Stephen D. Hayes '66
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[LEIGH P.]

STEINBERG: Hi. This is Leigh [P.] Steinberg interviewing [Stephen D.] "Steve" Hayes for the Dartmouth Vietnam Project. We are on the phone. I'm in Rauner [Special Collections] Library at Dartmouth College, and it is October 20th, 2016.

All right, so hi, Steve, how are you doing today?

HAYES: I'm—I'm fine, Leigh. Good to talk to you.

STEINBERG: Great to talk to you. All right, so let's start with some biographical information to know a little bit more about your early life. So where and when were you born?

HAYES: I was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, in July of 1944.

STEINBERG: All right. So right about the end of the—the—of World War II. Was that an important part of your life? Did your father serve in World War II? And what was it like kind of growing up in the post-World War II era?

HAYES: My father did. We're actually—my parents are from the—from the South. The only reason I was born in Utah is because my father was working in—had a job out there, and he was actually working in explosives and munitions industry, which supported the war effort, so he was not on active duty, himself. Some of my uncles were. And we moved back—back East when I was about three, and I grew up in Delaware.

And frankly, I didn't—I didn't really give World War II much of a—much thought except to study it a little bit in high school and then later in college.

STEINBERG: Mm-hm. So you said that your dad worked in the explosive industry during the war. What did your parents do when you guys moved back to Delaware after the war?

HAYES: Well, my father was working for a company called Hercules Powder Company, which—powder as in gunpowder. And that was his first job out of college, and he worked for that company in—in Utah, and then he continued with the same company for—for all of his career. And—and Delaware—Wilmington, Delaware, is the corporate headquarters, so that's what brought us to Delaware. He—he stayed in that business all his working life.

STEINBERG: And was your mom a stay-at-home mom?

HAYES: Yes. She was actually an artist and a—a—a serious artist, and I'd like to say a good one, but—but she did not work outside the home.

STEINBERG: Mm-hm. So what was your childhood like? What was it like growing up in Delaware? Can you just kind of take me through the early years of your life?

HAYES: Sure. I'm an only child, so I didn't have any brothers or sisters around the house. I went to—we lived in a little town called Claymont, Delaware, and then later moved, when I was in first grade, over to the west side of Wilmington. And I actually had a very—I think I look back on my growing up years as very stable and very happy. I went to a public high school from first grade all the way through—all the way through high school. Enjoyed it. Did pretty well academically. I was involved in—in sports in high school and a lot of swimming and boating and—we were around the water a lot, growing up, and then I went off to college.

STEINBERG: Great. So you said that you went to your public high school. When did kind of your awareness of current events develop? Did that develop once you got to college or in your earlier years?

HAYES: Boy, you know, I'm not quite sure how to answer that. No, I think I had some—I think I had some awareness, certainly, of—of—of current events in high school. I graduated in 1962, and I was certainly aware of the [Richard M.] Nixon-[John F.] Kennedy campaign in '60 and the Cuban Missile Crisis and, you know, a number of public events. And there was—there were increasing racial tensions and disturbances in—in—you know, in the states, even in Delaware at that time, and I

was aware of all that. Was not—didn't really develop any awareness of—of Vietnam and the Vietnam War until after I got to Dartmouth.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So you said—you mentioned the Cuban Missile Crisis. That was in the fall of your freshman year. So what was the reaction like on campus? Can you kind of take me back? You're a freshman on campus. And what is the reaction like, the environment like, when that starts happening in the fall of '62?

HAYES: Well, to be honest with you, I was aware of it and followed it a little bit, but—but it was not—[chuckles] it was not real high on my radar screen, so to speak. I guess I was more focused on, you know, trying to settle into college and, you know, get my courses going, and I started playing rugby on the rugby team. And, you know, that was—all those activities were much more important to me than—certainly than the Cuban Missile Crisis.

STEINBERG: Yeah. That's very understandable. So what was your transition like to college? Was it easy? Was Dartmouth what you expected it to be? What was it like when you got here on campus in '62?

HAYES: Well, I loved it. I mean, I really, really—it was an all-male school back then and developed a real set of friends and camaraderie. It was a lot of fun. And I found—I found the academics very challenging. I mean, I—I—I feel like I'm a reasonably smart guy, but I really—I really had to work hard to be in the middle of the class [chuckles], you know. So it was—so it was very—that was very challenging for me. And I—I guess I would have admit I approached the—the academic side of Dartmouth with a fair amount of trepidation and even fear that I wasn't going to be able to keep up with the rest of the guys.

STEINBERG: So did you—what did you study here on campus, and, you know, what were some courses that have stuck with you through your academic experience that maybe challenged you or kind of changed the way you viewed the world that you were living in?

HAYES: Well, oddly enough—I guess it's odd, in a way—I was—I was a—a—I had cho- —chose a major in philosophy. I'm not quite sure why, except I was always been very drawn to the—to the basic questions of—of human life. And—and so I majored in philosophy, and I enjoyed it. Those courses, like a lot of my other courses, were—were challenging. I took the required four sciences, but only because they were required. I took two math courses and a geology course and, I don't know, something else.

The o- —aside from my major, the two courses that really, in some respects, made the most impact on me were two creative writing courses that—that I absolutely loved. They were taught by a professor who's no longer there and passed away, by the name of Noel Perrin. But I just loved it. And I've actually—part of my career is now—was—I was very involved in press relations and public affairs, and did a fair amount of writing in my—in my work. And it's now an avocation. I've published a couple of novels, and I'm working on a third.

STEINBERG: Mm-hm. So—so the writing really impacted you, thinking about philosophy, the basic ideas of life. So while you're studying all of this, a lot is happening in the world. Nineteen sixty-three, a big year for the civil rights movement, March on Washington [for Jobs and Freedom] and especially the JFK [President John F. Kennedy] assassination. Did—you said in '62 the Cuban Missile Crisis didn't really impact your college experience. Did the events in '63 start to become—have a bigger impact on you? Like, how did you kind of—

HAYES: Yeah.

STEINBERG: —when did you become aware of what was happening?

HAYES: Well, certainly the assassination of Kennedy—that was—as I—just a few days before Thanksgiving, I believe, in fall of '63, and I remember exactly where I was when I heard it, which was in my frat- —Tri-Kap [Kappa Kappa Kappa] fraternity. I remember going—I'm not Catholic, but I remember going with a couple of other guys who were Catholic—service—somewhere on campus that afternoon. And that was—that was such a—such a traumatic event for—for—for all of us at—of that age. And I—I remember

that one very, very distinctly and I think followed the subsequent events certainly more closely then than I had a year before with the Cuban Missile Crisis.

STEINBERG: Yeah, so that kind of sparked your awareness of what was going on.

HAYES: Correct.

STEINBERG: So can you just bring me through more like what was campus like? So you said it was an all-male school. You played on the rugby team. You're in a fraternity. What was daily life like as a Dartmouth student in the early sixties?

HAYES: Oh, I don't know quite how to answer that. I mean, we—I had a—I had a roommate, a fellow named Robin [L.] Carpenter [Class of 1966, Tuck 1977], and Robin and I stayed very close. In fact, we e-mailed each other this—as late—as recently as this morning. We stay in very close touch.

