Douglas P. Fusonie '58
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[RILEY E.] CARBONE: Hello, this is Riley Carbone, and I am here at Rauner [Special Collections] Library at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, with Dr. Douglas Fusonie? [Pronounced foo-SO-nee]

FUSONIE: few-SO-nee, yeah.

CARBONE: Foo-SO-nee. This is the 28th of October, 2016. It's a bit after 2 p.m., and we are doing an interview for the Dartmouth Vietnam Project.

So, thank you so much for coming in,—

FUSONIE: Glad to be here.

CARBONE: —braving the rain and speaking with me. So just to start, could you maybe talk about your childhood: where you were born, way back at the beginning?

FUSONIE: I was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, and lived until I was five at The Taft School in Watertown, Connecticut, because my dad was a teacher and coach there. He also had a degree from [Dartmouth College's] Tuck School [of Business], so we then followed the textile industry to Rhode Island, and I went to grade school there, and then to Philadelphia, and I went to high school there. And then when I was at Dartmouth in my junior year—and my mom had died when I was a freshman. My dad had remarried. But anyway, we moved to North Carolina because the company went there. So I was in North Carolina, and when I graduated from Dartmouth, that was my hometown then.

And I've kind of been all over. I don't know how far you want to go with this, but I've lived in a lot of places, Riley. It's—I worked for a year in Philadelphia, and I didn't know—I knew I wanted to go to medical school, but I wasn't quite sure what I was going to do about it because I still liked to write. I was

an English major. And so I operated an air hammer for a year, and I took exten- —I took courses to show that I was still interested, in biochemistry and so forth.

And I acted in plays, and I wrote some things, and so—and then I applied to the medical schools in Philadelphia, and I got into all of them, and then Temple [University] gave me a little bit of a stipend, and that helped, so I went there.

And that brings us up to—like, what else do you want to do about my—

CARBONE: I mean, we have plenty of time,—

FUSONIE: Oh, okay.

CARBONE: —so we can dive into—

FUSONIE: Okay, all right.

CARBONE: —your childhood and your experiences at Dartmouth.

FUSONIE: Okay. My childhood. I had a brother, and we grew up in Connecticut and Rhode Island, and we played a lot of sports, and my dad was—had played football—in fact, here—and coached, so we—you know, we were into sports.

CARBONE: Mmm.

FUSONIE: And we were into a lot of reading and music. My mom played the violin and acted in plays. So—but we moved a lot, and that was different. And each time you moved—I went from a grade school in Rhode Island—it was St. Mary's Grade School [sic; St. Mary School], with 13 people in my class. I moved to—we moved to Philadelphia, outside, in Havertown, and I took trolley cars and things like trains and so forth into high school.

CARBONE: Big city. [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: Big high school, you know. I came from the suburbs, but I went to this high school. It was Catholic Boys' High, which was on the corner of the city, and it took city, suburbs, and I

went from a class of 13 to one with there were 500 boys in my class,—

CARBONE: Wow!

FUSONIE: —3,000 in the school.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: Four blocks away, it was a girls' school wit 4,000 girls. [Chuckles.] So we had pretty good sports.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.] You mentioned—

FUSONIE: —but it was a shock.

CARBONE: Sorry. You mentioned your father graduated from here.

FUSONIE: He did.

CARBONE: That was in 1928?

FUSONIE: Nineteen twenty-eight, yeah. How'd you know that?

CARBONE: I found him in the yearbooks.

FUSONIE: Oh. Oh, okay.

CARBONE: Albert Fusonie?

FUSONIE: Albert T. Fusonie. That's correct, yeah.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: He did, 1928. And he had quite an interesting story. He grew up in Roxbury, Mass., if you know where that is. It's—it's a lot different now, but it was Irish, Italian and, you know, people with minimum, if any, income.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: And he didn't know much of anything, but a friend of his talked him into taking a test for Boston Latin [School], and so he took the test, and he got in. And he ended up with the top

grades, and he, you know, played a—three sports. Anyway, to make a long story short, he was accepted at Dartmouth, Harvard [University], Princeton [University], a whole lot of things. And he decided to go to Dartmouth because it was green, and he was mostly Irish.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: [Chuckles.] With an Italian name!

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: So anyway, that's how *he* got here. And he went to Tuck, too, you know. It was a combined thing in those days. And so he ended up as—before he retired, he was in charge of the personnel for Collins & Aikman Textile Corporation [sic; Collins & Aikman Corporation], which was a big corporation. And when he retired down to Florida, he went back to teaching.

CARBONE: Because he had taught at Taft.

FUSONIE: He taught—Taft. Yeah, yeah, he taught until he was 70-something.

CARBONE: Wow.

FUSONIE: You know.

CARBONE: That's really cool.

FUSONIE: So, yeah. So anyway, I knew I was going to Dartmouth, sort of. [Both chuckle.]

CARBONE: It was in your—in your—

FUSONIE: And I knew I was going to Taft, too, for a PG [post-graduate] year, which I did. I was quite young when I got out of high school, so I did a PG year at Taft.

So anyway, my childhood was, you know, not much different than anybody's, I guess, except for traveling around.

CARBONE: Some moving.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: And was your—so your father worked as a coach and a teacher. And was your mother—did she stay in the home, or—

FUSONIE: My mom stayed at home, but she—she acted in plays, and she played the violin. You know, she was mostly at home, but she died young. You know, I was a freshman here when she died.

CARBONE: Yeah. Wow.

FUSONIE: From a blood clot, you know. Yeah. Anyway, so that was—

CARBONE: Okay, awesome.

And you mentioned you went to West Catholic High School for Boys [sic; West Philadelphia Catholic High School for Boys, now part of West Catholic Preparatory High School]?

FUSONIE: Right, West Catholic Boys High.

CARBONE: And so was this private school?

FUSONIE: No, it was a Catholic—what you call public-Catholic—we didn't pay any tuition. The parish we came from paid the hundred dollars or whatever it was. It is now—my high school, which just gave me an award, is now dwindled down to 800 students in the inner city, and they're—it's a terrific school. It's a different population. It's mostly African-American, and 90 percent go to college.

CARBONE: Wow.

FUSONIE: And they do very well, you know, so—but it's—so anyway—and we contribute as alumni. But that's—it's gone from the huge—

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]Three thousand.

FUSONIE: —because the Catholic schools started to build out in the suburbs. They went out that way.

CARBONE: Yeah, so now they're not bringing in as many children.

FUSONIE: Instead of bringing them in, so it went out there, yeah.

CARBONE: And were—was your family deeply religious, or just kind of with school?

FUSONIE: I would say—you know, probably—go to church on Sunday and, you know, I was a Catholic—you know.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: Probably know the Italian-Irish influence. So yes, they were religious, you know. And we are, too. Not overbearing.

CARBONE: Yeah. No. [Laughs.]

So you mentioned you graduate from high school in 1953,—

FUSONIE: Right.

CARBONE: —and then you were young, and so you took a post-graduate year, a PG year?

FUSONIE: At Taft School.

CARBONE: Okay.

FUSONIE: In Watertown, Connecticut.

CARBONE: And what was your intention behind taking that post-graduate year?

FUSONIE: A couple of things. One was to, I don't know, improve my grades, if you will, a little bit. A little more experience in the academics, although we had pretty good academics. And also to maybe get a little more year of maturity, playing football and baseball. And then I promptly—I had a great time in practices at football. I think I scored every time they gave me the ball, or I threw a touchdown or whatever, and then I broke my arm.

CARBONE: Huh!

FUSONIE: And I didn't play—[Laughter.] I didn't play till the last game, with a cast on my arm—this arm. And I broke my little finger trying to tackle somebody. But anyway, that was it. I never broke my arm playing here, which I played for four years, but—so it happens. I took my SATs with my left hand.

CARBONE: Oh, my!

FUSONIE: And I'm right handed.

CARBONE: Scrawling that essay.

FUSONIE: That was a chore.

CARBONE: I can't even imagine.

FUSONIE: Yeah. But, you know, we did it, so—

CARBONE: Yeah, you got into college. [Laughs.]

FUSONIE: I got in. [Laughs.] I did.

CARBONE: So—and then you spend a year at Taft, and you had mentioned your father had gone here. You kind of had this idea that you would end up at Dartmouth.

FUSONIE: Right.

CARBONE: Did you apply elsewhere, or were you pretty set?

FUSONIE: I did. I had a relative, my mother's cousin, actually, who taught at [College of the] Holy Cross, so I applied there and BC [Boston College] and I got in there too, but I didn't—I didn't—I didn't really look around much, you know? I was pretty sure I wanted to come here, and I was going to come here. And I think in those days that if you were an alumni's son or daughter in one of the other schools, you had maybe—maybe a leg up, but I'm not sure, you know? You know, it's different now, but I think—I think there was more—more of that. So I can almost—I couldn't say, "Well, I'm going there just because my father went there." I mean, I had to do something to get there.

CARBONE: Yeah. [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: I had to all right in the SATs and my grades and so forth, but it—but it helped.

CARBONE: Mm-hm. And so did you also plan on playing college football, or was that—

FUSONIE: I did. And I did.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: Yeah. And baseball.

CARBONE: Okay.

FUSONIE: Until my eyesight kind of decreased a little bit, and at first, I—I started out as a pitcher, and I was pitching against UNH [University of New Hampshire], and the coach said, "Will you please"—I won't use his language—"throw the ball hard?" And I said, "I am." I'd throw my arm out, because I couldn't pitch anymore.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: So anyway, I played for a couple of years, and then it was difficult to see the curve ball [both chuckle], so that was that. I had people telling me freshman year, too, "You have got to quit one of those sports." I was—you know, I thought I was going to play professional sports.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: And I played freshman football, then I went out for freshman basketball and track at the same time, until they called me in and said, "You know, you're gonna disappear here." I locked myself in the library over there and did nothing but study, you know, and I went to—I don't know what the system is. Is it a four-oh or five-oh [4.0 or 5.0]?

CARBONE: Yeah, four-oh.

FUSONIE: I went from whatever the low, almost disappearing grade I had to about a three-six [3.6], you know, just by locking

myself in the library, three-six, three-six [3.6, 3.8], something like that.

CARBONE: Yeah, dedicating to studies, not athletics. [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: [Laughs.] And I took all the pre-med stuff, and that was—you know, that was a chore. It was—you know, it was good. Plus I majored in English, and that was good, too, you know.

CARBONE: Can you talk a little bit about what—just like your freshman year was like?

FUSONIE: Freshman year—

CARBONE: Arriving on campus?

FUSONIE: Outside of—outside of them calling me in and telling me that I might flunk out, I don't know what was really impressive about the freshman year except [laughs] it was—except I had to mature again—

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: —and learn that I had to study; it wasn't going to come by osmosis, you know, and that I couldn't just jock it up and expect to pass. Freshman year was—I was used to—because I'd gone to Taft, I was used to a boarding school, if you will.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: For a year, anyway. And I had good roommates, and we had different ones at different times. And then I joined a fraternity, and I liked that. That was pretty good. So I think I was friends with everybody, and everybody was friendly with me. And I had some tough professors, and I had some that were not as tough.

