David “Jake” Guest
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
The Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Cesar J. Hernandez ‘27

HERNANDEZ: This is Cesar Hernandez. Today is February the 11th, 2025 and I'm conducting this oral history interview for the Dartmouth Vietnam Project. I am conducting this interview with Mr. Jake Guest. This interview is taking place in his home in Vermont. Mr. Jake Guest, thank you for speaking with me today.

GUEST: Thank you. Look forward to it.

HERNANDEZ: Just to start things off, can you tell me your name and where you're from?

GUEST: So my name is-- my actual name is David Guest [‘66] but I've been known as Jake Guest for most of my life. I'm from-- I was I was born in Portland, Maine. I grew up in Milford, Connecticut, and summers in South and Cape Elizabeth Maine, and moved to Hanover [NH] and went to Hanover High School in 1961. Graduated in 1962 from Hanover High School.

HERNANDEZ: And can you tell me a little bit about what your life was like before Hanover?

GUEST: Before Hanover? Yeah. My father was a-- I call myself academic middle class. My father was an associate professor-- had the grade of Associate Professor, but he worked in an independent project at Yale University, and that's why we were in Connecticut, and in 1960 he was hired by Dartmouth-- Tuck School at Dartmouth [Tuck School of Business] to be a tenured professor. So that got me up to through high school.

HERNANDEZ: Yeah. And what was that transition to Hanover like for you?

GUEST: Yeah it was good. I mean, I lived most of my early childhood, I lived near the ocean. We lived right on the ocean. And it was a bit of a change to come way up here. Just not the ocean. I always thought I was going to be an oceanographer or ichthyologist or something like that connected to the ocean, but I ended up being an organic farmer, yeah. So, it was a pretty -- I had three brothers. I grew up in the 50s. It was a pretty normal middle-class family. My parents are both-- have always been very liberal politically, and a fact that I'm proud of. My dad was very active in the Democratic-- his whole life he was active in the Democratic

Party, and my mom was very liberal too.

HERNANDEZ: You mentioned that you then attended Dartmouth after graduating from Hanover High.

GUEST: Yeah, I got accepted. That was a mistake. I got accepted at Dartmouth. I got accepted a few different schools around the country. I was pretty good in high school, had pretty good grades, and had a lot of extra activity and sports and various organizations and stuff in high school. So I got a lot of good recommendations, and I got accepted at Dartmouth. Part of the reason I got accepted at Dartmouth is that Dartmouth College has this long tradition of giving New Hampshire residents a few points more, so to speak, because apparently it goes back to historical thing where the state of New Hampshire gave-- they wanted Dartmouth to be the University of New Hampshire and Dartmouth agreed. I don't know the exact history, but the state of New Hampshire gave Dartmouth the huge tracts of land in the northern part of the state of New Hampshire-- I think they were for logging and other, yeah, for logging. And apparently they have, this is what I understand, they have a historical commitment to the state of New Hampshire to look favorably upon New Hampshire students. I don't know if that's true or not, but so I got into Dartmouth, and as I said, I think that was a mistake, because I think it would have been a better idea to go to some school that was further away. But anyway, that's what happened.

HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and why do you think it was a mistake?

GUEST:

I think it's a mistake because, you're right there, right in the same place you went to high school. I think at that age, it's probably a good idea to have a different experience. I mean it would be nice to be a few hours away from home, but being so close to home, I think that was- I didn't do well. I got kicked out of Dartmouth after my freshman year because I wasn't academically, was not performing as expected. I don't know. So that's why I don't think it was a good idea, but I think Dartmouth is a fine college, but probably wasn't for me. Although I had a good time here, but I really enjoyed a lot of my classes, and I liked being here. And the other thing about Dartmouth, it was all men-- that was pretty weird. It's sort of a strange environment where we were way the hell up in it, here in the woods and there were no-- we had very little contact with women. So that was another reason why it was a mistake, I think. Anyway.

HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and how would you sort of describe that campus culture when you first arrived?

GUEST: Dartmouth was very-- how should I describe it? It was very. Had a long tradition of, I'm trying to think that way and describe it. It had a very pro-Dartmouth kind of rah, rah culture. That's partly because it was all guys so it was, it was like a big fraternity. I mean that alone, with no women, and this tradition of it had a really strong alumni base, and there was a lot of traditions around what a great place Dartmouth was. And it was a little weird.

HERNANDEZ: You said that you got kicked out of Dartmouth. What was sort of going through your mind then?

GUEST: Well, I just didn't study very well. I mean I had really good grades in any course that involved discussion, or interacting with other students or the professors, where there was a kind of exchange of ideas, and some of the courses that I didn't do well were courses-- when I look back on it, I really had a hard time writing term papers, writing papers. I really had a hard time. It was really hard. I'd spend hours and hours at Baker Library trying to put my thoughts together and come up with a paper. And I just had a hard time with that. So I got a combination of very poor grades and pretty good grades.

And I had my social life. I got involved in theater so I was in a couple productions, and I went out for crew. And I like to hang out with other students and talk about stuff. I hung out with a lot of the actors who I thought were really interesting people-- the Dartmouth Players. They were kind of interesting people to be around, but I basically got really distracted.

So eventually, at the end of the term, they just-- the dean said, “Look, it just doesn't seem to be working out for you. We love to have you back, but we'd like you to take two or three years off and kind of decide what you want to-- who you want to be, and what you want to be and what you want to do at Dartmouth, and see how that works.” So at that point I was-- I actually had a family friend, a friend of my parents, who was a colonel in the Air Force ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] at Dartmouth. And because one of the things back then was they still had the draft, so there was an expression back then. It would say, well, you should take, maybe you take care of your military obligation, because everybody was sort of obligated to. Men were obligated-- young men were obligated to be available for the draft, and some got drafted, and some joined. But it was sort of like, well, sooner or later, I'll probably get drafted, so maybe take care of that. And

that was also encouraged by the college, by the Dean-- Dean [Thaddeus] Seymour. He said, “Well, maybe you should consider going in the military.”

It's important to note, especially since this is about Vietnam, at that time in 1962, 1963, Vietnam was really not in people's consciousness. We had a bunch of advisors over there, and there was a lot of talk about keeping the communists from taking over South Vietnam but there was also all kinds of crooked administrations in South Vietnam. But it wasn't like we had a war going on. There was special forces. There were special advisors. But it wasn't like a lot of people getting shot. That was to come later. So I joined, and he suggested-- when you at that time, if you joined in the army, you had two choices. You could either say where you wanted to go and be stationed, or you could say what you gonna do. And I ended up-- it turns out there were openings for medical corpsman, for medics. So that's what I chose. And then in September, I went into the Army

HERNANDEZ: And sort of what made you make that decision of joining the army?

GUEST: Well, as I say, there was this thing people used to talk about your military obligation. So first of all, the College, the Dean, saw that, especially someone like me, who I think he rightfully suspected, could get pretty distracted. He wanted me to find something that was going to require some discipline and maybe make me think-- have different thoughts about how I wanted to be at Dartmouth and the military seemed like-- the College, their attitude was they wanted to know what you were going to do, because they didn't want you just hanging out for two or three years and then applying to come back in again. They wanted to know that you were doing something that made sense in that context. So the military was a good direction to go. And it didn't at that time, as I say, it didn't have the connotations that it did later. Because Vietnam became a big deal. Obviously. So anyway, so that's why, that's why I went.

HERNANDEZ: What was that experience like, sort of being in the military before Vietnam?

GUEST: Well it was interesting. I mean I-- those three years were probably some of the most important in my life. I mean, because for one thing, and I was an enlisted man, I wasn't an officer, which is a big distinction. If you've been in the military, there's officers and there's enlisted men, and it's like the big difference, like,

whenever I meet somebody and they say, “Oh, you were, you were in the Army. I was in the army too.” My first question is, were you an officer, or were you enlisted? Because if you're an officer, I had this kind of negative attitude towards officers, right? But if they had been enlisted, then it was-- I could relate to that. So I forgot what your question was.

HERNANDEZ: Just sort of generally asking what your experience was like before Vietnam in the military.

