marines. And, they went home as a unit. And they were scheduled to go home. And I would, I knew I was only there temporarily. His emphasis in that first in-country briefing was more on what we would see on a day to day basis and what the mission was as far as, not pacification even though that was going on then, but rather security for public works.

MAUNEY: So you have this briefing by, this Major as one of your, you know, your first memories of getting in-country. Do you remember stepping off the plane like the first time you actually stepped foot in Vietnam? Was there any particular sights or smells or senses or thoughts that you had in that moment?

COTTRELL: Well, the heat, I mean the heat was impressive. And it was of course our first exposure, and we were getting off an air conditioned plane.

MAUNEY: And you had this briefing by this Major, was there any sort of training or classes or anything that happened or, I guess you could describe what was the process like in Vietnam before you were sent out to the field and actually to a unit that was, you know, engaged?

COTTRELL: It was pretty loose. I think they didn't really know quite what to do with us. They were filling a void of, you know, it was kind of like a

choke point. There are new people, we don't know exactly how to get them out to where they need to be. We're not exactly sure who's going to come off the plane, so we don't know where they are best fit. And so they did what they could with us for a little while. And, there was, certainly, the noise of war in that first two or three weeks, but, not, any real contact. I don't think we, I mean we certainly had mortars at night and, we could hear rockets going into Da Nang at night. And we were guarding a bridge, which is always a challenge because both civilians and military move across it. And we were, so we were certainly not lax, but, we didn't have a defined mission. And it wasn't like a normal Marine Corps company operation.

MAUNEY: Was this when you were with, you said 27th Marines and you were in and around the Da Nang area?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: Was there any other small villages or bases or any other way you guys would have like a specific location?

COTTRELL: No, the regimental headquarters, had, you know, had a perimeter and we went to the designated part of the perimeter and setup, our own space. The other lieutenant that was with me and I kind of stuck together and we both went off and did slightly different things during the day, but came back there at night.

MAUNEY: Did you have your own platoon at this time, or?

COTTRELL: No, we didn't. We were given Marines to supervise during the days. But we didn't, we weren't really in a table of organization.

MAUNEY: How long were you with 27th Marines? And during that time were you primarily doing this bridge protection operation?

COTTRELL: About three weeks, and, yes.

MAUNEY: After the, at the end of that three weeks, what happened next for you?

COTTRELL: They said, you know, you now have orders to 3rd battalion, 4th Marines and go find a helicopter.

MAUNEY: Did they tell you what, you'd have a specific billet?

COTTRELL: No, that that came after we got up there.

MAUNEY: Was there any sort of feeling of a, because you said when you were with 27th Marines, there was the sounds of war, but there wasn't, you wouldn't say any intense engagements with the enemy?

COTTRELL: No, no, not in my experience. Not, not for me.

MAUNEY: So, did you at the time, I assume when they're telling you you're going to 3/4 they told you the location? Do you recall what area 3/4 was stationed in?

COTTRELL: Quảng Tri.

MAUNEY: Quảng Tri. And were you aware of what was going on in that area of operations at that time?

COTTRELL: No.

MAUNEY: What were your feelings going to 3/4 knowing you would kind of be getting, I don't know, more of the traditional, if you want to call it that rifle [platoon] experience?

COTTRELL: I was ready to be a platoon leader. I wanted to be a platoon leader. I had been a goal for some time. I was happy to be assigned an 0301, or 0302 actually when we graduated from TBS it was 0302, and I was happy to be that. I was proud of being that and that was the skill set I'd developed over those last months. And so I was anxious for that to happen. And disappointed in a way, but you know, like I said, the Marine Corps, sends you where they need you and they keep you as long as they want and then they send you where else they need you. So, it was just a fulfillment of the process.

MAUNEY: What month did you go to 3/4?

COTTRELL: Well, like I said, I got there in June, so it was July. It was actually late June. Yeah, it was late June.

MAUNEY: So in July of 1968 you're going out to 3/4. And do you have any recollections of that helicopter ride and touching down in 3/4's area of operation and at that landing zone or anything particular there?

COTTRELL: Well it's a stepwise process. The actual rifle company was in the field and the battalion headquarters is where we landed in Quảng Tri. And, you just, you know, you have, you've got your orders. You stumble around until you find them and it's not like somebody is

waiting with a sign at the plane. Then you report and the personnel officer, battalion headquarters, your personnel officer, looks at his sheet and he says, you're going to kilo company and, there'll be a briefing this evening and, we'll see about getting you out there tomorrow. And that's the way it went. This was late June. And, they were in operations and, in fact, they only had one. They had the company commander was who was a captain and one other lieutenant. And, another lieutenant who was a real short timer, he was about ready to go home. And, so, you know, and that was, that's where they sent me and the next day is when I entered that scene that you described. And, I remember, it was elephant grass. It was a hill. Excuse me, and it was, again, you know, new to me and, yet the company gunny, I found the company gunny first. And, he was actually about ready to go to the hospital ship because he needed some surgery. But, he took me to the company commander and I reported in and he said, you've got 3rd platoon. I went to see 3rd platoon and they said, they kind of look me up and down, and that's the beginning of it.

MAUNEY: What were your feelings arriving to your platoon for the first time and meeting the Marines that would serve underneath you, under your command?

COTTRELL: Oh, well, I was anxious for it, you know, we are given multiple lessons in how to pay attention to your NCOs and, learn from them. At the same time you maintain a leadership role of them. And so the squad leaders and I were the first ones to get to know each other and then it was, you know, by that time it was dusk, and so there was a perimeter, there were ambushes, there were listening posts, things like that to be done.

MAUNEY: Do you recall, you met with the squad leaders, did you have a platoon sergeant in 3rd platoon?

COTTRELL: Not at that time. We didn't, we had the right guide was a sergeant who had been up and down the ranks, had a little problem with alcohol. He didn't then, or in the field, but that was his history, and he did a good job. He was limited in some ways, but he wasn't really a platoon sergeant. He knew it. And yet he was the platoon sergeant for a couple of weeks until one came.

MAUNEY: That process of meeting the squad leaders the first day and then the night there's taskings to do, did you have a set of priorities in your mind of things that you wanted to accomplish as a new lieutenant, and a platoon commander, like did you have a set of

ideas or command directives you wanted to give your men or was it just setting about the taskings, the immediate taskings of the day?

COTTRELL: No, I didn't have any agenda. You know, this was, I knew how green I was. I knew that I had a lot to learn and I knew that, the stakes were high and I knew I had, three squad leaders that until proven otherwise I could rely on, and a fourth, the machine gun squad leader, was also part of that, cadre. And, he was a you know, they had their own personalities and I had to learn what they were and I had to learn who was bullshitting me and who was reliable and who wasn't. But that takes time and, they don't make those kinds of judgements lightly.

MAUNEY: What rank were most of the squad leaders and were any of them on a multiple tours, a second tour. Were they all first tour Marines to Vietnam?

COTTRELL: They were corporals and one of them, the machine gun squad leader was on a second tour.

MAUNEY: Did they give you any sorts of words of advice when you first got there, any immediate maybe words of advice?

COTTRELL: Well you know, the company commander had already, dictated that the positions, for the nighttime activities. So that was easy. They just went on their business. They knew what to do. I knew then I learned where they were going, and it became my responsibility and, to stay in touch with them and to respond if they needed anything. So, did they have advice for me? I think, they did what Marines do, you know, they size you up at the same time they try to prevent disaster and wait to see what you're going to do. And yet they knew that they had a role in that way, whether it's instinctive or whether it's something they'd ever been taught in NCO school or as a mentor, as being mentored by another NCO as they came up the ranks. But they, it was, you know, they look to me, they, you know, they knew that the next night it would be my decision where the ambush was going to be held, and it would be my decision, what kind of a watch, whether it was 100% or whether it was 30% or whatever it was. And so they were waiting to see how I did that.

MAUNEY: So then you had that next day and the next night when it is your, decision on how, how to ambush, what kind of operations were you guys conducting at that time? And what was the goal of your operations?

COTTRELL: The goal, yes, that's a good question. This was, at a time when, it was the initiation of, of course there were different operations Scotland II, Purple Martin, the ones that are in the command chronologies. But basically the idea was to find the enemy. We knew that the, that there was at least two and maybe three North Vietnamese divisions, traveling into the country from North Vietnam. And of course we were only, we could watch the, bombing, ArcLights as they were called, the B-52 bombings at night. So we weren't that far away. And, similarly we weren't that far from the South China sea and we weren't that far from Laos. And so, the objective of the battalion was to, patrol, find the enemy, but recognizing that there were division size units and lower in the area, the support that was available to us, doing the foot patrols was in the form of what are known as fire support bases. And those were usually 155, or 105 Howitzer positions, battery, six guns, that, could fire in support. Sometimes they had 81mm mortars in addition. But we didn't see too many of them. We certainly had need of them, but we didn't see too many. And, so the fire support bases became small forts, out away from the battalion headquarters. And there were probably six of them active at any time, maybe four or five, depending on the tactical situation. And then there was the patrolling because the patrols were all either squad or platoon sized patrols, company sized movements from general patrol areas, one to the other were the other ways we occupied our time. Every day there was patrolling. And so one squad, would do the patrol or if it was a big, if the threat was high, or there was a need to move as a sort of a snaking around of the company or the battalion, as part of the patrol, then the whole platoon would go. We almost never operated as a whole company, except to move to an area and take up a new, position either on a fire support base or on a hill near one.

MAUNEY: How often did you do a, you said it was rarely you would do a company size movement, how often do you think you did that, if you could approximate or?

COTTRELL: Oh, I, Oh I mean, I know, usually they were done at the outset of an operation. And a company might be a blocking company. They might be a reserve company if the whole battalion was moving. Those larger tactical elements were not in my purview. We weren't really told, except the company commander would tell us where India Company was going and where Lima [Company] was going. And so on. But, it quickly became a focus of where we were going, and the mission was almost always the same, although it could be that one company was the assault company and the other company was, it was the reserve company or, we're assaulting a different

area. Sometimes, however, we were in position for some time as a platoon and, rarely as a company, and we would patrol from our platoon bases, which were in radio contact with the company. And we had of course, ways to communicate with each other to indicate for the company commander to indicate where he wanted us to patrol.

MAUNEY: How was your relationship with your chain of command, with your company commander? Do you recall his name?

COTTRELL: His name was Sid Thomas, the first one. And, he had been there some time. They had been, the company had been in a protracted battle that I wasn't part of. So he was quite seasoned, knew his way around. His successor, was, I could, you know, different circumstances, I might be able to think of his name. He was a very, very astute company commander also and had been around and, was very effective at tactics, and supporting arms. We also got a company commander who was, in my view a dud, and pretty self-important. And, we never were sure just how tactically sound he was. But generally speaking, they were fine.

MAUNEY: For the company commander who was a dud. How did you view your role as a platoon commander in relation to, to your men? Kind of maybe filtering the effects of that company commander. How did you view your role there?

COTTRELL: Well, I felt like I needed to, and I was at liberty, to adjust patrol routes and also, nighttime positions. I was at liberty to direct my own men. As long as the general area that he was interested in having us examine or, look at, we're done. And, we also started looking out a little during his time, we actually started looking out a little bit more for each other in terms of supplies, food. And, his time was during that same time, if you had read far enough in that book [Matterhorn], you would have noticed that there was five days when we didn't have any food. And it was the monsoon season, which in the North part of the, country starts in October and goes till about April, maybe March and, the absence, and so, we became a little more conscious of being able to keep body and soul together. And so, we were a little more conservative, in our approach to, our own platoon's resources. Somebody who went back to the rear, for instance, who might've been wounded or have a medical need or had gone to RNR [rest and recuperation], you know, would know to scrounge and, try to get us different things that we might otherwise not get. But generally it was a pretty seamless process. I mean, and that is to say that, I don't mean to say he was derelict. I don't mean that at all. I just think that he didn't have the charisma and he

didn't inspire the confidence that the other two of his predecessors had done.

MAUNEY: Right. What was your experience the first time receiving enemy contact and how far along were you into your time as a platoon commander did that happen?

