Jim Harlow
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
The Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Luke Grayson ‘25

GRAYSON: I'm going to start the transcript. There we go. So we have a transcript running I believe, sweet. Okay, the recording has started. So this is Luke Grayson. Today is the 12th of February, 2025 and I'm conducting this oral history interview for the Dartmouth Vietnam Project. I'm recording this interview by Zoom video call with Mr. Jim Harlow. I am on the campus of Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and Mr. Harlow is speaking to me from Daytona Beach, Florida. Mr. Harlow, thank you for speaking to me today.

HARLOW: You're welcome. Thank you for having me.

GRAYSON: So I would love to start right at the start of your story. So when and where were you born?

HARLOW: I was born in Hanover, New Hampshire, so a place you may know, but I'm from Norwich Vermont. My mother ran over the border for two days, so I can't be a native Vermonter. And I was born August 18, 1950, so [that] makes me officially old now.

GRAYSON: [Laughter] Well, so on that, I would love for you to tell me a little bit about the town that you grew up in.

HARLOW: I'm glad to do it, because when I was first born, my parents lived right on Route five north, right almost on the water. And I was the third [child], It turned out to be eight children. We moved a lot in the town of Norwich. I'm not sure of the circumstances. We were poor, we were poor, and I think there was a lot of people in our circumstance, but we didn't know it, and it was a lot of people like that. Spent some time in Lewiston – Have you heard of Lewiston?

GRAYSON: I haven't actually, no.

HARLOW: Do you know where the train station is by the Ledyard bridge?

GRAYSON: Oh, yeah.

HARLOW: That's the town of Lewiston. There used to be a coal yard there, and a store, the Raycrafts' store. They actually had two stores. First one was halfway up the hill, and then they moved it down and, that was a nice little village. And where the road goes now there was a bridge, and there's a bridge there now, but that's a new one. And then the road curve to the right, going up a hill, and then it went up to Mckenna Road. That's before the interstate came through. And it was great. We used to put pennies on the railroad track – if we had a penny, if we could find a penny, watch the train squish 'em. And my first big crime was I stole a piece of gum at Raycrafts store, and I went home, and my mother saw me chewing gum and knew I didn't have money for gum, she marched me right down to the store. And, and the Raycrafts were so nice. They were the greatest people in the world then, anybody from old Norwich from years ago would say the same thing. And but that was my first big crime, and I remember that even today.

GRAYSON: And are there many more to follow? Or is that the first and last?

HARLOW: Oh no, no, we lived on. Oh, you mean the crime spree?

GRAYSON: Yeah, yeah as a mischievous teen, you know?

HARLOW: No, I tried to behave myself after that she, she gave me a lesson I didn't forget, but we moved a lot. We have lived on Main Street, Norwich, Turnpike Road, Goodrich, Four Corners Road and last place, New Boston Road. There's probably a few more in there somewhere. And [our] last home wasn't the greatest. We had a brook that ran in under the house, it was pretty muddy, and water froze up in the winter, and yeah. But we didn't know much difference so you just survived, and did okay. Went to Marion Cross, well, what is now the Marion Cross School, that was Norwich Elementary which had eight grades then, and Marion Cross was the principal. And my father was in her first eighth grade graduating class in 1934 and I was in her last class in 1964. And I was elected by the class to give a corsage to Mrs. Cross, and as I was pinning it on her, she was telling me that my father gave her one in 1934. She had a memory that– she knew all her students. She remembered them all. And quite a lady – little itty bitty woman with tie up high heel shoes, the old fashioned shoes, I remember those. And she remembered every veteran that went through

that, she could tell you their life story and the ones that didn't make it, she remembered all the families.

GRAYSON: So was she particularly involved in the lives of a lot of the people who ended up going to Vietnam? Is that what you mean by veterans?

HARLOW: No, she remembered– now, you have to remember she was [around] in 1934 that would have been World War Two, and Norwich lost 11 people. I think it's 11 people. Their names are on the monuments in front of Tracy Hall. Uh Korea: one family in town, lost a brother– the lady lost a brother in Korea. Her son was my classmate, and he– he got killed in Vietnam. So there's quite a history of military service. It was in in Norwich anyway, but in Vietnam– during the Vietnam era, it wasn't a nice place for veterans. As a matter of fact, I had a very, very hard time just before I went to Vietnam, [I] wanted to talk with somebody. You had, I don't know what you would call anxiety, fear or whatever, you just wanted to talk to somebody. And my father was World War Two veteran. My mother was a British war bride. And they gone through hell in World War Two, my mother came to this country with a little sugar bowl and sugar spoon and a tea strainer so she could have proper English tea, if you make it like that, she did it. It was almost ceremonial. Every night she quietly made her tea and--. But there was no one to talk to, and I looked for a minister to talk with, and we had three churches in town at the time. And the ministers were all in Dartmouth College at a anti war rally on the Green. So I, I basically, I have had a difference with the churches ever since they went political. So, once again, I got a frog in my throat here. But so and when I came home, you know, everybody was, it was the anti war vibe that was out there. And they used to tell us, don't wear your uniforms when you're going home. And I was kind of an angry young man when I went in, so when I came home, I put my uniform on and proudly wore it home. But they didn't give me much choice. I didn't have any other clothes, so I wouldn't have fit into my civilian clothes anymore.

GRAYSON: So I have, I have so many questions with that, and some stuff that I'll touch back on later at some point, if you don't, if you don't mind,

HARLOW: anytime you want any questions, and I'll flip, flop around anyway. I float around. So please keep me on track. Anything you need to know?

GRAYSON: No, that's perfect. So you mentioned, and I do want to get back to the family in a second, but you mentioned, and I want to touch on this little bit more, that it was a bad place for veterans at the time of the of the Vietnam War. I wanted to ask kind of a clarifying question. So do you mean as in, and maybe this links into the anti war rallies, but do you mean as in, kind of hostile to Vietnam veterans at the time? I'm talking about before you left, or do you think.

HARLOW: Yeah. before I left and after. I mean, Vietnam– and Dartmouth became very, very liberal, and Norwich at that time was turning into the bedroom for Dartmouth. So, you know, people were standing down on the bridge with signs and all that. And it was amazing, probably 30, 40, years after, after I was home from Vietnam, is when they started saying, we didn't have anything against you. We were against the war. We wanted to stop the war, and I don't, I don't want to curse on this but I told him that was bullshit. They knew what they were doing, and they didn't care what we thought. We were drafted, most of us, I was, I was drafted. And we were used to, if your country told you you're going in the military, you go in the military and you do what has to be done. So it still bothers me a lot, and, I've always said that the churches in that town should have lost their non profit status, and today they're even more political, I think. And you know, be there for everybody, be more inclusive for us.

I felt left out of the church that I had gone to growing up, we had a pew in the Episcopal church that was kind of ours. My father didn't go to church, but my mother did. All eight kids would be in that pew, and that was ours. And up until a few years ago, the people still remembered it as that. You know you come in with your family and the Hicks would sit in front of us, the Hicks family, I can remember all that. And then to have your church, not be there for you when you just wanted to talk. Just wanted to have somebody. You wanted to find a little comfort. And that it wasn't there, and that that still bothers me today, and I don't see the churches coming back for people like that.

GRAYSON: So I what I'm curious about first of all, do you think that there was a divide on opinions on the war between, like, a big divide between the Dartmouth community and the local community, or do you think it was something that was kind of began in the Dartmouth community and spread and through the churches etc.

HARLOW: You know, that's probably out of my league for trying to figure out what caused it. The fact is that we were probably the local people as you started changing the -- you know, people were coming in, real estate was going through the roof. The working person, my father drove a bulldozer for Leonard Cook in Norwich, a local construction company. And everybody knew everybody as I was growing up, and then you see these local companies, carpenters were working for Dartmouth College instead of Bill Porter. Leonard Cook still had his company until probably 1968 and he was a World War Two veteran himself. It just kind of -- the majority of the people who were there were tied in with the Dartmouth community. And that was the philosophy of Dartmouth. It became quite liberal. As a matter of fact, I've got a cute story about it in the 60s, there was an anti war rally on the green, and the word was out they were going to burn a flag. And had you ever heard that John Wayne used to get his cancer treatments at Dartmouth Hitchcock?

GRAYSON: No, I had never heard that.

HARLOW: He had lung cancer, and he was staying at the Hanover Inn, and they were going to have that rally out there. John Wayne quietly walked out there, and a young man was going to light the flag off, and he picked the flag up and he said, I don't really remember what he said, and it didn't really make big news! He took the flag, and he says, you know, “You're going to lose people here. You're going to get people very angry. You're not helping your cause.” And he walked away with the flag. And nobody, nobody tried to stop it. True story. True story.

GRAYSON: Do you remember around what year this would have been?

HARLOW: I'm sorry?

GRAYSON: Do you remember roughly what year this could have been?

HARLOW: I will say I it was in the mid 60s, somewhere. Maybe '66-'67 and– because most of us locals didn't even know he was going there for his cancer, but he had lost a lung - they took a lung out of him, so most of his movies after that, he only had one lung, so.

GRAYSON: Wow.

HARLOW: Yeah, and my facts may be a little off on all that stuff, but it happened, believe me, I know it happened.

GRAYSON: I believe you absolutely. And the other aspect I'm really curious about is because you, you really talked about the church is a big focal point of this. So I'd be curious to hear more about how you perceived the church being involved in the anti war movement in the local area, and how that really impacted things for you.

HARLOW: Well, once again, I've always said that the sinners sit up close, they get in the front pews, and wear the best clothes. We would come in – we had our pew – the poor Harlow family. But my mother's British, Church of England, Episcopalian. And that meant a lot to her. All she did was made sure we went to church. That's it. But the Episcopal Church in Norwich, I was baptized, I was confirmed. And my mother told us, once you're confirmed by the church, you make your own decisions about the religion. And I was married in that church, and if I'm there, I'll probably have a funeral service, but maybe not, because if I can find an Army chaplain– and I found one, but he's elderly and retired now. He was with the 82nd Airborne and he was a Catholic priest, and he actually was a Catholic priest in the Army, and jumped out of airplanes. So he was my type of guy, and he was great. He never questioned a person. He was there for them. And you know, he would, he would tell if he thought something wasn't quite right, but he didn't put you on trial. He would say, this is the way the church believes. So, up to us to make the decisions. And I saw a lot of things. They were hypocrites in the church, and there was a lot going on. And even at a young age, you could see there was a lot of hypocritical people there and [pause] smiling– I don't know. I just didn't feel comfortable with that– but, when I went to talk to my minister – and you know, for the strangest thing I can't remember who the minister was now – but there was nobody, and the Catholic priest was there, and the Congregational ministry– they were all gone. They were at the– everybody told me: "no, there's a rally over in Norwich." And I walked away, and I told him, that's probably the last time I'll go back there, other than for funerals or marriages or something. And I've lived by it. I've lived by it.

GRAYSON: And just for the record, do you know the name, or remember the name of the Army chaplain you just mentioned you found?

HARLOW: Father, O'Keefe. He was at the VA hospital. And big man – big happy go lucky guy. And he had a way with veterans. He didn't worry about the language. There was a lot of veterans who were in crisis, and he's good counselor. And I know because the veterans talk to me, they said "he didn't try to change my language, he was trying to listen to me," and he just had that ability. So I made him promise to outlive me and bury me. And he thought it was funny. I said, "No, you gotta promise." So he said he would, if he outlived me, but [laughter] but he would come in wherever I was working and stuff, or wherever he was and he's just a great guy. I never heard a bad word said about the guy. Just that he was a personality. But he could talk about the church to anybody, and it just seemed natural that he would. That was his profession, and that's what he wanted to bring to everybody. Now, you never know what the ministers and priests, what their agenda is. You know, get back to what you should be doing. Minister to the people and comfort them. And you know in your sermons? It's okay to say the Bible says this, you shouldn't be doing this. You don't have to point to a person. You just put it out there and let everybody make their choices. So does that make sense, Luke?

GRAYSON: That absolutely makes sense. I–

HARLOW: [Coughs]

GRAYSON: Oh you carry on.

HARLOW: No, no. I'm just coughing, that might be in your accent a word, but.

GRAYSON: So one thing I want to ask as well, is, even with this contention that you talk about with the local churches, would you still regard yourself of having stayed religious as a person? Or you know.

HARLOW: Yeah, I think so. I think so. It was part of my upbringing. It's like, when you walk in a house, you take your hat off, you know. We didn't say grace before meals but, you know, every religious holiday we went to church. And on Sundays, if the weather was permitted us to get there, we'd go to church. And I, as a typical kid, I had other things that I would rather be doing, of course, but it becomes part of you– you feel comfort from that. And we had a chaplain that reminded me of Father O'Keefe in Vietnam, and he, he saved a lot of people's lives one night. Just good people, good people. They believed in what they were doing. And I like that. They were,

you know, they had the belief, they wore the belief, you couldn't help but admire them, and I could meet people like that who I disagreed totally with what they were saying, but you couldn't help but respect them. They really didn't dislike anybody. They just like their beliefs. You can't argue with that.

GRAYSON: That's great. And I'm going to– I'm definitely going to touch back on that when we get to some parts about during Vietnam, because I feel like that's a super interesting direction for this. But I want to first establish a little bit more of the context around your family and shift back to that so you've talked a bit about your mother, I'd love to hear a little bit more about your father and his background.