GUEST: So there were starting to be questions about to address Vietnam. There were people in the press and not mainstream media. So not particularly, but in more left leaning magazines and stuff, there was people questioning why we were in Vietnam. What are we trying to do in Vietnam? And everybody understood it was to keep-- there was this whole domino theory thing that if South Korea fell to the North, the communists in Northern Vietnam then that would just be another-- that would fall, become communist. And at that time, and all through the 50s this country, United States, was rabidly anti-communist, I mean, to the to the point of [Joseph] McCarthy and these crazy people, like the communists, were horrible, terrible, they were going to try to take over the world. It was a big battle between us and the communists. And so the idea that we would lose influence in South Vietnam was important. That was like, the reason we were sending advisors there is to support the South Vietnamese government against the possibility of being taken over by North Korea and the communists in North Korea. And most Americans bought into that. Most people thought that was a reasonable thing. But as I say, the whole culture was very anti-communist. But there were people, especially people on the left, so liberal, kind of liberal Democrats like my parents-- although my parents supported it war at first. But there were people on the left who were saying, “Well, wait a minute, first two things. One is, why are we there? It doesn't make any sense.” And people who knew about it knew that the South Vietnamese government were a bunch of crooks. I mean, it was like they were not people that were doing, supporting anything that resembled American democracy, or anything close to it. So people on the kind of inside knew about that. So that was-- and the other thing was people saying, well, Điện Biên Phủ -- I remember as a kid listening to the radio, and every day they were reporting about the French fighting the Viet Minh in Vietnam. And I remember I must have been eight years old, or seven or eight years old. And I remember we listened every morning on the radio there were reports from Vietnam about this. That Điện Biên Phủ was the last-- you probably are

familiar with this-- was the last stand of the French, of the French colonial military. And every morning they would have reports about how they were losing more and more ground and finally, how they finally surrendered and it was quite a shock. So there were people in this country who were saying, “Look we don't-- look, what happened to the French. We don't want to do that.” But most people were kind of oblivious to it. So now I get back to what your question was. What was your question? Sorry.

HERNANDEZ: Oh, just sort of asking about what led you to join the army.

GUEST: So there wasn't that stigma. I mean, later on, when I came back to-- I mean, we'll get to that. But I mean, it just seemed like a reasonable thing to do, to serve your country and go in the army and go in the whatever military that seemed okay. That was a red blooded American thing to do. So there wasn't a stigma attached to it. And also it wasn't a negative-- there weren't negative connotations that, it was nobody saying, “Well, how could you do that? Something so stupid as, join the army?” I mean, it was like, actually, people were positive about that. They saw that as a positive thing, serving your country, right? A great American tradition. I mean, that's why I think you're asking why I went to the army that was-- I mean, anyway it was to get to the three years and then get back to Dartmouth. That was basically it.

But my experience, I think you wanted-- you also asked about my experience in the army. Oh yeah. Get back to it. It was a really important part of my life, and what was so important to me, and as years have gone by, I realized was such a valuable experience, is that the military you get thrown in. Well, it used to be back in like the Civil War, military units were formed from people from the same geographic area. If you went into the-- in the Civil War, you went into the Army, you would be with a whole bunch of people that came from the same town or the same area, and so there was that. So you wouldn't be with people from different areas. So more likely you’d be with people from New England or from Vermont or whatever.

But the Army, when I went in the Army, they no longer did that. That was no longer the way it worked. You get thrown in, go to basic training. And in basic training, actually, is everybody is from the East and the Northeast of the country, because I went to Fort Dix in New Jersey. But basically, you're all of a sudden with all kinds of different people. My bunk in the in the barracks, on one side was a guy from northern Maine, and this big, really strong, not particularly bright I have to say, guy from northern Maine who

worked in the logging in the woods, and he only had a high school education, and he was really from the backwoods. I mean, he'd never been south of Portland, Maine. That's his environment. And on the other side was a black guy from Baltimore who was like, grew up. He didn't say exactly, but I think he was in gangs and stuff. But he was a tough urban black guy, from a pretty poor background. He was raised by his mom. Single mom, very typical kind of thing. And you couldn't get more diametrically opposite people then the logger from northern Maine and the black guy from the ghetto in Baltimore.

So all of a sudden, I was with people that I never had met before. I mean, the number of black people that I had met I could count on my one hand. I mean I had no close association. Well, no, there was some students at Dartmouth, I guess so in the Players, there were a couple guys who were, but they were-- even they were kind of upper middle class people, so they didn't have the rougher edge of the guy from Baltimore. And that was one of the best experiences that. That was really-- I feel like I got a taste of what America is and all America. Because then later on, when I went to medical training – the medic training -- it was people from all over the country. I mean, West Coast, south, I met people from, the bayous of Louisiana to the mountains of the Rocky Mountains of the West Coast, and just and different. Mostly in a class sense, mostly was lower middle class, or kind of lower working class people. There weren't very many people from my background, and it certainly weren't people from upper middle class people, although I guess you could say that's what I was. But so that was tremendously important, and then that's tied in with the whole thing, with Vietnam. I mean, it's like, well, anyway, why don't you ask your next question.

HERNANDEZ: I was gonna say, how did sort of this exposure to so many different people influence you and your time in the army?

GUEST: Okay, well, let me address the relationship to Vietnam, because that was an interesting progression. When I went in the Army, I was really kind of rooting for-- and it was escalating. Because when I was in medical training, I remember one morning, they call it formation, you go out and the sergeant, you line all up in the morning. And I remember, I never forget this. He said that -- he referred to somebody that most of us had known, that was in the class of the training class above us. And he said this guy had been killed in Vietnam. That was like, Oh. I remember that because it was the first time I thought, Oh, shit. People, this is serious. But I still, even back then, I kind of-- we had a lot of

special forces people who were being trained at the same time we were and, and they were headed, most of them for Vietnam, eventually, but I remember kind of being on our side, the US side. And if they described combat of one kind or another, I was sort of thinking more about how it was good if we won. If they had a battle somewhere if we, as Americans, we won. And that was where I was at that point.

And from that point all the way through the three years that I was in the military, my attitude started changing as time went on, and even though-- because I still-- anyway, my attitude changed. I began to think that this is not good. And I remember writing a letter to my parents and telling them that I don't think what we're doing in Vietnam is right. I don't think it's right. I can't support that anymore. And my parents wrote back, and they said -- it was interesting. They said, “Well, we've been thinking-- that's kind of what we've been thinking. This doesn't look good.” And I'm not sure why we're there. I mean, that's the question, why? Why were there, what is it? Because the whole domino theory was like-- that was just, that was a propaganda, fabricated concept. And it turns out, the irony, of course, is what happened, the North Vietnamese took over South Vietnam. So all 50,000 Americans who got killed, and that's what the final result was, what they were worried about in the first place. So being in the military, that was a change that took place with me.

By the time I was almost finished I got investigated. I got investigated by the CID, which is Criminal Investigation Department in the Army, because-- my best friend in the army, I was in Nuremberg, Germany-- my best friend was a black guy from Connecticut. Richard, Rich, and he and I were -- it's stupid stereotypical conversation that white Americans have, they say, oh, some of my best friends are black, right? It's like this thing. Now, when I hear that, it's like, Oh, Jesus, give me a break. But ironically, my best friend was black. So he and I had an apartment in Nuremberg and we were hanging out with a bunch of mostly German kids. Well, we used to listen to a lot of jazz, too. And in these jazz clubs there were Germans, but there were some Americans there too, but we hung out with a bunch of people. They were listening to Bob Dylan, and there was this growing anti-war thing that was happening. And I got investigated because they were thinking that I was doing some bad stuff, because I was talking to people, and I was talking to other soldiers. I was saying this Vietnam thing is fucked up. This is not a good thing. It's bad. In fact, my roommate-- I got promoted, and he didn't get promoted, and he was upset about that. And then he was going to

re-enlist, and they were going to give him $3,000 to re-enlist, and they would promote him, but he was going to go to Vietnam. And I remember sitting smoking a cigarette, sitting on the bunk, trying to tell him, don't do it. Don't do it. And I remember telling him if you go to -- Tony, Italian guy. His name’s Tony. I said, Tony, if you go to Vietnam and you get shot and killed, your family's going to talk about Tony and remember you for a few years, but after five or ten years, you're just going to be a memory, you're just nothing. But what if you go over there? What if you lose a leg? What if you get, to be indelicate, what if you get your genitals shot off, or something, and then you come back, or, let's say, you lost a leg, or whatever, or you lost both two legs, and you come back, you're gonna have to spend the rest of your life being disabled, and you're gonna have to ask yourself, why the hell was I-- what was I doing over there to deserve this?