COTTRELL: Six weeks.

MAUNEY: Six weeks. And do you recall that instance?

COTTRELL: Oh, sure.

MAUNEY: Yeah, how did that go?

COTTRELL: I recall all of them.

MAUNEY: [Laughter] What was that first time like? What was the situation? And how did you feel? Especially as an officer?

COTTRELL: It was a platoon size patrol and it was a small arms and shrapnel, er uh, mortars, that we were encountering. And it was a very brief encounter. I couldn't tell you how long exactly, although it was less than an hour, less than a half hour. And, the enemy broke contact. We returned fire and the enemy broke contact. I don't think there were any, there were some casualties. We did find some blood, that indicated we had made some impact, but we didn't find any, wounded or dead. And, we had a couple of wounded of our own, including me. It's a funny story, when I was in the basic school, I asked my platoon commander who was a captain, if I could grow a mustache. I thought that would be a time saver, and it was just something I thought I might like to do. And he said, I'll get back to you on that. Not in those words then of course, but he came back the next day and he said, don't cultivate on your lip, what grows wild on your ass. So, it's been an interesting thing. I've heard other people have said that, but that was a new one for me. So anyway, I didn't, and he said, besides that, if you get to Vietnam and you get wounded in the face, they might have to shave all that off and it's going to be very painful to get, you know, to treat your, any wounds you might have on your face. And, I said, okay. And, took him, you know, that's the way it was. And I got to Vietnam and that encounter we just talked about, there was a small piece of shrapnel that split my lip and, knocked out my, one of my incisors. And, in the period of time, while it was healing, I grew a mustache, [laughter] and then I've had it ever since.

MAUNEY: It's a good reason. That's a hell of a, that's a hell of a first encounter with the enemy that you went ahead and got a little, uh, a little gift in the sense of a wound in the mouth there.

COTTRELL: Well, it really wasn't much. Honestly, I mean, shrapnel happened to everybody. It was one of those things. Nobody was, almost nobody was medevaced [medically evacuated] for shrapnel. I mean it was, you just dealt with it.

MAUNEY: Yeah, how did you deal with it? The corpsman just stitched you up?

COTTRELL: Corpsman, yeah. I don't think he stitched me, I think he just put some butterflies on it. Oral cavity loves to heal.

MAUNEY: Right.

COTTRELL: And the tooth, I could stick it back in. It was a false tooth anyway. And it was on a gold post and I could, I just put it back up in there and, and it happened to stay. I had to take it in and I had to do it several times, but it did stay.

MAUNEY: These types of shrapnel wounds are common, as you said. Was it common practice to, to submit Purple Hearts for people that had these types of wounds? Or was it just overlooked as like, a scrape?

COTTRELL: Well, I mean, somebody had to document it, to have it be a Purple Heart. I think that most people kind of felt like Purple Hearts. The people who got Purple Hearts should really deserve them. There should be some kind of real wound and that wasn't everybody's point of view, including some people who, didn't want to go home without one. People who had career aspirations. But fortunately they were very few, but the corpsman were very good. They were very capable and, you know, a person might leave for a day, and come back the next day if they really needed to be seen. But most of the time the reasons for medevacs that weren't combat related were illness related, like malaria, or fever of unknown origin, or, um [pause], well I think those, those are the big ones. Sometimes feet and hands, would suffer in the wet and those just became untenable for continuing operations and those people would be medevaced.

MAUNEY: Is there any worry with these types of wounds that life in the jungle could make you more susceptible to infection? And how did you deal with that, if so?

COTTRELL: I think everybody understood that we were in a dirty environment and that there were both parasites and, other sources of infection. I think that we just, the corpsman did have antibiotics, and the corpsman did have morphine. The corpsman did have a number of things in their kit bag that allowed them to deal with those things. But, I think that basically, hygiene was relied on a great deal.

MAUNEY: How did you feel as a Marine, number one, and perhaps as a Marine in a leadership role after having been through that first bout of enemy contact?

COTTRELL: How did I feel?

MAUNEY: Yeah, uh, yeah. How'd you feel about that?

COTTRELL: Well, I felt a little silly that they're the ones who initiated the contact. I never really figured out whether it was an ambush or if it was just a happenstance that we ran into each other. But, I sort of assumed it was an ambush because, of the mortars. But, I just, I think we just, in all cases, we just responded to the expediency of the moment. We were trained and the training kicked in. The training was good. The training wasn't as complete as it might've been, I guess. I didn't mean to say that it was deficient. What I mean is that there are things that people can't anticipate in training. And so, we just knew our lot. We knew, what our capabilities were and we didn't ask for any, special dispensation. We just got on with the job and, I don't remember how I felt. I remember, I remember feeling a little numb and I was disappointed that I, that I, might have something which, interfere with my duties, but it didn't turn out that way. You know, within a couple of days it was basically a well healing wound. And so we just moved on.

MAUNEY: Was there any sense for whether it's you, or any Marine, the first time that you engage the enemy is there any sense of like, okay, you've now crossed that threshold, you've checked that box, you're not green any more, any sense of that? Or was there any acknowledgement of that in the group?

COTTRELL: No, I don't think so. I don't remember any such thing. I mean, I think there was certainly concern, on the part of not just the corpsman, but the squad leaders and others, if I was all right and but others had sustained minor shrapnel wounds too and nobody had actually been shot. And, we were all hale and hearty for the most part. So, just went on with it.

MAUNEY: And so you have that first round of contact and how soon after did you engage the enemy again? Was it a pretty everyday sort of thing, or was there gaps? Kind of ebbs and flows?

COTTRELL: You know, General [William Tecumseh] Sherman in the Civil War was quoted as saying that war is 90% boredom and 10% terror. And, that's the way it is. There were gaps. There were real gaps. I mean, they didn't want to be found. They wanted to move on into their, you know, in their own objectives and missions. And, we were trying to interdict the enemy and, we were a major inconvenience for them. The intervals varied a great deal between contacts, and the contacts themselves took on a variety of different forms.

For instance, when we were establishing these, fire support bases, we might take mortar fire even in the process even before the guns arrived because we're, you know, the North Vietnamese were finding the range on their mortars and they were preparing to engage the fire support base. And it was a big deal for them, I think to be able to overrun those fire support bases and spike those guns. And sometimes they stayed in the area for awhile and we could hear them at night, clacking sticks together, signaling to each other. And sometimes there was indirect fire and sometimes there were probes. And then at other times, there were, you know, full-scale, larger unit probes more than just two or three fire team size units. So the answer to your question is how long was it? It varied a great deal. What kind of contact was it? A very great deal. There were times when we, were charged with engaging them. And, usually those were company size units, or company size operations. One of the things that could happen and did happen was small units would engage the enemy and realize that they'd engage many more of the enemy than themselves. And then that would lead to an escalation because they needed the help and then it sorted itself out in one way or another. And depending on the size of the unit, it could last for days or, you know, overnight. And the next day anyway.

MAUNEY: Were these primarily regular North Vietnamese Army troops or did you ever encounter any sort of other Viet Cong or other type of more like militia, local type resistance?

COTTRELL: All North Vietnamese.

MAUNEY: All North Vietnamese. And what was your, just impression throughout your time there of the enemy? How capable or, their overall abilities?

COTTRELL: Well, I think they were quite capable. I think they were well trained. I think they were Spartan in many ways. They were used to living a harder existence than we were. They certainly were dedicated to their mission. They sometimes, the major fault of the North Vietnamese as it was explained to me, and as I experienced, was they're inflexible. Once they decided to do something, that's the plan. And it's only, to be flexible is an important skill in a warfare and to be able to adapt to the moment rather than just continuing, the original plan and hopes that it would work. And, I think we were better at that than they were. That's not to say that they didn't inflict casualties and make very, intelligent and effective command decisions, but, they really didn't want to see us. They didn't, they wanted to, they had cash, you know, we, it was our job to find them. It wasn't theirs to find us.

MAUNEY: And, I guess was it that simple? Your job was to simply find close with and kill the enemy. Was there any other type of missions you were doing or interactions with villages or locals or was it all pretty much search and destroy type missions?

COTTRELL: Occasionally we were tasked with on a patrol for instance with finding a wreckage of a helicopter or finding, trying to retrieve remains. But it was, find close with and destroy the enemy.

MAUNEY: Did you or did anyone else ever express opinions about how successful the strategy was or anything of that sort?

COTTRELL: No, I mean, I think we didn't have the big, we never had the big picture. I think that we were all happy, or I should say satisfied, when we accomplished, any portion of a measurable portion of the mission. But generally it was a slog. It was just, you know, try to stay, aware of the mission and, look out for each other. I mean, one of the important things that a lieutenant learns soon after they, in fact, I suppose everybody learns it. But speaking for myself, it was, once I came to the DMZ and once I joined my platoon, I think it was only minutes before my mission orientation was, I won't say took second seat to the mission of taking care of my men, but it became clear to me that nobody was going to be able to do the mission unless somebody took care of them and somebody made sure that they had what they needed to do the mission. And that quickly morphed into caring about them as individuals and not just as Marines. And, so the mission wasn't the whole thing.

MAUNEY: What was a day in the life like? If you can have a typical day. When you wake up, what are your, especially as lieutenant, what are your

taskings, what are your goals? Are you patrolling? All that, all those types of things.

COTTRELL: Well, usually there was a platoon commanders meeting with the company commander, or if I was independent, there was a squad leaders meeting. We'd go over the patrol route for whichever squad was going to do it. We would go through the five paragraph order: situation, mission, execution, administration, command and control. And, it's such a versatile, document or technique that we used it and it never failed us. There were times when we couldn't answer some of the questions, like, how are we going to communicate because we didn't have any, because we maybe were low on radio batteries. But, basically that's how we did it. And then, you know, after everyone had eaten, the day began and everybody had their duties. Some people who had been on, a squad size mission the night or, ambush the night before were on the perimeter. And we just rotated depending, you know, to conserve energy and, and maximize our, opportunity to complete the mission.

MAUNEY: Now were you on a, these fire bases is that what you called them? Like were you on a base every night? Would you come back to a centralized location and push out? Or were you always roaming?

COTTRELL: Both. There were times when we came back to the fire support base. Lots of times though, I mean, you can pretty well saturate your area pretty quickly from a fire support base. I mean, if you've got enough men there to secure a battery of Howitzers, then you've got enough men to do a lot of patrolling. As well as maintain a perimeter. And so, we were also very frequently off on our own. And we would spend the night, we would pick a nighttime POS [position] and occupy it for the night. Depending on how much more patrolling needed to be done and how strategic that place was, we might stay there two nights. But unless it was an old abandoned fire support base, or some other previously secure and developed area which had bunker systems, we were never any place more than two nights.

MAUNEY: What was the name of the fire support base you were primarily located?

COTTRELL: Oh, well, we were in at a number of them. Winchester and Sierra. Sierra was a particularly, it periodically apparently became important to both sides. And so we did a lot of patrolling out of Sierra.

MAUNEY: So you patrol throughout the day and then you set up for the night. Could you just kind of walk me through that process and at what point during the day, or day light hours, do you call a halt in order to set up for the nighttime? What does that nighttime set up kind of protocol?

COTTRELL: Well, sometimes we would encounter terrain which wasn't as clear on the map as it might've been. And so it took us longer to do our patrol and we tried to complete every patrol because they're usually set up in a way that the objectives on the patrol were, suitable tactical positions as well as observation positions. And so if we needed to, we could always utilize them that way. But generally speaking, we would try to be entrenched, before dark. I mean everybody would dig a fighting hole, in enough time so that an ambush could be set up if necessary. Or if we were going to do an ambush, which we didn't do every night, but we did most nights and certainly listening posts.

MAUNEY: How often did an ambush actually come to fruition, where you made contact with the enemy?

COTTRELL: That's sorta like the previous question. It varied.

MAUNEY: Because you said that, you know, they were trying not to be found. They were very much alluding your presence, your efforts.