HARLOW: Okay. My father was a Canadian. He came to this country when he– well, he came to Norwich when he was five years old. It used to be that you could just wander across the border. They didn't have the check in points like we have nowadays. And it's kind of vague, they were in Concord Mass [MA] I think. But somehow my grandfather and grandmother ended up in Norwich. I have not a clue what was going on, but they ended up in Norwich, and they ended up getting a house– or having a house in Beaver Meadow. My father, he had one older sister that was 10 years old, and she was she stayed in Massachusetts and was married, and he grew up there. I actually have a picture somewhere, and I can't find it. I haven't seen it in years. My father in a horse-drawn – a little pony cart – he and a guy named Jones, Doctor Jones. But it was Dick Jones and they were all about the same age, and Gordon Baum, all three of those guys were in that– the road wasn't paved, and they were just down from Dan and Whit's [General Store], near where the town hall is now. And the caption on the picture said: "these three hooligans are up to something, they must be." And I have not a clue who wrote that, but they were– he was five or six years old, and you could see it. And they were friends for well– Gordon Baum was killed in World War Two, but they were close friends, all three of them. So he came here and in World War Two, he was drafted, and they told him, you're going to go fight. You can fight for the Canadians, or you can fight for the US, but you're going buddy! He said, "of course, I grew up here. I'm an American." They said, "well, they can make you a citizen– not a problem, but you're going into the United States Army."

So he went into the Army– he was an air traffic controller in World War Two, which is a little different than our air traffic controllers are now. He

was in a wagon like you remember what they show you how the gypsies lived in these– looks like an old Conestoga wagon? And he was in a wagon, kind of like that, at the end of the runway, and the planes would come in over him. He saw some pretty bad stuff I found out later in life. He never really talked about it. He talked about the funny things in life that happened there. He was there, he met my mother and her family, and they got married. They made my mother a Green Card holder, and my father still had no documentation. She came to this country as if she– she never came through Ellis Island, none of that stuff– she came directly here to the United States to Norwich. And, I've heard different reports that my father met her here– he came home first. I don't think that's quite true, because they put it in newsletters telling about what all the service members were doing. But my father went on to Germany, or somewhere over in that area – eventually it was Germany, and she came to the United States at that time.

He was actually made a US citizen in Reims, France, when the armistice was signed, and that was his– as they were signing that– for all foreign nationals who wanted to become citizens, signing that document is what made it happen. And I had to get that confirmed during my military career for security clearance, and they confirmed that. He never said anything. He just said, "well, I was told it was by act of Congress, but I'm a citizen now," and he was! And my mother became a citizen in 1964. My brother tells me that's the wrong date, but I'm pretty sure it was 1964. I'm pretty sure. And so he went to war, he came home, and this is kind of interesting– his good friend, Gordon Baum was killed, as my father was preparing to go overseas from England to the next station. My friend was killed– as I was preparing to go to Vietnam, he was killed in Vietnam. And a classmate of mine. It's just– it's kind of– I don't know if it's funny or what the proper word would be, but it's like in our lifetimes, we paralleled a few things. Gordon Baum's family is still– his daughter still lives in the area.

But not much else to say about my father. He was kind of a dreamer– always wanted to win the lottery. Not for himself, for his children. So– but he didn't have the money buy a lottery ticket if there was a lottery back then. But he was that kind of guy. And I was always kind of embarrassed. I have to be honest, I was. I saw most of the pictures of my father when I was young. If he was in a photo, he had a beer in his hand, and a cigarette. He didn't, get drunk, or anything like that. But you know how something sticks out after years. I was always kind of embarrassed

because we didn't have the best. We didn't have this, we didn't have that, but when my father died half the town showed up for his funeral. And I just stood there and– I flew home for the funeral, I was still in the military, and, I was just amazed. I was just absolutely stunned that all those people showed up. And "yeah, well you know, your father was a good man. He lived his life, he did it." And that's– I just read into it as more of a feeling, and changed my outlook on a lot of things, a lot of things. And I did his eulogy. So that made me feel pretty good, too. So anyway.

So that's my dad– and I'm named after him, or my first name is Ellis, and that's what we were saying: "there's too many Ellis's in the house, so that's why I went by Jim." And a cute story about that: one time I was sick in school, and so they called my father's boss, Leonard, who, who [laughter] everybody knew– that Marion– he was in Marion Cross School too. He got my father, my father came to pick me up to take me home, and as we're walking out Marion Cross, she called me Ellis. She always addressed me as Ellis. And she said: "Ellis, I hope you're feeling better." Dad says: "Oh, I am, I am!" And then he realized she wasn't talking to him [laughter]. But it was interesting. It was kind of a family in that town. The whole town knew everybody, and if you got in trouble in school, God help you. If the teachers didn't take care of you your father was going to get you anyway [laughter]. But Marion Cross had all eight of us and, well, she wasn't the principal anymore after– no the eighth grade class, she was still principal for a few years. And people say: "no, Marion Cross was still principal!" And she was, but she stopped having an eighth grade class. They only went to sixth grade like it is now, and you went to Hanover for the seventh and eighth grade, so. That was the last official document that John F. Kennedy ever signed, was authorizing the first interstate high school in the United States. And he signed that document, apparently, just before he left for Dallas. And he authorized the first interstate High School in the US. That's my take on it, anyway. That's what everybody's been saying for all these years. So with a bit of interesting– history for you,

GRAYSON: Just to confirm as well again for the record– so what are the full names of your two parents?

HARLOW: My father's name is Ellis Letson Harlow. My mother's name is Joan Strudwick Brown Harlow, her maiden name was Brown.

GRAYSON: Could you spell out– I know this might sound silly– but could you spell out the middle names of your two parents?

HARLOW: No. [laughter] Letson I can [laughter]. L, e, t, s o, n– Ellis Letson. My mother's Strudwick, let me see: s, t, r, u, d, w, i, c, k– I believe. If not, that's phonetic spelling [laughter]. I tell everybody if I could read and write I'd have known what that draft notice said.

GRAYSON: [Laughter] And actually that's a perfect segue because, what I wanted to ask next was: when the Vietnam war was going on, prior to you getting drafted and in the lead up to that, was that ever a subject that came up, I guess, within your household and between you, and say, your father or your mother or your siblings? I guess, what were the feelings about that, And how did that progress when you got drafted?

HARLOW: My father being drafted, also: he believed in the United States. He believed that– and it was a rite to– it was a passage to adulthood for every, male, to be honest with you that got drafted. We all expected to get drafted. You did you two years– a lot of people never went anywhere, or they joined the National Guard or something, but the training we received, you came home a little more mature than we went in. No matter what happened, you came home a little changed. And I remember the training when you went in, but I walked into my house one night and everybody's in the living room, everybody's sitting there, and you'd have to understand the house to know what I'm talking about, but I'm going "uh something's up." And they said, There's something for you on the television. And I opened it up, and I said, "I'll be damned. It actually says your friends and neighbors." That was a joke [laughter], how everybody said, your friends and neighbors, have you know, elected– it's not an election but, chose you for this, and that's all I could remember that it said, so I was drafted.

When I went down to actually be inducted. They– you could change things a little bit. They said: "hey, this might be better for you"– A recruiter said this. They were after the numbers so they could change your status from US to RA, Regular Army. And they said, we can promise you a job maybe. So I said, "I don't care. You got me for two years. Why do I care?" So they actually put me in the Army as Regular Army, but it didn't change anything. They didn't promise me anything, and I never did understand that. But I was always proud of the fact I wore the proud fact that I was drafted into the Army all my life [laughter], and it was kind of a joke

because we were kind of the rebels, if you will, and we'd do different things. And I never really did care – tell me what to do and I'll do it. But when I'm not being told what to do, I'm going to do the things the way I want to do it [laughter]. And they used to – in a Regular Army unit – they would say, "alright, hand them over, Harlow," and I'd have been late for something and they would just take your stripes or whatever you had for rank. And they said, "this doesn't seem to bother you much." And I said, "no, it doesn't. You have me for two years. I don't wear those things on my civilian clothes, and that's where I'm going to be in less than two years." Little did I know that life was going to take a big change [laughter]. But, when it was time to soldier, I soldiered. I did what they told me to do. And I didn't realize it for a long time: I was good at what I did. I was– soldiering is what I should have been doing, and I did do it and it worked out. The first two years was fine, but I don't know if you want to get into that portion yet, where I was in basic training and stuff. Did you want more from the family? The there was six boys and two girls. Anyway, I can tell you that much. And I was number three in the pecking order.

GRAYSON: There's two more things I'd like to get from this–

HARLOW: Okay.

GRAYSON: –and one of them is to talk about your siblings a little bit. And I'd love to get– I know this is going to be a little bit of a task, because there's quite a few, but if I could get the names of the siblings?

HARLOW: Sure

GRAYSON: so I have it? And then you can– you don't have to talk about all of them, but talk about your experience with that.

HARLOW: I had one brother that I was close with, and the rest I– there was big range in ages there. But my oldest brother, Ralph– Ralph Gordon Harlow: – if you remember, my father's best friend was Gordon Baum, and he was named after Gordon. He died at 51. Heart attack. He was an Air Force veteran. Married, with two daughters who are still in the area, and his wife just passed away a couple of years ago from Lupus. Next is John William– and Ralph, Ralph was, I call it hell on wheels. You just never knew what my brother Ralph was going to do [laughter]. And but anyway, John William. He's two years older than I am. He lives in– he just moved to

Florida, somewhere around the Gulf of America, as they now call it, I guess. It's somewhere over there. He calls me once in a while. And then there's me, Ellis James. And then let me see that means Alan– Alan David, no, Alan Paul. He was named after my. Paul was my– one of my mother's relatives, so Alan Paul and Sharon Gene, Kenneth Charles, Laurene Claire. She was named after my grandmother. And Robert David, who lives here in Florida also. And I think that adds up to eight, unless I forgot somebody. And if I did, I probably meant to. I don't know [laughter].

GRAYSON: I think if my math is right, I think we're there.

HARLOW: Okay, well, you know, you guys should know the numbers game. Um, they– the younger ones, Robbie Lori and, oh, Robbie and Lori, they really didn't know me because they were in grade school, kind of when I was drafted, it's somewhere in there. Our lives just took on different directions. We could be in the same house, but we didn't– they were little kids doing little kid things. And I was out there, and it was the 60s, so, you know, I wanted to do everything the 60s was doing, except drugs, and I didn't do drugs. So it was a bit different. And they reached out to me after I retired from the Army, and they wanted to get to know me, and so we kind of know each other now. That's working out pretty well.

It's just when I came home, they were– I didn't know this until just a few years ago –my siblings were told: "do not talk to him about Vietnam at all," and they were threatened by my parents: "do not do it." And that's all they had to say, just like that. Not a word. And I didn't understand why no one– no one was talking to me. And they were just careful around me. It was, it was interesting. But the day I left to actually join the Army – within an hour after I left – my bed went out the door behind me. They needed the room [laughter] and so when I came home I was sleeping on the sofa until I left again. But they, they just, heard all of these stories and what was on television, and they were told, "do not talk to him about anything."

And of course, I was with the 101st Airborne Division. So everybody was always that's kind of like, "oh, well, yeah, they've got a big history, and you have to be a certain level of troop to get in there and all this stuff so." So we got back together, and I started hearing the back stories on what they were not supposed to do. And I'm going, "damn." And do you know? A soldier would be willing to talk to a little kid about anything. Little kids are innocent. They will just ask you what's on their mind. And most soldiers

will answer. It's the grown ups who are hedging or want to know or tell people not to talk to you. And you can– there's awkward moments where something comes up and everybody's afraid to say anything, or they think they said the wrong thing in your presence. That made it awful uncomfortable. And I know that's the same way with a lot of veterans. A lot of veterans.

A mother being a mother, they want to take care of their child. I know – my mother worked at the VA [Veterans Affairs]. And, she wanted to get into my record– she wanted to see my medical records. She never got to [laughter]. Not that I know of anyway. But they were really concerned for my mental stability [laughter]. But I came home a different person and I– the best way I can say this: Luke, do you feel much different than you did four years ago, before you started the– I mean, you know you're you. and you just built into– you morphed into the person you are, but it wasn't like a light switch changed and you're it. So I didn't understand what people were saying when they were saying, You're quiet. You're a quiet person. And when I met my wife, everybody was very concerned. They told her: "Don't marry him. He's not the same person. He's not that person who went overseas." And she told me – she says: "What the hell? What's so different in you?" And I said "I don't have a clue. I don't know what they're talking about, because I am the same person." But I finally figured out over the years: you go to war, as a 20 year old in a 20 year old body. You come home from war, say in one year, a 40 year old man in a 21 year old body, and you don't realize it because you have had to do that to survive. You come home still acting like that 40 year old person, because you had the responsibilities and you saw things. And people saw you as different.

Plus, I went in the Army at 117 pounds soaking wet. I was as skinny as a rail. But I came home bulked up at 180 pounds, and I was in good shape. I was in really good shape. And you had to be to do some of the stuff we had to do to rappel from helicopters and all that stuff. People looked at you different. It was just different. Once again it was difficult coming home from that. And a lot of veterans went through that, even in World War Two. They came home, knocked on the door, and the next day they had to go find a job, you know? It wasn't that way in my case, because the VA wouldn't let me go to work. So I went out and partied, and that was great! And when they finally– we were arguing back and forth, they were they were trying to tell me I was sick or I was hurt, and I've said "no I'm fine, I'm fine, you know?" And they finally gave up and said, "yep, you're fine. Go to

work!" So that very day– next day, I had a job. Somebody was knocking on my door to ask me to go to work. I think they wanted me to stop partying anyway [laughter]. And it was fun.