You know, I think it was, in a way, maybe, kind of—there were three—three parts to school. One was the academics, and the other for me was rugby, which was really—that was really kind of the center of my non-academic life there. And then there—then the third, I guess, was sort of the general social stuff with my—my friends in—in the dorm primarily and then later my friends at—in the fraternity. And we worked hard. We played hard.

And, of course, there were no—no girls out there, and so we were on the road to Col- —what was then Colby [Mountain] Junior College and [sic; now] the Green Mountain Junior College [sic; Green Mountain College] and to Wellesley [College] and to [Mount] Holyoke [College] and Smith [College] and—and similar destinations.

STEINBERG: To go meet up with girls.

HAYES: To try to—yeah. They would have mixers and—or, you know, later would get to know some of the girls and have dates, or a buddy would fix us up, that sort of thing.

I also enjoyed skiing. I had never been on skis in my life until I got there and learned to ski in a—in a rudimentary way. In fact, my—the winter of my freshman year, I was—I was skiing so much that the midterm scores, I was getting C minuses everywhere, and my father showed up in the dorm, unannounced, to read me [chuckles] the riot act—

STEINBERG: [Chuckles.]

HAYES: —to tell me that—get off the slopes and bear down a little bit, and put the fear of the Lord into me.

STEINBERG: [Chuckles.] Yeah. That's great.

So a little bit later in the sixties, there was a lot of—a lot of controversy over ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] on campus, and some riots on campus and protests. Was there any seedlings of that while you were there? Do you remember any early protests or kind of displeasure with ROTC on campus? Or that developed later, after your time?

HAYES: It—it developed later, or at least if it was there, I wasn't aware of it. The one recollection, though, I have is my father actually encouraged me more than once to—to join ROTC, and I chose to ignore it—that advice and did not join it, and we can maybe touch on that a little later, when we get into the—Vietnam and the war.

STEINBERG: Yeah. Well, so, what—what was that decision like? Why did you choose not to?

HAYES: I just—I don't—I just didn't want to be bothered. I just—I don't know. It just wasn't something that—that—you know, back in 1962 and '3, Vietnam was not—had not heated up. It really wasn't until—you know, into—into later—our later years.

I also had, in the back of my mind, thought that I was probably, maybe going to go to law school after Dartmouth, and—I never did go to law school. I went to graduate school later but—talk about that later but—so I—I think maybe part of my thinking was, *Well, you know, this war is—is what it is, but I won't get out of Dartmouth till June of '66, and then I may be in law school for three, four more years, so I don't*

have to worry about it right now. Well, that was my thinking—

STEINBERG: So it wasn't—

HAYES: —at the time.

STEINBERG: It wasn't even on your mind that you'd be going into the service out of college.

HAYES: Not—not—not when I was a freshman and —and sophomore. Maybe not even as a junior. It was—it was maybe toward the end of my junior year and senior year. But I—I actually applied—I took the law boards in the fall of my senior year. I applied to four law schools. I got in—I got in two of them; I was waitlisted on a third, so I had a chance to go. But it—but late in the fall, I decided that I did not want to go to law school. I wasn't—I didn't—I was—I didn't think I—I wasn't sure I wanted to be a lawyer, and I was sure I didn't want to go to school anymore, at least not at that time.

And so it was right after Christmas break that I started thinking about, you know, what I was going to do. And then—and it was sometime in the winter, that winter that I applied for Navy OCS [Officer Candidate School].

STEINBERG: So what was your family's reaction to your decision to apply to OCS? Oh, can you also say what OCS is, for future reference, for an acronym?

HAYES: It's—it's Officer Candidate School. You know, if you—for—for—you know, a lot of naval officers get their commission by going to the [U.S.] Naval Academy in Annapolis [Maryland], but many, many officers, in fact most of them get—get their commission ei- —either through ROTC or through Officer Candidate School, which, for the [U.S.] Navy, is in Newport, Rhode Island. It's a sixteen-week course.

STEINBERG: So was that going to be a post-graduation course?

HAYES: Yes. Yeah. I went—

STEINBERG: So—yup. Go. You can speak.

HAYES: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

STEINBERG: Mm-hm. I wanted to ask a little bit more about your decision to apply to Navy Officer Candidate School, knowing that you had the option to go to law school. What was your family and friends' thoughts on you, with an active war going on, deciding to apply to the Navy?

HAYES: You know, Leigh, I—I—I don't remember. I honestly don't remember what their reaction was, and I don't even remember what my parents' reaction was. They were very—I think they were—they've generally been supportive of me as supportive parents, although at times they've, you know, not agreed with certain things I've done. But I don't remember a lot of—a lot of talk among my friends or other relatives one way—one way or the other.

STEINBERG: So did you feel like Dartmouth environment had changed at all over your four years, by your senior year, or it had pretty much the stayed the same, of awareness of current events but not completely engaged in it just yet?

HAYES: I guess—I guess maybe the only thing that—that—I hadn't thought about that question, really. But I—I suspect there might have been some change from 1962 to '66 in the sense that the campus got somewhat more politicized. There was more open debate and—and sort of tension and friction on—on race—race issues and on political issues and—and maybe even a little bit on—on Vietnam, although I wasn't—as I said earlier, I wasn't aware of that of it.

But, I mean, for example, we had—there was a program called Great Issues. It was a speaker series. And in a period of—I seem to remember it was [unintelligible; 19:37]—three- or four-month period, we had the governor of Alabama, George [C.] Wallace [Jr.] up to Dartmouth to speak. And with a very, very short period of time, we had Malcolm X up to Dartmouth to speak. And, I mean, talk about polar opposites.

And there was a lot of—there was just a lot of—a lot more awareness and maybe even some public protest activity around politics and segregation and—and maybe some other public policy issues.

STEINBERG: So did you go see George Wallace and Malcolm X speak when they came up to campus?

HAYES: I did. Yes, I—I saw them both.

STEINBERG: What was your reaction to their speeches? What were your thoughts on the comparison between the two of them?

HAYES: Well, I—I think—I mean, they were—they were just—they were both interesting and fascinating people, but by way of trying to answer that question, I'll tell you that my—my mother was born and raised in Alabama, and my father was born and raised in Georgia, and even though I grew up outside the South, I had, you know, fairly deep family connections to—to the South. And so at that time, I was kind of annoyed that—that so many people were beating up on poor old George Wallace and giving him such a hard time. I mean, I—I'm seventy-two years old now, and my views on segregation and—and Wallace and all of that have changed probably 180 degrees. But at that time, that was my—my prevailing sentiment as a twe- —whatever I was, twenty-year-old or something.

STEINBERG: So were you in the minority on campus in your views considering your southern background?

HAYES: Absolutely, strong minority, yeah.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So was that a hard environment? Did you feel like you couldn't really express your views or there was room for open debate?

HAYES: A little bit of both. There was certainly a lot of debate, but I—but I—there was part of it that was kind of intimidating, and I felt—I felt as though I was in a minority in two ways. One was that issue. But I also, as a public school kid, I was—I felt—you know, a lot of the Dartmouth people—I don't know what it's like now with you all, but—and I don't know where you went to high school, but there were a lot of—you know, a lot of kids from [Phillips Academy] Andover and [Phillips] Exeter [Academy] and Groton [School] and, you know, very, very exclusive, very, very good private schools. And, you know, as a kid coming out of a—out of a little public school in—in Delaware, I—I felt intimidated by all that because I felt

they were—that I wasn't as good as they were. At least not academically.