And that kind of talk wasn't appreciated. So I was hanging out with sort of a bunch of German kind of hippie people and so we got investigated. And also, I think there was suspicion that here I this white guy was hanging out with, this guy, this black guy, and we were both hanging out with these kind of lefty, hippie people. That was suspect. So both of us got transferred. They got us out of there. They got transferred, but I was almost done anyway, and they investigated us, and they came in. I worked in a medical facility, and they came in, and they had-- it was interesting-- they came in, and they didn't have uniforms on. They were from CID, and they interviewed me in a private interview, and they asked me a lot of questions about the people I was hanging out with, and I gave them very vague kind of answers. I remember the thing that most upset me was my two bosses, my immediate boss sergeant and my staff sergeant, who was the head of the facility, were pretty upset that I was getting investigated. I remember, and both of them were black, that was the other thing. Both of the sergeants were black, and I remember thinking-- feeling really bad that I might be getting them in trouble. Because the CID people went and talked to them too, and I just met this guy, Sergeant Greer, was this one guy. I just felt bad for him, and he had been in World War Two. And in World War Two, if you were black, you were in transportation. Because I don't know if you're familiar with that, but in World War Two, before it was integrated, most black soldiers were truck drivers. All the truck drivers were black, and so he had lived through that, and I just felt bad that I was making him look bad. I remember that. So anyway, go ahead, let's try something else here.

HERNANDEZ: How did you personally feel about being investigated?

GUEST: Well, I wasn't surprised. Let me tell you that I wasn't surprised, and I was a little bit scared. I was a little worried. But the thing that worried me the most is- it's weird. I didn't want the people I worked with and my superiors, I didn't want to put them in a bad light. I remember, that was the thing I thought, because I wasn't surprised we were interviewed. In fact, I was kind of proud of it. Because by then, I was definitely against the war in Vietnam. I mean, it was pretty straightforward. I mean, it was quite a change going from kind of be pro-American, to being-- and the other thing that was really hard back then is it's hard for people to understand who aren't my age. America was very rigid politically in the 50s, and it was very -- and this communist thing was really-- anti communism was really-- but we all believed in America. I mean literally. I mean most people, most Americans, were patriotic, and we thought we were -- America was the greatest country in the world. And we thought we were shining example of democracy and all that, and as my attitudes to the war changed -- and so part of the thing was they were lying to us. They were lying. They kept saying, “Oh, there's light at the tunnel. We just have to hang on for a couple-- we have to send another 30,000 troops over there, and then we'll win it. And, we just have to keep fighting” and all this. And I was-- but they would lie, they, I mean, they would just lie. And it became so obvious. They would say, “Oh, we think we're gonna, in a month's time, we're gonna take Khe Sanh” or whatever it is. And then it wouldn't happen. And then it would get worse, and then more people would get sent, and then more people get killed. People I knew, some of them.

And, so it was the first time in my life that I started-- I mean, it's like my country's lying to me. My country is not this shining city on the hill whatever the hell it was. I mean, we were not loved all over the world either. I mean, that's the other thing. I mean, I was hanging out with all these German people and they didn't have such a great attitude towards, and these were young people, not the not the people who’d been through the war, but people my age, and America wasn't the greatest. I mean, they didn't think America was so great, especially with this Vietnam thing. And so to start to question-- I mean, it's hard to imagine now, because everybody now is so -- there's so much political stuff, and there's so many different positions -- left and right and everything. But back then a lot of people were really pro American. And began to ask questions about that. Maybe that's not exactly -- and the trouble is, as soon as you open that door right, as soon as you say, maybe, this isn't-- maybe we're not the greatest country. Maybe we have faults. Maybe we have bad things about us. And then at the same time, the Civil Rights thing was taking place,

because I was in between 63 and 66, that's a very active time. That's when Martin Luther King was. So that also said, well, maybe, America is not so great. That just reinforced that. So there was a huge swing in the country, and a polarization that was taking place. And in one way, I kind of think it's kind of cool that I grew up in that time, because it was such a interesting time. And anyway, yeah, and so how we doing here?

HERNANDEZ: You mentioned that you exchanged letters with your liberal parents and that your dad was active in the Democratic Party, yeah, sort of what role did that play in shaping your views and your experience?

GUEST: I had a liberal bent anyway. My, my dad believed in the Democratic Party. He believed that the Democratic Party stood for good things, and he was very active in it. He was always-- whenever there was an election, if he couldn't find a Democrat to run for, it didn't matter a school board or whatever. I remember going down to a local bar and recruiting some guy down there to run, because the worst thing for my dad was to have an election where there wasn't a Democrat running, right? And so here that liberal-- so for me it was a much easier transition from being rah rah American to being not that way. So, yeah. So my parents were already-- if this is the scale, and this is far to the right, my parents were already well on the left of the middle. And I think they instilled in me values which I hold to this day. Which are I would call liberal values. Anyway.

HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and you said part of the reason that you joined the military was because of your Dean. Dean Seymour believed in the ability for discipline and learning discipline.

GUEST: Well that’s what Dartmouth thought. That wasn't my thought. I realized that for them, it was really simple. If they had a kind of protocol, they kick you out for academic reasons. They always, unless it was some terrible thing you did, they always had the door open. You had a place to come back to Dartmouth if they let you back in, and if you put three years in the military-- like I had my commanding officer when I left, write me a recommendation and stuff like that, and said all kinds of good things about me. I mean, because I did pretty good and I was a good soldier. So, yeah, that was Dartmouth's idea.

HERNANDEZ: Do you agree with them that you could learn discipline in the military?

GUEST: Not particularly, no. But I mean, it just that if you’re three years in

the Army, you're going to be three years in the Army. So like that, inherently a disciplined environment. And I think that's what Dartmouth's attitude it was. Think of it this way, it was so much easier for the Dean to say, “Well, we want you to think about what you're going to do for these three years before we let you back in. Because we want you to go out there and come back with-- ready to be a good Dartmouth student,” right? If you're in the military like that was then okay, he didn't have think about anymore. Send him to the military he’d come back. He’s probably going to do okay, let him back into Dartmouth. So it wasn't me thinking discipline, because when I came back I flunked out again. So I didn't learn anything, from that. So anyway, go ahead. Where are we going to get something else here.

HERNANDEZ: What did you decide to do after your involvement in the military?

GUEST: I decided that I wanted to-- they had a thing called the European discharge. You could get out of the Army, out of the military in the Army, and you could actually get signed out and discharged in Europe, and they would agree to send you back home if you came back home within a year. So I said-- I thought, well, it was too late. It was kind of late for me to go back at that point when I got out, it was already into September, October, so I think I talked to somebody at Dartmouth, or communicated, and so the idea was I'd come back. Now, how did that work? Yeah, come back the next year. Okay, so I stayed in Germany, and I had an apartment, and I got a job working for the Army. But instead of being in the military, I was a Department of the Army civilian employee. I was employed as a medic, the same I had been, except I was sent to a place where I worked in a clinic that took care of dependents, military dependents, wives and children of military people over there.

And I was there for like, six months or something, and then I met some people in Nuremberg, and I used to go to Munich a lot, and I met some people there. And, no, I take that back, there was another thing. While I was in the military, I went to Turkey, the country of Turkey, because if you had leave papers, you know what leave is? You can have 30 days leave a year. It was like a vacation, paid leave. If you had leave, you could go to a US Air Force Base and hitch a ride on a US Air Force plane to wherever. And so I had a bunch of German friends, and they were gonna go boar hunting in Turkey. And I met them down there. I flew with a military flight, and got down there. So I went to Turkey. And that was pretty interesting. I got really interested, it's a different culture. It wasn't America, it wasn't Europe, it was different. Mostly

Muslim, different.

Anyway so when I got out of the Army at some point, I quit this job, and I met this guy, his name is John Adams, which I can never find him on FaceTime, because anyway. And he was an American, he was a black and he was, I don't even know how he got to Munich, but he was living in Munich. He had a girlfriend in Munich, and I got to hanging out with him, and we decided to take my old Volkswagen bug that I had and drive cross country to Istanbul, because I wanted to go back to Turkey. So we drove, we drove to Istanbul, and then we ended up driving all the way to Nepal. No, I'm sorry we didn't drive. No, I had to leave the car. I didn't have papers. I didn't have the right papers to go any further. But so we went. We hitchhiked and we went over land and all kinds of different ways. We went through Turkey and Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, all the way to Nepal and back again.

HERNANDEZ: Was this the same trip as your leave or was this after?

GUEST: No it was after. Was after I was out of the Army, but also after I had this job as a medic.

HERNANDEZ: So this was one year after you had already left the Army?

GUEST: Yeah.

HERNANDEZ: And how did you view this trip sort of happening during Vietnam?