GRAYSON: That's amazing. I'm definitely going to want to ask more about that in a little bit for sure. And so this is a perfect point for me to transition into the drafting and what happened then. So first of all, you mentioned earlier that you had a choice between US and RA. I'd love for you to explain a little bit of what that means?

HARLOW: Well, US is the stamp or the initials for draftee, they put you in different groups. RA is Regular Army. NG was National Guard. Everybody goes to the same basic training. And there was another one, something for the reserves. I'm not sure exactly what it was. So like when we were going into what we used to call the mess hall, the dining facility in the British army at the time they called it. You had to yell out, RA US, whatever, you're crawling across this ladder. You had to go off the ground to get across, to drop on the ground and yell what you were and then they would put you in line to go into the mess hall. So it was just what I call a nomenclature. It listed you as a different person, that's all. But it made no difference when you were in there. It didn't change a thing. You know, we're all together.

And after the third day, you couldn't tell the difference. We were twins. There was another guy in Iowa looked at identical, and I swear, half the time when I goofed up, they kept yelling at him and pulling him out of ranks and his name was Strickland. When I made it as trainee of the cycle – in other words I was number one in the class in basic training – they called "Harlow" and I came out, my Drill Sergeant's name was Drill Sergeant Eddie. That's after 50– let me see 1970. Yeah, God Almighty, a long time ago. And he's looking he says, "Strickland, get back in there." "Drill Sergeant. I'm Harlow. That's Strickland." And he looked at me crazy, and it was just funny. So I really think that half the time I screwed up, and Strickland got blamed for it [laughter]. So I got a nice little plastic trophy that said I was a great soldier. But the first thing that happens you go in – and at the time you were in civilian clothes – we wore those clothes, I think two, maybe three days, because troops are coming home from Vietnam.

This was down at Fort Dixon, New Jersey, and they took us out and set us in a circle on the ground, cross legged – we call it the Indian sit, you

crossed your legs and sat there. Soldiers are getting off the plane from Vietnam. And they came over and we looked and they looked old, you know. And "hey, son, where are you going?" And they'd come over and talk to us, and we're treating them like they were old men, you know, "we're going in the Army, sir." That kind of thing. And they were probably either our age or six months or a year older, that's all. But what a difference you would look at them. And I remember that.

Then I remember going in for our haircuts, and they would run that razor right down to your head. If you could pinch a hair on your head, it was too long. I also remember one guy went in – he had really long hair, because this was the 60s, so he was in line in front of us. He came out, they put him in the back of the line. They had gone one stripe right down the middle of his head. So he had it shaved down one stripe – back of the line. And they're telling, "oh, you're clogging up our clippers get out of here!" And they did it until– every time he'd take a strip off, they would put him in the back of the line, so he had all this weird hair [laughter]. And so we had shaved heads, then we got in line, and it went down through the line, and had all this clothing given to us that didn't look like it would fit, but they seemed to know what they were doing. And the boots were the worst, because you put those boots on, they were like old leather boots. They were hard to break in, and you were going to get some blisters out of those. And then we got what we called the birth control glasses. There, I'm looking at your glasses. The frames look the same, but they were gray, absolutely gray. And we call them birth control classes. You would never ask a girl out on a date wearing those glasses. But when you stood in the ranks after that, you're kind of looking around and everybody starts looking the same.

We didn't have a personality, and that's exactly what they were after. They wanted to take our personalities away and meld us into a unit. And then you learn to do the marching and the low crawl. You certainly learn how to do push ups – a lot of them. And after about a couple of weeks, when your uniform started getting– some of the newness was worn off on them and they were fading a little bit, you felt like you were the old timers in there, where, we're not the– we had a term for it. I'm not going to say it on tape. But we were different. We were becoming the soldiers. And you started walking with a little more pride. You knew what you were doing. I could master this. There's nothing they're going to throw at me that I can't do.

And that was back when the drill sergeants could actually hit you and get away with it if they needed to or whatever.

It was tough. It was tough, but they were teaching you to go to war, and you had to be tough to do that. And our drill sergeant had scars on his stomach. He was in a fox hole in Korea. And a guy, he jumped in this box hole with him, North Korean. He used to tell everybody, "I'm still here. I'm still here." And he never said what he did to the other guy, but he says, "I'm the one that's still here." Drill Sergeant Eddie. God I remember that. He had a gold tooth right in front with a star cut out of it [laughter]. Good soldier, though, good soldier. But when we graduated from basic training, you really felt like you'd accomplished something. And once again, I came out number one in the class, not understanding what that meant. Didn't have a clue. And you get an assignment to job training. In other words, you're going to be a, let's say, a surveyor. They send you to survey school. Well, two-year people, they wouldn't do that normally to. So, with me, they didn't pick a school for me. I'm going what's up? You know? But you can't go ask everybody. But I did kind of mention "I, uh, I didn't get selected for school!" They said, "Nope, you're going to Germany." "Okay, not Vietnam?" "Nope." With a grin on their face, they said, "Nope."

I did go to Germany, with a combat engineer unit over there – on the job training kind of thing. And from there, they gave me my letter, you're going to Vietnam. So came back to– had a lot of fun in there, though. Oh, Germany was great place [laughter]. And came to the US, and that was a hard one to tell my parents. They were wondering, why? What are you doing home so early, you know, what's this all about the leave and stuff? And I told him, I said, "No, I'm headed for Vietnam," and that that was kind of rough, that was kind of rough. Because I could see my parents before that. They were okay. They were joking, and "he's home, and he's home for the holidays and all this good stuff." Except there was no holiday, there was nothing. I told them, "No, I'm not going back to Germany. I'm going to Vietnam."

Actually, I told my oldest brother first, and I don't think he warned them, but if he did, he told my father he didn't tell my mother. That was one of the toughest things I ever had to do, was get on the plane and actually leave. And I told my father, I took him aside at the airport, and he said, "um, you know, they're going to call your flight here real soon." I said, "well, Dad, here's what I want to do." I said, "I'm, I'm just going to reach

over give Mom a kiss, and walk away." I said, "that's the only way I'm going to be able to manage this." He says, "gotcha." I said, "you're going to have to deal with her afterwards." He said, "no, it's okay," and that's exactly what I did. And walked out. And I call it surgical. You do it, you get through it and not have a scene. Her brother was wounded in the British Army in World War Two, badly wounded.

She had seen a lot of stuff. And they're watching everything on the news about Vietnam. And they see all that stuff. And the whole time I was in Vietnam, even with the 101st, we never saw a TV camera, or anybody like that. But they always thought the worst. You know, they always thought the worst. When I came home, that was worse. That was worse– I couldn't get off the plane. Could not get off the plane. In Lebanon, New Hampshire. I sat there and here's my family standing over there. And the reality was, "what the hell just happened? I was– I was in Vietnam a week ago, and here I am sitting there looking at my family!" And my parents were so old, and I blame myself for that. I said, they're old because of me. It's just– I think it's natural you just take the blame for that. So anyway, I'm getting ahead of myself, I'm sure.

GRAYSON: Not at all, not at all. I feel like that flowed perfectly and made sense to tell that story right there. And I think that's obviously a super important part of your story, is when you found out you're going to Vietnam. How did that make you feel at the time as well?

HARLOW: I think when I actually got the letter, when– you call it a Levy, you come down on Levy. There's a feeling of, this is not a game anymore. This is not a game. Now, later on, I think we were talking about this, because I made it a career. I got Desert Storm and all the things in between. But I saw young men grow up as they were getting on the bus from Germany to go to the airport to fly out to the desert. And I saw their actions, and I knew right then, that's what I had done. All of a sudden, it's a different feeling. This is not a joke. You know, a lot of military people would – when they got out of the Army back then, I don't know about now – but, they would tie their boots together, and they always had two pair, and they would throw the boots over the wires if they could and let them hang, and then they'd give their buddies the finger, and "I'm going home," and it's a big joke thing, you know, I'm headed. Or I'm going somewhere else. I'm going state-side to finish my time in the Army and all that good stuff. And when you get that to go to a war zone, it's different. It's different. And it's at that

point when it's a reality that you start– all of a sudden, I better get things right here. I've got things to take care of before I go. I want my insurance in place. Do you want to write a letter to people? And if you do, what do you want to say? And who's going to keep it for you? How are you going to do all that stuff?

You know, you start making adult thought process is a best way to say it. And, yeah, yeah. And I'm sure when I went home – that's when I wanted to talk to the ministers. And it was– I just need a little comfort here. I'm already in the army. I'm going to Vietnam. I just need somebody to talk to. You can't talk to your father, he'd been in the war and I never was able to talk real close with my father. We weren't that way. And my mother, she had been through hell in the war, because she lost everything she owned a couple of times. And her brother was wounded bad. And I'm her son. What comfort can she give me? So you try to go to the ministers, and so, there was nobody else to do that, for you. And my brother– my older brother that I was close with– Ralph, he hadn't gone to Vietnam. He was Air Force, and of all places they stationed him in Pease, Air Force Base, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The best thing in the world would have been to send me overseas with him.

Anyway, it was different. You go through a process. When I got that letter that I was down on Levy– and the process of leaving Germany, you go downtown partying with the boys– and I was combat arms, so I was never with women. So when I say guys and boys, it was us. We'd go down there, and the German locals were always trying to get your money, and they're: "here, have a drink and do this and do that, and see that woman down there. She'd like to see you." But when I was actually on Levy and we went down, they seemed to know that about the person before you actually got there. And it was like you couldn't buy a drink in that guest house. You couldn't buy a drink. No, you played by our rules the first couple of months you were here. You're leaving now, this is on us. And they meant it sincerely. And you felt like you're almost leaving family. And it was party central for the last two weeks before I left during the out process. And it was good. It left me with good memories on that part.

So then you transition back to the States and have to go through this with your family, and the little kids didn't understand what was going on, and I didn't realize I wasn't talking with them at that time. You know, I was more concerned with my parents, and the little kids were running around doing

their thing, and, all of a sudden I'm gone, and "where is he?" "He's in Vietnam," you know. And they were glued to the TV set. That time I was in Vietnam was not easy on them at all. And that still bothers me a great deal. And we had no way of calling home or any of the stuff that they have these days. And we'd write letters. And I was on a fire base and a helicopter would come in and you'd put your letter on the bird, and maybe for a week or week and a half, you didn't hear from home or anybody there. So you write a letter saying, "okay, this is the last time– you guys don't want to write to me. This is my last letter." And you put it on the bird, and they had taken the mail off, and all sudden, you get five letters out of the bag they had taken off and the bird's gone with your letter [laughter].

I do remember one time – it was funny – I told my mother, "do not send us any baked goods. Don't do it. It won't make it out here and we're on a fire base. It's not going to do any good." Your mothers don't listen to you: they're mothers. We opened up this box and all in aluminum foil, and we rolled it back, everything was totally green, and we're trying to guess what it was. And I finally said, you know, I'll bet you my mother sent banana bread. I'll bet you that's banana bread. And everybody's going, "Yeah." We couldn't get anybody to taste it. I mean it was totally green by that time. And I asked her later if it was banana bread, but she never understood. So, we had a lot of laughs about that and I do remember on the fire bases– we had a kid from Alaska that couldn't read, and it he was from some tribe up there, way back and they just didn't have schools and he couldn't read. That guy was a Scrounger, and he was a good soldier. So we would take our mail and share it with him, tell him about our families and read the whole thing to him. And we would help him write letters to his parents, and they would send the mail up to Alaska and to a, I'm not sure what they call it. It's like a town hall for their tribe, and they would get the parents to come in there, and somebody would read them that letter. And so they kind of knew about our families and all that. And so you, you take them in. And we would talk about him with everybody. Or when we got something, "hey, hey, we got something that– some girl wants to talk to you on a letter here, you want to– you want to meet her?" "Yeah!" [Laughter].

It was funny, and a lot of lot of people like that. It was a very diverse group of people– like in basic training. We had a young man walk in– and this is the draft! People were doing anything to get out of the draft. And some of these things, I can't tell you on tape that was happening. But anyway, this

kid came in holding hands with an older man. And we're going, this should be interesting. And his name was Katzenbaum, and he was from New York City. And as it turned out, he was completely legitimate. A Jewish family from New York City, and he was so proud to be in the Army, and he and his father were holding hands as they walked in. So we were looking like this guy's pulling something to get out of the Army. He wanted to be in the Army in the worst way. Kid could not even do one pushup and Drill Sergeant Eddie– remember I told you about the old guy in the– now Drill Sergeant Eddie said "Paul Katzenbaum, you're going to do a push up." And we're all down doing push ups. And he grabbed Katzenbaum by the seat of his britches while he was down in the front leaning rest position. And he took this knife he had– today we'd call it a carpet knife, but it was a jack knife with a curved blade on it. And he laid that down under Katzenbaum's belly, and he says, "now you're going to do a push up. Now, if you don't– you're going to hold this in up in the air– you can't do it, you're going to fall on that, and you're going to cut your guts out, or you're going down and back up. You can do a push up."