STEINBERG: Yeah. Did that change over your four years? Did you grow more comfortable on campus by graduation in '66?

HAYES: Yeah. I considered I'm much better than any of them. No, I'm just kidding. [Both chuckle.] Yeah, no, I mean, it started to even out. And—and, you know, as we all went through our four college years, we developed friendships and associations, and—and some of that dissipated, you know, over time. But certainly the first year or two, that was—that feeling was fairly strong for me.

STEINBERG: Yeah.

All right, so let's go back to your senior winter. You applied to the Navy OCS. What made you want to—what made you decide to apply to the Navy?

HAYES: I thought it was—I thought the Navy was much safer than going in the [U.S.] Army and that it was a—that it was basically a somewhat more upscale organization than the Army or the—or the Marines [U.S. Marine Corps] or—and I didn't know anything about the [U.S.] Air Force, so—so those are the two reasons why I applied.

STEINBERG: And—

HAYES: And I applied—and I—let me just add, if I may: I applied—I applied to—to the Navy not because I was crazy about going in the Navy. I applied to the Navy to avoid the draft.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So if you had been drafted, would you have gotten to pick what division you wanted to go in, what branch?

HAYES: No. No, no, no. If you get drafted, you go in the Army.

STEINBERG: Great.

HAYES: [cross-talk; unintelligible; 24:43].

STEINBERG: Was there any thought of going to law school to avoid service at—at all?

HAYES: Oh, I think I thought about it, but I—I think—I'm not sure I was confident that Vietnam would be any worse than law school. [Both chuckle.] I don't know. I just—I really didn't—I really didn't want to go to—I just didn't want to go to law school for three years. I felt that would be dull and a grind, and—and I think—I guess I thought maybe in a perhaps subconscious way that—you know, being on the Navy and being—being in a ship out to sea was—would be kind of a fun adventure. It wouldn't be like going to war.

STEINBERG: Yeah. Okay, so when were you accepted into OCS? When did you know that you were going to pursue this after college?

HAYES: I got my letter on July 24th, 1966, after graduation.

STEINBERG: And so did you have any other plans post-graduation, or you were waiting to hear about this?

HAYES: No, I was waiting to hear. And it was a very, very nervous time for me because I had actually already been contacted by the [U.S.] Secret Service and went up to Philadelphia [Pennsylvania] from home and went through all that processing, and—and they told me that—that if—that I was going to get drafted. And they said it could have been July, but if I wasn't drafted in July, they would—they would guarantee that I'd be drafted in August. So I just—I mean, I just barely got into the Navy in time.

STEINBERG: So you were contacted by the Secret Service for drafting information or to go into the Secret Service?

HAYES: No, no, maybe I misspoke. No, not Secret Service, Selective Service [System].

STEINBERG: Yes. Okay, that's different.

HAYES: Selective. That's the draft—the draft board, yeah.

STEINBERG: The draft board. Okay. So you got your acceptance letter in July, and when did you start?

HAYES: September.

STEINBERG: So what was that one month like? Was there any preparation, anticipation, or you were just ready to get going?

HAYES: No, I was ready to get going. I mean, that—that—that interim was actually just kind of a—a—kind of a sweet time of life. It was summertime, and I had a girlfriend then, and, you know, we spent, you know, time together toward the end of the summer, before I went off to the Navy and she went back to college. And it was just sort of, you know, enjoying a last summer at home with my family and buddies and swimming and, you know, doing things you do in the summertime.

STEINBERG: Of course. Okay. So take me back to your first day of Navy Officer Candidate School. You've arrived in Newport. What is it like? What is your first exposure to the Navy?

HAYES: Well, the first exposure is you're just sort of—it's like a cattle call. I mean, you've got—I don't know how many were—you know, several hundred of us guys, and you go in, and the first thing they do is they shave your head, so everybody has a—absolutely not bald but, you know, short buzz cut. Everybody is shed of their civilian clothes, and they put on these uniforms. And then we're immediately kind of marched around from here to there. So you're just—you're just sort of immediately plunged into this environment of rigidity and, you know, kind of a discipline.

And the first day, you're—you're just going from place to place. You're checking into the medical thing to get your shots. Then you're going to get—going to the bunkhouse and—you know, and all that kind of stuff. It was—it was—it was tiring, and it was—my main impression, as I say—it was just kind of this—you know, you're—all of a sudden, you're—you're just a cog in a wheel.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So what type of—what was your daily routine like there? Was it a mix of basic training and other lessons, or how did—how did you time there pan out? What did you do?

HAYES: It was—it was—it was a sixteen-week course, and, you know, they got us up at—I can't remember. I think it was five or five thirty. It was very, very early. And we had to get

dressed. We had to make our bunks. We had to have inspection every single morning because everything had to be spit and polished and so on. And then we—they marched us off to—to chow line to get some food.

And being out, even early in the morning, it really wasn't too bad in September, even October. But then when it rolled into late November and December, January, in Rhode Island, it was really unpleasant. But then—then it was a mixture of—of—of academics and—and—and other things. I mean, we had class every day. We had class in navigation. We had class in ship engineering. We had class in tactics and that sort of stuff.

And then—but then you had—you know, you had to run every day, and you had to work up to a minimum swimming ability and—and then later on, we actually—they took us out, toward the last couple of months of the training out on these small boats were actual—you know, on the water training. And, of course, by that time it was January, and Newport was just crappy. But anyway, that's—that's what it was. But you devel- —you get through it. It's sixteen weeks. It's not the end of the world.

STEINBERG: And what were the other men like that you were with? Did they—like, what—what were their backgrounds? Did you make any really strong connections? What was that like?

HAYES: Yeah, there—they were—I think they were all college graduates from—from all—I mean, just a wide cross-section of colleges in the country. There were a few, and I mean maybe, you know, one or two percent of—who were enlisted men, who had been in the Navy for maybe ten or fifteen years but had exhibited leadership qualities and skills, and the Navy asked them if they wanted to become officers, and if they said yes, they would send them to [post—yeah? 31:54]. So them of them were mixed in with us. So that's what it was.

STEINBERG: So—and what—can you go into a little more detail about what your academic classes were like? So what were you learning in order to prepare to be a Navy officer?

HAYES: Well, as I said, we learned navigation. Part of that was celestial navigation, which, you know, people don't do anymore because you have—have all the electronics, but we learned how to, as they say, "shoot the sun" and—and calculate our location at sea by the location of the sun and—and the horizon and so on.

We learned the basics of—of engineering. That is to say, ships all have—at least in those days, they all had—generally had diesel engines, and so they told us the basics of—of a—of a diesel engine and—and the coolant—the coolant systems, probably bringing in cool sea water and running it through the engines, the maintenance of the engines.

They taught us the whole structure of the Navy. We had to learn the—the—all of the ranks. We had to learn ensign, lieutenant JG, lieutenant, lieutenant commander, commander, captain and all the admirals' ranks. And the—they taught us the—the organization of the Navy: What's the difference between the 7th Fleet and the 2nd Fleet, and where—where are they—where are they, and, you know, what is a task force commander? Just all—all of that Navy stuff that you had to learn.

STEINBERG: And so did you enjoy these classes as a philosophy major? Was it kind of hard to adjust the way that you think? And, as someone who said he didn't want to keep being in school, was this an enjoyable experience in OCS?