COTTRELL: Well, they're, you know they're moving men and material South and, they didn't, it wasn't always, I mean they couldn't do it all on the Hồ Chí Minh Trail. So they, were in the countryside, of course this was an undeveloped countryside. There were no real, there were villages, but they were few and far between. Once you get back towards Quảng Tri, that's different. There were villages around there and lots more civilians. But, in the setting we were in, we made every effort to, be tactically secure, before sundown.

MAUNEY: When you were patrolling, would you have to just always be navigating terrain? Or would you follow pathways or any sorts of roads or kind of pre-cleared paths or did it vary?

COTTRELL: There weren't very many of those. We were following the terrain. It was map and compass. And, you know, the, the point, I was usually number four in line and, whoever the squad leader was ahead of me and a team ahead of him. Or a part of a team. And so, you know, he and I would, agree on the path or on the patrol route. We could change it if we wanted to. That was no problem at all. We

certainly had the liberty to do that and were encouraged to if we needed to.

MAUNEY: Did you guys, what was the primary patrol formation would you use? Is it mostly single file or how did you guys do it?

COTTRELL: It was a column.

MAUNEY: Column.

COTTRELL: We would sometimes have, it depended on the tactical situation and also the terrain, but, we might have flankers out some, to some, distance.

MAUNEY: Were booby traps ever a concern for you guys?

COTTRELL: When we would find a cache or a hospital or some other evidence of longer term, habitation by the NVA, we could expect, we were always worried about that. Probably as much a threat to us, and we lost, two men over time to land mines that we had planted. The so-called toe poppers, which actually could have been better called a foot popper.

MAUNEY: And those were American mines,

COTTRELL: Yea.

MAUNEY: That have been planted?

MAUNEY: And not,

COTTRELL: Yea.

MAUNEY: Okay.

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: That makes me think, you know, going back to this nighttime setting, you guys would set up at nighttime probably set a perimeter, did you guys put out Claymores or how did you establish a perimeter at night and how did you organize watch schedules or listening posts, things of that nature?

COTTRELL: Well, the listing posts would leave the perimeter at dark, and you know, establish radio contact when they were in their position and that was their position. The rest of the platoon or unit were arrayed

tactically, on the military crest, of the hill and, with fields of fire established, guns in place. We didn't necessarily put stakes out for fields of fire every place we went, but we certainly had a clear, everybody had a clear understanding of what their fields of fire were. And we had a watch system, which usually was, two men to a fighting hole, and so it was one-on, one-off. The frequency with which they would, the amount of time they had to sleep and the amount of time they had to be up was variable. It depended on the tactical situation and how tired everybody was.

MAUNEY: If a listening post detects something, what do they do?

COTTRELL: Well, the every hour or two hours, again, depending, they were to report in. And usually that report was solicited by the platoon radio operator, who would say something like, whatever their code name was, key, your handset if all secure key your handset twice. And if we didn't get anything, he would ask him again. And if he didn't get anything, he would ask if you have contact or if you have enemy in the vicinity, key your hand set once. And if that were the case, then we would just wait and see what developed. If they came back to the lines, if they were going to come back to the lines, there was another signal for that. And yet, if they felt like they had to, engage that noise, and then come back to the lines, you know, it varied a little bit how they did that, but usually there was communication, verbal communication, before that happened.

MAUNEY: Did you guys incorporate any type of pyrotechnics? Any type of signal plan?

COTTRELL: Oh yea, that was all part of the five paragraph order. We had some flares. We also had flares that we could request from the artillery batteries. And we also had what we call time on target, which was my job, was to, give the artillery folks, coordinates that I wanted them to shoot, during the night. And, so there was a lot of, coordination for the nighttime activities, both to protect the listening posts and ambushes, but also to do maximum damage to the enemy.

MAUNEY: At this time did you guys have illumination rounds, whether from artillery or mortarmen that you could call upon? And did you use them?

COTTRELL: We did.

MAUNEY: What would be the protocol for that? Were you ever concerned about using them? Was there ever a situation where you didn't

want to use them and how did you make the decision when to call for an illumination round?

COTTRELL: I guess it depended on whether there was, if there was a definite contact, and we weren't sure what the scope of it was. We would call for illumination.

MAUNEY: Did the enemy typically operate at nighttime or was it more of an accidental contact?

COTTRELL: Oh, no, they operated quite a bit at night.

MAUNEY: Did you guys ever maneuver yourselves at night or send out kind of probing patrols or anything of that nature?

COTTRELL: I don't remember any.

MAUNEY: Now what was kind of the typical kit, typical loadout for a Marine in that timeframe, whether it's weapons, gear, boots, uniform?

COTTRELL: Well, we had a lot of Korea era gear. The 782 gear, as it's called, included a pack, of course, a helmet and helmet cover, a helmet liner, and a flack jacket. Usually these were the plate style of flak jackets, which, in a nylon, vest. The Army had some nicer ones, but that's pretty much what everybody used was the ones with the, Kevlar plates in them. And, we had, pistol belts. We didn't have the, suspenders, in our unit. I know that some units did have them to help with the load bearing and, two canteens. Everybody had a table of organization, weapon, or two and those traded around a little bit, depending on the situation and who was on point and what kind of things we might be expecting in the terrain. And, then there was a pack, which contained your personal items, which turned out to be pretty Spartan after a while and your food. And maybe some letter writing gear. And, if you were so designated there might be some mortar rounds to carry or some Claymores. The radioman of course had radios. Every platoon, every platoon had, well, had four, PRC 25's, and the radio man carried the extra batteries for those. The person carrying the grenade launcher had a separate satchel with different types of grenade rounds in them and everybody had their own hand grenades. Usually numbering six to eight at a time. So the whole thing, weighed probably 40 to 50 pounds. And of course, your small arms ammunition.

MAUNEY: Did you guys use hand grenades a lot? Was the fighting close up usually or more distance?

COTTRELL: We did use hand grenades.

MAUNEY: How close would the enemy usually get or what was just a typical, if you could make a typical engagement? Was it close? Was it far?

COTTRELL: Close engagements were much more rare than more distant ones. I mean, everybody I think understands that you've got a lot better chance of surviving something if you send a round rather than an individual. And so a fire, fire support or fire suppression and fire power were the big players.

MAUNEY: Did you feel that your weapons, your gear, were adequate to the task? Especially in comparison to the enemy. Whether it's your rifles, mortars, machine guns, rockets, where's all that, did you feel that was adequate?

COTTRELL: Well, as I mentioned, we didn't have too many 81 millimeter mortars, but there were certainly times when the 60 millimeter mortar, even though it's much more portable and you can free tube it and it's more versatile in a tactical situation. The 81's would have been nice for at least at the battalion level, but as far as I know, we didn't have them. Or they weren't in support of our company. And, as far as, you know, we had standard issue, what then was standard issue, the officers and a couple of the individuals were, issued 45 caliber sidearms. And, usually there was at least one or two shotguns. When it came to rifles, when I first arrived, everybody had a M-14, and that was a fabulous rifle, is a fabulous rifle, accurate, a little heavier than an M-16, but it didn't jam. And we were very confident with them and we knew we could depend on them. The initial M-16, switchover, there was some jamming issues, and we did encounter some of those. But, I think overall the M-16 in its initial days and months and years were not as reliable as the AK 47. But, those problems were corrected and they certainly had the capacity to, expend more rounds in a given period of time than they M-14 did.

MAUNEY: Okay. When I think we'd talked previously, you mentioned the enemy having RPGs and perhaps you guys had a lacking rocket equivalency. Is that correct to say?

COTTRELL: I think that's accurate. We had LAWs, light anti-tank weapons, and we didn't have them all the time and we had them, when we thought we might encounter bunkers. We rarely encounter, I don't think we ever encountered tanks. And so, their purpose was modified for bunker use. The RPG is a much more versatile weapon, has more range, more accurate and more capacity.

MAUNEY: Everyone always wants to ask, what the food was like. What were the rations you carried like? What was the general feeling towards the rations, the field rations you would get?

COTTRELL: We had C rations. It was very very uncommon for us to encounter B rations, which were the next step up. Although they were all freeze dried, and so it was a mystery why they thought of them as stepped up, except that they were different. A little more exotic like steak. But the C rations, were our meals for the whole time. And, they came in, different menus, most of which were good. We were always hungry. They were designed to give us I think, 2,000 calories a day and we easily needed three [thousand]. But I could be wrong about that. And there was one meal which was not popular, which was ham and Lima beans and it had its own nickname of ham and mothers. And it was universally considered to be a bad draw. And it was up to the platoon sergeant or the right guide or the squad leaders to make sure everything was done equitably and nobody got the, ham and mothers too often.

MAUNEY: Did you have a favorite meal at all, particularly?

COTTRELL: Not really. I knew that there were people who did. And so there was a lot of trading that went on.

MAUNEY: Did you guys use tobacco pretty prevalently? Smoking or dipping or is any of that available?

COTTRELL: You know, every now and then we would get a box. I forget what it was called actually, which contained those kinds of things. Tropical chocolate, which was really a treat. Cigarettes, there was a cigarette or there was a small packet of cigarettes in, and matches in every C ration menu. So every time you got a meal, you got that as well as, you know, the utensils to eat it with. The other stuff didn't come all the time. It only came when there was a resupply. And, so we, I think everybody appreciated the meals as being convenient, although I'm sure we littered, Vietnam with, so many cans. You know, even though we tried to crush them and bury them, I'm sure it was a disaster when we left. And I was surprised and interested to see in the Vietnam [Ken Burns] documentary how the North Vietnamese officer said that they always knew where we were because they could smell us with the smoke. And, we thought about that, but not right away. And we only had, we tried to choose the time when it was alright to smoke, and it wasn't all the time, that's for sure.

MAUNEY: Were men prohibited from smoking at nighttime or was it okay?

COTTRELL: It was prohibited depending on the tactical situation.

MAUNEY: Did anyone ever use chewing tobacco? Was that ever a thing?

COTTRELL: Those boxes I mentioned that contained the more uncommon and more conceivably luxurious items. Like the chocolate and there was chewing tobacco in those, but not very much. It's certainly not enough to go around. And there were some people, who did use it, but not much because it sort of robs you of your saliva.

MAUNEY: Did you yourself ever smoke or partake in any of that type of stuff?

COTTRELL: I smoked while I was in the Marine Corps.

MAUNEY: In thinking about your men and things like that, was there ever, any particular issues that arose amongst the men that you had to deal with or solve?

COTTRELL: Oh yeah. Sure.

MAUNEY: Is there any that stuck out to you, particular any moments?

COTTRELL: Well, in some ways the most important of those types of, issues was one that didn't happen. We had a very cosmopolitan platoon. I think every Marine Corps platoon has an Indian, a Native American, and he is, universally called chief and, they are always valuable, and they're as good a Marine as any Marine. We did have African-Americans, this was at a time when the Black Panthers were, stalking the world, particularly in the U.S. And, so there was a certain opportunity there for racial tension. My impression is that happened a great deal more in the battalion headquarters area in Quảng Tri, or in LZ Vandegrift. But, I didn't experience it and I think it had to do with the strength of my squad leaders and an understanding that everybody had, that we were in it together. It's, I was, I don't mean to say that it didn't happen, but it didn't happen with our platoon.

MAUNEY: Were you close with your squad leaders?

COTTRELL: Well, let's I think I could say I was, I mean, there's always that distance you have to keep. They had to understand that they couldn't, walk on me. And, I think they understood that and appreciated that. I think they appreciated the fact that I'd been an enlisted man first. There was some, there were some issues with alcohol. I mean, they had it in their packs. They knew, you know, it was, it was the squad leader's responsibility to make sure that it

didn't get used unless we were in a position where we could, which was usually, I mean, it was very few and far between. And, that responsibility fell to them and I expected them to take care of it. We never had any drugs. I never smelled pot in the 13 months, 12 plus months I was with my platoon or company. And, you know, I mentioned that I was with a platoon for eight months and then I became the executive officer of an adjacent company, Mike Company and then very, very briefly was, the company commander. And, yet we didn't have that problem. We were lucky in that way. We knew that it did occur particularly in the rear where, people were more idle, where the tactical situation wasn't as tense. And I think that's what saved us.