Katzenbaum was so scared he never saw– now I was in a position so I'm talking first hand. I saw this. But Eddie kept his hand on the seat of his britches and Katzenbaum, I don't think realized it he was that scared, Eddie palmed the knife. And Katzenbaum went down and pushed back up, he was that scared. And Eddie acted like he was pulling the knife back. See you can do it. You just have to make yourself do it. And Katzenbaum graduated with us. He could do his 30 push ups in just a couple of weeks. In a minute or two minutes I think it was. And he was so proud of that. He was just so proud that he was in the Army.

And there was places for people like that in the Army, all of us, you know, when everything was down and out, one of those type of guys that you would never expect to do anything, came through for you. Had an idea. "Let's try it this way guys." And, you know, they did something successful, and it worked. And that helped me later as a platoon sergeant and a First Sergeant. Big time, big time. There was couple incidents where I went back to that. So anyway, it was really diverse.

I was sitting there in a reception station, and the guys were talking about one token or two tokens. Now, back in the 60 if you heard the word token, what would you think, Luke? Somebody was smoking something and toking up – that's what it the term was. So I'm like, "what the hell? Are they

talking about using drugs? "They'll go to jail in here!" And the guys looked at me – they were from New York – they said, "no dummy. What we mean, is, when we went to the recruiting station or down to get our physicals, they would send you out an envelope with two subway tokens in it, one to go down and one come home after your physical. But when you got the envelope with one token, one way trip, don't take a lot of clothes with you. You're not going to need them." And I'm going, "I–" you know, I didn't understand all that, and a lot of other people didn't either, and they thought we're all a bunch of hillbillies. They didn't understand us either. But by the end of the time, we everybody got to know each other pretty well, and it was funny to get to know those differences. But you became one solid unit, and it worked.

GRAYSON: On that piece about– because you were saying about how it was super diverse and there were a lot of different people from different backgrounds – do you believe that the cohesiveness came from basic training? Or do you think it was the experiences in Vietnam itself that kind of united people? Or what do you think?

HARLOW: Well, the people I went to basic with, I didn't see any of them in Vietnam. I went to a different unit. But it started in basic training, because everybody became basic soldiers. Katzenbaum was from very religious Jewish community. There was a Chinese guy who was from China or Taiwan, I think he was in college, graduated here, stayed here and got drafted, and so he was in the Army. You see all kinds of people. You see all kinds of people. And I didn't understand that a lot of people couldn't read and write. I just sat in for, I don't know how many hours, taking these written tests when you go into basic training. And about three weeks into basic training, they told me I qualified for the West Point prep school [U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School]. Do you want to go? And I went, "what?" And they said yeah, we'll keep you here, if you accept this, and you will go to the prep school at West Point, so you will get through that, and then you'll do four years of West Point, and then you'll do five years in the Army as an officer. And I'm adding that up, that's 10 years. I'd be 32 and I'd still have how many years? Didn't add up to me. I just wanted to not have anything– owe anybody anything, so I turned it down at that time. But before I left – I went back in before I left for Germany – I went back and I said, is it too late to still qualify for that? I said, this is stupid to turn down an opportunity like that. I don't think I can make it, but I would like the opportunity to try it. They said, “Sure!” Well, if they ever put anything in, it

didn't get to me, because I was in Vietnam when they mentioned you're supposed to be going to the West Point prep school. "It's not going to happen now, buddy, I'm almost done. I don't need this anymore in my life." And I never, ever thought that I would go back in the Army and make it a career, never even came to mind. So, and that was a story in itself, how I got back in the Army, and it was just amazing.

GRAYSON: So what was– because that's something else I do want to touch on, after the main portion kind of around Vietnam. I'd love to transition now. We've talked a bit about training. What was it like those first few moments and I guess few days when you got to Vietnam? What was your initial assignment and how was that process?

HARLOW: You get into Vietnam, you get off the plane. And I remember the taste and the smell. It's hard to explain, but you will never, ever forget that taste and smell. As a matter of fact, years later, I went on a mission down to Honduras, and the people on the plane asked me if I would wait until they got off. And I said, "Sure, what's up?" They said, "We'll explain when you get off." So when I got off, they looked at me and two of them, they had been Vietnam veterans, and they said, "Does this place remind you of anything?" And I said, "Yeah, it does." It had that taste and smell. I can't explain it, but it was there. Very hot, very humid. And so the first night, we didn't even have rifles, we didn't have anything. I slept on a beach. Just, it was just that hot. I call it a beach. I don't know how close to the water I was, but it was there in Cam Ranh Bay Bay. Laid down, didn't really sleep, but that's where I was. Got up the next morning, they put us on an airplane North to Da Nang, Vietnam. That's halfway up or a little more.

Oh! Before I got on that plane, they said, here's your unit, and it was on a piece of cardboard that somebody had drawn on a map of Vietnam. And here's this little red dot up there that said 101st. And I'm like– I walked away, and they said, that's your unit there the 101st. And I walked away and said, "that damn thing is that close to North Vietnam." It was a simple drawing not to scale. They didn't put that down on that. And so I knew I was going north. I knew I was going up there with 101st, and I got my air assault training as I got to the 101st but they took us into Da Nang, put us on their open air long trailers, like a dump trailer, you probably see these massive dump trailers? Same thing, same thing. And then we had to go north, up through the Hai Van Pass that was very tricky to get up through. And drove, oh, probably two hours or so in a big convoy and got to Camp

Eagle, the base camp for the 101st. Didn't want to sleep, didn't want to sleep on the ground. There were snakes, and I didn't want to do that. Didn't sleep real well at all. And so anyway– [Disruption from other room]. But eventually I was so tired that on my first Firebase, I just said, "Yeah, you know, can't– can't do this anymore." I laid down and went to sleep. And it wasn't that night, it was another night, that started my lack of sleep process. We were on Firebase rifle and– on my first Firebase out there, and got hit out there, but come to find out later, they had captured one of the guys – the NVA [North Vietnamese Army], but they really weren't, they were ARVNs [The Army of the Republic of Vietnam], but they Chu-Hoi-ed, they put on a loin cloth, come try to kill you, and then go back to say they worked for us. They had come on that fire base for seven straight nights before they hit us and had walked over– knew every person that was on there, had an accountability, could tell you how many in each bunker, where the ammo bunker was and everything. And that's in hindsight, but when they told us that and briefed us on it, I never slept well again. To this day, I still don't sleep well, and it's just the idea that somebody could have killed me seven straight nights. Could have been done. They were enemy. That's what they were doing, and when they hit us, that's exactly what they tried to do. And

GRAYSON: Were they civilians, you were saying? Or when you say, put on a loin cloth?

HARLOW: Well, the sappers would come through wearing almost nothing. They would come through our constantina, and they would put these little pieces of wire, [unstable connection causes interruption]. They're on all fours.

GRAYSON: The last I heard was they would come and put little pieces of wire, and then it cut out.

HARLOW: Yep, okay. They would put a little pieces of wire in their mouth, then they would take a piece of straw and kink it so you could reach out in front of you like a wand and wave it. And if there were trip wires in that constantina wire, they could hit it with the straw and know there was a trip wire there. So they would follow the trip wire back to the Claymore mines that were out there, they would take the blasting cap out of it, turn the Claymore around so it was facing back at the Americans. Then they would go back. They would push the wire back together so they were making an

opening, take those little seat clips and put it around the wire, and then come through, and they would come right up onto the fire base that way.

And most Americans didn't stand a chance, because we didn't concentrate on something moving out there the way we should have. And someday I'll tell you a story. Well, maybe in this thing, I'll tell you a story. Yeah, I'll tell you a story. There's a couple of them, but they would do that. Now, those seven nights that they came in on a reconnaissance mission, they would go back out the same way they came in, and they would hook everything back up. Sometimes they didn't turn the Claymore around. They would leave it backwards, hoping somebody would hit the clacker and it would just blow up the hill. And the clacker is just that, it was a thing that clacked and set off the charge and set electrical charge down through there. And but they were they were slick. They knew how to do it.

They could stand on one knee and one arm for a long time and not move. I've seen them do that. And so, I learned a lot from a captured Vietnamese guy, and could pick up on what they were doing. And you stored that away. To this day, I can still do a pretty good booby trap if I need to. And but anyway, they did things like that so. But when I was out there, I was just, I wanted to sleep. I wanted to sleep. And you couldn't, and you were angry. And finally, I just said, "come on, snakes, come get me if you want." Yeah, you know. And you just, you laid there. You just laid down. You didn't get in sleeping bags, you didn't do any of that stuff. You just laid down. And we had what's called a shelter house– well or a poncho liners is what it was. It was kind of silk, and it was all camouflage, and you could wrap up in it. They took mine and threw it away when they were evacuating me, if you will– it stunk so bad, but it was mine. It was it was part of me.

In monsoons, when it rained, you didn't put your ponchos on because it was so hot that it would soak right– it kind of make you sweat so bad, so you got soaked anyway. It just didn't work. So leave your ponchos off, get wet, lay down go to sleep, you know, right in the middle of the rain, or do whatever you could, and you just learn to live with it. And that's what we did. You know, if you're on guard duty, sit there and get wet and poured but when the sun came out, you dried off. IF the sun came out you dried off [laughter]. I'm not trying to glorify it, that's just the fact– that's just the way it was, and it worked for us. You know, it you had to be that way. Of course, you went back to base camp. If you got on the birds and they flew

us back to Camp Eagle for a break, you know, walk in and take a hot shower or something. And people that never left Camp Eagle would look at you like, "what the hell!?" you know, you're covered in mud you're covered in dirt. You brush it off, but your rifle was always clean and easy. You know how to take care of that baby! So anyway, I'm probably rambling now.

GRAYSON: No, this is all really interesting, useful stuff, and it's super relevant. And you mentioned there that you had a story. If you'd be willing to share it, I would love to hear it and have it on the record, but it's completely up to you.

HARLOW: Well, glad to glad to tell you this one. This was the most afraid I ever was in Vietnam. And at the end, you tell me what you think of the story. We went out on small teams from my unit, so I was out there, and they would come around and say, "you've got guard duty down on the side of the fire base at such and such time." It's your responsibility to get down there when it's time. I didn't know the person from another unit that was supposed to be there with me at that time, and I got there, but the other guy never showed up. So I'm there by myself. By that time, I'd acquired this feeling: if there's something in front of you, you can sense it, and you can get that feeling. But off to my left side, down at the next post, you can't see them, they're there. Our American guys. They popped a flare to put up in the air. That meant something's in front of them. Then they get down and you're the new light. After a few minutes, you pop one of your flares to put it up there. So if anybody's out there, they get a sense of where the sound is, so they're the ones that are going to shoot.

Well, everything died down. Nothing moved. You never heard anything from them. So I sat back and relaxed still by myself, and all of a sudden I'm sitting there and at dawn– when dawn's coming up, everything looks different in front of you. Now, on the fire base, we didn't always have a mad minute. A mad minute is where you take your M16s and your rifles, and you shoot up the whole– we call it AO [area of operations]– but the whole area in front of you. So if there's anything out there, you stand a chance of hitting them. So it keeps them back long ways, and they would have to come through a lot to come up on the fire base. And there's another story I'll tell you about in a minute, and you'll enjoy that.

This one, I got the sense somebody was in front of us, or in front of me. I was alone. We were up high on this mountain. It's called Firebase, Tennessee, way high monsoon time, I had my field jacket on, the army heavy coat. It was cold, and I'm sitting up there by myself, thinking there's somebody maybe in front of me. What am I going to do? I just started doing things, and after the fact is, I remember what I did. I took off the steel pot portion of my helmet. There's two parts to helmet, a plastic part that's a liner, and then the steel pot that you can cook in and wash in, and all that stuff. I laid that down. I took hand grenades, and made sure there was only one pin in the grenade, and I straighten that pin, and I set them in the helmet. And my thought was, if somebody's coming up there, I don't have to really yank or work those pins. They did not come out like John Wayne with his teeth, they didn't work that way. It was like a cotter pin, and it really was bent. So I had them all set to go. I'd pull the pin, pop the spoon, and just roll it down the hill, and I was my plan was to do that and then move back up the hill a little bit, alerting the rest of the base with those grenades going off. I thought that would work.

Then I set out my two remaining flares. So I was going to pop the flares and see if I could see anybody down in the wire. But I knew somebody was coming through that wire. I could hear it jingling some? And I tried to pop my flares? I had two dud flares. Neither one of them would fire. Never in my life had I experienced that, and I'm like, now, what do I do? And I'm here by myself. So I said, son of a gun. Well, the ditch went around the fire base, but where I was off to my right, it took a little downhill dip, and then went over and back up, like the letter U hanging out there. Why? I don't know, but I think people were going down, throwing garbage down in there, and didn't figure anybody would come through that. But I'm sitting there wondering what I'm going to do.

So this goes on for quite a while, and the sound didn't go away, and then I heard a thump like a body rolling into our ditch down there. And I said, This is it. That's real. Took my weapon off safe I had never in the whole time I'd been in Vietnam. Put that on what we call rock and roll, fully automatic. I did then, because my mission was to raise enough hell that everybody on the fire base would get out to their positions. So I put the barrel of my rifle down into that ditch. Now it's getting lighter and lighter, and so I could see down in that ditch some but the sun wasn't completely up, and I had that like this, and I had a grenade in my hand, and I was going to pull that trigger right on rock and roll, and get as much lead into

there and wound or whatever, do whatever damage I could, and maybe spray a little area, and then start throwing grenades. Just lob them down that hill, and then I was going to back up out of that as quick as I can and try to get up to another point where we and I knew, I knew, in hindsight, I didn't know at that second, but I had accepted the fact I was going to get hit. I just knew I wasn't going to walk away from this. I was going to get hit. The only thing I can tell you now is I thought of this after the fact when I analyzed it.