GUEST: I mean Vietnam was-- it wasn't such an issue, but it was an issue. Yeah, it was an issue. One of the things that happened when I was traveling was it was right after the Seven Day, the 1967 Israel war. And we were actually traveling during that war, and we were in a train station in Pakistan, and we were in Muslim countries, and they were really anti American. I mean because Israel and America, they were one and the same as far as Muslim countries were concerned. And we were walking along the train station, and these people sitting on the benches as we walked by were spitting at us. And the only thing I think that really saved me was I was with this six foot four black guy, right? And, this was really funny. Everywhere he went, in the Muslim countries, the kids would come up to him, kids and teenagers and a lot of people, and they'd look at him, they say, “Muhammad Ali boxing. Yes, very good, very good. Boxing.” And after a while, he'd say, “Oh shit, man,” he's got all these kids would come running over. And the other thing they, they looked at him, and they said, kept him “Muhammad Ali. Muhammad Ali.” And the other thing is, they want to feel his head, because, like you, he had African hair, and

they wanted to rub his-- feel his head. But this whole thing, it saved my ass, I think, because he wasn't a Muslim, but the fact that he was black, and Muhammad Ali had just become a Muslim, and that was a big deal in the Muslim countries. It was a bigger deal than any Americans can understand. Everybody everywhere in the world, in Muslim countries, knew who Muhammad Ali was, and it was actually a very positive thing. Even back then, even Vietnam was happening but people still, they were much more involved in this Israeli war thing. I mean, these countries, they weren't thinking about Vietnam. But they were still pro American, they would say. But that changed, actually, that was changing even then. But anyway, the fact that I was with this guy, who was they thought-- anyway, it was really interesting experience to do that. Anyway. Go ahead.

HERNANDEZ: How did it feel to be spit on?

GUEST: Excuse me?

HERNANDEZ: How did it feel to be spit on?

GUEST: Scary. It was a little scary. And I honestly think-- I don't think there would ever would have been violence, but I think being with John, being with my traveling companion, John, it was a real help. It opened a lot of doors. I mean we got invited when we were in Iran. We were traveling with this Iranian student, and he invited us to his family's house in Tehran. And, I mean, it was a bit of a shock for his family, but he spent a lot of time-- no, his brother. He had a brother who was a very committed Muslim, active. I don't know he probably later on, probably became part of the movement against the Shah, but he spent a lot of time-- he wanted to try to get my friend John off in the corner, because he wanted, he kept saying, “Why aren't you a Muslim? Muhammad Ali's Muslim.” I mean, they're American, because back then, they thought there were a lot more black Muslims in this country than there actually were. They said, “Why? Why aren't you? Don't you understand Islam?” I mean he was trying to convince him that he should be and John wasn't anything. He wasn't Christian either. But anyway, that was kind of interesting experience. But anyway, we're getting away from Vietnam, so how are we doing here?

HERNANDEZ: We’re good. Just sort of following up on that. Did you understand sort of their anti American views, or how did you feel about that sort of sentiment traveling throughout?

GUEST: Well, it was a mixed bag, because some people were very positive about America. That was interesting. But there were

some places, like in Turkey, where I found out that anyway, that I would tell people I was German because there were a whole lot of Turkish people who worked in Germany as foreign workers, and so a lot of them could speak German and stuff inside. I don't know, it was changing.

I mean, I remember going to one city, Mashhad, and it's a religious center, a Muslim religious center, and very hardcore Muslim control. And we were walking, the mosque was in the middle of the of the marketplace, and the mosque was in the middle. And we were walking towards it, even though I was walking with this guy who was black, they kept telling us, “You can't come here. You can't come.” And then people would say, ask, “Where are you from?” You say, from America. And sometimes they would say, “Oh, America.” There's still this feeling of like America is a great country and all this kind of stuff. But it was starting to get-- it was starting to change.

And the thing about spitting, I mean, that was scary. In fact, we were in Pakistan and we were walking down the street, and we heard all this noise, and there was this demonstration, and we wanted to see what was going on. It was like around the corner, and you could tell a lot of people yelling and stuff. And it was a demonstration against the Israeli war. And this, I think it was a shopkeeper or something, some guy, actually, he was a Sikh, he was a Sikh guy. He wasn't Pakistani. He ran out to us and he said, “No, no no no, no, no no. Come in here. Come in this shop.” And he was telling us to be afraid. This is a mob coming down the street. And we took his advice, and we got out of there. That was a little scary. And I don't know if I hadn't -- when I was walking down this-- I don't know. Back then, there was still kind of remembrance of the British rule where somebody was white, you didn't mess with them because you’d get in big trouble, right? I mean, when the British were there, if you were to attack a white person, a lot of shit could happen. And it was said that sort of a residual sense of that, like nobody-- if I had been with a white guy instead of with John, they still would have spit at us, but I don't think anybody would stand up and hit us, or anything like violent. And there were police, it was this train station, so there were police, but the tension was kind of weird, it was, like a weird thing.

Anyway, then I remember going to-- another thing about changing attitudes. There was a big, what do you call it? Like a trade fair in Kabul, Afghanistan, and it was like all the different countries had these kind of like traveling shows. They would they set up this kind of building, and they have, like slide shows. And they'd have

all kinds of, like literature. And it was like these countries would be kind of advertising themselves. And I remember walking through this, and I was kind of embarrassed by the American displays, because everybody else, like the East Germans, had all these pictures of wind turbines, and I mean, of electrical motors and industry and all this stuff like that. Or the Scandinavians would have all kinds of like health information and pamphlets about health or something positive, or pictures of the country and everything. And the American display, it was so, it was just pictures of smiling Americans and flags and all kinds of space stuff about the space and going to the moon and all this kind of stuff. And it was a little embarrassing. It was just so, like, superficial. And these other countries were kind of like, nuts and bolts. This is agriculture. This is working. And Americans was like, Oh, just, this is how great we are. It was like well, okay, I'm not so sure about that.

HERNANDEZ: And after this trip that you took, sort of what was next for you in life? What did you decide to do after?

GUEST: Well, I came back to Dartmouth, and I came in the middle of the year. I don't know if they still have the semesters, but I came in the-- I guess I came back for the fall semester or something. I don't know what it was. In the middle of winter I came back. And the thing that I think I mentioned in our conversation on the phone, when I left Dartmouth, it was all Dartmouth rah rah rah. Fraternities-- didn't I have this conversation with you? So fraternities were the big deal. Everybody was worried as sophomores, like you, were worried about getting into the fraternity, and which was a good fraternity, and it was all this competition and, there was all this hazing stuff. And it's a big thing. And then, football games, everybody went to the football games. It was very rah, rah. And then, they would bring up dates from-- like we used to go on road trips down to Smith [College] and Mount Holyoke [College] and the women's colleges and meet girls down there, and then have them come up for Winter Carnival. Winter Carnival was a big deal and Green Key, and it was all kind of rah, rah, Dartmouth and fraternity -- like everybody lived in dormitories. There was no off campus stuff. And anyway, the outing club was a big deal. And it was very Dartmouth. And no women. I mean, it was men of Dartmouth. It was a whole macho male kind of thing. And very few, I mean, diversity wasn't even-- there were a few kind of token black people. And then there were some students from-- international students.

But I especially learned this when I came back, is that, I would

ask people, just as I asked you, I said, What does your dad do for work? And these people, at that time, if they were from South America, they would say something like, “Well, he's in the government.” But I mean, half the time, they were from the most elite families in these countries, who could send and they paid for Dartmouth. It wasn't like scholarships and stuff like, like you get. There was no-- it was pretty. There were very few Asian kids. It was pretty white. I mean, it was pretty white, pretty upper middle class. There wasn't many scholarships. I had some help, because they used to have, if your parent was on the faculty as a full professor, they would pay your--their tuition. They’d pay Dartmouth's tuition. They don't do that anymore. But that was a big deal. But anyway, so I, where was I going with that? I forgot.

HERNANDEZ: Sort of what changes did you notice? So that --

GUEST: Oh, yeah. So when I came back, there was a whole bunch of people had long hair, everybody. When I left, I actually got in trouble because we were starting to do drugs. And, somebody would, come from New York City, and they'd have some pot. I remember the first time I ever tried, I was, like, 18 before I ever smoked any pot. And it was like, kind of secret, and everybody's sneaking around. And, it's like an undercurrent thing. When I came back like, everybody smoked pot. And the clothes got completely different. Everybody had like jeans and they were informal and as I told you on the phone, the fraternities were really in trouble because they couldn't-- nobody wanted to join fraternities. There was more activity in the dormitories than there were-- like you were in a dorm and you hung out with the other people in the dorm, more than-- and the fraternities were actually renting out rooms because they couldn't fill-- they couldn't get enough people. And if you were, kind of rah rah Dartmouth, you were very uncool, right? Very uncool. So that was interesting.

And then the whole Vietnam thing was in full tilt. I'm sure you must have in these classes, you must know some of the history of the anti ROTC stuff. And so ROTC was a big deal at Dartmouth. And when I was-- the first year I was here, the guy in the room next to me at Dartmouth had a full scholarship with the Navy. The Navy paid a full scholarship, and he was an ROTC. And there were a lot of students in ROTC. And every Wednesday, they would have -- they’d do marching on the Green. They would be marching back and forth on the Green.