HAYES: The scho- —the academic part—I mean, the classroom part I liked, actually. I thought that was—it wasn't terribly difficult, at least not compared to Dartmouth, and I enjoyed it.

The part that I did not like and was not very good at was—was all the discipline stuff, of making sure my bed was made with a hospital corner and there were no wrinkles and that my belt buckle was shined and my shoes were shined and I didn't have any—the term "squared away," which I guess you're familiar—everything had to be squared away. Everything had to be organized and tight and neat, and that part I thought was more onerous than the schooling.

STEINBERG: And did you feel like that ended up being productive and useful when you got into the military, or it was all not as helpful?

HAYES: No, it was useful, absolutely useful, sure.

STEINBERG: And so when you were at OCS, did they tell you anything about Vietnam, what was happening, or was it mostly just general knowledge? Like, what was the military's take on what was happening in Vietnam at this time?

HAYES: I don't—I don't think it was talked about much at all in—in OCS. I mean, it was really just—I think we guys, we—we students, we cadets talked—maybe talked among ourselves, but the—the instructors I don't think ever—ever—ever talked about it.

The one area—the one time at which it did come up—was toward the end, I think maybe sometime in the last month of—of OCS. You go through a process of deciding where you're going to be assigned once you get commissioned. And you—you—you fill out a—what they call a dream sheet or a wish list, and you can say, "My first choice is I want to be on an aircraft carrier home-ported in San Diego [California], and my second choice is I want to go on to Navy pilot school in Pensacola, Florida. My third choice"—you know, you—you list your preferences.

Then all of that information goes into the Bureau of Naval Personnel, which is here in Washington [D.C.]. At least it was; it's moved. And then the Navy ignores all of your—the joke was—and then they proceed to ignore all your preferences and then assign you wherever they want to assign you.

STEINBERG: So were most of the people that you went to OCS with assigned to posts in Vietnam?

HAYES: I don't think anyone was assigned immediately. Is that your question?

STEINBERG: Yes.

HAYES: Yeah. I don't think any- —at least I wasn't aware of anyone who was assigned immediately. I think the people they—they wound up in Vietnam, like myself, were people who went to a duty station for a year, a year and a half and then, if they went to Vietnam, then they went after that. That's—that's what happened to me.

STEINBERG: So where did you go right after OCS?

HAYES: I went to—I was sent to Japan. I was sent to California for three more months of training in amphibious operations, and then I was assigned to a ship, an amphibious ship that's home-ported in Yokosuka [pronounced like Yokuska], Japan. And even though I was not in Vietnam in a technical se- —in a technical sense then, we—we actually spent about 80 percent of our time on the ship in Vietnam, up—up the river, supporting the Army.

And then—maybe I'm getting ahead of your chronology, but I was on that ship for fifteen months, and then I—then I actually went to Vietnam for a year.

STEINBERG: So what was your experience like on that ship? What was your daily duties on the ship?

HAYES: I was the—an LST [Landing Ship, Tank] is basically a—a cargo ship. It transports troops, and it transports material: cement, bombs, Jeeps, food, everything. And so I was in—in the—in the division that was responsible for all of the logistics of—of loading up and offloading everything that we—that we transported. And—and what often happened—and you may have heard this from others you've interviewed—if you're, in my case, a twenty- —whatever-I-was, twenty-two- or twenty-three-year-old ensign, which is like a lieutenant in the Army, brand new out of OCS, and I'm put in charge of a division of maybe forty or—thirty or forty enlisted men, many of whom have been in the Navy for fifteen years, twenty years, twenty-five years and have sort of done it all and seen it all, and I'm supposed to be their supervisor, and yet they all know much more than I do about—about how all this operation is.

So it's—it's—any young, new military officer out of college goes through that phenomenon of learning from the people

that they're supposed to be supervising and then getting more and more experience to be—to be a true—a true supervisor and a true leader.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So you said you spent about 80 percent of your time supporting the efforts in Vietnam. What was your exposure to the war during that time? This was around '67. LBJ [President Lyndon B. Johnson] was escalating efforts there. So what was your exposure to the war effort?

HAYES: Well, it depends on what you mean by "exposure." Some of our operations were—were fairly straightforward, where we would pull into Da Nang or Cam Ranh Bay and—and—and—and offload what we needed to deliver, maybe take on some other troops and so on. And so we were in Vietnam, but it was—you know, we—we weren't in active combat then.

More of our time was spent down in the Mekong Delta, south of Saigon, where we would—the ship would go probably 80 or a hundred miles up the river. In one case, we were almost at the Cambodian border. And we would anchor, and we would be there for six weeks or eight weeks, and we served as a mother ship for—for a Vietnam division. And—and we—we came under fire from time to time, where the—where the VC [Viet Cong] would attack us, either with small arms fire or mortars. But even that was—was very light compared to what I experienced a little bit later on.

STEINBERG: Wow. So when you were there for six weeks, did you primarily stay on the boat? Did you go off the ground into Vietnam? Did you have—did you have any discussions with troops who were in active combat there?

HAYES: Oh, sure. Oh, on a daily basis, because we had probably—we had probably 300 Army infantry that—that was living on the ship. They were—they were—that was their—their home. They slept there. They ate there. They operated out of there. We had a helo pad, where the helicopters would take off and land from our ship. So, yeah, we'd talk to them all the time.

STEINBERG: And what was—what was kind of the pulse of the Army at that time? How were the men who were active in Vietnam feeling about the war?

HAYES: You know, I don't—I don't know if I can really generalize about that. I mean, in terms of the—I think in terms of the Army fellows that I came in contact with, I think a lot of them just were trying to endure it and support each other and—and wait for their twelve months to be over so they could go home.

Our job, as Navy people on the ship, was safer because, you know, as I said, we were basically on the ship. We—we went ashore a little bit, but we were basically on the ship. Number one, we weren't out in the rice paddies or in the jungle. And number two, unlike the Army guys, we were going back to Japan in six weeks, you know, so—or ten weeks or something, so our time horizon was much shorter.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So what were your exact dates when you were on the LST boat that was based out of Japan?

HAYES: Early June 1967 until sometime in August of 1968.

STEINBERG: And so around August of '68, when did you change to being active combat in Vietnam?

HAYES: In the summer of '68, I wrote a letter to the Bureau of Naval Personnel, and I volunteered to serve on the swift boats. Are you familiar with swift boats?

STEINBERG: I am, but if you could explain them for future listeners, that would be great.

HAYES: Well, they're basically river—river patrol boats. They're fifty feet long, aluminum hull. They're basically the more modern-day version of the old World War II PT-109 [Motor Torpedo Boat], although they're smaller boats. And they're—they're—they're strictly—they—they have two missions: One is patrolling and boarding and search of other suspicious craft, and then being—being a combat vessel. We carri- —our crew consisted of one officer and five enlisted. We had twin 50-caliber machine guns and mortars and small arms on board. And that's what they were.

STEINBERG: So what made you want to volunteer to be on one of these?