What I found was that no matter what your ideas were, the guys that were teaching here and the women that were teaching here—there were only a couple of them, by the way; it's a lot better now. But anyway, no matter what their politics or their persuasion was, they didn't try to make you think their way; you presented *your* thinking, and if you could

back it up, that was fine, you know. And that's what I really liked about it.

I have a little suspicion that college campuses now are a little too—I don't know what I want to say; I just—I think they—they try to make you think like they do. And I don't know if that's the right way to go. But, I mean, you know more about it than I do. I'm not in school anymore.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: But anyway, I—I found Dartmouth to be a great place, opening up your mind and allowing you to associate with some academic people and also your fellow students. And it was funny sometimes, too.

CARBONE: How so?

FUSONIE: [Chuckles.] I was taking embryology, and Professor [William W.] Ballard [Class of 1928] was a famous teacher here. Taught embryology. So we went to school on Saturdays, by the way, you know.

CARBONE: Really!

FUSONIE: Oh, yeah!

CARBONE: I didn't know that. Yeah, we all did in those days, yeah.

CARBONE: Six days a week?

FUSONIE: Everybody did, yeah.

CARBONE: Oh, my goodness.

FUSONIE: So Saturday morning, we're in anatomy—or embryology class, and he is talking to the class, and he said, "Now," he said, "I'm gonna invite you all to come rock climbing with me this afternoon. We're gonna do some exploring and so forth." He said, "Of course, a lot of you will probably go out there and watch these orangutans in the front row go play football."

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: [Laughs.] That's the way he talked. But—but he was funny. You know, he called us a bunch of orangutans. [Both chuckle.]

CARBONE: Was there a strong football community?

FUSONIE: Yeah, yeah. I mean, the stands were packed.

CARBONE: Really? It was a big—

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: —big draw for the student body?

FUSONIE: Yeah. We had—if you think about pre-med—on my team in my sophomore or junior year, I'll bet there were six or seven or eight pre-meds. And when the new coach, who was a great Dartmouth coach, came, [Robert L. "Bob"] Blackman, he said—the first time he was there, he said—one day he said, "Well," he said, "we're gonna have a special meeting at two o'clock." Hands went up. And I said, "What?" I said, "We can't. We have lab." He said, "Well, I'll get that changed."

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: Of course, he didn't. And then another time, he said, "We're gonna have this at such-and-such a time," and some more hands went up and said they have an economics exam. And he was going to get that changed, but he didn't. You know, he couldn't do that. *He* changed.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: You know, that's—that's—that's what happened. But—but it was a strong football community. We won a lot of games, and it was—it was good, you know?

My senior year, I was beat out. I spent a lot of time on the bench, but I had a lot—I played a lot of football for Dartmouth in the other years.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.] And were you the quarterback?

FUSONIE: Yes.

CARBONE: Okay.

FUSONIE: And a defensive halfback. We played both ways in those days.

CARBONE: Oh. Wow.

FUSONIE: But you could substitute one—one person at different times, and so even in my sophomore year, I was playing first string a lot on defense, you know, and that was—that's what I did, you know. I liked to tackle people, so—you know, I think I still did it in medical school. I founded a rugby team [chuckles], and we—we beat a lot of people that didn't let us out on Saturday to go play. [Both chuckle.]

CARBONE: Can you tell me more about Bob Blackman? He was the football coach who showed up I think your sophomore year?

FUSONIE: Right. He was—he was a great coach. He was. He had his favorites now and then, but he was—he was a really good coach. And, as I say, it was a learning experience for him because he—he wrote an article one time, and he said that he had never seen football players studying on the plane and the train and the bus, you know. So it was—it was both ways. We learned a lot of football, and he learned things—how it was here at Dartmouth.

CARBONE: Yeah. Academics before athletics, maybe?

FUSONIE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And that—that was good. But the students were behind—interested in football, and they attended the games, and—you know.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: And we had, you know, good pep rallies and all that. We had an Indian, you know—we still had the Indian in those days.

CARBONE: The mascot. You weren't Big Green.

FUSONIE: Yeah, yeah, and they changed that—I remember when they were trying to figure out what they were going to call Dartmouth. Finally came up with the Big Green.

But it was—it was good, you know. I would have recommended this place to anybody.

CARBONE: Did you know coming in that you wanted to be an English major or that you wanted to go on to medical school?

FUSONIE: You know, I think you develop as you—as you go.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: I always read a lot, and I liked English, and I liked to write, so I decided, you know, that I was going to major in English. I sure wasn't going to major in math because that was one of my lesser [both chuckle] strengths, if you will. You're—you're a physics major, right?

CARBONE: No, I'm not; I'm just taking a class.

FUSONIE: You're taking a physics—okay.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: That was not one of my favorites, either, but I did it. [Laughs.] All of the anatomy and embryology and all of those things, I kind of—that came not easy, but it came, you know, relatively easy. I like the—physics—physics at Dartmouth was a course that you had to take using calculus and analytic geometry, you know?

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: Whereas in the rest of the world, you took it with regular math. So I worked half the summer and took half the physics at Penn [University of Pennsylvania], and then the other half I took at UNC [University of North Carolina]. [Both chuckle.] And transferred it up here.

CARBONE: Stay away from the Dartmouth—

FUSONIE: And that's how I could do English major and—and still get all this other stuff in.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: But that was the only two that I did that with. But, you know, you get a grade lower when you transfer it, but—

CARBONE: Oh, really?

FUSONIE: Or a half a grade lower.

CARBONE: Huh!

FUSONIE: Yeah. Well, Dartmouth always did that in those days, you know? You'd—you-d—you'd get an A someplace else; they give you a b-plus, you know? I don't know if they do that now, but—

CARBONE: I don't think they do.

FUSONIE: Yeah, okay.

CARBONE: Just like it's a transfer grade, but that's interesting.

FUSONIE: Well, suppose you transfer it from some college that you know was rather easy compared to Dartmouth, then what?

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: They give you the same grade?

CARBONE: Very true. I wonder—maybe it doesn't factor into your GPA [grade-point average].

FUSONIE: I don't know. Yeah. But anyway, so that's what I did. But I—I generally liked the courses, and, as I say, morning courses we had to take because that's when the sciences were.

CARBONE: Hmm. When did morning courses begin?

FUSONIE: What do you mean, when did they begin? That's all we had, morning courses.

CARBONE: Oh!

FUSONIE: When do you go to school, in the afternoon?

CARBONE: Well, there's different time blocks, yeah. You could have a class that starts at 8:50 or you could have a class that starts at 2 or one that starts at 3.

FUSONIE: No, we didn't have any afternoon—labs in the afternoon, laboratory. But everybody had to go to eight o'clock class, that I remember, you know. No matter what you were taking, you had an eight o'clock class. [Chuckles.]

CARBONE: I think that would throw the current student body into revolt.

FUSONIE: [Laughs.] Yeah, I know, yeah, that's right. One of my sons, who went to Hamilton [College] [chuckles]—he picked something because—I said, "What course are you taking?" I forget what he told me. I said, "Why are you taking it?" Well, it's ten o'clock. I don't want to go to the eight o'clock class."

CARBONE: [Chuckles.] That's really funny.

Were there any—I was reading through the yearbook from your graduating class, and I noticed there was a—some pages included from I believe the campus newspaper that was talking about a student disagreement with President John [S.] Dickey [Class of 1929] over the Great Issues classes.

FUSONIE: You know, I—I—Great Issues was a great course, and I don't know what the disagreement was, it's so long ago, but Great Issues—we would go and have the finest speakers or important people in the country come and talk, and we had a critique it, though. Maybe they didn't want to do that. You had to write it up, and you got graded for it. So it was either in the afternoon or evening when—when it happened.

CARBONE: And every student had to take this class?

FUSONIE: You know, I think so, but I'm not quite sure. I don't know very—I think we did. And then you would, you know, write your critique of it, and that was—you know, I probably missed a few, you know, like everybody. But I don't know

what the complaint was. Maybe if I read the complaint, it would refresh my memory, but—maybe it's because they wanted us there every time, and I couldn't make it every time.

CARBONE: We're—kind of where we will begin discussing, with this interview, and talking about U.S. politics and the war in Vietnam. But was your time here at Dartmouth very political, or did you feel the campus was very political?

FUSONIE: No, I didn't, no. You know, I don't know. We never even—we didn't bother with it that much. in the '50s—you know, the time I was in college, there were really not a lot of contentious issues, you know? There was no Vietnam War. The Korean War—the Korean War was going, and, or had gone. That was pretty much over. So I don't' know—you know, we didn't have a lot of those issues.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: You know, and we didn't have—we had—there was significant alcohol on the campus, but there weren't many drugs. There were hardly anything. The only guys that were smoking pot were the bands, you know. And that was it, you know. So I didn't—you know,—we didn't—we didn't have that. We had other things. Did we have riots?

I remember one that I don't even know what it was about except that somebody—they all got riled up, and I think they drove a bulldozer into Parkhurst Hall or something like that.

CARBONE: Oh, my goodness!

FUSONIE: I'm not sure I even remember that, but somebody told me that. Anyway, I wasn't in it.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.] You weren't in the bulldozer, so—

FUSONIE: No. That's right. And then we were in—we were in fraternities. We did a lot of stuff with the fraternities. We would—I was in the Beta house (Beta Alpha Omega, formerly Beta Theta Pi], which went off campus and then came back as just plain Beta.

CARBONE: Mm-hm. It was Beta Theta Pi?

FUSONIE: It was Beta Theta Pi.

CARBONE: Okay.

FUSONIE: And that was good. You know, we had a lot of—you know, lots of the football team around there, in the house, and basketball and so forth. But we also surprised people by winning the Fraternity Hums. Do they still do that?

CARBONE: No, they don't.

FUSONIE: That was terrific.

CARBONE: Can you talk more about this?

FUSONIE: Sure. Fraternities would have a singing contest, and all of the members would practice some great songs and everything, and then they'd all stand up there in front of Dartmouth Hall and have a contest, and they would all have white shirts, black pants, and—so we weren't supposed to win. Theta Delt[a Chi] was going to be the one that won all the time because they were always winning. And so—but we did win, which kind of shocked everybody.

And then we had fraternity play contests too, and we put out—they didn't think we'd ever do that, but we did. We put on Dylan [M.] Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, which is a tale in verse and voices. And we won with that too so—

CARBONE: Wow!

FUSONIE: That was a shock to everybody. [Laughs heartily.] You got all these guys on the football team doing Dylan Thomas, you know?

CARBONE: A lot of English majors on the team, or—

FUSONIE: No.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: No, it was—[Laughs.] But anyway, I don't know if they have that anymore, either.

CARBONE: No, I don't believe they do.

FUSONIE: Yeah, yeah.

CARBONE: When you joined a fraternity, was that during your freshman year or—

FUSONIE: Sophomore year.

CARBONE: Sophomore year.

FUSONIE: Yeah. Freshman year, you had to live in the community, you know, in one of the dorms, and you had to dine at Dartmouth Dining Hall.

CARBONE: There was just one food—or one dining hall on campus?