But just before I pulled that trigger, a tail popped up. I dog somebody had brought to that fire base, was walking around and had gone outside the wire come back through, and had fallen in that ditch or jumped in it. And I went, Oh! I– I can't even tell you the emotions that ran through me. And the light came out, it was light, and people were moving around. I went up and was laying on the ground. I had sweat completely through a field jacket. It sounds impossible to do. It's like a heavy, heavy coat, an army coat, and I sweat so bad that it went right through and I never realized it. I did not realize it. And everybody's walking around cold, up on a fire base. I'm laying on my back in the dirt with the jacket beside me, or maybe it was still on me at the time when the kid walked over to me.

He started walking over to say something when an old sergeant walked over and said, "get away from him." And he says, "Okay?" I said, "I will be." And it was a short little conversations like that. He said, "something happened?" I said, "whoever brought that dog on? I'm going to find him, and I'm telling you what, I got a bullet for him." And I told him the story real quick. I said, "where's my other guy that's supposed to be here?" He says, "I'll handle that." I never met the guy. Never did meet him, but that was, I can't tell you how scared of– my muscles, ached. About an hour from then, I felt like somebody had beat me with a stick. But in hindsight, when I'm sitting there, I was I was pretty proud of myself, to be honest. Now this is where my ego comes in, because I could have screamed, I could have ran, I could have done a lot of things. I just could have gone crazy, or I– some people actually freeze and can't move. But in hindsight, I said I did everything I was supposed to do without any training. I came up with that plan all by myself on the move. And I said, and I never thought about it, that I was going to get hit, but I knew if they were in there, I was going to get hit either by a grenade or something. It would have been my own grenade, probably. But I felt pretty good about that. And I think I really

grew up then. But you can't, I can't even explain– you're so scared your bones hurt afterwards. Does that make sense?

GRAYSON: Yeah.

HARLOW: And the old sergeant knew and understood. Now, I got one more story for you, and this one's enjoyable. Back at Camp Eagle, when we'd come in from the field, they had these old bunkers all over out around like the airfield and stuff. And you would think the guys in the field would get a few days off, but I came back and he put me on a guard mount out there, so I had to go pull guard all night on one of the bunkers with we call them cherry boys, brand new guys. And nothing wrong with those guys, but it was still monsoons. But anyway, we're out there, and we're in guard mount, and most of the people back there then weren't going to the field because they were on heroin.

They would keep them as a permanent guard mount and stuff. And we had this dumbass lieutenant who was running the guard mount. He was probably on heroin too. But he came out and gave the order to everybody in the guard mount that you couldn't shoot at anybody until you were shot at. Swear to God. And I went what!? I walked out in front of the guard mount. I said, "don't you listen to a word he says, something moves in front of you. You shoot it. You've got the mad minute." We had all the 60s and everything. And it was a game back at Camp Eagle, it had all these people there. Only a crazy man would come in there and try to actually one on one, try to come in there. But they did, once in a while, try it, but it wasn't massive, and they would lob RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] in and try to hit one of the helicopters and stuff. But anyway, I told him, "don't listen to him. You shoot. You protect yourself." And anyway, next thing I know, we're out on the bunker, and Lieutenant comes out and he says, the Colonel wants you in the rear. And I'm thinking, oh God, something's wrong. Somebody in my family's died or something. So I left and left two young guys there by themselves, and went into the Colonel's office, and he said, "did you take over the guard mount and tell them not to listen to this Lieutenant or that Lieutenant?" "Yes, sir!" I said, "What the hell's the matter with everybody? You can't shoot until you're shot at? They know they can't be anywhere within a mile of those that field" and he went, "Harlow, I hate to tell you this, that's an order straight from the President of the United States." And he said, "but I'll tell you this much. All I'm asking you is I had to do my orders and put that out in the lieutenant's report.

He's just doing what the order was." I said, "Sir–" He says, "I can't even tell you it's a stupid order. So I won't tell you it's a stupid order," so I understood that he was just doing what he said. But that's that military training, and that was the difference between what I call a West Pointer and people who had been in the field.

You could find a way to say that, but you make sure that you say, "yeah, we thought we were taking shots. It sounded it, so we fired up the AO." But anyway, so he told me, Go on back. Please don't do that. Don't take over the formation again. Don't tell people that. And he says, you just gotta follow the orders. And this part you're going to bleep out. Well, anyway, I'll try to clean it up, but I know you're going to have to bleep this out. But I told the colonel. He says, "why? why? You know are you– Do you have something against the Lieutenant?" I said, "no, sir, my luck, you've heard of Murphy's Law? Well, my luck is I could marry a prostitute, and with my luck, she'd stop screwing, you know, where that first round would hit?" you know and he just looked at me. He says, "Harlow, get out of here."

I went back up, but later on, I was on that bunker again at, oh, I don't know, couple weeks a month, I don't know, [coughs], excuse me, and I knew something was moving out in front of that bunker. I knew it was moving out there. You could sense it. You could feel it. And I did wait for maybe 30-40 seconds. And I'm a good shot at dark. I can sense sound, and they teach you to put the butt of your rifle right in the V of your chest bone up here. I don't know if you're looking at me or not, but you put the butt of that rifle in with your two hands, you aim at it, where that sound's coming from, and then fire it up. And I did that. And all of a sudden, everybody's on the radio going "who's taking it– who taking fire?" One of the young guys is going "bunker so and so, bunker so and so, who fired that shot?" "Sergeant Harlow fired that shot." I'm not even sure, if I was Sergeant then, but I heard him yell at anyway. And so they brought the Cobras in with the lights and all this stuff, and they're coming around with the lights and we just got down.

You didn't want to give your position away, because if it really was somebody out there, they were going to come after your bunker. They were targeting it already. So they sent people in and came back and said, "Harlow, did you shoot?" "Yes, I did." "Well, you got it!" He says, "but for the life of us, we could not find an AK 47 on that mongoose, but you killed that mongoose. Deader than the hell." I swear I told him. I said "I'm telling

you, I knew something was out there, and who stole the AK 47 because we took a shot!" He just kind of went, "Oh God, Harlow, what are we going to do with you?" I said, "as long as I'm alive, you can do anything you want with me. When I'm not, it's harder to for me to come back and say, 'see I told you.'"

But that that actually happened. And everybody was laughing– the older guys, or the guys who had been there a while– the new guys that were coming in, it bothered me, because they were so used to taking orders and not thinking on their feet. And survival is the number one thing. You know, listen and do what you can to save the guy next to you, but by God, sometimes you have to make a decision, and you make that decision and you stay with it. And I don't care what you do. If it was a mistake that you shot into an area that nobody was at, then there's no harm, no foul. It doesn't matter. You did what you thought you should do. Now, if it was really people there, you know, everybody was on alert wherever you were shooting. And sometimes you made a mistake, sometimes you didn't. But I'm here telling you my silly stories [laughter].

GRAYSON: How did it– did you feel a tension then, because you mentioned the difference between the West Pointer and the person who'd been out in the field, did you feel a tension between the levels of command while you were there in terms–

HARLOW: Yeah, I did. And well, first off, I was going there– I had my sergeant was Mike Fisher. Called him Bull. I think he was drafted from a workhouse in West Virginia, and I don't know that for sure, but I had heard that. But he was certainly "well Harlow, let me tell you." And he and I would go out, and we're doing mine sweeps together. So a lot of times we'd go out two man teams and do a job. And we didn't have an officer over us. They didn't have enough officers to go around. West Pointers, which I was almost one, believe in the duty, honor, following the chain of command, running into a hail of bullets. That's all well and good. That's strong leadership. Leadership. In my case, you're down on the ground, you did what you had to do to survive. If they were out there with us, they would try to organize people. And if I'm down in a ditch and already hidden, unless there was a reason to move me, don't talk to me, don't give away my position, they would get seasoned enough where they would learn that eventually. But it was they were indoctrinated with four years of duty, honor, and country.

I've had some really good officers, as a matter of fact one contacted me just a while ago when he was a lieutenant. He told me, he said, "you saved my career for me" and we're good friends. I call him every Army Navy game now and complain about those third lieutenants losing the game, and they're laughing at me and all that stuff. They learn as you go. And I was the country boy who was taking over a section and had to run it, and officers would come down and give you stupid orders. Is what I call stupid. You want us to clean a weapon and then go shoot, and then come back and re-clean the weapon. We come in from the field, the first thing we do is clean our weapons. You don't put them down until your weapons ready to fire again. But the new people in the hooches, if you will, or came in and hadn't gone to the field, they believed they had to do all this if you tell them, don't shoot at something until they're shot at. They're afraid to disobey an order because they're trained to listen to orders.

You don't want to tell them don't listen to the orders. Listen to the orders and make a decision for yourself. And if you have a good Sergeant with you, he will tell you they're telling you not to shoot because there's an ambush patrol out there. There's Americans in front of you, so don't shoot. Okay, and they would take time to explain to the troops, so they'd understand, but a blanket order, do not shoot, and everybody's supposed to accept it. And the reason they're telling do not shoot until you shot at: they may know that there's an ambush patrol in front of you. What it is, is we set up our guard line for the night, and the enemy knows where we are. They know where our boundaries are. But after dark, you would send a number of people out in front of you, and we'd go out when you're on ambush patrol, you're in front of your own troops, and you just sit there. Don't say a word, anybody. We'd rip off our Eagles if we had our shirts on the because you could see them, and we never subdued– the 101st in Vietnam, never subdued our patch.

When I went back in the army two years later, they had subdued the patch so it blend in at night, but that was our honor point you wore that – they, Vietnamese did not like the 101st. They were afraid of it. But you'd rip it off when you go out on your ambush patrol. And I remember one kid went out on his first ambush patrol, and the guy didn't brief him and shake him down correctly. He went out there and lit a cigarette. That got pretty cagey, because they did take fire from their own people. They saw a flame out there, and guys knew something was out there. They fired it up and,

but that kid didn't realize it, because he was out cold, because the guy next to him nailed him and knocked him out. Put that fire out quick. So stupid things like that could happen, and did happen. And you never know. You get somebody high on dope with you. They just, they couldn't deal with reality. They just didn't do anything.

GRAYSON: And I really want to ask you in particular– first I would love, just briefly, because I realized that we haven't covered this yet, what was your, I guess specialty while you were there, and what, what was your [indiscernible] while you were there? Because we should probably get that in here.

HARLOW: Well, I can tell you because I mentioned the word surveyor before. When I went in the Army, I was technically a surveyor for the state of New Hampshire. Had never surveyed a day in my life. Went to work for the State of New Hampshire as a rod and tape man for a little while. When I went in the Army, they said, "oh, you're a surveyor. Boom!" So they made me a surveyor. There was nothing for us to survey, nothing. So I was doing mine sweeps most of the time, or setting out demolitions. That was kind of an interesting thing. Whatever they needed us to do, we were combat engineers, we would do.

At one time, a guy was wounded driving a bulldozer, and because I was related to somebody who knew how to drive a bulldozer, they had me take over the bulldozer. And I went right down the middle of a highway, dropped the blade down about two inches into the dirt, and I was sandbagged, and there was a guy sitting up next to me with a rifle for my protection, and we would try to roll over mines and blow ‘em up. And the troops would come down that track I was making so I was out in front of them all, and that was an interesting experience. My first time doing it, or trying to do it like day one, took me four hours to figure out how to start the thing in the first place. The guy was wounded, but he must have shut off– there's a kill switch behind the seat that I didn't know about, and got it started, figured out how to use it a little bit, got a little cocky with it and day one, I'm going down the road and you go slow, you just– and on the pedal that– like the gas pedal? In a car, you push the gas pedal down to go faster. On a bulldozer, you let the pedal out where you can take your foot off it and use your foot for breaks and everything else. So it's a deceleration pedal. You let it out to go forward.

Well, I'm going down the road, and I look off to my right, down by the blade, and I saw this big fin turning in the dirt, and I'm saying, "I think I just rolled over a bomb." Now I'm thinking that to myself, and it's still turning. So I slam on the decelerator, and everything shakes and shakes. I put it in reverse and just boom, I want to get out of there so the bomb settles down again. So how many times did I just describe that I should have blown up, and it was a 500 pound bomb from one of our bombers, and it was in the road, and it had gone in under far enough, and I just dug it up. And three times I should have been blown to bits, bulldozer and everything. And it didn't go off. And I backed up, and I'm sitting there going, what the hell?

And I thought the guy– the guy jumped off– the rifle guy, I know he did, but he was like, I couldn't have got far enough away anyway. I should have stayed with you, and I'm not blaming him for jumping I would have too if I could. But hit it, rolled it first, hit the decelerator, and that jarred everything. Put it in reverse, backed up, jarring everything, and just kept backing away. And when they brought in EOD [Explosive Ordnance Disposal] to blow it up, because they had a process to do it, they contacted us later and said "that was a dead bomb. We had a hell of a time setting it off, and finally did, but you were pretty safe with that." I said, "No, you don't know me, because I'm surprised it didn't go off" [laughter]. I didn't sleep real well that night. But did that. We opened up Highway One, right up to the North Vietnamese border, and cleared it up so that everybody could drive up there again for a last little ta da up there, and we did things like that, or we'd go in to a top of Firebase one [audio cuts out].