MAUNEY: You know, you mentioned some of these tensions or racial tensions, were you guys, whether it's that, or anything else, how aware were you of events unfolding back home, whether it was racial tensions or anti-war protest or politics or just anything at all? How aware were you of those types of things?

COTTRELL: Well, from time to time, when there was a resupply, even if it's just new Marines, much less, C rations or ammunition, we would, get the Stars and Stripes and that was our source. A couple of people had radios. They of course were tactically inappropriate, but my guess is that down deep in a fighting hole someplace, somebody probably did listen, but I think that, the Stars and Stripes were our main source of information. Radio Vietnam was something we would hear from time to time. But we, there were filters that kept us from having the whole picture and it wasn't purposeful. It just was not practical.

MAUNEY: Did you guys receive care packages, letters from home? How frequent was that?

COTTRELL: Yes we did. They made a lot of it. They spent a lot of effort to get those to us. I can remember getting care packages and being able to send letters out. I think we were pretty, I think everybody was a pretty good correspondent that had somebody who cared about them. Of course, particularly if you're coordinating your RNR was with another person, that was an important reason for correspondence. How frequent were they? It depended, I mean, they were, whenever possible they accompanied a resupply of tactically important things.

MAUNEY: Did you yourself frequently correspond with back home with parents? You mentioned you had a fiancé. Did you correspond back home a lot or?

COTTRELL: I did. I sent letters to my parents and to her, up until the point where, she didn't want to correspond anymore.

MAUNEY: Did that have an effect on you? At that time when she stopped corresponding.

COTTRELL: It was discouraging. It was depressing, but not for long. I mean, in a situation like that, you just simply have to move on. And you, I mean, you really do have to move on and in a much more compressed timeframe than you might if you were back in the States, for instance.

MAUNEY: If you ever sensed, maybe even yourself or your men getting unfocused, how did you deal with that? Or how would you identify it and if you identified it, how would you try to get them back on track?

COTTRELL: I relied on the NCOs a lot for that. If I noticed it and they didn't, or if they did and I did also, we would discuss it and we would say, you know, we would take measures to make sure people were more tactically aware or perform their duties better. We were always alert for discipline problems, whether it be distance between us on the March, so to speak, or whether it be noise discipline or whether it be, [Pause] communication amongst ourselves when information needed to travel. We were pretty diligent about that. I don't think I ever had, I know it happened just like the race stuff and just like the drugs. I know it happened, but to the best of my knowledge, nobody ever sandbagged a patrol on me, or an ambush, I mean, or a listening post. Nobody failed to go to the place they were supposed to be. I think in part because they were really good Marines. But also in part because they knew that I was planning to have fire support for them, and they didn't want to be in the wrong place. So we had an understanding that was largely and probably mostly based on understanding of the mission. And what it meant to be a Marine in that situation. But, I think, you know, there were some very practical things that kept everybody focused and on target.

MAUNEY: Were casualties a frequent occurrence, and did you ever have Marines that struggled with any type of casualty or KIA [Killed in Action] of a friend or someone near them? And if so, how do you refocus that type of situation?

COTTRELL: [pause] Probably the thing that shook the most people up was the two times that we lost people from our own landmines. And, we really didn't expect it. Nobody told us they were there. And one of these was on the outskirts of Khe Sanh and the battalion

commander was interested in making sure that everyone from Hồ Chí Minh to the regimental, or the division commander, knew that he could go back there anytime he wanted to. And we did. And one of the Marines lost his foot in that process, just on a patrol outside the wire. And, on another occasion it was quite remote. And, we were a long way from the rest of the company. And I think that really shook everybody up. It took some, it took some finessing. You know, to do that we in the immediate moment after we got back to the security of the rest of the unit, we made sure that nobody, you know, I think that the NCOs and I and the platoon sergeant didn't sleep. We just went from hole, to hole, to hole and made sure that everybody was not consumed and not distracted by that event. Subsequently, we were able to make sure that we got every piece of information we could about their welfare after they left us. And that helped everybody too.

MAUNEY: Was there an approximate amount of overall casualties that your particular platoon had?

COTTRELL: We didn't have anywhere near the casualties that many units did. It's just the way those things went. I mean, that book, Matterhorn, is, as I've told you is a book about the war I experienced, but that lieutenant was in charlie 1/4, and I was in kilo 3/4. We were in the same area. We occupied the same hills from time to time. We had the same mission. We had the same tactical situation, but they encountered the enemy more than we did. And he brings that out. He brings out, but everything else, you know, all the long arduous marches in terrain of the North of the demilitarized zone. Were probably as much of a danger to us as the NVA were. I mean, it was different, but it was the thing we encountered more. And, so the answer I think to your question is that we all experienced some contact and we all experienced some intense contact and we all operated with the same mission and did the best we could.

MAUNEY: Do you think there was ever, extra pressure being that you were the platoon commander, you know, and if you had something that you needed to get off your chest, or if you were struggling with anything, whether it was personal, or job-related, was there an outlet for that for you?

COTTRELL: Not really. Not really. Although, there was a time, when the then operations officer seemed to be available to me more than I expected, or more than any battalion level officer had ever been. We had ministers and priests from time to time just for a service on a Sunday, if the situation warranted. And we were close to where they were, but they were certainly not a frequent visitor to us. And

so the traditional outlets for or, opportunities for counseling or for respite of someone to talk to were not part of the condition of the rifle platoon commander.

MAUNEY: Do you feel as though your personal faith, you mentioned growing up, you guys would at least attend church do you feel like your personal faith was affected at all during this time in Vietnam, or did you rely on it?

COTTRELL: No.

MAUNEY: No. Did you find that there were good outlets for your men if they were struggling with something personal or professional? Did they have good outlets for themselves?

COTTRELL: Well, it's this, you know, it flows both ways in this command structure. And I'm sure it's true in all the services. They have, the individual Marine has a fire team leader, he has a squad leader, he has the platoon sergeant, and he has me. And if everybody below me can't do it, then it comes to me, and it did from time to time. But I think that the squad leaders in large part were the ones who handled it. Those and the fire team leaders, I think they were all so much more intimately involved with their men, even though we were just, you know, we were a small group and we existed in a very intimate way, they were in the same hole with them all the time, and they were much more, available to them. And so I think those folks really bore the brunt of it.

MAUNEY: When, you know you're out there and you're fighting and there's lots going on, when you're the commander though, or platoon commander, do you feel an extra burden or sense of responsibility, especially if someone is injured or killed? Would you, did you feel an extra sense of burden being in command?

COTTRELL: [pause] What do you think?

MAUNEY: Well, I have my own opinions from my own experiences, but yeah.

COTTRELL: Of course.

MAUNEY: Right. I know my experience too. I noticed that corpsman tend to take things, you know, much harder I think because their role on the battlefield is lifesaving. And when they aren't able to perform that task, no matter how impossible the task is, I found for, you know, my own Marines and corpsman that that was, I just happened to notice, that everyone's impacted, but they were

always very significantly impacted, especially afterwards. They had a pretty, hard time with that. I think that because, that was their primary job on the battlefield.

COTTRELL: Yeah, I think your war and mine are different in the sense that you, and those corpsman experienced more catastrophic wounds, and they were life changing. It's said that the Vietnam War did more to advance the field of orthopedic medicine than any other event in history. And yet, the War on Terror and all of its different parts, is characterized by, much more catastrophic wounds, and it's easy to believe that a corpsman would be more effected. I don't want to diminish the fact that my corpsman were affected, but I think there probably was an order of magnitude difference.

MAUNEY: Right. Did you feel your medical kits, your tourniquets, were adequate to the task?

COTTRELL: Yeah, I mean, we didn't, the science of a tourniquet was pretty, much was learned between Vietnam and subsequent conflicts about the use of a tourniquet. The battle dressing, and to a lesser degree the tourniquet, were the important tools of the corpsman in our war. And, that's not to say that they didn't have other skills like suturing and that sort of thing, but their big job was to treat shock and to prevent blood loss, additional blood loss. Because the time, because of the hell, except for the different parts of the monsoon season, notably those, you know, those five days without food, and other small periods like that where the helicopters wouldn't fly. Then the whole situation changed. You know, in the Marine Corps, pilots are held responsible for their aircraft. In the Army, they aren't. And, it made a big difference on decision making as far as when to fly, the types of ceilings and the types of weather conditions, the types of tactical situations. And, we never knew whether that was the case, but there were certainly times when it took us a day to get a medevac, for instance, for a wound. And whereas most of the time they came right away, and sometimes the Army came. And so, that triage of shock and blood loss served the corpsman pretty well.

MAUNEY: So, with this differing, viewpoints between Army and Marine Corps pilots, would it be safe to say the Army would, they take more risks then or, and the Marine Corps pilots were more cautious because they're responsible?

COTTRELL: Well, I think that, like I said, that the decision of whether to fly was in the Army not encumbered by that sense of, or that obligation of responsibility.

MAUNEY: Typically, I know you said monsoons and other things can affect it, but typically medevacs could occur quickly you felt or in an adequate amount of time?

COTTRELL: Well, yeah, I mean, you know, when an operation is taking place, even if it's just a search and patrolling type environment, the battalion has an understanding with the airwing that they will have medevac capabilities. You know, they rely on them to distribute their resources according to the tactical situation, whether it's for resupply or whether it's for medevacs or whether it's, they do dual duty.

MAUNEY: I don't know if it's the same way. I feel like it's been kind of this sort of thing for awhile now in the military where the commanding officer has to write a letter home, if someone in his unit is killed in action. And I remember one of our Marines, the father later on posted the letter on Facebook. So I know for sure that it does happen. Was that something that was, common when you were in command?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: And would that be, platoon commander, company commander? I mean who would do that, or how many would be sent? Or just one letter was sent, or how did that work?

COTTRELL: I don't ever remember the company commander duplicating my letters.

MAUNEY: Did you, when writing those letters, did you have a particular approach to doing that? Or things, or points you'd like to emphasize?

COTTRELL: Well, of course the circumstances of the Marine's death, have a bearing. If it was an accidental discharge, or some other area of negligence, which did happen, or if it was friendly fire, then that would be, perhaps a different tone, for the letter. But generally, you know what I think, even then, at my very immature 21 years of age, I think I felt like what parents and relatives and loved ones wanted to know most, hear most, was that their Marine was doing his job, was brave. Was a valuable member of the unit and was loved by everybody.

MAUNEY: Right. You know, it's interesting. I know a lot of guys do this. I didn't, for some reason. Alot of people will write a letter in the event that they personally are killed and they'll keep it on their person or give it to someone. I never did. I felt like it was almost like bad,

COTTRELL: Karma.

MAUNEY: Karma. And I also kept, this is weird, I kept my wallet with all my credit cards and IDs in my back pocket, the entire time, Because I felt like if I kept it in my back out on all patrols, everywhere I went, I certainly didn't need my wallet and, but I kept it there because I felt like if it stayed in my back pocket that one day I would need it again. I would be in a situation where I would need to use a credit card again. So I would just keep it there as like a weird piece of like, positive intent or something. And did you do anything like that, or?

COTTRELL: Well, no, we were in fact, we weren't allowed to. I mean it was information that might fall in the enemy's hands and be used in propaganda or other means of intimidation and, that was verboten. And, you know, our letters home, we could keep in our packs, but we didn't keep things like that. We had our dog tags and that was it.

MAUNEY: Did you have any, I don't know, like out of the box things like me and my wallet? Do you have any type of superstition or things you did, or didn't do, or kept, or didn't keep, because you felt as though that would help you in some matter in any way?

COTTRELL: Help me make a deal with the devil?

MAUNEY: Something?

COTTRELL: No.

MAUNEY: No.

COTTRELL: I don't remember anything like that anyway. Maybe I did, but I don't remember it.

MAUNEY: You know, I was reading in the book, Matterhorn, that some guys had these short-timer sticks. Did you guys ever do anything like that? Was there any type of thing around when someone was nearing the end of their tour? Which I guess also goes to the question, did you guys have a lot of constant rotation? Or did you kind of come and go as an entire unit, as an entire battalion, or platoon? Or did people cycle out a lot?