FUSONIE: Right, right. And even when we were in the fraternity, we did dine there because fraternities didn't have any food, so—they had beer but no food.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.] So an imbalanced diet.

FUSONIE: Yeah, yeah.

CARBONE: Once you joined the fraternity—but did you then live there for the next few years?

FUSONIE: Lived there in my senior year.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: So you can't—you can't live in the fraternity until—it's a special dispensation to live there when you're a junior; otherwise, it was a senior. So, it was pretty much—I don't know, the college wanted you to be part of the rest of the community?

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: At the same time, you were part of *that* community, so—

CARBONE: Yeah. And did you feel that there was a very strong Dartmouth community amongst that—

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: —the guys on campus?

FUSONIE: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, I did. And it was—and it was a lot of competition between the fraternities for different things, too.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: And that was okay, you know? We used to have inter-fraternity hockey and softball and, you know, touch football for the—you know. I don't know what they do now, your fraternities or sororities—they do any kind of softball in the Common or anything like that?

CARBONE: There's some intramurals and stuff like that.

FUSONIE: Yeah. Well, that's good.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: Yeah. All right.

CARBONE: Wonderful.

So you graduate in 1958—

FUSONIE: Mm-hm.

CARBONE: —from here, and did you—what were your thoughts upon graduation? What were your plans?

FUSONIE: Well [chuckles], I—I—as I told you before, I wasn't quite sure—I wanted to go to medical school, but I wasn't quite sure that I didn't want to do something else, too. So I—I told my dad—he was going home to North Carolina, and he dropped me off in Philadelphia, and I didn't have any money or anything. He gave me a couple of bucks, and he gave me a name, and I looked up this name, and I went to work in his factory, operating an air hammer. And I lived inside the

factory. You know, I lived in a—a—a flat in Philadelphia, which was like a closet. It really was. it was very small.

And I used to take—as I told you, I took courses—I took a course at Penn, and it was biochemistry, I think, and then I took something else. I don't know. But anyway—so I was working and writing stuff and acting, and acted in plays.

And then I applied to medical school. I already had taken the MCATs [Medical College Admissions Tests] when I was here, and so—and then I got in, and then I went to medical school. And in those days, as you probably know, there was a doctor draft.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: And so the deal was that I would get—go in a Berry Plan. You know, the Berry Plan meant that as a doctor, they would let you—they would take you after you finished medical school, or they would let you go on to training in a specialty and then get you. So I said, "Well, I'm gonna do the specialty thing." And went through medical school, and in my senior year I was married, and we had our daughter. And then I went to Ohio State [University] as a resident in surgery, and as soon as I—and I got paid nothing; my wife used to deal with the grocery store and put it on a chit for a while until I got something.

CARBONE: Wow.

FUSONIE: But then I got a cancer fellowship and heart fellowship, and I got some money in my residency. And when I finished, I—I—I was commissioned a lieutenant all through this, with no pay. Nothing. When I finished, I was activated, and I went to Virginia as chief of surgery at McDonald Army Hospital [U.S. Army Hospital, Fort Eustis now McDonald Army Health Center]. And got the first paycheck, the first paycheck I'd ever seen. [Chuckles.] And that was good.

And so by then, we had two more kids. You know, we had them while we were in Ohio. And so now we had three kids, and I said, "They won't send me to Vietnam because the last fully-trained surgeon just went." And about two days later, I got my orders.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: I'm going to Vietnam. So then I spent a year there. And I have no regrets. They needed me to be there, and I did what I was supposed to do, you know, and I came home. But it was tough on my wife.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: She was able to go home to North Carolina to be close to her parents, but, you know, three kids and I wasn't around.

CARBONE: Yeah. Wow.

So kind of working through your time in medical school and then residency and then serving for the Army—so you graduate college in 1958. You begin medical school at Temple University in 1959.

FUSONIE: No, that's the year I was out of school. Remember, I worked a year.

CARBONE: Oh.

FUSONIE: So I worked a year. Wait a minute, '59? Maybe. I graduated medical school in '63, so we backtrack that—'58, I graduated here. Right. And '59—yes, I did start in '59. You're absolutely right, yeah.

CARBONE: And so you were living in Philadelphia.

FUSONIE: Right.

CARBONE: And when did you enter the draft? Or when did you know that you were—

FUSONIE: Oh, I knew—I knew pretty quick. I knew when I was in medical school that as soon as I finished, I was going.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: Unless—unless in the Berry Plan, I went into a residency program for five years of surgery, you know. And by that

time, when I finished, the Vietnam War was really going, and so that's what they wanted. They wanted surgeons, and away we went.

CARBONE: Yeah. So when you first entered, did you choose the third option of the Berry Plan that allowed you to finish all of your education before—

FUSONIE: Yes. But—but—yes. And it was—even though—even the guys who went in after an internship, say, were in the Berry Plan. But they just decided they were going to go and not do the residency. Or they decided they were going to be a family doctor and they were done, you know, so they would go in as—we called it GMO, general medical officer?

CARBONE: Okay.

FUSONIE: And they might be out in a field taking care of sore feet, hemorrhoids, and things like that, you know. We were at the hospital, taking care of blown-up people, you know.

CARBONE: Mm-hm. And so after medical school at Temple, you then moved to Ohio—

FUSONIE: Columbus, Ohio.

CARBONE: —State University.

FUSONIE: Yeah. Actually,—yes, with a slight detour in Bryn Mawr for the internship—Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. And then from there I went right to Ohio State. So I had five years of post-medical school surgery.

CARBONE: And so what can you tell me about your experiences in medical school, both at Temple and at Ohio State for your residency?

FUSONIE: Well, Temple—you know, medical school is medical school. [Laughs.] It's a lot of studying, but you had to—there were quite a few of us who had played different sports, and we would like to do something on a weekend to blow off steam, so to speak. So I—I said to somebody—I said, "You know, I never played rugby at Dartmouth because I was playing baseball, but," I said, "I kind of like the game." I said, "Would

anybody want to play?" And they said, "Aw, yeah!" So I got some Englishmen to come and show us the rules and show us a movie, and we formed a team, and we actually got pretty good. You know, we would beat the undergraduate schools. And that team stayed, I'd say, for 20 or 30 years, and now they don't have it. They have it at the university now.

So it was good, you know, in a sense. And we didn't—we only had a few injuries. We didn't have that many, so—and I carried that on at Ohio State. I found that team for the university, too.

CARBONE: Mm-hm. Were many of your classmates and peers—had they also been drafted by the Berry Plan, or under the Berry Plan?

FUSONIE: Yes. Yes, yes. Everybody—yeah. But they didn't end up in Vietnam. [Laughs.] I was the only one that did. [Laughs.]

CARBONE: Wow! Indeed.

FUSONIE: So they were—a number of them went right into practice or they went into Stateside military, but I was sort of—sort of a combat surgeon, if you will, or whatever. And so they sent us.

CARBONE: Yeah. And so you graduate from Temple—you leave Temple in 1963, and in 1963 there's the March on Washington [for Jobs and Freedom], John F. Kennedy is assassinated in that fall, and then 1964, again kind of these years of turmoil.

FUSONIE: Right.

CARBONE: What was the—you know, what was the mood? How—what were your—were your experiences?

FUSONIE: Well, I think it was a sad mood, you know, with Kennedy being assassinated and it was—it was not a good—not a good time that way. But, you know, Vietnam was building up. Kennedy put the first troops in Vietnam, and then after that, others did. And so it was not—it was—I'd—it was a big shock and a terrible situation for the nation when—when our president got assassinated,

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: That was—and then all of the investigation about who did what and, you know, all this stuff, you know, and it seemed pretty obvious to most of us that this was a Russian that did it, you know? But we didn't really get involved at all of that skullduggery. You know, it was just a shock to have this happen.

And then, of course, Vietnam—Vietnam was going, and it's—it's okay in retrospect to say things about Vietnam, but at the time, we had a treaty. We had the SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization] treaty. Do you know what that is?

CARBONE: Can you elaborate for our listeners.

FUSONIE: It's the Southeast Asian [sic] Treaty Organization, which we belonged to. And so did South Vietnam, who asked for our help. And Kennedy started it, and it was continued on, and when I was there, we had a tremendous number of troops. It was the—the North Vietnamese were basic- —it was a communist country, let's face it. I mean, they killed so many Catholics, it's unbelievable, you know. They chased out—and they all went into the south.

But—in fact, Hồ Chí Minh used to work in Boston.

CARBONE: Really.

FUSONIE: And he was a communist then. Yeah. But anyway, so—and the Viet Cong were indigenous in South Vietnam, and they were supplied by the North, and they were—there were to me nasty. They blew up the schoolhouse outside out base camp because it was a successful government schoolhouse, and we had to take care of all the blown-up kids, you know,—

CARBONE: Aich!

FUSONIE: —and stuff like that. But it was a—it was a war that—I don't know how to describe how it affected everybody, but what it was, was a war that we got into because of the treaty and

also because we wanted to block the advancement of communism down further.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: And in fact, the president of Singapore and—I don't know if you're familiar with Singapore, but the president of Singapore on *Nightline* with [Edward J. M.] "Ted" Koppel probably when they had a ten-year anniversary of the North taking over the South and declaring themself—and they—and they had it on TV, and he asked the president of Singapore what the effect of the U.S. ever being there was, and he said it stopped them, the communists, from advancing through all of Malaysia and Singapore, and so—so we had a purpose, but we left in a wrong way.

You know that our troops—I'm speaking like a commander now—our troops never lost a battle in that war, never lost a battle. Even when they lost a lot of guys, never lost a battle. But to leave by the helicopters with the tail between our legs was not the right way to go. I'm not a—when I came home, I really couldn't stand the antiwar protesters.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: They spit on our nurses, and when we'd come home to Oakland and San Francisco, and you still had a uniform on, and the girls would be standing there, waiting for the bus to take them to—to the place they were supposed to go, and people, yahoos would come by and spit on them. And they treated the rest of the Vietnam vets terrible.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: Terribly. And they're not doing that now. They protest the war, but they don't spit on the troops anymore, you know. So that's—that's an improvement. Whether they like the war or not, they're not treating our soldiers that way.

CARBONE: Yeah, respectful of the individual.

FUSONIE: It was not—it was not nice. But anyway, so it was a very difficult war.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: I had—you know, it didn't make any difference what I felt because I was there taking care of all of the blown-up people on both sides—

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: —mostly G.I.s [soldiers; "General Issue" or "Government Issue"]. But I took care of Viet Cong, North Vietnamese, civilians—you know, everything.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: The worst injured patient would go to surgery first, because we were doctors first, you know.

CARBONE: Yeah.

Going back to when you were—like, 1964, when you're at Ohio State, you mentioned that, you know, the assassination of Kennedy—people suspected Russian involvement, and involvement in Vietnam began to halt the movement of communism south as well, so can you talk more about this sense that communism was the threat of the day?

FUSONIE: Well, I don't—you have to go back—you can to back to [Joseph V.] Stalin if you want. I don't know how far back you want to go, but Stalin killed as many or more people than [Adolf] Hitler, you know. And that was rampant communism. So it's—and Hồ Chí Minh in the North was close to Russia, not China. And he didn't like the Chinese. And, as I say, he chased the Catholics out of North Vietnam because they would not go with the Communist Party, and killed a lot of them, too. So he's a hero to Vietnam people. A lot of them—you know, a lot of them consider him a hero because he basically won the war. [Chuckles.]