[Internet connection cut out for approximately 30 minutes, interview resumes from this point]

GRAYSON: And there's transcript running again. Make sure that's all working, great. So I am back here with Mr Jim Harlow: – It's been about 30 minutes since the last portion of this recording ended, so we're going to jump back in where we started. And yeah, so Jim, I believe you were telling me about your experiences on the mine-sweeping detail. You just told me about the unexploded bomb, basically, that you'd [indiscernible] a couple of times. And I think you were just telling me about how lucky you were on that day.

HARLOW: I was, I was, I mean, three times that bomb should have exploded and it didn't. And here's something you will probably understand or not understand with your British background. When we were all done that mission, we called to have them come pick up the bulldozer and take it to

whoever it belonged to– we don't know who it belonged to. It wasn't ours. It wasn't our unit. So we got a call back, saying "you do not have a bulldozer there." And Bull Fisher said, "we have something that certainly looks like a bulldozer here, and you better come get it." And they said, "we understand totally. Just wait, somebody will be right there." And within an hour or so, a helicopter dropped down in the middle of the road and told us, "you don't have a bulldozer." And it was some Major talking. And Fisher says, "that's not a bulldozer?" And the guy says, "here's the problem: that has been written off as a combat loss years ago, and to put that back in the military system, all the paperwork involved with it, it would cost more than a brand new bulldozer. We don't care what you do with that bulldozer, it's not coming back."

And they used to– it was a big bulldozer. I didn't realize they could actually lift them with those big helicopters, the Jolly Green Giant. They took the blade off, and then they hooked up to the dozer, and they would swing it out of there. But they said, blow it up. And we went, "really!?" So they said "Yep, end of mission, you got your C4, you got all that stuff, so take care of it." As it turned out, we asked the other unit that was out there that we were kind of helping with, but they asked, "what are you going to do with it?" "You want it? We'll sell it to you." We didn't tell them that it was blown up. So for 100 bucks, we sold the bulldozer, left [laughter], and we give them a little lesson on how to operate it. By that time, I was supposed to be very smart on a bulldozer [laughter]. Give them enough– but they were– they were the ones that actually walked down the middle of the road with the metal detectors trying to find things. Very dangerous sort of stuff. And the Marines had dogs. But anyway, we got 100 bucks for the bulldozer. Fisher and I jumped on a helicopter and disappeared so end of story. That took care of one of your non entity, you know, your tax dollar at work, but they used it in good faith, so it worked. So.

GRAYSON: So what did you go on to do after I guess you weren't working on the bulldozer anymore?

HARLOW: Oh well, we went on to the next mission. We blew up part of a road. They asked me to do a topographic survey. They wanted to know what the top of a fire base looked like. And I figured out, from doing in civilian life, what's called cross sections, I would run out with a rod and just place it on the ground, and they would just give an elevation. So I thought about it, and I said, I could do that here. I think we can figure this out. So that's

exactly what we did. We went out with a transit, an old transit, I believe, and a rod, and just had people walking around, and as there's a difference in elevation, in the terrain or a road or something, we would take a shot and write notes. So like, if I'm looking when I start and I say three feet, and then I and that would be my benchmark. So from the benchmark, I turn an angle and go out this way and take a shot at four feet. That means that ground that below that rod is a foot below where we took that benchmark. And we just kept doing that. We would go out and just take a shot, take a shot, take a shot, and we'd do an angle, a distance and the level. So when we went back to the rear, we had this big piece of paper, and we just started going, Okay, we went this far, and this was shot. So what's the elevation? And you just pick a elevation for your benchmark on a mathematical number. Say we figured it was 1000 feet. So if we were eight feet below that, we're 992 feet elevation. And then when you write the elevation, you connect the dots. You go, "oh, I want something within a few feet of that. Does this connect?" And we'd been out there, and we kept it kind of simple, and we did like curvature, and it came out in a map.

I don't know what they wanted it for, and they were thrilled to death with it. They said, "This is great!" So I really didn't know what I was doing, but I knew enough about cross sections to know how to do that and there was a book on topographic survey that I kind of looked at, and I said this is the same thing. So we did it. And I got even with Fisher, because Fisher was my boss, but he had to run the dummy and he had to run the rod. I sat there writing down things [laughter]. So it worked out. It worked out. And after that, we just did different things that they needed us to do. We were combat engineers. We did anything. Went on scrounging missions to get food, traded old AK 47 for food down in Da Nang and stuff, and had barbecues, and beer– stole a whole pallet of beer down there, put it in the back of the truck and drove north again. So few things like that. We did.

GRAYSON: Did you have many interactions with the local civilian population when you were down there?

HARLOW: No, we could not associate– my unit did not associate with any civilians. But the civilians worked on base at Camp Eagle. So when we're in the mess halls or something, they would be in there working, because I remember going by the back of our mess hall, and here's Vietnamese women in what we call the kimchi squat. They would sit down, just flat

footed, but like they would just sit down, crunch down, and they were drinking hot water out of the hot pipes, like we would drink coffee, and that was their coffee break. It was strange. You saw the weirdest things over there. But we didn't associate with the civilians. My unit, they told us, "that's not your mission. That's not what you do." And so we didn't. Did get to interact some with the Montagnard people. Super nice people back up in the woods. Didn't have a grudge against anybody. And we would shoot, even with our M 16, these big lizards. And when we're driving through, we'd toss them out into the village. They loved them. They were a delicacy. We knew they'd like them. And I did come across a leper village one time. We didn't go into it, but it was like Gilligan's Island, the TV Show Gilligan's Island. I'm not sure if you're aware or familiar with that, but we asked a guy one time, and that was just below the Hai Van pass that I told you we came up in those trucks when I first got in there? And you could look down in this most peaceful looking village. And I said, what's going on down there? And there was this guy we call Mister Clean, and he says, it's a leper village. Nobody bothers it. Nobody goes in there. And those people are the most peaceful things you've ever met in your life, so interesting country. But no, we didn't interact with them.

GRAYSON: And the other thing I really wanted to touch on, because you mentioned it earlier, actually on a couple of occasions, one mentioned about the 60s in general, but also about being in Vietnam. I know, obviously the issue of drugs and drug use in the military was a big deal. What was your experience of kind of witnessing that and your impression?

HARLOW: All right, here's I'll paint you a picture. We would come back– we did not have real milk in the dining facilities or the mess halls, but these guys that were using heroin. They would be going into the mess hall. They would have the field jackets on in the middle of summer, walk in there. They would take chocolate syrup, pour it into a cup, take grape extract, or grape syrup– so if you mixed up grape juice you could have that with water, sugar, pour that into a cup, powdered something else, and then they'd stir it up and drink it. Now, $3 a day in Vietnam for heroin laced with opium was $300 a day in the States at that time, a guy told me. [I'm not sure] Whether it's true or not, but I knew it was a lot.

These guys, their faces were kind of rotting away, if you will. I mean big scabs on their faces. And they would walk out like they were perfectly

normal. They would be walking around, and then they would throw up on themselves, or actually puke while they're walking along. And like you and I might spit if we're on walking a trail and spit, but they just puke down in front of themselves and walk like they're normal. On guard duty one night, one of these guys was on the bunker with me, and he was high! And I was trying everything to scare him. I took 60 Cal rounds, and right in front of him, he didn't even see me doing it, I'm dumping the powder into a pile. And I took the lead out and dumped the powder out of the rounds and touched it off with a flame, and it just kind of like whoosh, and the guy just kind of raised his head and went, “Wow.” Well, another guy on the bunker, I'll say it was another guy on the bunker, but somebody on the bunker took an empty ammo can, tossed it over his shoulder like it was going to land behind the guy and maybe scare him, came down and hit him on the head, and he was knocked out cold. So we got rid of him. We could call up say we don't know what's wrong with the guy. He's high or something, but look, he's out cold. So they took him off the bunker and got rid of him. But it's bad. It was really bad.

And to get out of– I don't understand how they did it– but to get out of the country, we would go into this building, like a little modular home. Nothing inside except two desks. And we would come in like a side door in the center of the building, and there was a painted line between those two desks. You would go up and stand on that line, and you had a cup in your hand, and one guy in a desk this way looking, one guy in a desk this way looking, and you had to piss in a cup and they would seal it. They had our information on there, and then they would lead you out into a dog cage, if you will, the whole thing. And we stayed in that cage for, I think it was 12 hours. It was long time. Nothing to sit on or anything. It's just a cage you couldn't get out of there because they wanted to see if you were going in withdrawal or something. Because some people could do that and get in there, and if they timed it right, they could make it through that whole thing, get high, get on the plane and fly out of there. But we were, of course, we're laughing. We didn't give a damn. We would do that to get out of the country. And the guys on the end of the desk– one guy says, "look, least you guys got stories to take home. How would you like to write home and tell your mother all you did is seeing you guys in a line, and all we see is all those dicks in line pissing in a cup. That's our Vietnam story." And we were laughing, and we really did feel bad for the guys, because that's what they did. That was their full time job.

But somehow a woman got in one of those lines and got in through the door, and we were in there just about to lead us out, and they said, "whoa, whoa, whoa, you can't come in here. This is for men." And I remember her yelling at him, "I don't care. If that will get me out of this country. I will go up there right with the men. I will fill that cup. Just get me the hell out of this country." And I swear, but things like that happen. But we didn't even see what we call round-eyed women in my unit. We didn't have it. So you know, we weren't co-ed.

GRAYSON: When you say to get out of the country, do you like? What? What by what means like? Because that was like to get–

HARLOW: Oh, that meant that you had to be drug free to come out of that country. And that's what they were doing, is testing us for drugs before they moved us to the next station to kind of get us out of the country. And with some of us, it went faster than others. So I don't know how some of those people got back to the States. I think they probably coded them. And in other words, you're a user, you're going to a VA and we're going to, we're going to sober you up before we release you. I don't know. That's my assumption. I don't know.

GRAYSON: So I'd love at this point, then start to transition, because we've heard a lot of stuff about a lot of amazing stories about your time in Vietnam, I'd love to start to transition to the return. Because there's so much more I want to talk about after that. So first of all, what led to you going home? What was the circumstances of that?

HARLOW: We were kind of getting ready. We heard the 101st was pulling back. But at my level of rumor control, you heard that every other day. But they had gone through my files, my medical files, and said, “You've been coughing up blood.” And I had some little steel shavings in my back. So the Army immediately thinks I'm shot and my stomach lining might have been ruptured. I didn't really realize about the steel in the back part. But even my wife said, for years, and she's sitting right here listening to this, that some of that stuff would work out over the years, and little like black particles of steel in my back. But they said "you're going home, you're going home, you know you're coughing up blood, and we're getting you out of here." And I kept fighting it, you know, kind of like, "there's nothing wrong with me. Leave me alone." And they treated me like a walking wounded: you're gone.

So like, one day I'm in Vietnam, next day I'm in Fort Lewis Washington, eating a steak. And that, in itself, was kind of funny, because we got on a plane, got in Japan, and we're all nervous. It's like, what the hell is going on here? And you could go in there. They were fueling the plane. So you went into the airport, you could buy booze, but if you took it on the plane, it had to be sealed and you couldn't open it on the plane. They wouldn't let you drink it on the plane. If you opened it and took a drink, you couldn't bring the bottle on the plane. So I got a bottle of vodka, and there was a couple of us, and pretty big bottle too. As we're going down this long line waiting get on a plane, everybody's drinking it straight out of the bottle. Set the bottle down with all those other bottles. We weren't the first ones to have that idea. Got on the plane in Japan, and we slept good. We slept real good for the rest of the flight. Got into Fort Lewis, still in our jungle things, but they had taken most of our equipment like my clothing and stuff away from us, because they said it stunk and it was contaminated and all that stuff. It had been 10 months of hard use, is what it was.

And got into Fort Lewis, and in a couple of days, they put me on a plane– they say you're going to the VA hospital in White River Junction Vermont. And I was still in the Army, but got into New York City. My cousin, who is also a Vietnam veteran, I had his phone number and I called it. I said, “I've got to stay overnight somewhere.” "I got you, bro." He says, "I got you. I'll pick you up." So I went to his apartment, and just before I got on the plane to New York. I couldn't wait any longer. I called my parents, and they answered the phone finally, and I said, "I'm back in the States. I'm coming home." "Oh, okay." I said, "I'm not sure exactly when I'll be there, but I've got to go to New York and then get a flight from New York to Lebanon, New Hampshire." So I got a flight for the next day. They actually booked it for me. The Army did all this. But my cousin Paul, before we left to go to JFK, I think it was JFK, but it was New York to Lebanon. I got there, and just as we're leaving, I called my parents, and I said, "okay, we're leaving to go to the airport." We didn't have the cell phones and all that stuff then.

Unbeknownst to me, as we're driving from his apartment in New York somewhere, and I'll call it New York City to the airport, my parents got in their car in Norwich Vermont with my brothers and sisters and drove to Lebanon airport. Now, we had to go to the airport, get on a plane, or I had to get on a plane, then fly to Lebanon, but the whole time they were waiting there. I did not know that. So they're pretty nervous. They were

waiting for me. And I got on this little plane --prop job, and sitting in there this kind of cramp quarters. And I finally got a set of what they call the dress screens, a dress uniform. So I was in proper clothing and landed in Lebanon, and I look over, that's when you waited outside the terminal and saw the planes taxi out. And I don't know how many people were on there, maybe eight, nine people on the plane.