COTTRELL: I think I mentioned that earlier. This was in the days before that lesson was learned. And so we came and went as individuals. If we came with someone else at the same time, we might rotate with them. But no, we came and went as individuals, and I don't remember any sticks. I'm sure they were there, but nobody ever

had them in their hands. They were, if they ever went anywhere, they were in their packs. And because we just needed your hands free. People would often doodle on their helmet covers, the number of days with, you know, a scratch, through the tick mark, and maybe even, words to the effect of, you know, 30 days and a wake up or something of that nature, or a short timer. But, the sticks I don't remember seeing any, even though, if they had them, we probably did too. It was the same time frame, same everything.

MAUNEY: So you were, and you've mentioned this already, but you're a platoon commander, and then you moved to the XO or executive officer position. What was the reason for that move?

COTTRELL: When I first got to Vietnam, the typical tour for a lieutenant was, X number of months, usually no more than six, five or six, in the bush with a platoon. And then they would become a staff officer or some other billet, maybe even at regiment. That didn't appeal to me and I don't know why. I don't remember thinking it through exactly, but what I really signed on for was to be a platoon leader. And, that's what I did. The executive officer function was the billet was the first lieutenant and I was a first lieutenant as a platoon commander and yet, there was an executive officer needed in my company. And the tradition typically was you become a platoon commander, then you become executive officer, and then you become a company, this is the grooming for a company commander. And, you learn things as an executive officer that you will use and depend on as a company commander, you step up, you go beyond the responsibilities of a platoon commander, but you know that because you've just spent time doing it. And at that point in time, in fact, all through my time in Vietnam and also for a year plus, after I got back, my goal was to stay in the Marine Corps and be a career officer. And, so that was the progression for my rank, and that's what I did.

MAUNEY: And what month and year did you make this move from platoon commander to executive officer? Do you recall?

COTTRELL: I think it was February or March. I really don't recall, frankly.

MAUNEY: And are we into 1969 at this point?

COTTRELL: Mhmm.

MAUNEY: Okay. And how long were you the executive officer, approximately-ish?

COTTRELL: Four months.

MAUNEY: And then what happened at the end of that four months?

COTTRELL: The company commander rotated and,Swe were over next to the South China sea and we were in a much more open and exposed area and we were operating more as a company. And, we had just come out of the more common, type of terrain that we were operating in the Northern part of the DMZ, I should say the central and Western part of the DMZ. And so, there definitely was a need for a company commander, so I did that for a week or two. And then a captain rotated in and took on that role.

MAUNEY: And then where'd you go once that captain came?

COTTRELL: Back to executive officer.

MAUNEY: Back to executive officer.

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: And then, so what month did you leave Vietnam where you finished, and got to go home?

COTTRELL: August.

MAUNEY: August of 1969?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: Did you, were you in the field and engaged all the way up until that moment, or did you have a time where you kind of came back and did some type of staff duty or something?

COTTRELL: The short answer is no. The executive officer has more need, to go back and get payroll and, or take prisoners, or do legal duties. There was a situation, and this is what I alluded to when I was talking about bootcamp. The husky voiced drill instructor named, well I won't mention his name, but he announced to all of us, that he was, he had his orders, he was going to Vietnam. And, as an executive officer, I had the duty to take a prisoner from a different unit to Da Nang to the brig. And, so I did that. And, I was walking back towards the landing field to get a chopper back North. And this truck passes me and comes to a halt. And, of course you have to remember, you know, nobody wore insignias. That was stupid. And, so I'm just a Marine walking along, he pulls over and he says, you want a ride? And I hop in and, as I hear him say, do you want a ride? I'm thinking, I know that, I know that voice. And I got in and I

looked at him and sure enough, it was him. And, he looked at me and he said, do I know you? Actually, he said, do I know you? And I said, yes you do, Sergeant Massie. So, we talked for a little while and the [laughter] funny part is that, it turns out, he was in the third division band and, that was his duty, that he was going to in Vietnam, that he told us about in the [boot camp] squad bay. And he was some surprised to learn that I was a lieutenant.

MAUNEY: [laughter]

COTTRELL: Anyway.

MAUNEY: That is a good story. Was he still in the band then?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: Did you ever find out what instrument he played? Did he tell you?

COTTRELL: Trumpet.

MAUNEY: Trumpet. Okay. Yeah I had a friend who was a trumpet player and he loved it. And he bragged about it and I was like, hey man, good for you man. If you love the trumpet or the French Horn, whatever, it was like, I'm glad you found a niche that you found, you know, pride and fulfillment in, you know, it takes everything. Yeah, was there, you know, was there ever a divide, in your timeframe, between, you know, we had grunts and POGs you know, POGs were persons other than grunts, they were not infantry. Was there ever this divide or rivalry?

COTTRELL: Sure.

MAUNEY: Was it pretty prevalent or more just kind of fun?

COTTRELL: More fun.

MAUNEY: More fun.

COTTRELL: I mean, if somebody was using being a POG to get out of being a grunt that wasn't as well tolerated. But generally speaking, people, you know, we all knew you did what the Marine Corps said you should do. You were given an MOS or you were given a job because you have a skill set that somebody else doesn't have. And that's just the way it is.

MAUNEY: Right before we start like leaving Vietnam, you know, you spent that time as a company commander, did you enjoy that role? I know you were briefly in it, but how did that go for you?

COTTRELL: That was very stressful. It's one thing to maneuver squads. It's another thing to maneuver platoons and think of all the things that were needed at that time. No, it was something that I did out of necessity and because I was told to do it, but I'm pretty sure it was something I was not as well prepared for as I could have been.

MAUNEY: Were you in the same company when you became a company commander?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: And that was 3/4, which company was it?

COTTRELL: Mike.

MAUNEY: Mike. And were you always in 3/4 Mike or did you ever bounce around within the battalion or anything?

COTTRELL: I was always in 3/4 and it was either kilo or mike.

MAUNEY: Kilo or mike. Okay. And so when you were, what is a short timer, how much time are you considered to be a short timer?

COTTRELL: Well, it depends on the individual.

MAUNEY: [laughter]

COTTRELL: But usually it's days.

MAUNEY: Days?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: Did...

COTTRELL: But you know, I mean if at the end of 12 months, if you've only got one more month to go, you're a short timer.

MAUNEY: Right. Right. Did you ever feel, as you were leaving, I don't know what moment it was, when you finally left the field and maybe you were at a larger base or, was there a moment where you realized, I made it. Like I'm alive and unless something really bizarre happens,

for all intents and purposes, I made it. And, I guess what was that point and how did that feel?

COTTRELL: I think it was kind of a surreal period. It really wasn't a point in time. You could sense that the potential for harm, personal harm was declining, and it became more precipitous as everyday passed. I don't think after I left the field, I don't think I was in country for more than a week before I was in Okinawa.

MAUNEY: Right. And I know you mentioned that first firefight where you get the lip would, were you ever injured throughout your deployment ever again or was that...

COTTRELL: Oh yeah.

MAUNEY: You were?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: Was it multiple times, and similar type injuries or what were those?

COTTRELL: There were some other shrapnel incidents. But I was, and we never really learned what, we had bridge security on the Cam Lộ River and it was either a mine placed during the night or it was a round, I really don't know which probably, a shot in the leg, or you know, impacted in the leg, and that, and even that, you know, that took me back to the battalion aid station, to have it looked at and you know, to do something to continue to stop the bleeding. And, then, I had two days in the company area to cleanse it. And, then it was back to the field.

MAUNEY: If you're, if I'm not mistaken, if you're wounded a certain amount of times you go home.

COTTRELL: Well, yeah, I think there's some interpretation in there. Three was the number. Three wounds or if you had a sibling killed, or if you had a particular type of wound. You could be rotated in advance of your normal time.

MAUNEY: And you said shrapnel wounds are pretty common. So that probably wasn't a particular type of wound that would...

COTTRELL: For some of them were severe enough that they qualified. Yes.

MAUNEY: Right, right. And when you went back to the battalion aid station, how long were you at that, and did you immediately go right back to

your platoon or company right after it, following that healing process?

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: How long were you in this medical process before you got to go back to the field?

COTTRELL: Four days.

MAUNEY: Four days. And would they actually helicopter you right back out or was it kind of an arduous journey?

COTTRELL: No, no, no, we were in a situation where all the helicopters, it was the major jumping off point for resupply, for operations, where you know, where larger size units had to congregate first.

MAUNEY: Okay.

COTTRELL: So it wasn't hard to get a chopper.

MAUNEY: So, we had your platoon commander time, your XO time, your company commander time, you are, short timer, and then you're finally going home. And you said there's only probably a week or so gap between leaving the field and actually getting to Okinawa. Was that correct?

COTTRELL: Mhmm.

MAUNEY: Did you spend any amount of time in Okinawa or was it just a layover and then a flight?

COTTRELL: I think it was roughly another week, maybe a little less. You had to wait for space on the plane and some people wanted to pick up gifts. Some people wanted to take a more leisurely approach to going home. But, in my case, it was about a week.

MAUNEY: Did you ever, were you allowed any sort of like liberty or time out in town or were you...

COTTRELL: Oh, sure.

MAUNEY: Okay.

COTTRELL: Yeah, we were in casual situation. We weren't assigned to a unit.

MAUNEY: And I guess you would go out in uniform? You didn't have civilian clothes packed away somewhere?

COTTRELL: I don't remember that I did. I think we were still in jungle fatigues.

MAUNEY: Did the Marine Corps allow...

COTTRELL: Utilities.

MAUNEY: Right. Did the Marine Corps allow RNR during deployments?

COTTRELL: Yes. Everybody got two weeks. If you had a spouse, or if you could fanangle it, you could go to Australia, or Hawaii and meet your spouse there, or your significant other as they say these days. And, otherwise there was a variety of places you could go. And, so yeah, that was what everybody looked forward to and hated to come back from and probably lives on in their memories as much as anything else.

MAUNEY: And for you, where did you go and at what point in your, you said 12 or 13 months total in Vietnam, is that correct?

COTTRELL: Mhmm.

MAUNEY: At what point in that 12 or 13 months did you get RNR and where did you go?

COTTRELL: I don't remember where it fit in, frankly. I went to Okinawa because a lieutenant that I had come into the country with had been gravely wounded. And, it wasn't really clear whether he was going to survive or not. And I also had a friend who was a sergeant from my hometown, who was in Okinawa. So I went there and, you know it wasn't the most glamorous or exotic place to go, but it was all right.

MAUNEY: Did you, I don't know, feel recharged after that or just rejuvenated?

COTTRELL: Well, [laughter] I was sitting in a bar in Okinawa when they landed on the moon and it was being televised. And the bar girls couldn't believe it. They thought it was a fake. They thought it was, not a joke necessarily, but a skit. And, that was pretty funny. Did I feel rejuvenated? I really wanted to get back to my platoon, frankly. It was mixed feelings of course, but, you know, I'd done what I wanted to do there and it's time to get back to work.

MAUNEY: So, yeah. Now you're leaving, now you're going back home. Are you going back home in the sense that you're going to be discharged and get out of the Marine Corps now?

COTTRELL: No. No.

MAUNEY: No. What was, I guess, what was the next steps? We fly home and then you fly into California?

COTTRELL: We did fly into California. We flew into San Francisco and my friend's parents picked me up again. Went to El Toro, got a plane across the country from LA and had orders at that time to go to Second Marine Division, back to Second Marine Division. But there was leave, you know, everybody had 30 days leave.

MAUNEY: When did leave start? Did you have to report in to Second Marine Division first and then go on leave or is it directly?

COTTRELL: No, no, I could, I was on leave when I left.

MAUNEY: And where did you go, back home or?

COTTRELL: Mhmm.

MAUNEY: How was, yeah how was that process going from, sounds like you're only a few weeks removed from, or maybe a month removed, from the field to...

COTTRELL: Two weeks.

MAUNEY: Two weeks, to being back home in Frederick? Would that...