HAYES: [Chuckles.] Well, that—it got to be very interesting because when I think back on it, our thought processes back then, as young—kind of young bucks—by then, I guess I was twenty-four maybe. I had a very close friend on the ship. His name was Ted Tack. And Ted volunteered for—for a swift boat duty, and he started urging me to do the same, and I said, "I'm not sure that I really want to do that." And this went on for several weeks. And, you know, he said at one point—he said, "Look, Steve, if you don't volunteer for something, you're gonna be—you're gonna stay on the same ship for three years." I'd only been on it for, like, fifteen months at that point. He said, "You'd be on it for a total of three years. You won't see—you won't get to go back to the States. You won't have any leave. Why don't you do something different? Why don't you come with me?" And so on and so forth.

So I—so I volunteered, and I did it for several reasons, none of which had anything to do with the war. I volunteered because if you volunteer and you get picked, you get to go home for a month, for a vaca- —for leave, before going back to Vietnam. And I did it because I wanted to hang with my buddy. And I—and I did it just because I was interested in a new adventure, and I knew it would be boring to be on the same ship for three years.

And—and the time—at the time when I volunteered, the swift boats were doing coastal patrol work. They were—they were off shore maybe 500 yards or a thousand yards or a mile, trying to interdict seaborne traffic. And it was—I mean, nothing is *real* safe in Vietnam, but this was relatively safe duty. And between the time I wrote my letter to volunteer, and then I went back to Vietnam a couple of months later, they had changed the strategy, and a lot of these boats were operating in direct combat in very, very small rivers. So it was—I mean, I can laugh at it now. It wasn't funny at the time, but—so anyway, that's what happened.

STEINBERG: So what was you feeling like when you realized that the mission of these boats had changed and you were going to be seeing a lot more active combat?

HAYES: Oh, I just thought, you know, *Well, it's just kind of a* McHale's Navy [1962-1966 television series] *kind of a turn of events*. And you're so busy, you know, doing what you're doing, you don't have too much time to—to reflect on that sort of thing. And so I just—not that I had any choice, but I just went along with it.

STEINBERG: So when did you start serving on the swift boat?

HAYES: End of October 1968.

STEINBERG: And who did you serve with? Like, what—

HAYES: You mean, what organi- —

STEINBERG: What division? Did you have a certain—

HAYES: I was—well, I started—they moved us around. I at Coastal Division #14, which was in Cam Ranh Bay, which was in—in the middle of the country.

I'll mention parenthetically, one of the—one of the other men in our squadron was John [F.] Kerry, current secretary of state under—under [President Barack H.] Obama.

And then in—and I can't—I'm not sure of all these dates, but I think it was more like February, they transferred me down to Coastal Division 11, which was down in—in the Mekong Delta. And that's where I experienced my most intense exposure to combat.

STEINBERG: So what was combat like in the—in the Delta? What would—like, when you got exposure to combat, what did it look like?

HAYES: We were operating in,—you know, some—a river could be a mile wide and a river could be fifty yards wide. It could be very, very small tributaries. Anyway, most of the time—and we had different missions down there. Sometimes we were just patrolling, because there was a curfew at dark. Nothing was supposed to be on the rivers. Other times, we would be—the term is "inserting." We would be inserting SEALs [U.S. Navy Sea, Air and Land Teams] and other special operations—American special operations at night into various areas.

Other times, we would—they would send us in specifically to get into a fight so that they could—the fighter aircraft above could—they could locate where the enemy was, and they could strike them from above.

So most of the time that we got in combat, we were—we were attacked. We were ambushed by rocket fire and mortar and small arms fire from the shore.

STEINBERG: And what were your duties—

HAYES: And a lot it—and a lot of it was at night.

STEINBERG: So what were your duties on this boat? When you were ambushed, what did you do as an officer on the boat?

HAYES: Well, I was in charge. And so I was like the captain of a ship. I was in—I was in charge of making the decisions of, you know, whether to return fire, whether to reverse course, whether to drive through the ambush, whether to come to the aid of—of another boat that might have been hit—you know, all those decisions anyone in charge would make.

So—but I had—I had an enlisted man on board who would be manning the twin 50-caliber machine guns directly above me. I had a quartermaster who was driving the boat. Next to me, I had another man, [noise; unintelligible; 52:34], who was manning the mortar and the other machine gun, and that sort of thing.

STEINBERG: And so take me back to making those decisions in the middle of the night on these rivers. What was that like, having to make combat decisions on the fly?

HAYES: Oh, you—I don't know what to say except that it's—you know, your adrenaline just starts pumping, and you just—you just do it, and you don't have much time to reflect on anything or think. You just react almost instantaneously. If you see—if you see flashes of fire from the bank on the port side, you direct the fire there. If—if someone is on the radio and says, you know, "Bravo, bravo. Man is hit. Need a medevac [medical evacuation]." You know, you react. You get on the radio. You try to—you try to call a helicopter. You

move over there to—to try to hel- —you know, you do things the way any human would do in a—in a crisis situation. You just—you just react.

And sometimes when it's all over and—and, you know, you're heading back to the mother ship, you're heading back to base, you think about that and you say, *God, I can't—I can't believe I did that. I can't believe that that's what we just went through.* But in the heat of it, there's no reflection.

STEINBERG: So in your reflection on the mother ship, did that at all kind of change your view on the war or your thoughts on why you were serving?

HAYES: Wow. I have a lot of thoughts about that, and I just don't know quite how to organize them. First of all, I will say that when I—when I first went to Vietnam, I had misgivings about—about the effort and whether it was the right thing for our country to be doing. When I got to Vietnam, that internal deliberation just sort of got buried because you're—you're so busy, you just do what you do.

There was a—there was a time when—when we were operating in the Mekong Delta that I really concluded—and John Kerry did, too, and a lot of the others—not that—not that the overall war effort was a mistake, but rather that—that the way our commanding officers were using swift boats was a mistake, that we were being used, for example, as bait. You know, we were being—we were being sent in specifically to—to come under fire so they could identify where the enemy was.

We were also used to—to go in and—and have a—have some sort of engagement or a strike, but we never held any territory. In other words, we would go in, we would kill a bunch of the enemy, and then we would leave and the enemy would come right back in. So we thought kind of parts of what we were doing were a little—a little stupid.

STEINBERG: And did you guys express this to each other, to your commanding officers at all, or mostly did it stay within your boat?

HAYES: We did express—we expressed them to each other. I did not express them to the commanding officer, although there were several of my buddies who did express them.

STEINBERG: And how did that go over?

HAYES: Say that again?

STEINBERG: How did that go over for them? Was there positive response, or it was just back—

HAYES: Oh, not real well. I mean, I think—I think the senior officers made a good-faith effort to pretend to be listening, you know, carefully and taking it in. I'm sure they did. But there was no change of tactics as a result.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So you said that most of your operations were at night. So during the day, what was life like on the boat in Vietnam while you guys weren't in combat?

HAYES: Well, I mean, if you—if you were out in the boats all night, you'd be sleeping for part of the day. You know, part of it would just be relaxing. You'd sleep. You'd, you know, get some food. Probably had some cleanup to do on the boats. And then there were some—

Excuse me. I'm about to sneeze. [He sneezes once.] Excuse me.

You know, and you just sort of hang around and talk to the other guys, maybe play—play some cards or play some acey-deucy or something. You know, that's they way it was. It was—it was fairly unexciting time.

STEINBERG: And what was your relationship—

HAYES: And I didn't—and I don't—and I don't mean to suggest our operations were all at night, but a fair amount was. We did a lot—we did some day operations, too.