But so was [Ngô Đình] Diệm, who's the president of South Vietnam, who we kind of allowed to be assassinated, I think, but anyway—and South Vietnam was—there were a lot of Catholics there, and the French—you gotta remember, it was French Indochina at one time, wasn't it? And the French

were there, the Japanese were there, lots of people were there.

So they were pretty well educated in the South, too. They used to run the banks on our base camp and so forth, so I don't—you know, I understand the—the Viet Cong, but I don't really respect them that much because they were pretty brutal. And it's possible that the so-called peasants were not treated right by the government, and they were easier—it's easier to amass them into some—some form, with—with a big, you know, movement.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: So I was not—you know, most of us were not involved with being, you know, antiwar.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: You know, we weren't pro-war, but we weren't antiwar.

CARBONE: Yep. And so—though in, like, 1964, with the Gulf of Tonkin [incident] and kind of the beginnings of this escalation of U.S. involvement, was there concern amongst all these doctors or residents who had been drafted through the Berry Plan that it was only a matter of time before they were in Vietnam?

FUSONIE: Oh, yeah. [Chuckles.] It was—everybody thought, you know, we could go. And not everybody did. And then some of the residents had already served in the military. They went in as a general medical officer, put in two years and came out, and the Vietnam War started after that. So—then they took their residency, so that—we kind of had a little bit of that. You could not be part of this program, residency program, unless you either had served already or you were in the Berry Plan.

CARBONE: Oh, really.

FUSONIE: Sure, because otherwise you might get drafted right out of the middle of your residency and, you know, leave a service blank.

CARBONE: Yep.

FUSONIE: So that's the way it went.

CARBONE: So 1964 is also a presidential election with Lyndon B. Johnson and Barry [M.] Goldwater. What do you remember about kind of the—the ways in which the war in Vietnam shaped that election?

FUSONIE: I don't know. You know, I'm not sure [chuckles]—I'm not sure it did. You know, I do remember there was a nasty ad on TV—maybe you've seen replays of it—of a little girl dancing around a field and picking flowers, and then the atomic bomb goes off if you vote for Goldwater—you know, that kind of stuff. And that was a lot of baloney, but that's—that's the way those ads are, you know. Even now, they're pretty nasty, but—so I remember that.

And, you know, who would have been better? I don't know. it's so long ago, and it's all water over the dam now. I do know that a [chuckles]—actually, it was a—I went to a Democratic—some kind of a fund raiser or a party or something like that, you know, because a girl in my class in medical school was from the Pendergast family, which was a big Democratic family in St. Louis [Missouri], but she was in Philadelphia. So I said, "Yeah, sure, I'll go."

And I went out there, and I got talking to some—some guy. It must have been a ward heeler or something like that, and I was defending Goldwater, because he was really trashing him something—something bad. So he took a swing at—and he was drunk. He took a swing at me [chuckles]—

CARBONE: Oh, my goodness!

FUSONIE: And I ducked, and he missed, and he ended up in the pool, and that was a fine—

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: He ended up right in the pool.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: So I said, "You know, some of these people are dangerous." [Laughs.] So there was a lot of—I don't know who had the most votes between the medical students at that time. You know, there was Goldwater people and there was Johnson people, there was Kennedy people, there was, you know, everything.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: It was all mixed up. So it was America. But it was—yeah. But some people get violent, you know?

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: And I—I'm pretty much, I guess, a Republican, and I find that some of my liberal friends get—get very dangerous. [Chuckles.] But that's *my* opinion.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

So you spend kind of the last years of the '60s here in residency.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: You mentioned that you were starting a family at this time. What was residency like, though?

FUSONIE: Hard. It was hard. You're on every other night, and on your night off, you probably get home at eight o'clock, you know, and the kids were already in bed because my wife couldn't tolerate them anymore. [Laughter.] Yeah, it was not easy. But, as I say, I—my personality is such that I'd have to find some way to burn off steam or energy, and without practicing or anything, I'd go out when I could and play rugby, if I wasn't on call. You would get the weekends off, and sometimes I had somebody cover me for a while when I went over to the field over there by the university and played, much to the chagrin of my wife, who—you know, she doesn't like rugby. [Both chuckle.]

But anyway—but it was tough. And, as I said, my wife had to—she had to deal with the grocery store and things like that, and, you know, we had to wait. I had to take out a loan

here or there, but I didn't—you know, they were nice people, and they would put off charging us until I got something. And that worked. That was good.

So the kids—kids did okay, you know? But we got paid in the military. That was the on- —big difference.

CARBONE: So you were paid during your residency but then on military pay afterwards.

FUSONIE: I got no military pay during residency. I got paid by the university hospital at a pittance. It was—it was, you know, nothing. Until I got a cancer research fellowship and a heart research fellowship, and then I got some money, so—

CARBONE: So what were those fellowships for?

FUSONIE: You would do—in addition to your ordinary, regular duty, you would do research, and you would be assigned, you know, so many patients that were on their research medication, and you'd have to go around and make sure they got it and check on them and see how they're doing and so forth. The same with the heart one, you know. And then write it up, and trying to write something up to get a grant, to get some more money to research this, and—you know, we did some good work, you know. It worked out pretty well, you know? But that's what it was. But, I mean, it didn't take away from your everyday duties in surgery and making rounds and taking call and—you know. It wasn't easy.

CARBONE: Yeah. Was your residency in—and, like, your duties relating to surgery—influenced all by the knowledge that you would be going to a combat zone?

FUSONIE: No. No. You mean why did I take surgery? You know what I think? Surgery was something where you'd get an answer, okay? I'm a pretty active, you know, person, and—but you have to take the responsibility. You have to be able to take the responsibility that you're operating on this person, and whatever happens, you're involved. You can't say, "They didn't respond to the medicine," you know, because you have a direct hand in it.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: So you have to be able to take that responsibility, and I think I could do that, and at the same time, I'd get an answer, you know? I mean, somebody has a cancer, and I operate and remove it, and they're better, okay? It's a lot of work, and it's a lot of follow-up, and so—but that's basically why—why I became a surgeon. I started out to be a psychiatrist.

CARBONE: Mm-hm. Really?

FUSONIE: Yeah. Until I went into surgery, you know, and experienced the other aspects, and I said, you know, *I like that more*, you know, so—

CARBONE: Was that—was it in your mind, the surgery that you might be doing later on, should you be sent to Vietnam, when you were, you know,—

FUSONIE: No.

CARBONE: —operating on people in Ohio.

FUSONIE: I was trained in all that, because we had trauma there, too. I mean, it's a big city hospital, you know, so we—and we had the trauma. We didn't have as many gunshot wounds all at once—

CARBONE: [Chuckles.] I would hope not.

FUSONIE: —or IED [improvised explosive devices] and bombs and everything, rockets. They used to rocket us, you know, all the time. They were trying to shoot the airfield, but they would fall short and hit the hospital, you know.

CARBONE: Wow!

FUSONIE: But—so we lost—I don't know, we lost one nurse and one doctor. Yeah.

CARBONE: Mmm.

FUSONIE: It was shrapnel.

CARBONE: Yeah.

So you had mentioned earlier, after you finish your residency, you began your service.

FUSONIE: Right.

CARBONE: And you were sent to the McDonald Army Hospital on Fort Eustis?

FUSONIE: Fort Eustis, Virginia. You know, 25th [Infantry] Division Transport Corps, and that was a busy place, but it was in a peninsula in Newport News [Virginia], around there. And we had three kids at that time, so—

CARBONE: And what sort of surgery were you doing? Was it treating people returning from Vietnam?

FUSONIE: No, no. It was everything. I mean, it's a big base camp, so you have families, and you have guys that are there. You know, they're assigned there, and they're on this base camp. They may never go over. But it's a whole—there's probably 25,000 troops or whatever it was. And so it would be—they have gall bladder problems, they have cancer problems, they have lung pro- —you know. So you'd be doing all of that. There was no combat there, you know.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: People returning, having had—you know, needing prostheses and so forth—they would go someplace else, you know.

CARBONE: Okay.

FUSONIE: Walter Reed [National Military Medical Center] or whatever.

CARBONE: And you mentioned that following the war, you really—the antiwar protesters did not earn your respect.

FUSONIE: No.

CARBONE: But what was your concept or what was your feelings about antiwar protesters in 1968,1969, right before you do head over?

FUSONIE: I thought—well, the SDS on the campus of Ohio State was led by a guy whose name I forget now, but he later denounced them and said he was funded by the Communist Party, so, I mean, there were a lot of little things going on. You know, and that's the Students for a Democratic Society, but—

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: And they would lie down in front of the marching band [chuckles], Ohio State's marching band and—you know. I thought that a lot of them were—I think they had—a number of them had too much pot; that's what I thought.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: You know, I think their brain was addled. But—but they didn't have anything to do, and they were pro- —I mean, I didn't think they were very intellectual. If you talked to them, they didn't know things that went on in the Second World War. They didn't—they didn't know a lot of things. And were there legitimate ones? Of course, you know. None of us, by the way, liked Jane Fonda, because—

CARBONE: Because of her antiwar—

FUSONIE: You know what she did. She went to Hanoi, North Vietnam and sat in a gun emplacement aiming at our planes. She has since apologized to everybody for it, but, I mean, that was—you know.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: There were a lot of things that were surreal over there. We were in the officers' club one day, which is a shack right across from where we lived in those hooches. Anyway, they showed us a movie. There was a movie going on, and it was *The Green Berets*, with John Wayne, and everything on the screen is blowing up, bam, bam, bam, and then we looked over there out the screen, and there's the real world going bam, bam, bam, and then we looked back at the screen. [Laughs.]

CARBONE: Woah! That's—

FUSONIE: You can see the things going on out there, you know?

But—so anyway, when I came home, I thought that the war protesters were nasty.

CARBONE: Mm-hm. And that was kind of a perception you had had of SDS, even at Ohio State?

FUSONIE: Oh, well, yeah, but that was—that was because—I didn't deal with them, you know. I didn't deal with them. But years later, I found out this guy wrote and said that he was—you know, he denounced them and said that he was wrong; he was supported by the Communist Party. So were they all communists? No, I don't think so, you know?

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: But I think a lot of the war protesters were—first of all, they didn't—they didn't want to serve. You know, they wanted to save their butt. And I understand that. And—I mean, who *wanted* to go? But I think that—and it was a big pot time, too, you know? It really was. Maybe it wasn't as strong as it is now, but it was plenty of it, you know. It's not new. And, I used to drag the corpsmen out of their hooch down there to come and help me in surgery, and sometimes I'd get them out of there and I got really mad at them because they were—they were all smoked up, you know? And the enemy was selling this stuff to them, you know.

But—so anyway, I don't—I—I think the protesters now are kinder to the troops.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: They think the troops are part of them now, you know?

CARBONE: Yeah. Interesting.