COTTRELL: Yeah. Well, you know, the airport environment was kind of funny. The plane had civilians on it. The one that left Vietnam and, no, the one that left Okinawa, excuse me, you know, it was a civilian aircraft. And, there were Asians as well as Caucasians. And it was an immersion into, you know, a culture where it was more complex. And, you know, I don't want to imply that I had any wits about me. I don't want to imply that I was smart at still 21 years of age, or worldly, or thoughtful even. But I, found it just unsettling to be in amongst all those people who's purpose was not something I understood like I had for the last year. Understood every bit of what was going on around me. So, and then in the environments of the airports, there were side long glances. Of course I was in uniform and, there were some mutterings. I don't think anybody ever spoke out to me in a derogatory way, but it wasn't, nobody certainly came

up to me and said, thank you or, and we didn't expect that frankly, we just didn't expect to be vilified either. And, in fact, I don't think we really knew what to expect and, we just wanted to go home. And that's what we did. My parents were there and my, to meet me and, my former fiance actually was there too, which didn't make a lot of sense to me, but, that happened. And, yeah. And then various relatives and friends came by and, spent time with me at home. My brother asked me if I wanted to go camping and I declined. And, you know, I understood why he said that, but, it wasn't the most thoughtful thing he could have said. Anyway, yeah, so it just was a reimmersion of, you know, getting used to things again. And, I think the human nature is such that ,that's pretty easy to do, unless you really are in the throws of, a mental disarray. Fortunately we didn't have a lot of contact right in that week or two before I left and I wasn't involved in any of it, directly. So, maybe that was the beginning of coming home. I'm not sure. But, you know, and I knew that I had done my job and that I had another job waiting for me, at Camp LeJeune. And, I was very glad to be out of the war zone.

MAUNEY: Did you go into the homecoming process with any preconceived notions or just?

COTTRELL: No, no, not really. I mean, my parents wanted to put, my parents lived in an apartment, on the second floor of an apartment complex and they had a balcony and they wanted to put a welcome home banner up. And the establisment wouldn't let them do that and that my dad felt like that was a statement that they were making and he was pretty upset about it, you know, that came and went pretty quickly.

MAUNEY: Were you aware of when you were coming home, were you aware of any of the tensions back home or any antiwar sentiments?

COTTRELL: Oh yes.Yeah, it wasn't hard to, you know, sit in an airport for a while, and in fact, in the period of time we were in Okinawa, we watched television. So, we were able to see it.

MAUNEY: Did you have any feelings when you, or thoughts, when you saw these things and going back home?

COTTRELL: Well, you know, as I mentioned, I don't think I was a particularly thoughtful person then. I was pretty young and, had had an intense experience of some duration. And, I felt, I feel like the dominant thought for me was a resentment of them, of those who were protesting the war. I don't think I realized at that point how rampant the, mismanagement of the war was. And, the political nature of the

war. I do know that we were very conscious of the fact that we had opportunities to do more damage to the enemy than we were allowed. And, so that was, that certainly was the case. And, yet that didn't have a bearing on really reacting to the people who were objecting to the war. I think we all felt like we had done an honorable thing and, had served our country. And, the fact that they weren't, lining the streets to welcome us home, in part was because we were dribs and drabs coming home. You know, that was the, units in and of themselves didn't come home until the end. And they were peopled by a whole different cast of characters then when they went. And, so, it was a very artificial situation and, hard to get your head around. And I think that we just did the best we could again, and waded through it, confident that, that the values that we had that had sent us there were still good values.

MAUNEY: You said something interesting. Did you then, and do you feel even now that you were held back by, or the war effort was held back by military commanders, or politicians, or anything like that?

COTTRELL: Yes. We spent a lot of time, filling out after action reports, that, you know, that were, required. And, I can understand this. I don't think it was necessarily artificial in its emphasis. People need to know how many were wounded, how many died, how many casualties of the enemy there were, because it was important tactically. How many weapons were captured, if any prisoners were taken and that sort of thing. So,and yet, in retrospect, I realized that, you know, those numbers, just like political statements now, were altered by those whose purpose was served by it. And that felt awkward to me. That felt disingenuous.

MAUNEY: At the time in particular, did you have any thoughts or feelings towards, I think you mentioned earlier at President [Lyndon B.] Johnson or [Robert S.] McNamara, or [Richard M.] Nixon or anything of that nature?

COTTRELL: Well, not them particularly. Nixon never impressed me very much, as a person, the way he came across. The, McNamara was an intellect. I didn't know untill much later, what a charlatan he was in terms of his approach. [Gen. William C.] Westmorland on the other hand was always known to be a bumbling idiot. And, even for us, even down at the platoon level, we knew that Westmoreland really didn't have his act together at all. And, you know, later, other details would emphasize that. But, you know, the Marine Corps holds itself separate from the rest of the services and does its job. I don't think seeks to judge the other services except to take pride in what we

do. And as my, one of my squad leaders once said, we know what we did.

MAUNEY: Right. That's a good point. I know from my wars, people have different feelings about when areas that we fought for that you know, subsequently lost and taken back over by the enemy. Did you, or do you have any thoughts or feelings about how Vietnam turned out, or was it more just an appreciation for the experience you had with your men? And that was enough. I don't know how you feel about that, but?

COTTRELL: If I understand the question correctly, I know that there was give and take of territory and, it's well described in the, in the book [Matterhorn], and, we experienced that. And I think that that's a feature of the evolution of warfare. It's a, there are no longer long lines, the operating unit is no longer the regiment and there are no long lines, of advancing soldiers. And over time that, you know, the evolution of warfare and weapons has kept that from, you know, has done away with that type of tactical approach to a conflict. And so it seems only natural to me that, in a guerilla or a, small unit type war, it's going to be inevitable that there's land which is contested, taken or not taken and retaken and, as long as there's a tactical reason for it, then, it's just a fact of life. It is, disconcerting, it is humbling to attempt to, well, retake ground that you once occupied. But, as I said, I think it's inevitable. As far as, bitterness or criticism for the need to do that, I don't have any. As far as appreciation for, and, I think, for the experience that I had and for the opportunity I had to lead those particular men, I'm, I think it's safe to say I'll be eternally grateful.

MAUNEY: Are you able to still keep in contact with some of those men?

COTTRELL: Well, it's a, it's an amazing thing, but, the one casualty that we had from landmines, and, on the outskirts of Khe Sanh, did subsequently die, not from his wounds, but from the aftermath. Definitely associated with his time in war and in the Marine Corps. The other one, went on to be a corrections officer, in New York and lived an exemplary life, had children. And I have, I'm still in contact with him after admittedly a long hiatus. We did get back together and on the anniversary of his wound, third November last year, we got together again with his family, and that was good. The other ones, the other squad leaders, I still, I know where they are. I email them regularly, one of them who is sort of been the glue that's kept us all together. I probably email every day and, have been to his wedding. And I've been visited by he and the machine gun squad

leader and, so yes, I'm in touch with them. And, not many of the enlisted men beyond them, but certainly with them.

MAUNEY: Has your unit ever had like a reunion of sorts or?

COTTRELL: 3/4 has a reunion, but frankly, and so did my basic school class. But frankly, I'm not much of a reunion guy.

MAUNEY: Any particular reason or?

COTTRELL: Well, the people I really relate to were not the people. I mean, I certainly value my friendships, particularly with the two individuals, that I've mentioned at different times in this interview. One of whom was a high school friend and, who joined independent of me, and, I saw in the OCS class. And the other one with whom I was enlisted at Parris Island. And then, he became a helicopter pilot. And, those two guys I really enjoy seeing. The former Director of the FBI, Robert Mueller, was in my class, in The Basic School, and I used to correspond just a little, Oh well, he and I have exchanged notes once or twice. But really aside from that, I've been to a couple of the reunions, and it became clear to me that those relationships, although valuable, were not the real relationships that I cherish from that year plus. And, so the other ones are the ones I work on and put energy into.

MAUNEY: You think it's because those were your squad leaders and you guys have worked so intimately together? Is that..

COTTRELL: Sure. Yeah. I mean, we were the operational unit and The Basic School was a training situation and while there was comradery I have to remind you, I was a 20 year old, I passed my 21st birthday in a fighting hole in North Vietnam, or on the edge of North Vietnam. And so, I was two years or so behind all those guys. Maybe three or four years behind all those guys. They had world and life experiences that I didn't have. And they had been to college. They had in some cases married. A couple of them had families. Some of them had been career Marines, well a couple of them in the enlisted ranks. But they were in a whole different world for me. So, those friendships were real, but they weren't as intense or as long lasting as the other ones.

MAUNEY: Right. I kind of just want to briefly go back to, you know, you come home, you have your 30 days leave. What was it like, you know, finally seeing your family and particularly your mother? I know, I can remember that for me coming home from Afghanistan and that

was the reunion I was looking forward to the most. How did you feel about that?

COTTRELL: It was great to see my mother and father. I know it was great relief to them that I was, able to get home, come home. They had some questions about, but they just had a respectful silence, and they just were, my parents.

MAUNEY: Right. I gotta ask, how did you solve the situation with the fiance who apparently came back around after she had quit?

COTTRELL: No she didn't come around. She just wanted, she just didn't want to cut me loose, without talking it through. And we did and she left. And that was that.

MAUNEY: That was that. And so you spent the whole thirty days at home and then you go back to Camp Lejeune?

COTTRELL: Yes.

MAUNEY: And then what was your, how did the, I know you expressed that you wanted to maybe be a career Marine.

COTTRELL: Mhmm.

MAUNEY: How did your career upon returning from Vietnam, how did it unfold from there?

COTTRELL: Well, I was assigned to, the Second Marines and we were assigned to go. In those days there were, the Marines of course are a fighting unit that fights on land, air and sea. And, one of the missions of the Marine Corps is to protect U.S. nationals, either in embassy duty or in the countries where they are doing diplomatic duty or humanitarian duty. And, in order to do that, the Marine Corps has to have some sort of force afloat that can respond, to international situations. They did that in those days, by having a unit, a battalion, afloat in the Caribbean, and a battalion afloat in the Mediterranean. And, I was not fortunate enough to go to the Mediterranean, but I was fortunate enough to go to the Caribbean. And so we trained on land, for a month and a half or so. And then we, embarked, from Norfolk and, went afloat for six months. And that was the last of the six month Caribbean cruises. They went on much shorter rotations after that, but it was a grand time. We went into a number of things, a number of places. The training that we did to extract U.S. nationals, as a unit, took place on an island, which was a naval bombardment range. And off the coast of Puerto Rico called Vegas,

which has now been given back and is a destination, a tourist destination, I'm told. So we had opportunities for liberty in Puerto Rico proper, and we really enjoyed that. The old town Puerto Rico, was most interesting. But we went on hikes and tours around too. Then we went to other islands and we went to Curacao and we went to, I'm trying to think, give me some Caribbean names.

MAUNEY: I was trying to think too. I don't even know. And don't tell anyone. I took a class in the Caribbean, so don't tell anyone I can't remember. I had to memorize all the nations.

COTTRELL: I think we had three or four. We had four ports of call, and then we would, in between those, we would go to, Vegas [Puerto Rico] to train. And, they would have, you know, the battalion would set up aggressors and we would enact scenarios. And, at one point we were, afloat and, there was a dust off of some kind, in Martinique. And, we were deployed, up as far as the flight deck, live ammunition and, ready to go. And then it got solved diplomatically. I was told. And, so most of the time we were aboard ship, which was a helicopter carrier. We were learning what a good life, the Navy has.

MAUNEY: [laughter] Did, I actually don't know. Did the Navy ever have alcohol rations? Was that a thing?

COTTRELL: Like a rum that the British had?

MAUNEY: Right.

COTTRELL: As I recall, we didn't have any alcohol, period.

MAUNEY: Right.

MAUNEY: Yeah. I went on a MEU [Marine Expeditionary Unit],

COTTRELL: No.

MAUNEY: and we didn't have any, but,

COTTRELL: No.

MAUNEY: When we ported in Spain, we found out that's when I found out like you said, the Brits did. And I was like, wait a minute. They issue beer tickets on the ship.

COTTRELL: Yeah.