So it got to the point where, well, I mean, the whole country was going through this thing about Vietnam, and it was like at that

point, Vietnam was a huge big deal for everybody. And there were strong conflicts, and opinions. Opinions. There were people, and people at Dartmouth who were very-- the new, the younger, I think, what it was called the Young Americans for Freedom, or whatever. There was a pretty active right, conservative right wing student organizations, and those people were very conservative. And then then there was the left, and I was in SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], and that was the far left. But most of the students had come to the point where they were against the war in Vietnam. And the other thing is, students were afraid of getting drafted. So, I mean, people didn't flunk out of Dartmouth, because their asses were on the line, because if you left Dartmouth, you get drafted. And people were afraid of getting drafted.

But we had lots and lots of meetings. We had a group of people who were negotiating with the college. And the college administration was pretty conservative, and so there was a lot of friction there, and the faculty was fairly conservative, but the young faculty at Dartmouth, most of them, were definitely against the war. People would kind of categorize you against the war, or you weren't against the war. So, they took a survey. You may have read about this. I don't know when it was, but there was like a survey or what would you call it, but it was like a referendum. It was a referendum, and students signed this referendum. And the referendum, what it was, was we want Dartmouth to disassociate itself with ROTC, because we don't want this institution-- it’s contrary to the basic premises of this liberal arts institution, to support this devastation, this military which is committing genocide in our name and killing thousands of our citizens and millions of Vietnamese. And we presented this to the administration and at that point, I remember it was almost three quarters of students at Dartmouth signed that referendum. So the majority of students were definitely anti war.

And it was a constant reality. And then there was television. We didn't have all the internet and all that stuff, but there was television. And every day, on the television, you'd see-- after Vietnam, the Army stopped this-- but they had lots of reporters right on the front, with the with the Army units in Vietnam. So you'd watch CBS News, and it was all about Vietnam, and the more you saw, the worse it got, and the more you learned about it, the worse it got. There was no positive side to it. So Dartmouth was really quite radicalized by that. But the irony, of course, is that, 10 years later-- and we had pushed all these academic things like we pushed for the school to be more open to different ethnic groups, and to honor their original intent, which is to

educate Native Americans. So they set up a -- made a Native American, a whole infrastructure within the college, which I think they still have, for-- they would give scholarships and so forth to Native Americans. And then they had the Afro-Am organization, Afro American [Afro-American Society]. And then they had this whole thing, pass-fail instead of grades. They did this pass-fail thing. I don't think that was such a great idea, but it seemed like. So there was a whole lot of these liberalizing influences, and most of these things emanated from the war. Because, as I said before, the war, for the first time in American history, this war was seen as a bad thing, and it kind of poisoned the whole society, because everybody kind of had to take a stand, and everybody was-- every day you felt about, you knew about the war. I mean, it was a presence. It was like a real presence. Anyway, go ahead.

HERNANDEZ: You mentioned that ROTC presence was a major thing. How did you personally feel about their presence on campus?

GUEST: Oh, I thought they should get rid of them. I had a lot of credibility. I was three years-- I was older than a lot of the students, because I had been away for three years. But I also-- there weren't many people who had been in the military. So, like I was seen as somebody who had actual experience with the military. So, people, when I talked and talked about my opinions that people would listen more. And also, there were a few Vietnam veterans who were coming back from combat. And I knew who they were because every month we would go to the administration office and pick up a check that was from the Department of Veteran Affairs that help pay for-- it wasn't very much money-- but when I went there, I would meet, see people, and I'd say, Oh, well, were you in the Army or whatever, Navy, Marines or whatever. And so I began to meet people who had, and some of them had come back from Vietnam, and some of them didn't want to talk about it at all. They didn't want to talk about it. And some of them were saying, “Yep, it was fucked up. It was a mess. It was bad. It was bad.”

And also, the other thing about Vietnam, which was really hard, when I was in the Army and I was in Germany, I worked with a lot of black guys. I mean, it was like 14% or something, or more. Actually, it was more. There were more black guys in the Army than the population in the United States. There were also a lot of rabid southerners who were really racist, but no matter how much stereotype you might have of somebody, if you work with them, like at a job, day after day-- I remember thinking, these black guys are, they're just like me. They get a letter from the girlfriend

saying that she's found somebody else. And they’d cry just like I did. Before I went in the Army, I had a stereotype about black Americans. I kind of saw them all as being good, like they were struggling, they were religious. They were, like a lot of southern-- like, black people were mistreated and all that kind of stuff, but it was a stereotype. I mean, it was an incorrect stereotype. So working with people, and there were also a surprising number of people in the Army had come from some of the like, Samoa, and some of the-- like one guy was, he was from Samoa, I guess. Anyway, so, possessions. And there were quite a few Native American guys, because it was a good way to get out of the reservation, or get out of whatever situation they were in. But there was tension, but it was-- we all got along pretty good. It was okay. And even for some of the Southern guys who are really, were definitely very racist kind of thing, after a while, it kind of mellowed out.

But towards the end of when I was in there, people were coming from the States, and this whole Black Power movement was happening, and there began to-- some of that comfortable feeling started to-- there were people who started to be-- there were black guys who didn't want to talk to you if you're white. It was like, Okay. And this guy that I had, Rich [Richard], who I had an apartment with, and it was his friend’s. I remember going to a jazz club and there's this guy who was-- he was pretty into Black Power and we were sitting at a table, and he was talking to Rich, and he wouldn't make eye contact with me. And that was a little upsetting but there was a change. And it was change for the worse. But that was noticeable. And in Vietnam, it was bad in Vietnam. I mean, it got bad in Vietnam. The racial stuff got really bad. And people also started disobeying orders, but there was a lot of tension. There's a lot of tension. Yeah, it went on. So that was one of the negative things about Vietnam.

HERNANDEZ: And could you feel that same tension at Dartmouth?

GUEST:

Well, there weren't enough-- I mean, yeah. It's hard to describe, but I felt if I was in a-- at Dartmouth when I came back and I was in a room and I was with white guys and some black guys, I felt very uncomfortable being with the white guys. I mean, because they, they just didn't-- I mean, they would say the stupidest things—“Oh yeah, some of my best friends are black,” and just a bunch of bullshit. And when I talked about, if I was talking to people, I would be-- the way I talked. A lot of the black guys I knew kind of gave me some slack, because they kind of

recognized that I-- I mean, I would say you can't be white in this country and deny that you're racist. I mean, it's inherent in this society. It's like black people have been fucked over here for years, and this bullshit, trying to be all friendly and nice. You have no idea. I mean, it's to be black in this country is just a whole different ball game. And the black guys would say, “Yeah, you got it, you got it, Jake,” they’d said, “Yeah, you got it.” They'd laugh and say, “Yeah, yeah, yeah.” And the white guys, would go, well, they just sound like-- oh, that was embarrassing. Really, it's like, it was like being, if you mix company, men and women and somebody was saying, well, you chicks or you- they say misogynist kind of stuff is the same kind of embarrassing thing. Anyway.

HERNANDEZ: Yeah. Just going back to what you previously mentioned about SDS, what kind of drew you to joining them initially?

GUEST Well, SDS--

HERNANDEZ: Just to clarify, can you say what SDS was?

GUEST Students for Democratic Society. SDS was a pretty informal national movement in student campuses of people who were primarily motivated by the war and felt that the basic contradictions of capitalism and the war should be addressed. Some of us had been thinking about it a lot, and we felt that we should try to organize. At Dartmouth the organization was around Vietnam because-- you have to understand, as soon as you-- when you get to the place where you see that Vietnam was wrong and that then there was a lot of dishonesty and lying involved in that, you then, as I said, before it opens the door, and then you look in. And what about capitalism? I mean, what's the role of capitalism here? And then you start seeing all these companies are making money on this war, and plus they're controlling a lot of the politics. And so you start questioning that stuff.

So with sort of SDS, it was the most democratic organization I'd ever been involved in, and we did everything by consensus to a fault. We'd have meetings, and we decided we're going to write up a statement to present to the Dartmouth administration, and we were going to compose this, like “We the students of Dartmouth, blah, blah, blah,” write something up. And we would spend hours and hours because some of the people were really far left, and some of them were sort of like, not so far left. So

there's a lot of variation and so we would spend a long time carefully trying to put something together that we could have a full consensus on. And in that sense, it was really democratic that we didn't have leaders.