And so there were—you know, Students for a Democratic Society was an organization that existed across the country. There was such an organization here at Dartmouth. When you were working at the McDonald Army Hospital, were you

kind of aware of the Dartmouth world and the protests that were going on here?

FUSONIE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, well, yes. And no. But years later, you know, when I came back from Vietnam and I was in Massachusetts, I would come up here for reunions, and I remember tent city and all the stuff that was going on on campus [chuckles], you know. So I—yeah, I—I—I was aware of some of it, and I thought they needed to study more, but that's [chuckles]—you know. You know, I don't—what goes on on college campuses is somehow beyond me now in some of the things, you know. It's—you know. I can't remember us really protesting too much. But, then, we didn't have the same issues, you know?

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: You know, we would have if it was something that we were really into, but we didn't have a war, you know.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: As I said, you know, the Korean War was over, so—

CARBONE: Yeah, there wasn't something at the forefront.

FUSONIE: Yeah. No.

CARBONE: And what were—so you're on McDonald Army Base for the election of 1968, and what were politics like on—at Fort Eustis?

FUSONIE: Hmm. That's hard for me. I don't know. [Laughs.] I can't—I don't know.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: You know, I'm not sure that I was—I was really into it that much,—

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: —you know, because I was about to be sent to war and so forth, so it didn't make any difference. Whatever the president was, was sending me over there, so—

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: —it wasn't going to make a difference who it was. The *Pueblo* incident—you know, who knows what that was? You know, that was a ship that was supposed to have been shot at by the North Vietnamese or something?

CARBONE: Oh.

FUSONIE: It got us into the war or something?

CARBONE: Yeah, the Gulf of Tonkin.

FUSONIE: The Gulf of Tonkin, yeah. I don't know. The Gulf of Tonkin. That's it, yeah. And, you know, I don't know about that, you know?

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: But there's—there's a lot of books out, and most of them are anti the war, and then there's some that are, you know, pro the war, you know, that says we *did* belong there, because we do have to honor treaties.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: I don't know what we're doing now with the—over there in the Mideast. You know, this is ridiculous, you know, the way we're doing it.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: One of my sons—his partner keeps going over, keeps being sent over there.

CARBONE: Wow.

FUSONIE: [Chuckles.] But the military paid for his education, you know?

CARBONE: Mm-hm. Giving his due.

So when *did* you know that you were going to Vietnam?

FUSONIE: I knew I was going to Vietnam in 1969. And then I went.

CARBONE: And you went—

FUSONIE: I was there ’69 and ’70.

CARBONE: Mm-hm. And so how much prior to your departure from the United States were you—

FUSONIE: Did I know?

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: A couple of weeks, a month. I don’t know. Not a lot of time. [Both chuckle.]

CARBONE: No, that is not. It’s a big adjustment.

FUSONIE: No.

CARBONE: And what as your reaction to that news?

FUSONIE: I couldn't believe it because, you know, I was—I was the last fully-trained surgeon at that hospital. The other guys were not completely trained. But they brought in other people, so—

CARBONE: Mm-hm. And so—

FUSONIE: It’s my turn to go, and they sent me.

CARBONE: And was it May of 1969 when you—

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: —went over?

FUSONIE: Yeah. And May of ’70 when I got out.

CARBONE: May of ’71?

FUSONIE: Seventy-one? Well, whenever it was. Oh, yeah. No, May of ’70.

CARBONE: May of ’70, okay.

FUSONIE: I was there a year.

CARBONE: One year, yes, okay.

So can you just kind of talk me through your arrival in Vietnam and that first—

FUSONIE: Well, you know, an officer, which I was, is supposed to know everything, in the military. But I was a doctor, and I didn’t know much.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: And when I showed up in Fort Eustis, to give you an example, I went to breakfast with my new uniform on. I was a captain. And a colonel looked at me, and says, “Captain, you have all your insignias in the wrong place.”

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: I had to learn all of that. And they kept sending me to Vietnam training. I fired every gun in the world. And then they’d send me again, send me to Fort Sam [Fort Sam Houston in Texas] to do the same thing, which was a waste, but—but I did. And so then I got ready to go to Vietnam, and my orders—and I went to San Francisco and took my oral boards on the way. I’d taken the written part. Surgery boards. And then went out and flew out to Vietnam.

It’s a long trip. It was about 19 hours in the plane, you know?

CARBONE: Ohh!

FUSONIE: Landed in Saigon, which is now Hồ Chí Minh City, and I said, “Where do I go?” I had this military piece of paper that didn’t tell me much of anything. And I said, “Sergeant, where do I go?” There was a guy standing there. And he was taking all the enlisted men wherever he wanted them. And he said, “Well, I don’t know.” He said, “Just go over there. Wait

around in that camp." So went over to that camp, and it was nothing but a series of bars. So I sat there, having a beer, and I said, *I still don't know where I'm gonna go*, and I showed it to somebody, and he said, "Oh, grab a truck over here, and it'll take you to Bien Hoa [Air Base]." And so I jumped on a truck, and we went to Bien Hoa.

That was a big camp, a big base camp. And they got rocketed all the time. So I'm sitting in Bien Hoa—you know, I had a cot and a bed, and you know. And nobody called for me. So I said, *Something's the matter here.* So I went to—to the colonel's office, and I say—he said, "We've been looking for you."

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: I said, "Oh, really?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "You're going to Củ Chi [Base Camp]." I said, "Oh, God, that's where they told me not to go because it gets rocketed all the time."

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: But anyway, that's where I went. So they put me in a helicopter—pssh! Off I went to Củ Chi, and I was there for a year.

CARBONE: Backing up a little, you mentioned that you had kind of some military training in firing weapons and stuff?

FUSONIE: I did.

CARBONE: Was there any medical training to prepare you for what you would see in Vietnam?

FUSONIE: I mean, I was already a fully-trained surgeon, you know? I mean, they did some of that, but it was—I mean, it wasn't much that we didn't know, you know?

CARBONE: Uh-huh.

FUSONIE: They would show you what a—what a high-velocity bullet did. You know, they would—I hate to tell you this, but it was a dead goat. They'd shoot a goat in the butt, and then you'd

go look at the wound and see it went in there; it came out in the back, and so they did show you that.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: But as far as trauma goes, this was just—some of the stuff we knew, whether it was quadrupled, you know, when we were over there because it was mines and rockets and bombs and rifles and IEDs and all that stuff, you know. And people would be brought in with lots of things missing.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: And sometimes you had somebody look at you and ask why you saved them.

CARBONE: Wow.

FUSONIE: Because they didn't have anything left below their belly button by the time you finished, you know. But they were alive. And your job is to save them. And I don't know if you're familiar with a senator, Democratic senator, [J. Maxwell] "Max" Cleland.

CARBONE: I haven't heard the name.

FUSONIE: From Georgia. He may still be in the Senate.

CARBONE: Oh, actually, I was just reading an article about him today.

FUSONIE: Right. Well, he came through, and the bottom half of him was all blown off. He sits in a chair, and he's happy to be alive. So you don't know who's going to be—

CARBONE: Yeah, different reactions.

FUSONIE: You know, yeah.

CARBONE: Oh, that is so funny. I was literally just reading an article that was about senators who are amputees.

FUSONIE: Yeah, yeah, yeah, Max.

CARBONE: What was—so you had heard of Củ Chi and you'd heard that it was—

FUSONIE: I never heard of it in my life. Oh, I'd heard that it was a place not to go.

CARBONE: Okay.

FUSONIE: Because we had other surgeons that had gone and come back or written—when they came back—they went to Vũng Tàu, which was on the beach. And so I'd heard about it that way.

CARBONE: Yeah, because Củ Chi is just, like, 30 miles from—

FUSONIE: Saigon.

CARBONE: —Saigon. Very—

FUSONIE: Yeah, I know. I know where it is.

CARBONE: Yeah, no, I'm—

FUSONIE: [Laughs.]

CARBONE: —giving context.

FUSONIE For sure. Yeah.

CARBONE: But there's a lot of activity.

FUSONIE: It was the busiest hospital in Vietnam, and as I said, we did 5,800 majors in one years, you know?

CARBONE: Wow.

FUSONIE: That's a lot of surgery.

CARBONE: So what—what classified as a major surgery?

FUSONIE: Something that involves chest, abdomen, amputations, neck, brain, you know, as opposed to just skin or something with that. And so, you know, it was pretty busy. And gave people—a lot of blood. We had two full surgical teams in

almost every specialty, and you would be on, you know, 24 hours; then you're off and made rounds on the patients you had operated on. When you had a mass casualty, meaning they brought in 30, 40 at a time, everybody had to go and respond.

CARBONE: Yep.

FUSONIE: And nurses. We must have had maybe 60, something like that. We had a lot of nurses, anyway. All wards—you know, took care of them.

We had a bunch of "Dustoff" pilots [from the 45th Medical Company Air Ambulance]—you know, medevac guys?

CARBONE: Mm-hm. Yep.

FUSONIE: And they would go in anywhere and pick up wounded on a hill or someplace and get shot at. You know, the Viet Cong would shoot the helicopters down, even though they had a big red cross on them. They really—they did a lot of good work. They were brave. You know—

CARBONE: Yeah, I can't—

FUSONIE: You know, they would go right in there and—

So anyway, that was—it was a very hot—they have two seasons over there: hot and wet, and hot and dry. When I got there, it was, like, 100-and-some degrees. I don't know. But anyway,—

CARBONE: Oh, goodness!

FUSONIE: —you couldn't spit or anything for about three days.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: But you got used to it, you know. And it was plenty—we had plenty of food. You know, there was a commissary, and we went there and had food. And there were lots of stories, but, you know, there was just a lot of trauma, you know?

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: A lot of trauma. And, we probably, on our time off, went and had a few drinks, you know. [Chuckles.] We used to sit on a tin roof when we were off sometimes, and one guy would be sitting there, having a drink, and he fell off and landed behind the sandbags. But he didn't spill the drink.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: He came up holding it like that. [Demonstrates.] But we didn't get much time off. But we would actually sit—sit up so we could see what was going on. They had this thing out there called the—I don't know. it was called Puff, the Magic Dragon (Douglas AC-47 Spooky] or something, but it was a [Douglas] C-54 [Skymaster]. They still use them. With Gatling guns coming out the side. And they'd fly in a circle and just kill everything in sight, I guess, but—and you could watch the war from up on the roof of our chicken coop.

CARBONE: Wow. That's—

FUSONIE: But, most of the time, we were busy, you know.

CARBONE: Yeah. So speaking of, though, your chicken coop, can you talk about the setup of the hospital, what it had, what it didn't have, and then just the base at large, too?

FUSONIE: Yeah. The hospital comprised a lot of Quonset huts hooked together.

CARBONE: And Quonset huts are these—

FUSONIE: Domed—

CARBONE: —steel-domed things. And they were hooked—in fact, there's some pictures there. They were hooked together , and they air conditioned them, thank God, with—you could see air conditioners sticking out everywhere.

CARBONE: Oh, yeah, in 100-degree heat without air conditioning.

FUSONIE: Oh, you had to. You had to. So they would go along and—okay, so there's the Emergency Room here [demonstrates],

and that was a big emergency room. And then you went from there to Pre-op or Holding. That's another—

CARBONE: Mm-hm. Another Quonset hut?