MAUNEY: Well that's wild.

COTTRELL: That's a tradition. It's the grog. In fact, there's a size of a little copper mug that gobbies, as they were called, always had.

MAUNEY: Did you ever get to interact at any time in your Marine Corps experience with other militaries? Other allied militaries, like the Brits, or any?

COTTRELL: Yes. One of the stops on the Caribbean cruise was at, in Panama. And so we went to the Army's jungle warfare school. And we also trained with, Belgian Marines.

MAUNEY: Do you have any particular impression of them? Their quality?

COTTRELL: I thought they were very good. You know, we, they were still, they were in unit size too, and so we didn't interact too much with them, but we did maneuver with them as it were. And, they did a good job. We enjoyed their company.

MAUNEY: Did you guys call these floats, the Caribbean float you did, were they called MEUs at the time as well, or was there a different name for them? Like the unit that would, they might have been?

COTTRELL: They might've been. I don't recall.

MAUNEY: So you returned from this Caribbean, float, cruise if you will. And, then what happened with your career?

COTTRELL: Well, they needed platoon leaders at Officer Candidate School in Quantico. And so I put in for that and they were, and put a platoon through, there. And that was a very interesting experience. It was there that I realized that, number one, I probably had, well, I knew that I wasn't myself. I knew that, in fact I knew that even when we were, on the cruise. I found my sleep patterns were different, I was not as alert, I was certainly more edgy, and yet was more easily taken by surprise. And I'm not sure if I was preoccupied or what, or if it was just continued let down from the combat environment. But it was long enough after that that I couldn't put my finger on it. But when I got to Officer Candidate School, the company commander was a major, and he had no pity, not that I was asking for pity, but he saw me as substandard. I'd gotten excellent fitness reports as they're called, everywhere I went in the Marine Corps. And he gave me one, which typically when you get a fitness report, you don't have to sign it, but if you have, a negative report you do. And he gave me a report that I would've had to sign, and I wouldn't do it.

And, that brought us to the, commanding officer of the Officer Candidate School. And, he created a solution, which, was satisfactory for both of us, which allowed me to continue to have a position with my rank and, age for promotion, as well as an unsigned fitness report. So, but it was not as good a fitness report as I was used to and it was a real blow. But I also had noticed, I mean I think I understood part of what that major was talking about. I found myself, not as physically capable. I had had malaria when I was overseas and yet technically I was well beyond that. And ,in fact, it was never, it was attended by, joint ache and severe joint aches and a fever of significant proportions. I don't remember what the number was, but I was, for two or three days, out of it. And, then it broke and the corpsman pronounced it malaria. And, so I wondered if that had had a toll or if it was still ongoing. I sought some medical examination and, you know which we got regularly anyway, and there was no, conclusion per se. But performance on the O-course [obstacle course] and, that kind of thing was not what I was used to doing. And, so maybe that was where this major was coming from, I'm not sure. But, he platoon did well and so, but when that was over, I was transferred to weapons training battalion at Quantico, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico and taught pistol marksmanship to new second lieutenants until I got out. And, then I got out, was in the reserves for a period of time. And, then retired.

MAUNEY: You mentioned at one point wanting to stay in. So what was the decision making process to transition to the reserves and eventually retire?

COTTRELL: The decision to leave active service came as a result of the encounter with the field grade officer. And, there's a book out called One Bullet Away by a Recon Marine. I think he was, if not a seal, and, no, he was a Marine. And, he uses the phrase, met the wrath, or no, the field grade officer uses the phrase, you're about to meet the wrath of a field grade officer. And you have to understand that second lieutenant, first lieutenant and captain are company grade officers because they're in the field with the men. Field grade officers are major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel. And then general grade officers are above that. So the field grade officer might be a staff officer and he might, he obviously has increased responsibility and expectations for his conduct. And, so, the field grade officers, we always used to joke about how they had to have frontal lobotomies to be promoted. But, they historically have had, they've had, a contentious relationship with company grade officers. And, there's some notable exceptions to that, even in my experience, but still, there's something that happens, and that's what happened. And I decided I didn't want to try to bite that bullet any longer.

MAUNEY: You mentioned there may have been elements of truth in what he was saying, but more importantly maybe some reflection on, you know, who you were after coming home. Throughout this process, whether it was that fit rep or, or getting out, did you, start taking some self stock, some self evaluation of where you were personally in relation to being home and figuring out career and family and just life in general?

COTTRELL: Yes. You know, I had the advice of the guidance counselor at the University of Michigan. I had the experience in the Marine Corps, all of the experiences in the Marine Corps. I had a failed relationship, with a woman. And I had, then a reason to leave my career plan. And so that required me to take stock. And, that's, you know, that's, that was a process. And ups and downs. And I think basically it was a process of trying to find peace and try to find fulfillment and a way to contribute to society, differently than I had thought I was going to.

MAUNEY: Were you, and are you, successful in finding that peace and fulfillment that you were looking for?

COTTRELL: Am I a high functioning PTSD sufferer? You could say it that way. I went back to Michigan and enrolled at the university, at Michigan State, and not University of Michigan because they had a veterinary school. I decided I wanted to be a veterinarian. And, that effort, times two, failed and my backup plan was to be a wildlife biologist. And so, because shared some of the same features of what I wanted to do day in and day out, how I wanted to use my brain as well as my hands. And, I was a wildlife biologist for six years. Discovered that I still wanted to be a veterinarian. And, by that time I was living and working in Vermont and, having worked in Maryland and Minnesota prior to that, and applied to Cornell and Pennsylvania, which were the two states taking Vermont students since they don't have a veterinary school. And failed, in that first application. I received some valuable counseling from Cornell and applied again. Number four, times and was admitted and graduated at the tender age of 38 and started a practice. And I'm still a veterinarian, 34 years later.

MAUNEY: How did that feel after having this whole saga of ups and downs? Finally being able to get to the school you wanted to, and Cornell is not a shabby school. So was it...

COTTRELL: It was a lapse on their part.

MAUNEY: [laughter] It worked out for you.

COTTRELL: It did. It did. And, just like the Marine Corps, and the people I met there and my platoon and company, I'm eternally grateful to them. The, how did it work out? Well, I don't know if you've ever seen the quote, which is attributed to Calvin Coolidge called persistence, but it's something I've read a long time ago. And, it, along with the skills that I learned in the Marine Corps, about discipline, and focus, and, the skills for compartmentalization of, different facets of events, which came to me of necessity in Vietnam. Served me well in that process. And, even though I was the oldest person in my class, those things helped me be a returning student, six years out of college and, helped me, focus on finding a way to make a career and also provide for a family.

MAUNEY: You know, this interview isn't about me but I very much sympathize with the ups and downs of school and military and career and all that. And I just wonder, for you, what you achieved is remarkable and that comes from a sense of purpose and drive. And where do you think that comes from for you? That to keep pushing forward, even when you failed at something or didn't get the response you wanted? Where do you think that drive and determination came from?

COTTRELL: Well, that's a good question and I don't know if I can answer it accurately. I think that, my parents instilled in me, my father particularly instilled in me the idea that I could do anything I wanted to. When I got into the, when I, you know, found out I couldn't, at different times. It didn't really change that. And, on balance, the failures to, for instance, go to the Naval Academy or, succeed, in Naval ROTC at University of Michigan, and so on, were adequately balanced by the successes of the relationships of the, successful completion of the training of the Marine Corps threw at me. And also the, success of the relationships I had with my men. And, I think that on balance, girded my loins in a way that allowed me to remember that, everything else pales compared to determination and persistence.

MAUNEY: Right. I wonder, I've talked about this with other friends and veterans of my conflict. Did you, do you ever feel a sense of responsibility or duty to maximize your life because you were able to get through Vietnam and get through it alive and capable and having all your faculties, and being able to go to school. Did you feel any sense of duty or responsibility to make the most of that because there are other people who maybe weren't able to?

COTTRELL: I think that sense of responsibility came well before the Vietnam experience, for me. I think that, all of that intensified it. There's

nothing that succeeds like success and, to be a successful Marine officer at a time and place where, only 2% of the nation's age group that could be, are, and to have been an infantry officer on top of that, I think was the kind of thing which gave me confidence and gave me, balance, to handle setbacks and to find ways to work around them and to persevere in the end.

MAUNEY: What made you want to be involved with wildlife, be a wildlife biologist or veterinarian? Is that something that you wanted to be from a child or what inspired you to take that career path?

COTTRELL: Oh, I've always, my father and the Boy Scouts all, you know, came together to give me an appreciation for the natural world. Whether it was hunting or whether it was appreciation in a non-consumptive way. And, so that was easy. And we've always had, my father raised Irish Setters, and, not in a big way, but I've had dogs in my home all my life and I'm very attached to them. And, so, yeah it's one of those, that part of it has grown over time and, so the human animal bond is strong in me. Both in a professional way and in a personal way. And, it has been a good way, because I found that not only could I empathize with my patients, but I could empathize with their owners and it was always, paramount that this be a way to contribute to society. And in the case of my initial 20 years of practice working in a mixed practice, it was in an agriculture environment as well as a small animal environment. So it was an opportunity to put my skills to use in different ways that still contributed to the local community and, fulfilled that obligation to contribute to society in general. I've been a wildlife veterinarian for 12 years now and, that has brought me full circle, to my, through my training, and that's become even more fulfilling. It's a different type of veterinary work, but it's equally rewarding. And some might say, easily as valuable in a different way.

MAUNEY: What brought you up here to the North country, to the Vermont area?

COTTRELL: A job. I mean, that was the last wildlife biologist job I had was with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

MAUNEY: And we're here interviewing at Dartmouth, you know, I go here. Have you ever had any interactions with the college or ever occasion to stop by, be on campus, anything like that?

COTTRELL: No.

MAUNEY: This is your first time on campus?

COTTRELL: No. I mean I frequent the community but not the campus.

MAUNEY: Right, right. And once you got up here to Vermont for the job, did you fall in love with the area? Was there particular wildlife issues up here that you, resonated with you?

COTTRELL: Well, the important thing was to have a job. And, we lived in the Southern part of the state. I was a regional biologist and I also was the biologist that dealt with the group of species, which are called furbearers, which include, everything from, Otters, to Fishers, to Mink, to Muskrats, and everything in between. The canines as well. So then all the weasel family. And that was a good job because I was the first furbearer biologist in Vermont, and started programs which go on even today, 40 years later. And a great group of people too. I mean, a stellar group of people, ones who are just as valuable to me as my military acquaintances and friends. So, what attracted me to the area? Well, we always liked the Upper Valley. We lived in the lower part of the valley and thought this would be a good place and there was a job for me when I graduated, so.

MAUNEY: A job is always important.

COTTRELL: The rest is history, as they say.

MAUNEY: Right. As we're kind of drawing towards the end here, I wonder throughout your life and including today, in this moment, what's been your relationship with your time in Vietnam?` And the impact that it's had on you personally and professionally and just as a man in general? What's been your continuing relationship with that experience up til now?

COTTRELL: [Pause] It's never far from my mind. The individuals that we've spoken about here today are in my thoughts and prayers. Maybe not every day, but certainly every week. So, you know, the details, as they are want to do become blurred. The heat, I can't feel the heat anymore, the way I did when I was there. I certainly remember being wet, you know, for months on end, but I don't exactly feel it anymore. So some of those things fade, some of them remain. Then there are artificial stimuli which bring it back, like the 50 year reunion of The Basic School class. Those kinds of anniversaries, as they became larger in number, bring back some of the memories. And there have been certain, episodes of remembrance amongst me and myself and the squad leaders, in our encounters. And they sometimes surprise me and I surprise them with details that each of us doesn't remember. But we, what we remember is that we did it together and we got through it and we accomplished our mission as

it was given to us. So accomplishing a mission, whether it's a peacetime mission, an out of the military or whether it's a military mission in a war zone, are not dissimilar in the sense that, they still require you to apply yourself and to give yourself up to it, in some cases, in a way that makes other parts of your life, have to suffer, or at least, be diminished temporarily. When those things happen, I remember the intensity of those moments, and realize that they too will pass. And that, I just, I think that being able to compartmentalize and also be able to move on and stay focused on the mission has made me a better veterinarian. It has allowed me to see more patients, think better, about their needs and, have given me, communication skills. And, you know, those wouldn't have happened except in the war zone. They couldn't have happened at Camp Lejune for instance. Where the big draw, the big challenge is my girlfriend is cheating on me, or I've got another traffic ticket lieutenant, what do I do now? So, that's my relationship with that war. I can't say that I'm exactly grateful for it, but I certainly am not sad that it happened, given the way it's turned out.