The other thing is something I learned from SDSBecause SDS began to be seen as a very radical organization. Okay, it wasn't. What happened was, this is a dynamic that takes place all the time now. Okay, so you have like 50 people in this group and we start making noise, like it gets in the in the press, or something, that there's a bunch of -- at Ivy League, Dartmouth College, there's a group of more radical students who are pushing for the divestiture of ROTC and so forth. And so somebody would send a reporter up to Dartmouth. And we’d be having some meeting, and somebody would come over and say, “I'm from The Boston Globe. We're doing a story. We heard that there's a lot of this anti-war stuff and we’d like to do a story and would like to have your comment?” And most of us would say-- they’d say “Well, who? Who's in charge? Who's in charge?” And we said, “There's nobody in charge. This is the Students for a Democratic Society, a democratic group here. We do things by consensus.” “Well, there must be somebody who's in charge.” And they're sitting there and they got their notepad, and, “Well, who can tell me what's going on?” And maybe somebody would say a few things, and they say, “Well, you can stay here at this meeting, you can see what's going on?”

But then there were a couple guys who would go up to the reporter, right? And they'd start talking about, “Yeah, well, Dartmouth is a bunch of fascists, they're supporting ROTC, and they're fascists and we have to do this. We have to get rid of this.” So the press would go to those people, right? And it still happens today. I mean, it just drives me nuts. [George] Floyd was killed, and Black Lives Matter, right? Most of the people in the country had a very positive feeling about the demonstrations, because there were demonstrations, thousands and thousands of people demonstrated peacefully with signs. They're chanting, but there were peaceful demonstrations, thousands and thousands of people.

HERNANDEZ: Just to clarify, you're talking about the 2020, BLM Movement?

GUEST Yeah, yeah. There were thousands of people. And people were saying, “Well, gee, maybe we should have reform of the police and so forth.” And then, at night the crazies come out, right? These people don't speak for the vast majority of people who, in

all sincerity, are demonstrating, as citizens are allowed to demonstrate and protesting this thing. But the crazies come out and start throwing Molotov cocktails at a post office or whatever the fuck it is. And it's like, then that becomes a focus, and then all the right, and the [Donald] Trump and everybody all starts saying, look at what they're doing. And the impression of Americans-- the popularity, it goes down. Goes from like 60% approving of the Black Lives Matter movement down to like 30 because everybody sees the crazy and say, “No, we can't have that.” And then defund the police. Defund the police. The last place in the world that anybody wanted to defund the police is in black neighborhoods, because people were afraid. There were a lot of bad people in those neighborhoods, and they really wanted police. They just wanted the police not to pick on because they were black, but they wanted the protection, because grandma is all by herself in this apartment, and these junkies come in and then ripping her off. They want the cops, that was the thing that nobody quite got.

HERNANDEZ: And so you saw sort of this same--

GUEST: Well it’s this focus. And then it became SDS is the crazies, we're all the crazies, and we weren't the crazy. These people were some of the best and brightest at Dartmouth had to offer. They were all like top students. They were intellectually on the ball. They were open-minded. They were everything that a liberal arts institution should be proud of. And they were some of the brightest and the best. I thought, and they ended up being lumped together with the crazies. So I don't know. I mean, it's true, we went into the administration building, but we didn't go into and take over the administration building until we had spent weeks and weeks and weeks trying, in good faith, to negotiate with the Dartmouth administration and say, “Listen, you've got to-- the majority of the students are against this. Dartmouth has to stand up and we think you should be responsible for what's going on here.” And so finally we decided we were going to demonstrate and peacefully. Peacefully. We did no violence. In fact, we had meetings before, and we said, nobody resist arrest. Nobody hit anybody. It was like classic civil rights, Martin Luther King non-violence. That was what we're going to do. We're going to go in there. We were going to occupy the building. We wanted to make that move, but we didn't want to-- nobody was going to do anything violent. And the irony is, this thing that recently happened was so different. The cops when they came, there was no SWAT teams. There was no battle gear bullshit with-

HERNANDEZ: And you're referring to the recent Palestine-

GUEST: Yeah, yeah. I mean, that got out of hand. We were peaceful. We were-- anyway.

HERNANDEZ: And what was your personal involvement in the Parkhurst takeover? Your personal experience with it?

GUEST

Well, I actually wasn't a student at that point because I had gotten kicked out for the second time. But at that point, a lot of it was because I was involved in this anti-war stuff. I mean, that was what-- and so I was actually working for the college. I was a college employee, I think there were three of us. There were two women and me. Maybe there were a couple-- I think there were like four or five people who were not students. They were employees of Dartmouth. I was an employee of Dartmouth College, and I was working. I was working in the medical school taking care of the experimental animals that they had over there. Anyway. So we had planned the night before that we were going to go and at three o'clock in the afternoon or something, we were all going to meet at the Parkhurst [Hall], and we were going to enter the building, and we were going to tell them that we were going to take over the building. And I think I got there-- I actually got out of work, I think it was like four o'clock, and by the time I got there, there were a bunch of students in the building, and I just came in. I was just one of the people who was there. And we actually had-- when it really looked like we were going to be, maybe arrested, we decided that anybody who was there who felt that they supported us, but that they just couldn't-- like one guy was a dad or something that -- we told people and faculty members, there were a few, couple faculty members, and we told the faculty members, we asked them to leave because we knew that they risked getting fired from Dartmouth. And we kind of pleaded with them. We said, “I know you stand with it. I know you stand with us. We understand. But Jesus, you really should. You should go, we want you to go. Yeah, we love you, but we want you to go.” And there were a few people like that. So I was just one of the people that stayed in there.

HERNANDEZ:

What was the school's response?

GUEST:

To what?

HERNANDEZ: To the takeover? Sort of, how did they respond?

GUEST: It was a mixed bag. It was-- most of the student body supported us and some of the faculty. The faculty, that was tricky. That got tricky. There were especially some young faculty members who supported us and they got in trouble. They got in trouble with the college. In fact, they had some trials, they had hearings, and they had some lawyers that were defending them based on free speech. And yeah, that was tough on those faculty members. Some of them did get fired, and that was hard. We always felt bad about that, but we appreciated that they were on our side. But the student body generally-- like I remember looking out and it was this whole bunch of people out in front of Parkhurst. It was at night, and they had all these lights and cops and everything out there and everybody, they were all cheering us, they were all like-- I mean, I think most of the students at Dartmouth were on our side. But there was a sizable-- Dartmouth had a sizable, these Young Americans for Freedom. I think they were Republican. A pretty active group. Some of them went on to become well known radical right people in the media and stuff. And the alumni were definitely-- the College was in between a rock and a hard place. On one hand, they wanted to respect the spirit of liberal arts institution-- open-minded, free speech, all that stuff. On the other hand, they had this fairly conservative, quite conservative Alumni Organization, and which were really against this. I mean, they were giving Dartmouth-- they were saying, look, we've given a million dollars to our alma mater over the years, and this is going to stop. If you don't get this shit straightened out, you're not going to see any more money from us. And there was a lot of pressure, a lot of was behind the scenes, of course, but there was a lot of pressure from them. Anyway.

HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and what was the result of your involvement in the takeover of Parkhurst?

GUEST: I went to jail. I got thrown in jail. We were kind of surprised about that, because we had lawyers and we thought they would-- with the nature of the charge, it was interesting, made me learn something about court systems. Dartmouth College asked a judge in Grafton County. Dartmouth College didn't go to the police and say, “These people are trespassing, they're disrupting the reasonable operation of the college but they're trespassing.” But they didn't go to the police, they went to a court, and they got a judge who it turns out he was a crook anyway, but anyway, he got this judge to file an injunction. So the charge was, what do you

call it, contempt of court. Was the charge because we were directly defying the judge's order to vacate the property. It wasn't the police like it was with this Gaza thing. It was the judge, and he was pissed, and he was really pissed off. And so when they arrested us, we thought that they were going to set a date for hearings. We were all supposed to show up in a Grafton County court up in Grafton [NH], or whatever the courthouse in Haverhill, or wherever it was. And a lot of us drove our own cars there, and we went there with the idea that we were going to go in there, we were going to have this hearing with the judge, and then the judge would set a date for some kind of trial, and then we'd all go home, and a couple weeks later we'd go in, and by then we'd have lawyers, and we had some lawyers lined up and stuff. But we went there and the judge, one after another, he charged us with contempt of court, and had the sheriffs take us in jail, take us away. And we were like, “Whoa, wait a minute. Aren't you supposed to-- Are we going to have a hearing sometime later?” “No, take him to jail.” They just took us out, and they ended up sending us to all these different jails all over the state of New Hampshire. So I don't know, I’ve forgotten what your question was actually.

HERNANDEZ: Yeah, well, how did that make you feel, sort of not having a proper process to being in jail?