STEINBERG: And so what was your relationship like with the other men on your swift boat? Did you guys—did you always operate with the same group of men, and did you get really close with them?

HAYES: Yes. There was—they were—the five enlisted and I were—were—operated together and stayed together as a group, and—and we got close, although we were kind of trained, as officers, not to get too close to our enlisted, that we were—you know, to maintain some—some distance, because you have to—you have to manage them, and sometimes you have to discipline them.

The—the—the people that became my—my real friends were the other officers or the other JG [junior grade]—usually lieutenant JGs, who were—had their own—you know, we were in the same squadron, and each of us would be in charge of our own boat. And those are the fellows I became very close to.

STEINBERG: And for anyone who doesn't know, lieutenant JG is lieutenant junior grade, yes?

HAYES: Cor- —that's correct.

STEINBERG: And how did you earn that—that ranking?

HAYES: Well, by staying alive, for one thing. That helps. You just—you get promoted. I was actually promoted to lieutenant junior grade when I was still on the ship, before I went to swift boats. You—you know, after about a year or so, if you're doing a reasonably good job, you know, your comman- —your commander will write up a nice report and you'll get—get promoted.

STEINBERG: And then I also have here that you won the Bronze Star and the Navy Commendation Medal for heroism. Would you care to expand on what—what you did and your actions to earn those?

HAYES: I can't remember exactly the incident for the heroism, but I think it was—I might be able to just go in my thing and read and refresh my memory. I think it was a time when there were four—three or four boats—and this was during daytime. I think we came under pretty intense attack, and one of our boats was—not my boat, but one of the other boats was hit. And I actually moved in between that boat and the attackers.

Do you want me to read this to you? I just found this.

STEINBERG: Sure.

HAYES: I can—it's a big, long paragraph.

"For heroic achievement while serving in Coastal Division 11 engaged in armed conflict," blah-bih-dee-blah. "Hayes was in charge of PCF-71." PCF is Patrol Craft, Fast, or swift boat. "And five others in the [unintelligible; 1:01:17]. Six boats were proceeding up the river with embarked troops to assault the enemy when intense enemy rocket and automatic weapons fire was received, forcing the three lead boats to beach. Lt. JG Hayes immediately assumed command of the [aft of? 1:01:34] three boats, directed accurate, intense suppressing fire into the enemy emplacement and disembarked his troops to flank the enemy." That's right: Some of our crew got on shore. "Despite their harassment of enemy rocket fire, Lt. JG Hayes held his command in position, significantly contributing to the success of the mission and devotion to duty," blah-bih-dee-blah-bih-dee-blah. So that was kind of a nutshell, just a little snippet of what it was all about.

STEINBERG: Yeah.

So over all, what are your broad reflections on your time in combat, on the swift boats? Was it a positive experience compared to being on the carrier ship from Japan? And over all, how did you feel when you kind of finished up your service there?

HAYES: I finished up—well, first of all, I didn't stay on swift boats for the entire year. They transferred me in—I think it was in June of '69. I was asked to—to take a different position, on the staff, Navy staff in Saigon. So I left the boats and—and served out the rest of my time in Vietnam on a staff job, working indirectly under Admiral [Elmo R.] Zumwalt [Jr.] and doing it as a trainer.

But the answer to your question: I—I—I left with just tremendous jumble of mixed feelings, Leigh. I—I—I was glad to get away—hello?

STEINBERG: Yeah, I'm still here.

HAYES: I was glad to get away from—you know, the danger and the mud and people being hurt and killed and so on, but I was—I had made some very, very close friendships, and I was sad to leave them. And there's—there's also something goes on, I think, in the military, a little bit of survivor's guilt, where even though you're delighted to be leaving something like that and going to a relatively safe job in Saigon, there's some guilt involved. You're guilty that—that you're leaving behind your buddies, for them to continue to face all that down there. So—and—and I had a very, very close friend, who was killed there, and I could elaborate on that story if you're interested. So there's mixed feelings: relief and also guilt.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So with your friend, were you part of the mission that he was killed on?

HAYES: What happened was—and I know the dates like the back of my hand—on April 12th, 1969, there was a—a scheduled attack operation into a river called the Duong Keo River in Cà Mau Peninsula. And about seven—seven or eight boats were scheduled to be on that operation, and I was scheduled—and—and I had a very good friend named [Donald G.] "Don" Droz, who—who was the officer in charge of the [-43? 1:05:16] boat. And he and I were buddies. We were both on that—supposed to be on that mission.

On April 10th, two days before that, I was in a different river, and my boat came under attack. Some of my crew was injured. But more importantly, we took a rocket on our port side, which blew out one of our engines, so my boat was out of commission, which meant that I was pulled off line and I was not on the April 12th operation, where Don was killed that morning. He was actually dead, I think, before the sun came up.

So, you know, I've always had tremendous emotional feelings about all that, partly be- —mainly—mainly because I lost my friend but also because, you know, there's part of me that—even though I don't—I know it's not my fault, there's a part of me that thinks, you know, I should have been there.

STEINBERG: Yeah. Were there a lot of instances like that, where you guys would lose people in combat and it would kind of rock the rest of the division, or, for the most part, did people stay safe in combat?

HAYES: I think—I think the very large majority of—of us on swift boats were—were not injured. I was never hit. I mean, but on the other hand—you know, it's all relative. Relative to a Marine Corps platoon or relative to a lot of the Army units, our casualties were, as percentages, were—were—were much lighter, I think. But, on the other hand, you know, there were—there are a whole bunch of names on the plaques out in San Di—Coronado, California, listing all the swifties that were killed over there.

STEINBERG: So can you elaborate a little more on what you did in Saigon when you were transferred off of your swift boat?

HAYES: I was—I was asked to join a newly-formed unit up there called Personal Response. It's sort of an odd name. But what was happening, just by way of a brief background, in 1969 the U.S. military was going through what Nixon was calling Vietnamization. In other words, we were in a process of withdrawing ourselves grad- —very gradually from the war and turning things over to the Vietnamese, so that—so that, for example, a swift boat that had an officer and five enlisted, all Americans—we would gradually turn it over, and I would have,—you know, you'd have an American officer and four Americans and one Vietnamese, and then after a couple of months it would be three Americans and two Vietnamese, so you would gradually transition.

Well, all of this was not going well, and there were a lot of fights and hard feelings and miscommunications. And so they—the Navy created a special unit to—to train incoming Navy—U.S. Navy personnel coming into Vietnam, to train them how to relate and how to communicate more effectively with their Vietnamese counterparts. So I became a trainer, a and that's what I did from June until I left—left country in I think late October.

STEINBERG: So what were your interactions like with Vietnamese troops who were in the military?

HAYES: I missed part of that. What were my reactions to what?

STEINBERG: No, what were your inter- —did you have interactions with a lot of Vietnamese troops? And if so, what were they like?

HAYES: Well, we had limited interactions when I was on the boats. We had—we would transport Vietnamese troops, and we would have limited interaction with them. We would—and then we'd—I had left the swift boats just when they were starting this transition process, so I actually had one and then, for a brief time, two Vietnamese crew members. And it was difficult because first of all, the language. They might speak some English. We probably had a smattering of Vietnamese. But it was just very difficult, I think, to communicate with them or to get to know them.