MAUNEY: Do you over time, found that you've gravitated, or avoided particular movies, or books, or documentaries, or things about the Vietnam War? Is there anything that sticks out to you that you think, yes, this is it? Are there any things you're like, this is absolute trash? Anything like that? Or did you try to avoid those things throughout your life?

COTTRELL: Well, I didn't seek them out. Well, you mean since Vietnam?

MAUNEY: Since you've come back, throughout your whole life.

COTTRELL: It's been easier over time for me to read some things. I think I mentioned to you that, James Webb, is a storied, participant in that conflict. And he wrote a book, which for all I know is accurate in every detail, but it just wasn't my war. And that's why when Matterhorn came along, it was not just easy for me to read, I gobbled it up. Because you know, I kept saying to myself, where was this guy? He had to have been right next to me. And, there's also been this evolution of how veterans are seen, in general. There's been this mass confusion between patriotism and heroism. And there's been this, guilt driven in some cases, but pride driven in most cases, assignment of value to veterans that we just didn't experience. I think it has a lot to do with the fact that, you know, in the case of the greatest generation, we have, all the Merchant Marine shipping going across the Atlantic and our friends in Britain being chewed up, as well as Pearl Harbor, that are just motivators beyond what anybody technically needs. I mean, they were just,

induced the patriotic moment, and fired up the nation to get behind their servicemen and women. And in the case of the War on Terror, 9/11 served a similar purpose. Not to imply that it was artificial in any way, but it's given credibility to the servicemen again. And, you know, there's a certain sadness that comes with seeing that contrast, but it's one of those things about which we can do nothing. And we are, destined as it were to have lived the life we've lived, and done the best job we could. And even though we were maybe badly led at the top, who's to say that our contribution still wasn't valuable? At least to each other.

MAUNEY: Right? The place of the veteran in American society has definitely evolved. And did you ever feel any bitterness towards people who were anti-war, anti-troop, or people in the government, or did you ever feel any sense of bitterness, or anything towards any of those types of people?

COTTRELL: Well, I think that, those kinds of points of view don't have a broad enough historical understanding, and comprehension. History, teaches us that while war is horrible, no one abhors it more than the one who is tasked to fight it. And there are wars which have changed the course of history for the better. And so to say that war is not the answer belies the fact, that sometimes war is the answer and it has to do with human nature. And it's all regrettable, but it doesn't seem to change. You know, the war that ended all wars, the war to end all wars, didn't. And so, here we are again is another way to think of it. And, the distaste and the disappointment and the dismissal of, if I have that for anyone, it's for those who profit from war and don't fight it. Those who criticize it, and don't understand what it is they're asking. Or those who promote it and don't understand what they're asking, and have shied away from it. And sent others in their place. That's the thing I feel animosity towards.

MAUNEY: Do you feel like the government, or the nation has let down the Vietnam veteran in any sense? You know, you talked about seeing how my generation of veteran is treated, which is great, but I mean, I'm sure, is there any part of you wish that you or the men you served with could have been treated that way and what it could have done for them and for their lives, if that appreciation had been given. Do you ever reflect on any of that?

COTTRELL: Oh, sure. And I think it could have changed a lot of lives. I mean, it's almost not worth looking back and asking that question because it is what it is. That said, you know, you have to say, you have to realize how many years it took for the Veterans Administration, which of any government agency should be dedicated to every

veteran, no matter what conflict they served in. How long it took them to recognize and prove to their satisfaction that nine different diseases came from Agent Orange and provide compensation for those who were so effected. And so, you know, those kinds of things, you know, give you a feeling of sadness is one way to put it. But, disdain for government response to those they have sent to the guns.

MAUNEY: Right. Well I'm trying to think, I think that's exhausted anything that I can think of. Is there anything that, any topics we didn't cover? Any points that, you think are worth mentioning or anything you'd like to say and kind of in conclusion?

COTTRELL: No, not really. I mean, I think every veteran comes out of it with their own story, even though they may have been in the same unit, or the same, area of operation, or the same MOS. But, everyone has a different, because we're humans, we have a different capacity to weather it, and to survive it, and to benefit from it. And so, judgment has no place.

MAUNEY: Oh, sorry, we're you going to say something else?

COTTRELL: No, that's not, that's all.

MAUNEY: I was actually, real quick, I was wondering, have you ever had a chance to go to Washington D.C. and see the Vietnam War Memorial? The wall.

COTTRELL: I've been there several times.

MAUNEY: What is that experience like for you?

COTTRELL: It's moving.

MAUNEY: And the first time you went, do you recall what year that was, or when it was?

COTTRELL: I would say the first time I went was [pause] '97.

MAUNEY: What was that first time like when you went back, or went there?

COTTRELL: What was it like?

MAUNEY: Mhmm.

COTTRELL: It was overwhelming. I mean, it's a very effective design, and moving, in lots of ways. You know, seeing the names brings faces to mind. Seeing the people grieving is also very moving. So yeah, it's hard to know what people who don't, who didn't serve in that conflict, feel when they go there. But my guess is that at this point in our history, a lot of the people who go there, are the children of those who served. And, you know, we can hope that they also gain, some comfort from it.

MAUNEY: Have you ever been able to go to something like that with any friends or family of your own?

COTTRELL: I have.

MAUNEY: Did that add a certain element to the experience if you're able to share that with them?

COTTRELL: It intensified it.

MAUNEY: Do you think for them that it was, an experience that was helpful? For your friends or family that went with you?

COTTRELL: Yes, I think so.

MAUNEY: Did they ever mention that to you? Did it ever spark a conversation that you maybe in the past, you didn't know how to quite bring up, it was kind of a, segue or a way to start a conversation like that?

COTTRELL: Not that I recall.

MAUNEY: Not that you recall. When's the last time you were there?

COTTRELL: [pause] I would say it's been 10 years.

MAUNEY: 10 years. Yeah. It's a, I mean, simple in a good way, a simple and powerful representation of the enormity and the cost of things. I think it was, you know, it's like if you were to pitch that to me and said that it's going to be a wall of names, that, that's great, but maybe we should do something more grand. But I think, it gets right to the point. It's the names, the people. And you see it all there and it's just, you know, obviously I didn't serve in that conflict. But it's a, I think it's a fantastic reminder, and I, living in and around D.C. for awhile now and having family there. I have family in Ellicott City [MD] and so I went there as a kid too. And, that was something that I always valued and always try to go back to. Out of all the, all the different monuments, I just find that one to be one of the more like

powerful monuments. Because I feel like it was, not the other monuments are, but it feels not pretentious. It's about the men and women who served there, period. And the ones who sacrificed, it's their names. It's nothing more, nothing less. It gets to the heart of it.

COTTRELL: Well I think the minimalist design of it is not just powerful because it's minimal, but it's also a reflection of how the country, thinks about it. It's not something they really want to recognize. It's something they don't want to own. Something they don't want to talk about if possible. And so it's a minimal response by the country and it's a minimal monument, on the one hand. On the other hand, it's powerful to those who did serve and for the opposite reasons.

MAUNEY: Right. Well, you know, I want to say I, and I know we spoke briefly about this, that, you know, your conflict and a few others in the 20th century were very, I think, very powerful to my generation of Marine. And, you know, inspiring us to want to live and continue a legacy that was paid for by you guys. And I've heard multiple Marines in my generation, of course express that, you know, we're treated very, very well and very kindly. I'm here at Dartmouth because of a veteran's program and I probably wouldn't be here otherwise cause of my high school grades, were not good. And, so we definitely have benefited. My generation, definitely benefited from some of the struggles, and things, that in particular the Vietnam generation had to go through and not having the proper appreciation for what they did regardless of the politics of it. And I think, it's like you guys had to pay a sacrifice that for some reason was needed, but I like to think that in the end was worthwhile because the American people started to realize that that was a very inappropriate way to handle returning veterans. And that there was a better way to do and there was a way to separate, the men and women who fought the war from, you know, the war itself. So, but yeah, I, you know, there's still practical lessons in the Marine Corps that you learn on tactics that come from Vietnam. And I think there's still some gear leftover that I'm pretty sure I've used that they didn't quite get ready to get rid of yet.

COTTRELL: It's a tradition.

MAUNEY: Yeah. I can pretty much guarantee that.

COTTRELL: You know, one of my classmates in The Basic School, went to the airwing and, he went on to become a major general and he wrote to us a year or so ago and told us that, there were documents that found, for all of us who wondered why we went, or if we did anything worthwhile. He made it a point to tell us that there were

documents that were found in East Germany after the wall came down, which reflected the decision on the part of the Soviet Union, not to advance their campaigns in Asia at that time. And, which technically then gave Asian countries a chance to become, more developed and more, of their own, develop their own strengths. But, it's a, it's nice to hear that. But we've lived for so many years with just the understanding that we kept each other safe as best we could. We accomplished the mission. We'd never shirked away from it. And, that's all anybody can ask.

MAUNEY: Yeah. I think it's a good point because I've seen a lot of friends of mine, you know, like the area I fought in even in Afghanistan has been taken back over years ago, it's in Taliban control and I know people and I understand why get very upset when that happens and feel like it's some type of an assault, not on the town itself, but on our legacy and accomplishments and the lives, and injuries that were sustained doing it. And I totally get that. But I also think that politics, and countries, and boundaries, and things, ebb and flow, and there's nothing that we can do about it as just regular citizens trying to work hard and make lives for ourselves. But as you said, nothing can ever take away the times you have with the people who are there for. And I don't know if you've felt this way, but I never thought about American flags or Bald Eagles, or any type of patriotic images when I was fighting, I just wanted to do right by the people next to me. I didn't want to look like I was weak. I wanted to be a good Marine. And part of that was admiring your generation, Korea and World War Two. And being a lover of history growing up. And I wanted to, I didn't think I'd ever quite be on, I would never be in the same level as a World War Two, Korea, or a Vietnam vet. But I hoped that I could kind of just shave off enough honor and good deeds to be even somewhere near what, you know, everyone was able to accomplish before me. And so, but yeah, I think that it was more about the people around you and, you know, I can't control, nor can you how Vietnam, Afghanistan, or Iraq or any place turns out 10, 20, 50, 100 years from now. But the experiences you had in that moment with the people you had them with, will be with you forever. And that's what matters. And that's what you can can control. And you know what, like what else can you do so to speak. Yeah, is there any else you want to say before we wrapped up?

COTTRELL: I'm all done.

MAUNEY: All done. Well, yeah, I just I want to thank you for doing this interview. I know it's a long process and I'm trying to get it all out there, but it went very well and I'm very appreciative for you taking the time to, to come here. And, I don't mean this, and I sincerely

mean I want to thank you for your service in Vietnam and for your time there. Because I feel like I've said already, you guys weren't told that and from a later generation of Marine to another, I know how appreciated you guys are in the history of the warrior ethos and history that we still study Vietnam tactics and we still look up to people, your generation as setting a trail, as Marines and as warriors. And so we've always, that legacy is always there. And many Marines I served with had fathers or grandfathers who served in Vietnam and would talk about that and how they looked at them with honor. And that inspired them to want to continue by joining the Marine Corps and continuing that sense of service and duty. So, I know that the legacy of Vietnam is very much alive in a healthy way in the Marine Corps and in veterans today. So you know for what that's worth I personally want to thank you for everything that you did and I always looked up to you guys and was happy to even wear the same uniform and serve in the branch as you guys. So, just kinda, a personal thank you for that. And with that, that's it. And yeah, that is the end of the interview with Walt Cottrell, here for the Dartmouth Vietnam Project. Thank you.