FUSONIE: And you went into the OR, which was another Quonset hut, and then you went into Recovery, which was another building, you know. And in Recovery you had respirators and—we had a lot of what you have now, but not as computerized and not as automatic, you know.

CARBONE: But it was a well supplied hospital?

FUSONIE: Yeah. Oh, yeah, it was. For that time. You know, we didn't have, obviously, some of the things they have now, and—but—and then you had other wards where the people would go and—you know, for after. And after a certain number of days, it was going to be a longer recovery—they would be shipped out to a convalescent center, because we didn't have time to do a lot of that stuff, you know, so—they had a whole system. And the Vietnamese we operated on would go to a Vietnamese hospital after we were done with them.

The people that we had no answer for were what they called Kit Carson Scouts. Have you ever read about them?

CARBONE: No, I have not.

FUSONIE: A Kit Carson Scout is an ex-Viet Cong who—Chiêu Hồis, or in other words, leaves the Viet Cong and becomes a—with the U.S. or with the Vietnamese, becomes a guide or a lead for—the Vietnamese would not take them in their hospital, Cong Hoa, down in Saigon—

CARBONE: Even the South Vietnamese.

FUSONIE: The South Vietnamese wouldn't. The North Vietnamese would kill them.

CARBONE: Yep.

FUSONIE: Our government would not take care of them after we took care of them in our hos- —local hospital. You couldn't send

them to any military—I don't know what became of them, but—

CARBONE: Hmm. Interesting.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: Kind of left in this limbo.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: Whew! Jeez!

So earlier, you were talking about nearly—what was it?—6,000 major surgeries in a year. And was there one injury or one type of injury that was the most common? Was it—

FUSONIE: You know, it's hard to say. There were a lot of gunshot wounds, AK-47, but there was a lot of blowing-up stuff, too—you know, mangled limbs and amputations and—a lot of amputations, you know, because they had these things, [M18] Claymore mines. They were something like what they have, IEDs now. And they were full of ball bearings and stuff, and they would, you know, blow up and really do a job on you. There were mines you might step on that would blow up.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: So we lost a lot of limbs. But we also had a lot of abdominal operations and a lot of chest operations from gunshot wounds and mortars and rockets, you know?

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: I don't know if there's one injury that was more common than the other. They were all pretty much there.

CARBONE: Every one was common.

FUSONIE: Brain injuries were pretty much almost terminal. I mean, gunshot wounds to the head were really bad, you know?

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: And we'd actually—we'd send them to the 22nd Evac[uation Hospital], where the neurosurgeons were, and they'd try but weren't too successful. So it was a lot of—a lot of everything, you know?

CARBONE: And where—was it equally Vietnamese civilians and American—

FUSONIE: No.

CARBONE: —military men?

FUSONIE: Mostly American military, but we took care of Vietnamese civilians when they got blown up for whatever rea- —little kids, you know. And we took care of the enemy, too. You know, our guys would shoot them and bring them in, you know?

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: So, you know, we took care of them, too. And, there was a—and I don't know if you ever heard of the tunnels of Củ Chi. I think you asked that before. But anyway, the tunnels of Củ Chi went underneath the town of Củ Chi, but it also came up under our base camp.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: And they snuck in one time and blew up 14 Chinooks and—if you know what a [Boeing CH-47] Chinook is; it's a huge—

CARBONE: Big helicopter.

FUSONIE: —helicopter. And they got them all. But they were—they had a hospital underground.

CARBONE: Wow!

FUSONIE: They had a little hospital under there. I don't know what they did. But anyway, if they—if things weren't going well and they were taking care of the patient, they'd throw him out on the field for us to take care of, so we'd get—we'd get these guys in with a tube coming out of them, you know. We didn't

know what they'd had done to them, you know. But anyway, that was the Viet Cong.

CARBONE: Did it change your perception of the war, seeing it so physically, with all these people with, like, horrific injuries and missing limbs?

FUSONIE: Well, yeah. War was at a distance, over there, until you get there. And I didn't really think that I was going to be killed, although I almost—a couple of times. But not like the troops that are going out in the field, where they get killed any time.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: My perception of the war? It's probably bloodier than I—I—you know, I hadn't seen so much trauma. I had seen trauma, and I knew what to do about it, but, you know, we could see, you know, 40 at a clip for a number of days coming in. And then we'd have nothing for a while. So, yeah, it was a lot.

CARBONE: Was it more than you had expected?

FUSONIE: I don't know what I expected, you know? We were all trained to do it. I don't know what I expected, you know. But it was a—it was—a lot of different things went on, you know. We had tunnel rats come in. Do you know what a tunnel rat is?

CARBONE: Was that someone sneaking up through those Củ Chi tunnels?

FUSONIE: Little guys. They were trained to go down the tunnels after the Viet Cong. We had the 32nd Scout Dog Patrol. I think it was the 32nd. They were dogs. And they were trained to sit down when they smelled a mine and go out with the guys and sniff and stuff, and they still use them. But they would go down tunnels, too, after the Viet Cong. And the guys would go down also, with a pistol and a knife, you know. I mean, I wouldn't get past the first entrance to the tunnel.

CARBONE: Yeah, there were, like—what?—18 inches or something tiny?

FUSONIE: I don't know, but I have claustrophobia, and you wouldn't get *me* down there.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: But anyway, they brought one in one day, and I was going through the Emergency Room and to go over to Surgery, and I said, "What do ya got there?" The guy was screaming and hopping around, and he said, "We got a tunnel rat with a—you know, he's—he's decompensated, and he's got acute, you know, phobias and whatever was going—which I—it's understandable.

So now what do you do with him? And he's cracked, you know. What do you do with him? And I said, "What are you going to do with him?" He said, "Well, I'll tell you." He says, "We're gonna knock him out for two or three days and send him back to his unit."

FUSONIE: Oy!

FUSONIE: "Because if we don't, he'll have this on him for the rest of his life. He'll feel guilty about it. And we'll see how he is." So they gave him a lot of barbiturates and everything else and put him to sleep for about two days and then woke him up, and the guy went back to his unit. I don't know what became of him, but—

CARBONE: Wow.

FUSONIE: But they followed him, I guess, you know. They said, "If he can't make it, he can't make it." But he wanted to go back. That's what they told me. I didn't take care of him, because he wasn't a surgical guy. [Both Chuckle.] You know, he was for the psychiatrist that I would have been way back. [Chuckles.]

CARBONE: The other—

FUSONIE: Yeah, the other profession.

CARBONE: Version two of you.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: Were there—did a high percentage of the people that you treated then return to their units?

FUSONIE: No. No, no, they were too—most of them were too injured. They went home. I mean, they went to—there was—some people that had minor injuries and that you took care of—would go to the 6th Convalescent Center in Cam Ranh Bay, and they would go back to their unit. But most of the big abdominal, chest and legs and everything—naw, they went—they went from us to Japan. They'd basically end up in Japan or the Philippines, and then they'd eventually get back to the States. Yeah, only the small stuff went back.

CARBONE: Yeah. Makes sense.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: And did you have—did you establish relationships with any of these patients in kind of their post-operative care, or—

FUSONIE: No. No, because they left, and we were still there. We have had patients come back and thank us at a reunion or something. We had a reunion in Texas, and a couple of G.I.s came back and thanked us.

CARBONE: Wow. That's pretty cool.

FUSONIE: Yeah. But, you know, most of the time you never saw them again, which is different. You know, that doctor-patient relationship is only there for the time they're there.

CARBONE: Yeah. But *were* those interactions like with patients who had lost limbs or kind of been—

FUSONIE: It was hard. It was hard, you know. I think I told you about the one guy woke up, wanted to know why we didn't just let him go, because he didn't have any parts, you know? They're mostly grateful. They were happy to be alive, and they knew they had a long road ahead to get, you know, a prosthesis and all the things that come later so they could walk. Yeah, a lot of them were really glad to be alive. Had been shot in the chest or something, and now they're going to be okay. Yeah it was—it was a mixture, you know.

CARBONE: Yeah, different reactions.

FUSONIE: Some of the—you know, the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong we operated on, they didn't know what to make of us because we had saved them, and they probably didn't look at life that way, I guess. I don't know, you know. If it was a G.I., they might not have done that, but that was what we did.

CARBONE: Was that a hard decision for some people on the base, to treat North Vietnamese?

FUSONIE: No, no, you just—you just do what you do, you know. It's—as I said, the worst injury went to surgery first, and—I mean, we would take the Viet Cong ahead of a G.I that had had similar injuries, you know. But, but if this guy—well, this one—one—well, no, he was a South Vietnamese soldier. I can't remember—that was—he came in with a whole here [demonstrates]—

CARBONE: In his chest.

FUSONIE: I knew it was going through his heart. He had a ball bearing went through his heart, so I opened his chest, put my finger in the hole in his heart and I sewed up around it, and he did okay, but, you know, it's a—I got him before he bled to death. [Chuckles.]

CARBONE: Yeah. wow. And were the injuries that you saw amongst civilians and, like, members of any sort of fighting force—did they differ significantly?

FUSONIE: You mean—yeah, civilians were all kinds of things. They were women that worked on the base when a rocket came in or they were kids in a schoolhouse or they got hit by some bomb or something, you know, so those were civilians we took care of. We took care of the South Vietnamese Army and the North Vietnamese. I don't know. What do you mean, "Are they different?"

CARBONE: Just, like, if there were different types of injuries that were commonly occurring.

FUSONIE: No, it was pretty much the same. It's all gunshot wounds, shrapnel wounds, rockets, you know.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: Was there a burn unit at the hospital?

FUSONIE: We took care of burns and then shipped them to the Saigon—the hospital down in Saigon, the 24th—I think it was the 24th. There was another hospital there anyway, 3rd Field, 3rd Field Hospital, yeah. Because we couldn't keep taking care of them for days on end because we had all this other stuff coming in.

FUSONIE: Wonderful. Great.

So you've mentioned, like, the North Vietnamese coming in through the tunnels and blowing up—

FUSONIE: That's Viet Cong coming.

CARBONE: Viet Cong.

SCHEIR: Yes.

CARBONE: Blowing up the Chinook helicopters and some rocket attacks.

CARBONE: They got into the base camp an blew up 14 Chinooks on the airfield, yeah. And it blew up a bunch of other stuff two, before they all got killed. But the rocket attacks came from out in the distance. The could fire the 122-millimeter rockets, you know, miles.

FUSONIE: Yeah. And was that just because the 12th Evacuation Hospital was within the Củ Chi base?

FUSONIE: Yeah, it's in the base camp. It's in the—it was in the 25th Division base camp, and from that mountain over there, over the hospital to that airfield over there is where they were trying to go. The ammunition dump was over there, too. So I think that's w here they were trying to go. But it would

occasionally fell short and hit the hospital. Not a lot. You know. And, you know, we would get guys that came in and described the battles to us now and then, which was kind of –interesting, bloody and interesting.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: But—yeah. But they didn't get in again. But their tunnels! You know, the tunnels—that's a—that's something. They had built those things right up under our base camp, probably, you know?