Later, when I was in Saigon, I had a counterpart who was a Vietnamese naval officer, who was fluent in English and—and a—and a great guy, and he and I became very close and worked very well together.

STEINBERG: So did you support this idea of Vietnamization, or did it not really matter for your job as a trainer?

HAYES: It didn't really matter. I mean, that's what—that's what we were doing, and I was—I just tried to do the best job I could. I wasn't—I guess I wasn't, for whatever reason, in a mind-set to kind of step back to try to assess the overall transition effort at that point.

STEINBERG: Yeah.

Okay, so when did you leave Vietnam?

HAYES: I left in October of that fall, October 1969.

STEINBERG: And what was your homecoming like? That's about the time—you know, about the time when feelings at home were starting to turn against returning troops, so what was your homecoming like in October of '69?

HAYES: [Chuckles.] Well, first of all, I didn't go directly home. I went to—for reasons I don't—I'm not sure I understand today, I

went to Taipei [Taiwan] for—for a week or so, just to hang out and decompress, all by myself. Just went there. I got a hotel room and went to some bars and hung out.

Then I—then I went—I flew home. I flew to McChor- —I think it's McChord Air Force Base [now Joint Base Lewis-McChord] in Washington state. I'll never forget. We arrived at night. We got off the plane. There was nobody around. It was an Air Force base. And I went into the terminal, and I put a dime in a payphone and called my parents collect and said, "I'm back in the States, and I'll be home in a day or two."

It was all very anticlimactic, I guess. I don't even remember first coming home, to be honest with you. I just don't remember it. But there was no fanfare, you know, pro or con. I just sort of arrived home.

I do remember—this is not exactly on point to your question, but I remember, for quite a number of years after I got back, being very defensive about the antiwar protests and being angered that—that people were criticizing us. It took me a long, long time to understand that, you know, there's a difference between the war and the warrior. You know, if someone is criticizing U.S. policy vis-à-vis Vietnam, they're not necessarily criticizing Steve Hayes. And so that was a long process of me shifting my—my—my attitude and my opinions.

STEINBERG: And so with these escalating antiwar protests, how did you deal with that? Did you reach out to your other military friends? Did you, like, engage in anything public at all? Or did you just kind of keep to yourself and transition back to normal life?

HAYES: The latter. The latter. I didn't have any—of course, all mil- —the military friends I had—none of them were in Delaware. They were either still in Vietnam or they were in Arizona or they were in Michi[gan]. You know, we were from all over. So I was in touch with maybe a couple of them by phone, but basically, you know, no. So—so, yeah, I just kind of tried to avoid the whole thing.

STEINBERG: So when you came home, how did you decide what your next step was going to be?

HAYES: I decided, because I got some very nice help from my parents—back then, there was a—Delaware is such a small state, we just had one congressman. His name was [William V.] "Bill" Roth [Jr.], who since—later became a senator. But he had worked at the same company where my father worked, so—and so we knew—we all knew each other. And he was—luckily for me, he was looking for a—to fill a staff position on his congressional staff. And so I got—I got a job working in Wilmington, Delaware, in the—the local congressional office. So that was my first job after—after the Navy.

STEINBERG: And did you continue your work in policy in the public sector straight through to working for the federal government, or did you—when did you go to grad school, as well? That was the big question.

HAYES: Yeah. I—I—I stayed with the congressman for only I think less than two years, and in the meantime, he was elected to the U.S. Senate, and that's what brought me to Washington, where I've spent—spent my time ever since. And I—I was—in nineteen seventy- —I can't remember what year it was, '72 maybe. My old boss, my old Navy boss in Saigon had since been promoted to admiral and was back in Washington, and he wanted me to come work for him again, so I went into the—back into the—well, I went into the federal government as a civilian, and I worked for the Navy for about three years. And it was during that time, in the early seventies, when I took advance of the G.I. Bill [the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944] and I got a master's degree from Georgetown University in international relations.

STEINBERG: And so did you—how did your Vietnam experience influence your work for the government? Like, your views on the war and kind of just your views on American government and engagement abroad, as a whole.

HAYES: Well, I think—I think, Leigh, my—my time in Vietnam and my time in the Navy and being in Vietnam and Japan, I think is what—what created my longstanding interest in international

relations, and that's where I—part of my career was after—after the Navy was in international work. So in that sense, it—it affected me.

I think part of—maybe in a much smaller way, having gone through some—some tough times in Vietnam, it allowed me to say to myself—you know, if I had some sort of problem at the office in Washington, I could maybe think, *You know, well, not as bad as what I've already been through, and I can handle this. You know, well, not as bad as what I've already been through, and I can handle this.* You know, that kind of thing.

STEINBERG: Yeah. And so when you got your master's from Georgetown, how did that influence your later work with U.S. international engagement? Did that kind of shape your views on Vietnam and U.S. engagement, or was that more shaped through your work in the government?

HAYES: I don't think either one of them shaped my views on Vietnam very much. I think—I think what shaped my views on—I'll tell you little anecdote. Do you know [James E.] "Jim" Wright?

STEINBERG: Yes, yes. He was a—the Dartmouth president.

HAYES: Yeah. Jim has written a book on Vietnam, and he interviewed me, along with many, many other people, about it. But I told Jim this same little story. And I'll try to make this short. We—as I mentioned, I spent a lot of years after coming back being—sort of defending the war effort and defending my friends and so on and so forth.

My wife and I went to church retreat out in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, where we live. I mean, we lived in D.C., but we went out to this thing, and they had a labyrinth. Are you familiar with those labyrinths that some churches have?

STEINBERG: Mm-hm.

HAYES: It's sort of a complicated process. So I was going through the labyrinth, and totally unbidden to me, my mind locked onto a particular incident in Vietnam where we—we meaning my crew and I—had killed a couple of Vietnamese. A lot of—we—a lot of our work was at night, so we didn't really know

who—who—what we had done many times. But this was in the daytime, and these were very close to us, probably thir-—forty yards or something. And we killed these—both these [unintelligible; 1:20:50]. I saw their bodies sort of blow out of a bunker, and they appeared to be young, maybe young teenagers or something.

I was walking this labyrinth, and all of a sudden I flashed on that, and I started to cry. I just wept uncontrollably, and I ran from the labyrinth, and I ran up into the woods, and I just felt such remorse of having—of having taken human life. And —and that was sort of when—I think—I don't know when my overall thinking started to change, but I—I had—I came to believe, and believe today, that—that—that the Vietnam War effort was a—was a very, very serious mistake on the part of our country and—and—and that I acknowledge that I was a part of all that, even though I was, you know, a young—a very young guy then.

But anyway, I just—I just tell you that little vignette as sort of an example of how one's emotions and one's beliefs maybe change over time.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So do you think about the Vietnam War a lot in your life? Does it have a strong impact even now?

HAYES: I don't know if it has that strong now, although, as I've mentioned, I've written—I've written a couple of books, and both of them deal with Vietnam, so—so to that extent, I'm sure it's on my mind. I used to have nightmares. I don't have nightmares anymore. And so I guess it sort of dissipated over time, but parts—part of it's always with you.

STEINBERG: So talk—tell me about your books. When did you want to become an author, and in what way do the books deal with Vietnam?