And I sat there and I couldn't move. I couldn't move. And I'm sitting there, and the plane's empty, except, he was the co pilot, I think, a pilot. And I just kept looking out the window at my parents, and all of a sudden, it hit home. What the hell am I going to say? What? How am I going to act? And I could see my mother and father out there, and they look so damn old. I mean, they look really old. And I kept sitting there, and the pilot just turned around to me and look. He says, “you take your time. I'm in no rush. You take your time.” And you know how you just meet these people once in a while that are real calm and are like "I've seen this happen before. I've been there myself," or something. And I did, and I finally gathered myself and walked off the plane and walked over to them and started my civilian life.

But I just couldn't believe that was one of the toughest things I had to do. Like I said when I left my mother and father at the airport and then to come back, and the kids are standing there, just as quiet as statues, not saying a word, and my mother's just hugging me. And you know, "you're you're okay," and, "yeah, yeah, I'm okay." Went home. What the hell do you tell your parents? And it's kind of like writing letters home. You write– you tell them, "it's hot here, it's rainy here," you don't want to tell them more than that. I mean, the people who talked about a whole bunch of like combat and stuff like that, most of them were legends in their own mind, they want to build themselves up to everybody at home. I didn't tell them a lot, and I had been gone almost two years by that time, without a basic training, and ended up in Vietnam– other than that 30 days home before Vietnam, and didn't tell them a whole bunch. And like I said, I came home that 40 year old man in a 22 year old body, and I started listening to people. I was quiet, and I'm filling up my data banks with what's going on. What's happening with people, who's around, and they expected me to pick up right where I left off. You know, having a good time laughing about all this stuff.

And about two weeks after I was home – this is January – it wasn't even two weeks. Probably about a week when I met you Deb? Then– oh, she's not here. She left, walked out. Now, my wife and I were only about eight miles apart, her house and my house. She was in Bedford Center on route 132 and I was at Goodridge Four Corners just before you come into Union Village. I'm not sure if you're familiar with that area or not. It's the wild country to you city folks from London or wherever. But anyway, my brother, my oldest brother, Ralph, was being given a car. He wanted the motor out to put into a car. I think it was a race car he was building. It was in under snow behind the garage. So anyway, I'm sitting in his car. I had a bottle of whiskey, and I was just sipping on it straight. I was freezing. I was so cold. And my brother Ralph, unbeknownst to me, ran in the house. He knew my wife. He had met her, and he was a lot older than her. And he told her, he says, "I got somebody for you to meet. My brother just got home from Vietnam, and he's out there freezing in a car. Maybe you want to ask him to come in!" And her mother's sitting there and said, "well, go ask him. We don't want him to freeze to death out there!" So it's kind of amazing, but I can tell you exactly what my wife was wearing that day. She had loafers and like a wool jacket, she slid on and just came out. Said, "would you like to come in where it's warm" and, "uh, huh," and I walked in the house. [laughter].

And that's how we met, and we had never met before that. And my wife now, Deb, she thought there was only one child that was Ralph. She didn't realize there were seven other children. We started going out. Next thing I know, we're engaged. I don't remember her asking me to marry her, but it happened.

We were married in that very church that I was baptized in, and the strangest thing happened when I finally -- they told me I was okay at the hospital, I could go to work, and that was couple of months, and went to work, and I ended up working at the grain store in West Lebanon and unloading railroad cars on Saturday morning. And then during the week time I would drive the grain truck that the farmers, and everything was by hand, 100 pound grain bags and stuff, and I would deliver it. And I was – igt was a great job. I didn't have to think. I had to work, and work hard, and it was quiet, and the poor farmers who didn't know if they could pay their bill, would come out and talk and offer you coffee and help you unload and all this. And it was nice, and I appreciated them, people– I'd go to Charles Bronson's estate and Charles Bronson, we met him in the store when he'd

come in once in a while, nicest guy in the world. But the people out there where you just went to different places, they wanted a bag here and a bag there and bag here, and you just– part of the job.

But while I was in that store one day, a young black guy come in. And I had my jungle pants on, a pair that I'd saved. They were good to work in, and then you could move. He was walking in the store, and there was a pretty blonde– a beautiful blonde babe with him – and he went "Army?" And I said "yeah." And he looked at me and he says, "do you know what they say about blacks and Cadillacs?" And I went, "yeah." He said, "look out there in that yard." And he had the most beautiful, gorgeous canary yellow Fleetwood Brome convertible with the black top. And he was saying, "I just retired from the Army. I had been saving ever since I joined the Army to buy that car. So I bought the car, I went up to my wife's parents in Maine, course, we can't live there" is what he said. And I realized I was having a conversation that we would have like in the Army. This man had no hatred for anybody. He knew who he was, but he could talk about this. "You know what they say about blacks and Cadillacs."

We were always like that. It was a brotherhood. It wasn't against anybody's race. You would say stuff, you know, like I forget they'd have a nickname for me or something backwards. Where'd you get that weird accent? Why? Where do you talk that way? And I didn't know all the music and stuff, and so we were different, but we could pick on each other. And when he said he knew he couldn't live in Maine, I knew exactly what he meant. He meant he couldn't live in Maine because it was unsafe for him. But he said, "I'm going down the east coast. We're going to find a place that we think we would like. We're going to stop off and see if that's some place we could live and we'd be happy." Now, this guy was young first place. I didn't think he was old enough to retire from the Army, but he was. He knew who he was, he was healthy. He had no grudges against anybody.

And I went home that night and told my wife, I said, I think I know where I'm supposed to be. I think I'm I know where I'm supposed to be. I think I need to go back in the Army. And her response to me right then and there – and we bought a house and everything – she said, you put the food on the table. I'll go. And that was 52 years ago. And that's what we did, went back in the Army, didn't have a dime to our name when I finally ended up back at Fort Carson, Colorado. It took a general to get me back in. They

had screwed up my paperwork so bad. But and I've been retired from the Army now 30 some years.

GRAYSON: And so dates-wise, again for posterity. So what were the dates that you went to Vietnam, left Vietnam, and then what was the date that you re enlisted? If you can remember those dates?

HARLOW: Oh, I can tell you I went to Vietnam. Actually arrived there, I think, in May of '71 and January '72 I was sitting in the VA, White River. And my wife actually had to used to drive me to the VA, because I came home and I got a such bad bursitis, I couldn't lift either arm. And they were working on my shoulders, amongst every other thing, too. And then I went back in the Army in September of '73 so everything happened so fast when you look back at it, but at the time, it made sense. Came home. [Brief audio cut-out] was working, and all of a sudden this guy comes in my life, I go back in the Army, and it's all by 1973.

GRAYSON: Wow.

HARLOW: And it worked out, and I had to go back in– I got out as what they call a Buck Sergeant E-5, they go by the pay grades. And had to go back in the Army as a private. I got promoted extremely fast when I went back in, because if you get awards and combat awards —they had changed the promotion system. So one award I had was more than enough to I was probably number one in the Army to make Staff Sergeant. I just bounced up through so it was way ahead.

GRAYSON: How long were you in the army for your second stint? Like, when did you leave? What year.

HARLOW: I retired in 1992. May of 1992

GRAYSON: Wow. And I'm curious, what was it about that conversation with the gentleman in the store that made you think, I need to be back in the in the Army?

HARLOW: I just knew that something was missing. I wasn't having a good time as a civilian, and may have had a few run ins with the police and stuff. Nothing serious. I was not mad at them, and they treated me right. They were really good. But some people threw one of my brothers off some rocks

and this is the same group of guys that lit a drunk– a drunk guy, an older gentleman, walking along. They lit him on fire. And just thought it was funny. But when they threw my younger brother off the rocks, I noticed my father came down and come to block me in at the house, and he was telling me all this happened. I said, "what are you telling me for? Why don't you go after them, that– he's your son! You don't let somebody come mess with your family." "No, no, no, no. We don't want you doing any of that." So I went in the house and went upstairs. And it was an old house. The second story was pretty low, so grabbed the shotgun, jumped out the window, went over to have conversation with these guys, or one of them that I knew where he was, and police got me first. They just told me that "they deserve to be shot, but don't do it, Jim, Just don't do it, and we're going to keep your shotgun for a while." A few things like that. You know, just didn't care anymore. Don't mess with me. I didn't come home to be messed with, and I'm not going to be pushed around, and I don't take that stuff from people anymore.

And my parents and Deb's parents told her, point blank, do not marry me. He's not the same person who went to Vietnam. And Deb had never met me before, so she didn't know what they were talking about. She asked me, says, "What the hell is different about you?" "How am I supposed to know? I don't know?" I said. "They just say I'm different. But is that a bad thing?" And it was just that I really didn't take a backseat to anybody. I didn't go looking for trouble, but don't give me a hard time. I'm not going to take that from anybody anymore. And I didn't. I didn't. So when the guy came in, I saw a very self assured guy, confidence in himself, happy with the world, he had done his 20 years, he knew what he had to do. Had a nice wife and family. You know, "to hell with what other people said. We're happy together, and that's what we wanted." And he saw another soldier, and he come "hey Soldier! yeah!" And we bonded just like that. It was only about a 10 minute thing, or maybe a 15 minute thing. Didn't tell stories. We were just happy, and I just felt that feel that I had– I wasn't doing good as a civilian. I could not picture unloading grain bags until I'm 60 some years old. I couldn't picture doing that. I knew there was something else out there that was there for me, and I just, it just kind of clicked.

I told my wife, I said, I think I know what I'm supposed to be doing. And it felt right. It felt right. And it was a love-hate relationship. Near the end of my career, they looked at me like an old dinosaur. And granted, I was only at 41 and then by the time I retired, had I hit it? May, May, June, July,

August. No, I was going to be 42 that year. So I retired at 41 and got out of the Army. But when I was in formations, one time when I was a platoon sergeant, before I became a First Sergeant, they wouldn't inspect me in the unit, the colonel would come by the ranks and wouldn't inspect me. Would just walk by. And I heard my people laughing, you know, kind of when he walked to the next platoon. No, they were a bunch of idiots, and I told him that all the time anyway, but good guys. And so I went into the Colonel and asked him, I said, "what's the deal? What? Why don't you like me? Why do you do that?" And he looked at me, it's like I slapped him. And he said, Sergeant Harlow, how many ribbons do I have on my uniform? And he'd hang his dress green jacket in the in his office. And when we were doing payday formations were in our dress greens. And I looked over there. Said, "You got three." And he says, "how many rows of ribbons do you have?" I think it was four at the time. And I said, "what's your point, sir?" And he says, "I respect you too much to try to tell you what's wrong with your uniform, and you're a good sergeant, so I can trust you to do the right thing, and your men look good too." I said, "but sir, you're a colonel, I'm a sergeant. You're the boss of this outfit." I said, "do me a favor. Come in front of me and just go [imitates sound of looking], and then you can move on, but it will look like you're inspecting me, would you?" I said, "that's that protocol that we should have, the difference between an officer and NCO [non-commissioned officer]," and he did it, but I felt kind of bad because I was assuming he just– oh, that old– you know, he's a Vietnam vet.

But at one time in our battalion, there was only, that's about 300 people. There was only two of us that had any combat experience at all, with a combat patch, and that guy worked for me. So there was two of us together. That was it. And anytime you would disagree – this was all peace time Army at the time – you would go tell your commander, "I don't believe this mission is going to work. I don't believe it, because these are the things that are going to go wrong." And it started coming back to me that I was just a disgruntled Vietnam veteran. And I had to go tell them. I said, Listen, "I'm a Senior Sergeant here. I've been down the road. When you give us a mission to go to the field, this is just play stuff. I have no reason for not following your game plan to the letter. But it's always coming back that I was right. I'm just advising the leadership as your Senior Sergeant that this is not going to work out, and I need to train my people. And they're getting to doing the same things every single time they go to the field, so it's a walk through. They could almost do it in their sleep.

You go to the same place, you get attacked at the same point, you do this at the same time. Where's the surprise? I said, I train my troops by sending them out and changing the plan just as soon after they get it, I want them to fail, and I want to see if they adapt and figure their way through it. And when we're all done, they were feeling bad, you know, they come back. “We failed, we failed, we didn't do this.” I said, “No, wait a minute, what would you have done different? What could you have done?” And when they found out, I wasn't mad at them. That they fail. I said, "this is what happens in real life. Nothing happens the way it's supposed to, if it does, good, but if it doesn't, how do you react to that? You're going to be leaders, and you're going to be responsible for all these guys in this platoon. How are you going to do it now? If you took a chance and deviated and tried something and it failed, did you fail any worse than you would have on the other way? You're field expedient, you have to do that in life. You have to think, because if you stay in the Army and get promoted, those guys are your responsibility." And they started understanding that, and we were good.

We were good my platoons, we were recon. And we called -- they called it survey recon stuff. We'd go out and locate where missiles would be placed, or in the field artillery, where the eight inch howitzers would be placed. And they had to know all that stuff. And you went out before the troops, and you went out alone. And then you had to go up on the LPs [listening posts] and find the enemy. You had to locate them and call that stuff back in and then direct the artillery fires to where it was going. And they were good guys. They were good guys. They trained hard, played hard. That was fun. And I think I was pretty successful at that. I know I was, to be honest, not to toot my own horn. But people look at you like, "wow, you're old, you're dinosaur in a young man's Army."