CARBONE: That's insane.

FUSONIE: But—but they never came in again after that, you know. There was one time, and then I don't think the tunnels came up in through there anymore. But they had them all around, out there in the—Củ Chi, itself, was a town over here [demonstrates], and the hospital and base camp was over here [demonstrates]. Ad the women from the town and from others would come and work in the base camp, but they would have to all be checked when they came in. You know, they would come in with their pajamas and a white shirt and a little straw hat, you know, and they would come in and, you know, work in the kitchens, cleaning hooches and stuff like that. Then they would all leave at the same time.

CARBONE: Mm-hm. And what was the relationship between these Vietnamese civilians working in the base and—

FUSONIE: It was—it was fine, you know. I remember one and her daughter, who was probably in her 20s when I came in. We were working in—chi- —the hooch we lived in, and on the wall was a picture of a skier on snow—

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: —with [chuckles]—with Vail [Colorado] 9,000 miles that way, and those two women looked at that snow. They'd never seen snow, you know?

CARBONE: Yah. [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: [Chuckles.]

CARBONE: Yeah, you said it was hot and hot.

FUSONIE: Yeah, yeah. And the monsoon season—it would rain, and water would come in, you know, come into the hooch, and so, as I say, it was wet and hot, and dry and hot. That was it.

CARBONE: So you arrived in Vietnam at the 12th Evacuation Hospital in May of 1969, and the, like, Battle of Hamburger Hill was that same year, and you were arriving just before it?

FUSONIE: I don't know. There were so many battles over there, I don't know.

CARBONE: Nothing really stuck out to you?

FUSONIE: I just missed [the] Tet [Offensive].

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: Tet One.

CARBONE: Which had been that very area.

FUSONIE: Tet came—came just before—before I got there, and—

CARBONE: Yeah, one year.

FUSONIE: —that was a bloody battle. We won that one, but, you know, it was still a lot of guys lost. We had—we had a lot of—there was a lot of fighting all over the place there, so I don't know. There was a mountain outside of our base camp called Núi Bà Đen or the Black Virgin Mountain. And the top was owned by the U.S.; the bottom, by the South Vi- —but the Viet Cong were tunneled in in the middle. I don't know. It was a crazy setup. But anyway, so there was a lot of places that battles were fought.

CARBONE: Yeah. You were kind of just in the thick of it?

FUSONIE: It was all over the place, so I don't know. I don't know any special—special battle. [Both chuckle.]

CARBONE: Did you feel somewhat insulated from the war at all, being in the hospital, or—

FUSONIE: No, no. The war was coming right in the door every day, you know. I didn't feel insulated from it at all. Was I—did I feel a little less vulnerable? Yeah! You know, because I wasn't out in the—in the field, you know, fighting everybody, so—yeah.

CARBONE: In that sense.

FUSONIE: But, but I'm not really insulated because those guys were brought in. And sometimes we got rocketed. But, no, it was different. Yeah. And I was not—thank God I wasn't 19 years old and out there in the boonies with—fighting those guys.

CARBONE: Yeah. Well, and that's also kind of an interesting aspect of your experience with the Vietnam War, is that you were in your 30s—

FUSONIE: Right.

CARBONE: —by the time you were at the 12th Evacuation Hospital. And so what was it like to be, you know, 16 years older, potentially, than some of the enlisted men?

FUSONIE: Well, no 16-year-olds.

CARBONE: Eighteen-year-olds.

FUSONIE: Eighteen- and 19-year-olds. Well, you know, it was—it was tough, you know?

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: And, you know, the guys would come in. They would get one day. They'd come in out of the jungles there, you know. They'd come in. You'd see them walking in, holding their rifle, you know, and walking along. They had one day, and we had a fake beach. They were made for the troops. It was—they put this black tarmac down, and they made a pool out of it, and they called it Waikiki East.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: And they would go there, and they would swim and everything, and every once in a while, some of the nurses would go and swim down there. And those young guys thought that was terrific, you know. And they were down there, but then the next day they had to go back out. But they would get, like, one day in a month or something like that.

So 19-year-olds? Yeah, that was—that was tough, you know, you know. And they were all young. Even the helicopter pilots were very young. And, you know, if you were trying to get a helicopter back from Saigon, you would go to this place called Hotel—it's not a hotel, but it's a helipad. And you look for the insignia from some unit that's on your base camp?

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: And, you know, you'd get a ride back. But if you got on there with some nurses or "doughnut dollies"—that's a USO [United Service Organizations]—young girls. Those young pilots would give you a flight you didn't want.

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: They would try to impress the girls, and they would fly like this [demonstrates] and then sideways, and there was—oh, my God!

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: But—so everybody—they were all young, you know. And we were older. Yeah.

CARBONE: Was there a distinct separation by ages, kind of?

FUSONIE: No. You know, I don't think so. The nurses were young, you know?

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: They were, I don't know, 22, 23, 24. But they were closer to the age with those guys. So, you know, they had shared

that—pretty much the same age, almost. And they were good. You know, they did a lot of work, they did a *lot* of work.

But we had some—some things were—you know, I remember trying to send this nurse home, and she was married to a chopper pilot, and he got shot, and they were sending him home, but they wouldn't send her home. You know, it's supposed to be compassionate leave, you know, go home. So I remember arguing with the colonel about it. But I think they finally sent her home, but—so there was little interplays of things like that, too, you know?

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: And what was the relationship of the people working—so the medical staff with the enlisted men and people, like, on the base?

FUSONIE: Fine. Yeah, it was fine, you know. I'd get mad at them now and then because I had to get them out of the hooch, where they lived, because I needed an extra [chuckles]—an extra hand, and he might be smoking pot, you know?

CARBONE: [Chuckles.] Not going to be very much help in the operating room.

FUSONIE: Most of the time they weren't—they were mellow, you know. But anyway, you know, most of the time they didn't, so—you know, we—everybody got along. You had to.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: You were there, so you know, it didn't pay to have any enemies.

CARBONE: Yeah, [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: And you kind of—you know, being older, you know, you kind of looked after them,—

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: —you know, sort of. Did the best we could.

CARBONE: Was there a contingent of older—

FUSONIE: All the doctors were.

CARBONE: —surgical staff?

FUSONIE: Yeah, all the—there were surgeons, internists, anesthesiologists, you know, oral surgeons, you know, and they were—yeah.

CARBONE: Looking out for them.

FUSONIE: What would be different now, as you well know, is that 50 percent of the medical school class is women, so the women would be over there, which, you know, we didn't have. Do you know how many girls were in my medical school class?

CARBONE: How many?

FUSONIE: Four.

CARBONE: Out of how many?

FUSONIE: Eighty-something.

CARBONE: Oh, my goodness!

FUSONIE: But that's the way it was, you know?

CARBONE: Yeah. Right, Dartmouth was all men when you were here.

FUSONIE: Yeah, yeah. That's the way it was, you know? So, you know, it's a lot different now, and it's a different perspective in—in—in medicine and a lot of things, which is good.

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

Going back a little bit, you mentioned that, you know, these guys would be smoking pot in their hooches. Was drug use and alcohol use a big problem on the base?

FUSONIE: You know, none of us smoked pot, okay? Drank beer or something, you know, whatever, so we did have that. But never when we were on call. You know, when we were on call—at least for me, I never touched anything, you know.

The young people, it was the—close to the Woodstock [Music & Art Fair] era or Haight-Ashbury [district in San Francisco, California] or whatever, all of that—and they—they did some pot, okay?

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: I did not see—even though it was there. I mean, I know heroin was there, but I didn't see that. Other places, they had it. And there was no abuse of any of the—OxyContin or anything like that, so basically it was pot, you know. And maybe some of the troops maybe heroin. And it all came from the enemy, too. They were just as soon everybody was smoked up, so they could kill them easier!

CARBONE: Less formidable. [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: In fact, we did lose a few troops, you know, that were on guard duty and then, you know, smoked up a little, kind of too relaxed and—

CARBONE: Yeah. [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: But it wasn't a—so it wasn't a big thing, you know, but it was there, yeah. And I told the guys, you know, they're not going to do it while they're supposed to be operating, anyway. But it's nothing new. You had to deal with it.

CARBONE: Was there any—I mean, you had not been in Vietnam, and then you were in Vietnam. But did your year at the hospital change how you understood the war in any way or how you understood the Viet Cong or—

FUSONIE: Well, it was more real. It didn't—I mean, I didn't—I didn't know a lot about it, but, you know, when I'd get over there, I did. And after, I did, you know. I mean, I knew about it, but I was more in tune with it when I was there, and I could see the real stuff, you know. And when I left, I also followed up on it because you don't forget it, you know. You never forget

it, you know. And I know some of the troops have—they had PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], you know, although we—I'm not sure we had that much from Vietnam. But they did. And I can't say that the doctors did. You know, we were so used to looking at trauma that it—you know, we see it in civilian life, too. But this was an enormous amount.

CARBONE: Yeah. Did you—I mean, I kind of assume you had to, but did you become desensitized to—

FUSONIE: No. But you had to just keep going, you know. It's a—I don't know if you'd call that desensitized as accepting it as what it is and doing what you have to do. I mean, if you get all blown away by it, then you can't take care of the next one, you know?

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: So it's not desensitized, but it's—and it's not like you've never seen it before; you just never seen this much.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: And you're trained to take care of it, anyway. But, no, not desensitization. Maybe, I don't know, accustomed to.

CARBONE: Yeah, I understand what you're—

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: Still recognize it as horrible.

I guess if there was a typical day or a schedule that you kept to, could you walk me through that?

FUSONIE: Well, there was no set schedule. It was—you responded to whatever happened. So I can't say there was a set schedule. I mean, we operated daytime, nighttime, whatever. And your team was on 24 hours, and then you—even the day off, you had to go make rounds and see people. So there was no real set schedule. You just—whatever happened, you did.

There are some—somethings that are kind of funny that—and happen to have nothing to do with the schedule—but,

you know, we were entitled to R&R [rest and recuperation] one week, all right? So I was going to meet my wife in Hawaii, and, you know, her parents wouldn't take care of the kids. So anyway, I went over, and I said, "I need a Jeep tomorrow to take me down to the helicopter pad, so I can take the helicopter to Saigon and get the plane out." "Oh, yes, sir. Yes, sir."

Well, I went over there that morning. No Jeep. I say, "Where is it?" "Oh, it's down in the general's mess." That's the big dinner—breakfast, whatever. I said, "Well, how am I gonna get there?" "Well, I don't know." So and, I looked over at the Emergency Room, and there was an ambulance there, just sitting there. So I went and got my roommate, who had a military driver's license, and he came out. He had nothing on but his shorts, and he had the dog under his arm. We had a dog. So he was going to drive.

So we get in and drove, and as we went down the highway—takin' the standards—we went down the highway. The helicopter pad is down there. And the thing died. So I looked in the front seat, and the water pump was in the front seat with me. So I got out, and I went to the chopper. And I got out of there and went to Hawaii and had the R&R.