GUEST I was a little surprised, but it wasn't-- it's hard to remember. I mean, we were surprised. We were surprised that that happened, but we were [pause] all pretty fired up. I mean, it was pretty dramatic. I mean, it was something that none of us had ever experienced before. We knew what we were getting into. And you have to also understand this was happening all over the country. We didn't have cell phones, but we were in contact with people at Harvard, with people at Columbia, with people at Berkeley. People knew friends, or they had family members or friends, and we were on the telephone. We'd go to a pay phone and we'd call up somebody in Columbia, and so, what's happening down. Then we'd watch the news, and we'd see, but, communication was, I mean, compared to what it is now. I mean, if I had a cousin, or if somebody had a cousin at Columbia who was in SDS, you couldn't just call him. There was no cell phone. You had to have a phone number, like in a dormitory. And you call a phone number and if somebody answered, you’d say, “I'm looking for Rob Johnson. He should be in that dorm. Is he around? Do you know who he is?” “Yeah, I know who he is.” “This is his friend, Frank from Dartmouth. Can you have him call me? And this is the number to call. Call me at six o'clock.” I mean, that's how primitive

it was. So then you call, “How's it going down there? How are you guys doing? They said all the police just came in and blah, blah, blah,” whatever. So, and then we'd watch the news, but then the news would always show the crazies anyway. So, that was kind of weird, but I'm not sure if I forgot it was answering the question.

HERNANDEZ: Yeah, just sort of how you felt about the whole process and being arrested.

GUEST: Oh, yeah. Well, as I say, I didn't think it was unfair. I mean, we all knew factually what was likely to happen, although-- well, no, we didn't. We didn't think we were actually going to go to jail. We thought we might have fines, or we might have something happen. But it was kind of a surprise that we were 30 days in jail. And for some people, it was-- I mean my parents were totally supportive, like my mom brought up cookies. We had a bunch of cookies, and I remember she was-- my parents were proud of me. They were proud of me, that I stood up for what I believed in and proud of my friends and all these people. But there were some people-- I mean it was a tragedy. I mean, I remember one guy telling me that he couldn't talk to his parents. They wouldn't talk to him. They would not talk to him. They didn't call him. They didn't send them any letters. They just basically were shocked, and they said they spent all their hard-earned money sending you to Dartmouth, and this is what we get. And I mean, for some kids, it was really traumatic because of their whole family. And then a bunch of kids, a bunch of them were seniors, and they never graduated. And I think that's such-- I think Dartmouth should have graduated. I mean, they were seniors, and it was a last-- it was the very end of their senior year. And I just got this email from this guy, Dave Green, and he was a really good student. He was, like, really active in Dartmouth, and very respected and he never graduated. And I think that was-- well, me, it didn't matter, because I wasn't even close to graduation. But some of the people, and the way it affected families, it was substantial. So anyway.

HERNANDEZ: Yeah, and you mentioned earlier that you had three brothers. What did they think of all of this?

GUEST: Oh, they were all supporting me. They thought like-- they came up. In fact, my one brother came up, and I told him, I had left my car outside the courthouse, and he came up with-- oh yeah, they were all supportive of me. I mean, they didn't do anything about it, but they were, yeah.

HERNANDEZ: And after you were released from jail, what did you do?

GUEST: Well, that's when we-- that's a whole nother. What time is it now? That was a whole nother-- well, so we had this energy. It's like, this camaraderie that was really felt. It's like a team sports, similar. Like if you're on a varsity soccer team, you get pretty tight with all other people who are on the team. You're on busses together. You go to games, you win games, you lose games, you get to know everybody. You get to know their girlfriends. And it's a lot of camaraderie. It was some in the military, it was like that too, somewhat. But this experience was so different and the more different and unique the experience, the group experience is, I think the more bonding takes place. You follow me? So everybody felt like these were our comrades, they were comrades. They were our comrades.

And so we got out of jail and we didn't know what to do. I mean, it was kind of the spring. It was in June or May, or June, or whatever. And so some different people had established different relationships with people, with groups in like, say, Boston, who were anti-war. People in Boston who were doing all kinds of demonstration, and then people were printing all kinds of literature and magazines and stuff that all the anti-war, it was a lot of activity.

So we had this idea that we were going to have a place in the countryside that was going to be kind of open for a retreat for people in the city, who could come up and get away from all the trouble stuff. And that never worked out. We even had a printing press. We were going to actually print something. A guy gave us this giant printing press. It was called the Wooden Shoe, the Wooden Shoe Press and, Wooden Shoe, didn't you say you're a history major? Yeah. Well you know what the Luddites were in Europe? The anti-industrial people? Yeah, well, there was a movement where they threw their wooden shoes, Sabbats they called it, into the machinery to sabotage. Sabotage comes from sabbat. So this was called the Wooden Shoe Press. So it was like sort of anarchist, and there was a whole bunch-- there were several of us who were kind of in this anarchist thing. We got into because it was a lot of politics, talking about politics and different sort of political theories. And so we had this idea that we were going to have this press.

But it turned out that what happened was we made a decision to try to all live together. There was about 12 people, originally. Most

of the people were in jail together. We weren't all together. Maybe were in different places, but most of the people were. [Pause]. We rented this house in Hartland, Vermont, just a few miles south of Dartmouth. And as I say, there was like 12 or 15 people, and most of them had been in SDS, but there were a couple girlfriends and stuff like that, people who sort of fellow travelers. And we didn't know what we were doing, but we were trying to figure out how to live together like a communal. There was some historical, sort of precedence for that.

So that was the beginning. We called it the Wooden Shoe. We called ourselves the Wooden Shoe. And it was a commune. It turned out to be a commune. And there were lots of communes around Vermont, New Hampshire. We were in New Hampshire, and we bought a house, a beat up house, way up in the in the woods in New Hampshire. No running water, no electricity, no phone, all beat up house. And we moved out there in the spring, early spring one year, and we borrowed the money from my parents. We borrowed $10,000 from my parents, which we paid back, and we bought this house. And we fixed up the house, and we just started living together. And it was a really interesting experiment. We had two kids who were born there. It was a rural commune. We grew most of our own food. We had our own animals. We had milk cows, we had chickens, we had pigs. We all lived together in the same house. We had hardly any walls or anything, and we had-- there was no leader. I mean, at first I was probably more influential than the others at first, because I was from around here, so I knew where to rent a house, or something. But also I was older. I was, like, three years older than most of them. And at that age, at your age, three years is like a lot. When you get to be my age, now, three years. [Laughter] But that was-- people kind of respected me. And then I had kind of worldly experience. I had been all the way to the Near East and the Far East, and I had been in the Army. Nobody else had been in the army. There was no leader. We never had. Some communists had like a guru, like a person who was like the leader. Usually didn't work out very well.

So we did everything by consensus. And every Friday we would have a meeting all together, and it would take all day. It was ridiculous. And we just try to work out all kinds of interpersonal stuff. And then we made an effort not to have sexist roles. So everybody would take turns cooking. We had the two kids-- taking care of the kids, I learned how to change diapers and stuff. And we would build. We worked on a building together. We built a barn. We took care of the animals we had, and we had a really

neat thing that I did set up. I call it the Wooden Shoe Labor Force. And what we did is we hired out. Okay, back then around here, it was really hard, if you-- let's say this is a typical client of ours, say a retired woman living alone in a big house, living on Social Security or whatever, or some small, her husband’s whatever. And she had broken front steps. She had screened storm windows that had to be put in. She had a yard that needed the leaves raked. She had some painting done on the back of the house. Bunch of jobs. Well, we would hire out and we do odd jobs. We even had specialized crews. We had one crew which was a roofing crew that put on roofs, and it was a woman that was in charge of it. And we had this roofing crews.

And then we did another thing. It was really, we had-- Dartmouth College used to have these life drawing classes, in Hopkins Center [Hopkins Center for the Arts]. And they would have models, and they had people come in and they do nude classes, painting classes. And the guy who ran it always had a hard time finding people to come in and be models. He'd have faculty wives or grad students or, it was really hard to find, especially female people to do this modeling. Well, we were running around naked all the time anyway. We were totally okay with that. So we offer, we said, “Look, I tell you what, we got 12 people here. How about we come in? All we gotta do is stand there, right, for half an hour?” He said, “Yeah,” and 25 bucks. That was like equivalent about $100 now. So we would take turns and we’d go and model at Dartmouth for him.