HAYES: I wrote a short story about Vietnam probably twenty-five years ago, and then when I retired five or six years ago, I had a lot more time, and I—I wrote a short novel. I mean, I'll have them send it to you if you want to see it. It's just a little short novel. It's—it's really—at one level, it's a sailing adventure about four men taking a sailboat down to the Caribbean [Sea], but—but it's—but at another level, because

there are a lot of flashbacks and—and recollections and other scenes of—of Vietnam in the book, and that was sort of my way, through—through fiction writing, of dealing with it, I think. And I have a second book that—that talks a little—a little bit about Vietnam, not as much.

STEINBERG: So just for any listeners, the first book that you mentioned—was that *Light on Dark Water*?

HAYES: Yes, uh-huh.

STEINBERG: And so when you were writing this book, what was your inspiration? Did you want to write a book that kind of had undertones of Vietnam, or did that story emerge after writing it?

HAYES: No, I think—I think it was the former. I think I wanted—I think I consciously wanted the beginning to—to have the undertones, as you call them, about Vietnam.

STEINBERG: And so these are books that you've written after you retired. What was the last thing that you did before you retired? Kind of take me through your career path from grad school and working for the U.S. senator to becoming an author.

HAYES: Well, I moved around. I was—I was mainly in—stayed in the federal government. I worked for ten years at the Treasury Department [U.S. Department of the Treasury], and I was—I spent seven of those years on a big project involving Saudi Arabia, and—but then later, I got into public affairs work, as I mentioned earlier, I think.

And then I was—I also served in the Federal Aviation Administration and the—and—and the State Department [U.S. Department of State]. Both—both those jobs were public affairs jobs. And then I—but around that time, I moved in and out of government a little bit, and I worked for a couple of trade associations, all of which involved public affairs.

And my last—oh, I don't know, what was my last job? I guess my last—my last job was with a small company that was owned and operated by a swift boat Navy friend of

mine, and so I did some work for him, and then I retired about six years ago.

STEINBERG: So you've mentioned public affairs a lot, and I know we've touched on this, but what specifically about public affairs work really drew you to that field? Why is that a common theme throughout your career?

HAYES: I think it is—it's—it's—when you're in public affairs, if you're a press secretary, for example, at a—I'm making this up—at the [U.S.] Department of Energy or at—for a governor or for a senator, there are two things that come with a job like that. Number one, you're almost always in communication with the person at the very top, the senior person. And number two, you're generally dealing with the press, news organizations and—and—and consequently dealing with whatever hot issues are—you know, are of interest to the press at the time.

So it's very interesting. It's very exciting. You're sort of all—you're involved in the mix of—of sort of breaking news and—and interesting developments and controversies. And also, if you're in the—in the public sector, you're involved in some—some top of mind public policy issues.

So I—that's—that's what draw me. Plus I—plus I'm kind of a news junkie. I love to news. I love to—I love to watch news on TV. I love to read the newspapers. And I like to write. So it—it was all very interesting to me.

STEINBERG: Great.

So bringing it back kind of full circle, when you came back from Vietnam and throughout the rest of your life, what has your connection to Dartmouth and your Dartmouth friends been? Did your—did your friends serve, and if so, like, how did your service kind of shape your relationship with them and the college?

HAYES: Well, a lot of my classmates served, but I'd say ninety-five percent of them who served, I didn't know it at the time because we had all gone our separate ways. And I just came from my fiftieth reunion in Hanover in June and ran—talked to a number of buddies, and we all said—oh, we found out

we were—we were both in Vietnam, but neither one of us knew it until four months ago. [Both chuckle.]

There were a couple of Dartmouth guys, though, that I did connect with, one a very good friend, classmate, who was—he was not in Vietnam; he was in Hong Kong, teaching. And I—he and I connected when I went to Hong Kong.

Another guy, [Daniel K.] "Dan" Corbett, who was Class of '65, was in swift boats at the same time I was, and we saw each other over there.

STEINBERG: So is the Vietnam War—you said that you were talking about it with someone you met four months ago. Is that still an experience that shapes the Dartmouth Class of '66 even today?

HAYES: Oh, I'm sure it does. I would be—I would not be loathe to try to explain how it shapes us or what—what influences it is. But it was a part of all of our lives, whether we went there or not. That was a big, big part of American life in the 1960s and early seventies. So—go ahead.

STEINBERG: Well, so I was going to say: So a lot of your Dartmouth friends served. And what about your buddies from the Navy and the military? When you came back, have you stayed in touch with them? Is it easier to talk to them because they experienced exactly what you experienced?

HAYES: Yes, it is easier. I think I'm only in touch with maybe—probably the—I could probably count on one hand the guys that I served with that I'm in touch with. The fellow in—on the ship that I was telling you about that volunteered for Vietnam and—he was instrumental in getting—motivating me. He lives in Prescott, Arizona, and we stay in touch. I was out there a year ago, and so he and I stay in touch. There's another guy in New Hampshire, up at—oh, some little town—town near [Lake] Winnipesauke, and—anyway, there are a few of them.

STEINBERG: And so just over all, just kind of wrapping up, would you say that the Vietnam War is still pretty actively in your conscious [sic] today when you think about your world view, your political views and things like that?

HAYES: Yes. Yes and no. I mean, I don't—I don't think—you know, there are lots and lots of days that go by where it doesn't—I don't even think about Vietnam. It's not like it's on my mind all the time.

It does shape my view, though. I tend to—I'm generally sort of on the conservative side of the political spectrum when it comes to certain things, but—but I parted company—I mean emotionally parted company with—with President [George W.] Bush over his invasion of Iraq, I think specifically in light of my experience in Vietnam. I thought that—I thought Vietnam was ill advised, and I thought the invasion of Iraq was a terrible, terrible mistake. I think a lot of times that people that are more cautious about going into overseas ventures are those like [U.S. Secretary of State] Colin [L.] Powell and others who have been in the military and seen it and people that are—tend to be trigger happy, like [U.S. Vice President Richard B.] "Dick" Cheney, for example, never served.

STEINBERG: Yeah. That's really interesting, because I know that that's kind of a common theme throughout a few people that we've interviewed. And so when that was going on, did you feel, again, kind of in the minority around 2001, 2002 for having had this really formative experience that was shaping your current political views?

HAYES: Yeah, a little bit. I hadn't quite thought of it that—the way you just framed it, but I think, yeah, there's part of me that did feel like I was in the minority.

STEINBERG: So great. Over all, is there—is there anything else that you would like to share with me about Vietnam, about Dartmouth, about your post-Vietnam life, really anything you would want to be included in the project?

HAYES: Well, first of all, I just—I applaud you and everyone else that's involved in this project. I think it's a wonderful, wonderful thing you're doing. You know, Dartmouth—Dartmouth and Vietnam—my time in Vietnam are maybe, I guess, probably two of the—two of the most important drivers in—in what has—what has shaped me. Vietnam at-Dartmouth was kind of an unalloyed positive. I mean, it was

just—I just feel so grateful that I went to Dartmouth, that I got that education and had that whole experience.

Vietnam was—it was obviously a different kind of experience, but—but actually one I'm not sure I would want to have missed. I think I—I grew a lot as an individual, and I learned a lot, and I'm—I'm hopeful that—that as a country, we can keep the lessons of—of—of that whole saga in mind and, as a country, learn—learn from it.

So I guess maybe that's—that's where I would want to leave it.

STEINBERG: Yeah. I think that's a great place to end.

[End of interview.]