And then I came back, and when I came back, God they called me into this colonel's office and read me the riot act: I had stolen an ambulance, and my roommate got caught out of uniform, and all this stuff, and "what are we gonna do about that?" And you know, he said—you know, I don't know what he was going to do to me, but anyway—and he said, "You know, you doctors don't listen to me. You're hard to deal with," we are, you know. You know, we didn't go for this Mickey Mouse stuff with the hats and all that. But anyway, we did our job.

And so he said, "I don't know what I'm gonna do. I gotta do something because everybody knows." I said, "Well, look," I said, "you gave a Bronze Star to one of the docs that put a fire on a helicopter." I said, "We work 24 hours. We're working all the time, and you never gonna give us a Bronze St- —. Why don't you tell everybody you're gonna give me a Bronze Star and now you took it away?" And he said, "That's what we'll do."

CARBONE: [Chuckles.]

FUSONIE: [Laughs.] It was dumb stuff like that. So anyway—but, by God, I was going on my R&R!

CARBONE: [Chuckles.] And you did. You made it to Hawaii.

FUSONIE: Yeah. You know, but that was—and Hawaii was good, you know?

CARBONE: Was it—what was it like to return from, you know, Hawaii—

FUSONIE: From R&R?

CARBONE: —to Vietnam?

FUSONIE: It was, you know—it wasn't great, but, you know, it had to be done, you know. We got—and we got an R&R and we got a leave, seven days' leave. Now, you can't go anywhere to meet your wife or anything like that, so I went to Singapore, you know? And that was interesting. Went around Singapore and saw what it was, and—yeah. Saw what another war had done. We stood on a hill and looked down across—on the British cemetery, of all these crosses that went down to the Straits of Johor. You know, the Japanese had killed all these people, you know?

CARBONE: Wow.

FUSONIE: Second World War. So, anyway, war is hell.

CARBONE: Yeah. Jeez. Ooh!

So one of the photos you showed me was of the use of defoliant.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: So can you kind of explain the United States' use of defoliant and then how you saw that on the base and at the hospital?

FUSONIE: Well, defoliant was used to do just that: defoliate, all the way to a perimeter so that you could set up a perimeter and not

have bad guys sneak up on you. I mean, we had guards out on the perimeter. And that's what it was for. And it worked very well. But unfortunately, it also has caused some damage to people.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: And it's responsible for some prostate cancers, skin cancers and different things as the years go by and the older guys—you know. And we know that know, but they didn't know it then. So Agent Orange was never intended to cause physical, medical harm to anybody, but it did. And it caused it to civilians, caused it to children, you know, unborn children. So it was—it was a—you know, it was—it was the wrong thing to use, but we didn't know it then.

CARBONE: Yeah. Was the entire area surrounding the base—had it been sprayed with Agent Orange?

FUSONIE: Yeah, and I'm pretty sure it was because it was clear, out to the mountains, you know? And the base camp—I could show you other pictures—it was just flat. There was nothing there. Roads, and no trees, no bushes, no anything. Of course, a lot of that was plowed down, but at the same time, a lot of it out there was Agent Orange.

CARBONE: Wow. Jeez. Is that—was that something that ever came up with, like, civilians who were being treated at the hospital, or—

FUSONIE: No. You know, I didn't know who—you mean, who got affected by Agent Orange?

CARBONE: Yeah, just, like, immediate or burned or something?

FUSONIE: No, you wouldn't see it. I mean, it's something that affects you years later. I wouldn't have—nobody would have known, you know. No.

CARBONE: No.

FUSONIE: But it gets you—you know, it gets you years later, so when you're in your 60s or 70s, you get prostate cancer or whatever.

CARBONE: Yeah. Right. Lots of terrible birth defects and stuff.

The one thing—so you were talking much earlier about how the—like, the United States didn't lose a battle in the Vietnam War.

FUSONIE: They never lost a battle.

CARBONE: But the—in a sense, then, lost the war with how the U.S. forces left.

FUSONIE: Because we left. It was basically the public back home. You know, we were fighting two wars. You were fighting—fighting the Viet Cong, the North Vietnamese, and the public at home.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: So when it came—and you had all these people in Washington all fighting each other about what to do about it, you know. We didn't—there's certain places we didn't bomb because it wouldn't have been right, you know, but, you know, so we didn't bomb the dikes in Haiphong so that people could—you know, coming down.

But we sh- —and we turned over our equipment to the South Vietnamese Army to carry on?

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: But we didn't leave them any repair stuff, so they couldn't repair them. And there were the Paris Peace talks were going on at different times, and supposedly—well, you know, they used to say the North Vietnamese weren't in the south. Well, that's not true because we operated on some of them. But "there was just the Viet Cong." No, that's not true. The North Vietnamese were—were there, coming down.

So I don't—I don't know. It's a—it's a tough thing, you know, as to describe what—what went on in the end was—it was wrong.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: We got out the wrong way, and—because we didn't have to lose a thing, but the government and the people couldn't tolerate us being in a war any longer. That's really it, you know.

CARBONE: Was it ever hard to reconcile, like, all the injuries you were seeing, all the people who were coming to the hospital with the military successes or these—you know, the winning of these battles?

FUSONIE: Well, you would have had the injuries anyway, so if you win, it's better. I don't know. But I don't like any of the injuries, whether you're winning or losing. I would—I would hope that they would win everything around our base camp [both chuckle] so we wouldn't get overrun, but, you know, all I know is they were—they were good—good soldiers, and they never lost a battle, you know. But we did lose, you know, 55,000 or whatever we lost, a tremendous number of troops. And I'm not sure it had to be that way, you know. But, you know, I don't have an answer to it.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: I don't have an answer to the one that's going on now, either. That's beyond my comprehension. I just don't know what they're doing over there. I don't think the government knows what they're doing.

CARBONE: Did you feel that the government knew what it was doing while it was fighting the war in Vietnam?

FUSONIE: No. I think the—I think the commanders did, but I'm not sure the government did. They were hamstrung. The commanders knew how to fight the war, but they couldn't fight it.

CARBONE: Yeah. Politics got in the way at the end.

FUSONIE: Yeah. So I don't know. But if you've got half of the population marching around and marching on Washington and all over the place, I mean, you're going to declare victory and leave, but it didn't work that way. You know, we left with people

falling off the roof or trying to get on a helicopter and everything else, you know?

CARBONE: Mm-hm.

FUSONIE: On TV.

CARBONE: Yeah. So when you, though, did leave Vietnam in May of 1970, how did you—what was your sense of the war at that time?

FUSONIE: See I didn't—you know, I thought we were winning, but that's—and I thought it wasn't long after that that they closed the hospitals.

CARBONE: Yeah, yeah. In I think it was November of 1970.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: 12th Evacuation closed then.

FUSONIE: The battles were over, a lot of them.

CARBONE: Yeah. When *you* were leaving, were you aware that the usefulness of the hospital was—

FUSONIE: No, no, it was busy. [Both chuckle.] It was still busy, so—no, when I left, they were still going full—full steam. Yeah. But not long after that, you know, things calmed down as we left. And I have no idea what they've done with that base camp. I don't know what the—what the Viet Cong or whatever have done with it, or the South Viet- —or whoever it is now, the North Vietnamese. I don't know. It was a good hospital. They could have used *that*. Yeah.

CARBONE: So will you walk me through your return to the United States?

FUSONIE: My what?

CARBONE: Your return to the United States in May of 1970?

FUSONIE: Oh. I came back to the United States and landed in Oakland—or, rather, Travis [Air Force Base, California], and

then went to Oakland, California, to get out and sign my—my way out. They said they owed me money. I used to have it all sent home except for a couple of dollars. Anyway, they owed me money. So I said, "Oh, okay." I said, "Well, send me a check." "Oh, no, no, we're gonna give you the money right now." So they handed me a stack of money like this [demonstrates], and now I had two or three days in San Francisco before my flight home.

And so what am I going to do with all this money? I had it stuck in my socks and every- —I didn't know what I was going to do with it. I didn't want to get hit on the head and have somebody rob me. Anyway, I put it somewhere. I can't remember. But anyway, I—I finally left and went home. I got out of there and landed in Charlotte [North Carolina], and my wife and kids met me, and that was good. So that was my introduction to being home.

CARBONE: Yeah. Did—you mentioned that many returning soldiers had very—like, were not welcomed by antiwar protesters.

FUSONIE: I—

CARBONE: Did you have any personal experience with that?

FUSONIE: No. Well, I did in Boston but not—you know, I was sitting in Boston in my uniform. I had to go to Greenfield [Massachusetts] for something, and, yeah, they came by and harassed me, you know, but I held my cool.

CARBONE: What were their—

FUSONIE: They were calling me a baby killer and everything else. You know, all that stuff.

CARBONE: Wow.

FUSONIE: Yeah, but worse things have happened to other people. You know, it wasn't—but it did happen to our nurses, and it happened to other people. And it was—that's the way it was, you know. And they have made a conscious effort to—the protesters—to not do that to the troops now.

CARBONE: Yeah.

FUSONIE: Which is—that's the good—good part about them, you know? That's good. But anyway, it was—

And then I had to go look for a job, you know, when I got home, and I had a lot of places, and I did not want to go back to a city. I was teaching surgery, too. Teach and so forth. I wanted to go to some community where they would be able to do all I was trained to do: chest and arteries and so forth. And so I ended up in—somebody contacted me, and I ended up in Greenfield, Massachusetts, and that's where I've been ever since 1970.

CARBONE: Awesome. Wow.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: And that's a small town?

FUSONIE: No, it's not that small. It's part of the Baystate Medical Center. Our town is probably—the town, itself, is probably, I don't know, 20,000. But it's the largest county in Massachusetts, mostly farms and things, and people come from a lot of places to come to the hospital. And they're busy. I retired from that when I was about 66, and then I did some locum tenens, going to different hospitals, replacing people, and then fully retired. And, you know, all I do now is twice a month I do minor surgery, skin tumors and things like that. And other than that, I golf, ski, stuff, you know.

CARBONE: Yeah. Awesome.

FUSONIE: My wife and I travel to visit our grandchildren and our children and their kids and so forth.

CARBONE: Mm-hm. Are you involved in any way with any groups of, like, medical veterans or—

FUSONIE: Oh, I'm—well,—

CARBONE: —stuff related to the Vietnam War?

FUSONIE: I'm in the Massachusetts Medical Society. I'm still active there. The American College of Surgeons. You know, different things, yeah.

CARBONE: Mhm. Do you continue to be involved with things related to the Vietnam War and your service?

FUSONIE: Not really. I've been to the Wall [the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.], and then they bring a portable wall around. I've seen that. No, you know, I don't—I don't do that much with—you know, I go to the VA [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs] for medical stuff, you know. My own doctor, also. So, no, I don't do a lot with that, you know. I've been busy with other things.

CARBONE: Mm-hm. Awesome.

Do you feel there's anything else you want to—wasn't touched on?

FUSONIE: No, I—I—we've covered a lot of territory, I think. You know, I don't know what I left out, but when you get old, you forget anyway. [Both chuckle.]

CARBONE: Well, I just want to make sure you've put it all out there.

FUSONIE: Yeah.

CARBONE: Great. Thank you so much. This was wonderful.

FUSONIE: Oh, thank *you*.

[End of interview.]