So we had a lot of little things like that. And we got along really well with the community. We got along with the police chief. We got to be real friendly with the police chief. Our neighbor was the head of the Select Board. You know what the Select Board is? That's how towns are run here, by a Select Board. It's like the town committee. And they had a farm, and we helped him get all his hay in. We had this whole gang of kids-- gang of young people over there getting all this hay in the barn for him. So we had this. We had a really good reputation. And that was a time when there's a lot of animosity towards hippies. We were hippies, and people used to say in Canaan [NH], they said, well, we don't like hippies, but we have good hippies in Canaan. They wouldn't shoot people, they're good hippies. They liked us, and we had a great reputation. We ran the town dump. We were on-- I was on the Conservation Commission. Anyway, so that was what finally came out of this whole thing. Anyway.

HERNANDEZ: How did the Wooden Shoe come in, kind of tie to your anti-war activism?

GUEST: Well, to be honest, we put energy in a different direction. I mean, it was still anti-war stuff, but that was getting towards the end of the war anyway. We weren't active. I mean, the kind of things we got active in were not so much the anti-war thing anymore. I was one of the founders of the Northeast Organic Farmers Association, and we started the co-ops. We had a whole network of co-ops. We had-- doing recycling-- we had one person who was really into recycling, and they were going. They got involved in that. We were pretty active. And I was one of the people started the-- you know what the Norwich Farmers’ Market is? I started that. It was me and two other people started that market.

So, when we were in the commune, we were active. It wasn't the war so much anywhere, but by that time, the war was just-- I mean, it was just a matter of time. The whole thing was just falling apart. I mean, that's when in Vietnam, there was a lot of racial tension, and things were just falling apart, and everybody was against the war. And then in the Cambodia, they invaded Cambodia, and then a whole new class of students were-- do you know about that? That was later, but a whole bunch of people -- and then a lot of people worked on the campaign of what was his name, McCarthy. No, presidential candidate. I can't remember his name. Anyway, he ran against [Richard] Nixon or something, so there were people active in that kind of stuff.

So I think the long term effect, I think of that whole experience, was that those of us who were involved, mostly set us on a trajectory in our lives, where we did good things, I think, like I always say to this day, I say I'm an organic farmer. I'm not ashamed of my occupation. I mean, I think it's a good, positive. I think it's a lot different than being a fund manager in Wall Street or something. I mean, there's a whole lot of jobs that aren't very-- you can't be proud of. But I mean, I respect teachers. I think, example, teachers, people who are teachers, people who are first responders, people who work for the government.

I think I am just the opposite of what's happening now. I believe in strong, vigorous, benign, and progressive, local, state, federal government. I believe in the government. I believe the government is a force for good, and it's certainly hard to take that position now. But also I think something came out of this. I was pretty anti-American for a long time. Between the, all those experiences I talked about, I was really getting kind of

discouraged about this country, and the way it had been going politically like Ronald Reagan. I remember. I never forget, Ronald Reagan said the most dangerous words in the English language is, “I'm here from the government, and I'm here to help you.” And he saw that as being like the worst thing, the horrible proactive social programs and stuff. Or he'd say-- he would say, “Taxes, it's your money. You should decide how your money is spent. You, yourself, personally are the one who should decide where your money is, not the government.” And my feeling is just the opposite. I think a benign, progressive, sensitive, all-inclusive, lawful government, a strong government is good. That's a good thing. And that's what I think.

I think capitalism is, it's not that it's evil, but it has to be-- if the motivation, the primary motivation, is to make money for stockholders, I would rather-- I'm more suspicious of that than I am of even a poorly run government, whose basic mandate is to serve the American people. Even if they make a lot of mistakes, their mandate, that's what they're supposed to do. If you have a corporation, you're, no matter how much nice, touchy-feely stuff you talk about, your responsibility is fiduciary responsibility to your stockholders. Period. Right? That's what comes first. And I'm not sure I think that's such a great thing. I think it's nice to have entrepreneurial motivation. It's good, it's creative, it creates a lot of things, but people should pay their fair taxes.

So some of those kind of feelings are what came out of all that experience a long time ago. I haven't changed my opinions very much. Oh, but the one thing that is changed. We go down to New York quite a lot, because my wife, her brother-in-law, is down there in a nursing home. And we go down to drive through Brooklyn, and we drive through New York, and I just see this mixture of people. This mixture of people, and they're all getting along pretty well. And it's people from all over, immigrants. We're all immigrants. Look at you. I mean, we're all immigrants. My father's parents were from England. My mom's go back further. But we're all in this together. And I feel things are kind of coming apart now, but generally, this country, its richness, I feel comes from its very diversity. I really believe that. I believe that.

I remember feeling a little nervous that all these-- I go to hospital, and all the doctors are from India, right? They're all these Indian kind of people. And I remember feeling kind of a negative thing, like, wow. And probably is true, they probably should be in India, but for India. But then I realized that's ridiculous. It's great. And you could answer this better than me, but I think most recent

immigrants, they want to be Americans, right? And America is-- they're better Americans than those of us who live here. They believe in the things that we're supposed to be all about. I meet people down from Haiti, or some down there, and they just are so happy to be here, and they think this is like-- they come from the countries like Haiti or, I don't know what you're exactly, what your parents’ background was. But they come here, and it's the diversity which makes it so-- anyway, and so that's nice. I mean, I feel that's something I feel positive about my country. There's a lot of things I don't feel very positive about, but that particular aspect of it. And it's too bad when that becomes eroded. And this stuff with Trump and all these people, it's just the opposite. It's like, it's just making people take another look at their fellow Americans and say, well, maybe I don't like them. I don't like them. Anyway.

HERNANDEZ: And sort of just to wrap up this interview, looking onward, what's next for you? How do you sort of take lessons from the life experiences you've had, and how do you wish to continue that?

GUEST:

Oh, I'm too old. I'm gonna die pretty soon. So I haven't-- I don't know. I'm doing what I do now. I'm 80 years old. So, I mean, I probably haven't got another 10 years. So I think, family is important. Friends are important. I've been active in this organic stuff. And doing this farming is pretty neat. We had a big farm before, and now we just have one guy who works for us. So there's not a whole lot of future in me, but I'd like to-- I gave as much money as I could afford to political campaigns in this last time, and unfortunately, not very many of them won, which is-- but I think things like that, I want to do. I want to try to do what I can to, on a simple basis. I would like to do things that would get Democrats-- I have faith in a Democratic Party, and I think there's a lot of good people, and there's a lot of good people. There's a lot of people, I see them on TV. They're just people out there working in the community, people who are doing selflessly, working with all kinds of situations, with minorities, with diversity. I mean, I think just, just the opposite of the DEI [Diversity Equity and Inclusion], whatever they call it. I think all that stuff is good. So I would like to support this and try to, if we can get-- my feeling is it's going to be hard to get through four years of Trump and his administration. But I do what I can to, I guess, as I say, supporting Democrats. I think Democratic Party is a lot of good people, really interesting and thoughtful and democratic and patriotic people who are trying to do the right things. If I can support them-- that a

reasonable answer?

HERNANDEZ: Yeah. And before we end the interview, is there anything that you wanted to discuss that we haven't talked about, or--

GUEST: Just thinking about the- just trying to think about the whole concept of this project. I guess, in summary, I would say that the Vietnam War had a profound effect on me and a lot of people in this country. I think the Vietnam War, it's getting to the point where it's starting to be forgotten. And it shouldn't be forgotten, because it was so unlike the Second World War. The Second World War, everybody was on the same side, right? I mean, 100%. Hitler, fight. Go out there, America, we're gonna save the world. And we did. And Vietnam was just-- it was like the culmination of a whole lot of bad, bad things. And I think-- it's hard for me to think about how someone your age would think about it, because I have no-- when I think back, it's like the Second World War, it's like a terrible thing, but it's this whole positive. It was, it was a good, good war. It was the right thing to do, and Vietnam was just turned upside down. It was just the wrong thing. It forced people to be against each other. It just made a mess. It just made a mess. And it was profound experience. And I'm not sure we've learned the lessons that we learned.

The fact that Dartmouth is kind of a conservative-- it's a pretty conservative place. I mean I remember listening to being at a restaurant somewhere, listening to a conversation between two students. And I thought they were joking. I mean, they were talking about how important it was for them to get an internship on Wall Street so they could make a lot of money. And, I was just like, Wait a minute. Wait a minute. We were trying to get away from all that stuff. So I think it's kind of interesting why this project, this Vietnam Project, even took place. I didn't even know it existed until, I forgot your professor's name, but I didn't even know it existed. And it's still a little strange to think of that time as being ancient history, but it is. It was 50 years ago, more than 50 years ago, and I don't know.

HERNANDEZ: All right. Well, again, it's been a pleasure talking to you and thank you for the interview.

GUEST: Okay, well, you're welcome.

[End of interview.]