Then Desert Storm kicked up. And I was so proud of my guys. They came back with their heads screwed on straight. They trained well. They followed their training. They got there, and when I became a First Sergeant, first sergeants are authorized to carry a .45 . You don't have to carry an M16 anymore. Well as the first sergeant, I kept my M16. I didn't want the .45 and everybody was picking on me, saying, "why do you want that? Why do you want that?" They got to know me pretty good. We're a working group of people and my sergeants are saying the same thing. And I said, "look, I know that if I had that .45 in my hand and I shot at that floor, I might miss that floor. But with that M16 in my hands, I'm an expert shot

both left and right handed, and you find the enemy while they're a lot farther away than in .45 range, the only thing that .45 does for first sergeant, it's an ego booster to tell everybody I'm the first sergeant, or “I'm an officer” which the enemy can see maybe want to shoot you."

So anyway, one of my sergeants was– they took our unit and we augmented other units in Desert Storm, and this other guy that had the other combat patch, they took us out of the ranks when we were at the tarmac getting ready to go on the planes and stuff. And they said you're going in the second wave, you will instill confidence. And because all the reports were showing this is going to be a bloodbath, it's going to be a bad, bad– turned out to be a big traffic jam, but that's all it was. But anyway, so I asked him, I said, "you guys know the difference between a damn jungle and a desert and I've had all the desert training. They sent us to Fort Polk, Louisiana. That's where we did all the desert training." And so anyway, they left us, but they took one of my sergeant first class, and the first sergeant in that unit got sick or got hurt or something, and they made him the first sergeant, the acting first sergeant. And the first thing he was doing was taking food out to the troops on the front line. And he had a .45 he didn't take an M16. And they're driving out, and the Republican Guard, the Iraqi Republican Guard walked out from behind the sand dune with their hands up. And I forget what the numbers were, he told me later. But he got so nervous, he saw all these Iraqis coming at him, he grabbed his drivers M16 that was– they used to hang them off a windshield in the middle of the Humvee. And drivers madder than hell at him, but he had a knife in his boot.

But the guy jumps out with the guy's M16, and points to the Iraqis, and the Iraqi's going, "mister, mister," and he– hands up in the air, but he's pointing to the ground and the sergeant's yelling at him, "tell them, keep their hands up. Keep their hands up." And what had happened is they were so hungry, they were just giving themselves up. So anyway, but the guy kept saying, "look down." And the sergeant looked down the magazine from the M16 was laying on the ground. He had hit the eject button. It fell on the ground. And he says, "I captured those guys with an empty weapon, and the Iraqis knew it."

But what happened was, before I knew all this from him directly, his wife came to the office and told me. She said, "First Sergeant Harlow, I got to talk to you." And I'm saying, "oh God, he got hit." And she says, "no, he

wanted me to come tell you personally that you were right." And so she went down the whole story, just as he told her and the just as I'm telling you, he said that damn .45 wouldn't have been a bit of good to me with all those guys. And they tried to put him in for a big award, and he turned it down.

He put his driver in for an award, and tried to make up for what he'd done to him [laughter]. But they came back with their heads on straight. They said the training they had worked, that's why they made him a First Sergeant from augmented unit. And it worked so that that made me feel real good. And you know, my guys came back. And one guy from one of those units that my guys were with, was taking all these pictures of the blown up vehicles and burning vehicles, and there's probably some bodies and stuff, but he was just taking pictures. And he was telling stories as he was going these guys– this guy was just going to go home and make it look like he was in hard combat, and this was what was happening, and he was getting photos after the war, after the shooting was up. So they told me, they said, "we don't know what happened, first sergeant, but something happened to his camera, all his film, and everything was destroyed." I gave them a thumbs up. Their heads were on straight when they came home, and that was important to me. That made me feel good. I know the training we put them through, and I was tough on their training. And so it worked. It worked.

GRAYSON: How did so your experience during Desert Storm? Obviously, very different experience in terms of what you were doing and where you were at. But how did your experience with the military during like an active combat situation, how did that compare to your experiences back in Vietnam in terms of how you felt and the culture and everything?

HARLOW: Well, I always trained as if I was in Vietnam, knowing we weren't, but I was stationed in the desert. They dropped us in the desert. We'd been training up on desert warfare for a very long time. I remember when I said I got my notice that I was going overseas, I felt that part of me– this is for real. And I felt a change in me come over me. I saw those guys– where– my guys were always crazy. They were always joking with each other, pulling jokes. But one of those guys was on the bus to go to the airport, and he was all shaken up. There was something he had forgotten to do. And one of the other guys came up, said "what? What's wrong?" And he told him what it was, and I can't recall it, but it was something for his wife. Now,

normally, if, if you're going to go take something to the wife, they would joke and say, "yeah, I'll go help your wife, buddy." But this guy told him, he says, "don't worry, man, we got you, we got your back. We'll go see your wife. We'll get this all straight. And okay." And I forget what it was. It wasn't a major thing, but the guy's getting ready to get on the plane. He's all nerves, and he forgot something. And what does he do? He needs to try to get to a phone. He can't. That's not the time to be trying all that stuff. You need to get your head into the game and make sure your gear is with you and all that. And the guys that were going, maybe on the next bus, or not even going, came up, and I saw these young men became serious. "I got you back, brother, you have nothing to worry about. And for the rest of your life, you'll have nothing to worry about, because if something happens to you, we will guide your family through their life."

And there was no joking. There was no bad jokes. You, you knew they meant it. And I related to that, because I saw them doing that, and I said, that's the way I felt when I got that notice, that the people I was relating to after that was the combat veterans that were in Germany when I was over there, and I got that notice. They were kind of surrounding me. Not talking much, just, "got your back. Let's go get a beer. Let's go do this. Let's go do that. We got you." And they weren't relating their experiences to me. They were waiting to see if I had questions. What did I need? "Have you got this?" They'd say, "okay, yeah, yeah, make sure this is taken care of, and don't let anybody another GI buy a life insurance policy on you." That's one thing that I walked away with. Guys in country would take out life insurance policies on other guys in country. You figure it out from there. Some of them were gamblers, and other guys made– you could get a guy killed over there it for about 40 bucks I think. They were the Cowboys. But anyway, one guy told me that. Other than that, they were just there, just around.

And that's the way the guys I am now, when you're with combat vets that have been down the road, as I'd say, they're calm. You don't have to say anything to them, the loud mouth guys in the corners, or they're legends in their own mind. They're trying to promote themselves. And yeah, you can tell. I can tell a phoney a mile away. It's simple. And it's just something that you get a feeling on. I don't know if I can even explain it, but sometimes you see a couple of old veterans sitting next to each other. They're not saying anything. They may be feeding birds or any other thing. "Yeah, you know. Throw it that way," the camaraderie, they're there, they got each

other's back. Even if it's just feeding a bird. And they're comfortable. And that's the way I feel. I like to be around veterans. I don't know if that makes sense, but that's the way I feel. And I saw those guys doing that. I saw those guys doing that. And it meant a lot to me that I recognized that, and to have the guy come back and admit what he had done. He had no ego. He told his wife that first sergeant was right, and he's telling her how he screwed up, not thinking his wife might say, "what kind of idiot are you?" But it was funny, and she came and told me, and it was word for word, just about what I just told you. And he said, "yeah, I learned the hard way," but and he made the– you know, he was a careerist. He was in the Army, so I'm sure his people did quite well. So what else do you like to know? Luke?

GRAYSON: Well, you know, I have one main thing, one main last question that I have for you, and then I'd like to open it up in case there's anything that you'd like to say to me. But you talked about how intensive of an experience it was coming home from Vietnam. How did that differ with when you came back from your second stint in the military? Like, how did that feel in comparison?

HARLOW: It felt okay. I had a wife and children. We had been stationed in Germany a long time, So my family was with me. And I was on what's called terminal leave. I had 90 days of leave time built up. So I came home retired, but still got paid for 30– or 90 more days, and so the transition was smooth, and it was time. It was time. And they told me that my body would start breaking down and I'm having problems now, but I've gone farther than they thought I would. So you know, I'm happy. I'm happy. And you look back at it, I thought when I was in high school or out of high school, if I could ever get a job, get married, buy a mobile home, maybe on a little lot of land, not a whole bunch, get it paid off in my lifetime, have a couple of kids that maybe got into college, and you know, that would have been the highlight of my life. But I have gone so much farther than that. When I was in the military, I thought I was going to lose my GI Bill, so I went back and went to college while I was in the Army, and have my actually have a master's degree from Boston University. They had a big campus in Heidelberg, Germany. And while everything else was going on, we were getting degrees– and with West Pointers, because the officers needed to get college to get promoted, it was really bad, and I went to the colonel. And hardest thing is West Pointers had never had to financially pay for an education. They didn't know how to do it, and they weren't going to listen

to a sergeant. So the colonel brought him in, and instead of everyone going out to different places for a class, the colonel asked, why don't we bring all the professors here, use this facility. Everybody that we bring in here are going to get the same degrees.

Boston University bought off on it and on at a graduation, I got to go and see the president of that. Had a little drink with the president of Boston University, got the meeting. He thought that was a great idea. They were going to implement those programs in Europe. And I was just trying to– the bug bit me, the education bug. It worked out quite well. And I've had the degrees. I haven't used them really, per se. But I didn't get it to make money off those degrees. I got it because I was told I was too dumb to go to college when I was in high school. And then I qualified for the West Point prep school and didn't go to that. And then finally, I thought I was going to lose my GI Bill, so like a dummy, I started learning, and then the bug bit me, you know, I liked it. I enjoyed that. And we had some really interesting classes. If nothing else, that prepared me for civilian life pretty well, because we learned to interact with people and listen– become active listeners, and demilitarize what we spoke, all the military terms. And it was obvious to everybody, you were a military guy, and it kind of limited your options with what you were doing. And it was great. I appreciate it. And I appreciate what you're doing with Dartmouth. And I don't know if you knew Roberta Howard, who's a English professor. Am I saying that right? Howard? Roberta. Ed [Professor Edward Miller] knows who she is, but anyway, she talked us into taking classes at Dartmouth at no cost to the veteran, and had us do the Iliad and the Odyssey and from a perspective of combat veterans and stuff. And it stretches your imagination. It expands you. You don't get stale. And it was fun. And I can say "I went to Dartmouth, folks." Bragged to everybody I went to Dartmouth. I took a class. And she wouldn't buy me a beer. So I don't think I'm going back so. But Stewart -- Roberta Stewart, I was thinking of Martha Stewart. It's Stewart, but nice lady, nice lady, and interesting classes. It expands your mind a little bit.

GRAYSON: I agree with that this class has been great. Love it.

HARLOW: Yeah. And I'm surprised that. How much our younger version of you and I are parallel? Your family backgrounds gotta be close to mine.

GRAYSON: Yeah, yeah, from what we talked last time, yeah, absolutely.

HARLOW: It will be interesting to see you're the West Point part of what I wasn't. I ended up at Boston University, but I was already in my late 30s by that time, and it was perfect, because I was ready to learn then, and I wasn't when I was younger. And I will be really interested to see where you are for 10 years from now, I would really be interested in it. Because something's out there for you Luke, I can just sense it. I can sense it. And you're enjoying the ride. Does that make sense?

GRAYSON: Absolutely. And you know what, we should definitely stay in touch, and we can chat more about that once I finish this recording. The last thing I want to cover with you is, is there anything at all that you feel like you haven't talked about that you want to mention? It can be anything.

HARLOW: I can't think of anything. I'm sure I've rambled some. Haven't told you all the crazy things we did. We pull a lot of jokes in the Army, and it was fun. But I am who I am because of my military experience, and things worked out for me. I've always said there's like a little angel just when things are going to go bad, something happens to correct it. And I can't tell you more than that. So you know, here I am. Here I am. For how much longer I don't know. I've made the VA– I told him, "you gotta promise to keep me alive until after I'm 80. After that, I really don't care.

GRAYSON: Well, hopefully it's quite a deal, a long, deal longer. And I have to say, I very much enjoyed this conversation. To close it out, I'd love to say thank you again. Mr. Harlow: for agreeing to do this–

HARLOW: I would like to ask you a question. Did this work out where you're getting what you think you needed for your project? I know this is part of your senior project, or whatever you're doing for Ed, did we get off too far off track, or anything?

GRAYSON: Not at all. Honestly, the more off track, the better for me, because, I think the value in what you had to say was very much in the details that you wouldn't be able to find somewhere in a book. And that's, that's what I think you really gave me today. So I really appreciate it.

HARLOW: Good, good. Well, I hope it's useful somewhere down the road, because it's been– God Almighty 72 How many years is that? I think it's 55 years.

54 years, something like that? You know. And I'm surprised. Nobody wanted to hear our story when we first came home. Nobody wanted to hear it. But at the same time, I'm not sure we wanted to say anything anyway. So who knows.

GRAYSON: Well I'm going to hang around in this meeting anyway so we can chat.

HARLOW: Okay.

GRAYSON: I'll just end the recording, I'll quickly say, obviously, thank you so much, Mr. Harlow for doing this. This is incredible. The time right now is 8:35pm on the 12th of February, 2025 and I'm going to end the recording just there.

[End of interview.]