Ward Hindman ’65, Thayer ’68
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
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[DAVID J.]

MANNES: Today is May 25, 2016. My name is David Mannes, and I am here on a phone interview with Mr. Ward Hindman. And how are you today?

HINDMAN: I am fine.

MANNES: Wonderful. So I’d just like to start this interview off by going back to the beginning and actually a little bit before the beginning. I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about your parents: where they’re from, what their backgrounds are.

HINDMAN: Well, my parents were both from Illinois. Both went to high school and Champaign, Illinois, and attended the University of Illinois, although my mother is several years younger than my dad. They knew each other from childhood. My dad was a doctor. My mother was a homemaker until I was in my teens, and then she went to work for Macy’s and eventually became an executive for Macy’s.

My parents were divorced when I was 14. I don’t know how much information you need about that.

So my grandparents (my mother’s parents, my father’s parents) lived across the street from each other in Michigan when I was a child, and I spent my summers roaming the woods and lakes of Michigan as a young—as a boy.

One of the critical parts of my past was when—when I was 11, my parents took me to Switzerland and put me in boarding school, so just at the time that the country of Vietnam was divided in the north and south—that was the summer of 1954. Just months after that, I arrived in Switzerland, just a few miles away, at—I was at Lutry, where, of course, the—the accords that divided Vietnam was in Geneva. So that year that I spent in Europe was a critical

year in terms of my—the way I look at the world and in terms of Vietnam.

You know, the—the critical thing was—you know, I remember arriving in Switzerland and seeing men running around in uniform with their backpack and their gun, and I said, "Mom, what's going on?" You know, I thought the war was over, because we had just been through Germany and seen all of the bombs and, you know, the destroyed cities, which had a tremendous impact upon me. And then here I'm seeing Switzerland, which was totally untouched by the war, because every man was a soldier.

MANNES: Mmm. Yeah.

HINDMAN: So that—that was critical to my feeling that I would go into the military and I would do whatever I could to defend my country.

MANNES: Did your—did your father serve in World War II?

HINDMAN: My father was a doctor on a ship hauling soldiers back and forth across the Pacific [Ocean].

MANNES: Okay. So—

HINDMAN: He—

MANNES: Oh, continue. Sorry.

HINDMAN: No, go ahead. Go ahead.

MANNES: No, no, go ahead. I—

HINDMAN: No, I was just going to say when—when they were getting ready to invade the country of Japan, my father was slated to be on the first wave with—he had—he had his orders: you know, set up a triage station on the beach. Well, you know, everybody knows that if you stay on the beach for more than a few minutes, you're going to get shot. So this is basically a—a death warrant for him and—and his corpsmen. He had a whole team of corpsmen under him. And so when [President] Harry [S.] Truman authorized them to drop the bomb, he saved my dad's life.

MANNES: Yeah.

So I guess that brings us to your childhood. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

HINDMAN: Yeah, I was born in Kings County [Brooklyn, New York], which nobody seems to know about. It's—it's the southern tip of—of the—I should say the southwestern tip of Long Island [New York]. So there is—there is Kings County, Queens County, Manhattan, Staten Island, the Bronx. Those are the five boroughs of New York [City]. Everybody forgets about Kings County, but it's right down there at the very southern tip, southwestern tip.

So I was born there and raised in Great Neck [Long Island, New York] and mostly in Manhasset [Long Island, New York]. We eventually moved to Munsey Park [Long Island, New York], which is one of *the* most sought-after, affluent, you know, name it, upper-crust—the top one-tenth of one percent [chuckles] is who lives there now. When we lived there, it was just regular people.

MANNES: What's it called again? I'm sorry, I didn't catch the name.

HINDMAN: Munsey Park, M-u-n-s-e-y.

MANNES: Munsey, Munsey Park, got you. And so what was the neighborhood like growing up, then, from a I guess when you were born through Munsey Park? You said it was—it's now affluent, you said, but back then it wasn't? It was working class?

HINDMAN: Well, you know,—no, I wouldn't call it working class, but, you know, when I was a child, you know, a little child, my dad was an intern, and then he was a resident, and then he was starting his own practice. We—there were five of us in a two-bedroom apartment. You know, I remember my mother struggling with the budget. You know, she bought day-old fish, day-old bread, day-old—you know, stale whatever. Whatever was on sale, that's what we got to eat. So, you know, I—I'm very familiar with, you know, the struggles of—of people that don't have enough money.

I remember my dad remarking bitterly that just when we finally had things under control, where we had some money in the bank and—you know, we didn't have terrible financial problems. That's when my mother left to go pursue her career in New York. So, you know, I—I—you know, I have memories of a working class type life up until the time I was, you know, 10 or so. Well, yeah, sometime around there.

And then after that, we were well to do. My dad was a doctor, but, you know, he—he was a baby doctor. He loved delivering babies, and, you know, the families that, you know, went to him to deliver their babies were young families that had a lot of money, so it was not—you know, he didn't have a real wealthy practice. He wasn't one of these fancy doctors that has a lot of—you know, a lot of money.

MANNES: Right.

HINDMAN: But we were comfortable. You know, and we were comfortable enough that they could afford for me to go to college—go to boarding school in Europe. And then, after my mother left, and, you know, things got very uncomfortable at home, I was sent to boarding school in [New] Jersey. And my dad [chuckles]—my dad said that a year of boarding school in New Jersey cost him less than my year of boarding school in Switzerland plus all the traveling around that he and my mother did, because my mother brought me over, dropped me off, and then she toured Europe. My dad came and picked me up. He and his mother went—he toured Europe and picked me up. So both of them got to see Europe, a lot more of it than I did [chuckles], even though I spent a year there.

MANNES: Yeah. [Chuckles.]

What was the rest of the neighborhood like, the people that you lived around, back on Long Island?

HINDMAN: [Sighs.] You know, they were well-to-do—you know, as a child you don't really know what your—your peers' parents do. You know, everybody was comfortable. You know, pretty much people had reasonably new cars, not a brand-new car every year but, you know, nice cars, certainly not European cars. We were one of the only ones. We—my dad had a

series of—he had an MG, and he had an Austin-Healey. Most people just had, you know, Buicks and—and not even a lot of Cadillacs. So, you know, I'm not sure how to explain [chuckles]—

MANNES: Yeah, no. But you were mostly living around families that were pretty similar to yours, though.

HINDMAN: Absolutely, yes, yeah. But that—that was one of the—the things about Munsey Park. Munsey Park was extremely exclusive. There were only two realtors that could sell houses, and, you know, there were—there were no minorities. I remember my mother being incredibly horrified when a couple moved in across the street from us that were Catholic. There were—there were no—no Jews, no blacks, no Hispanics—you know, none of that. And you know, mostly it was WASPs [White Anglo-Saxon Protestants]. I mean, that was—that was—you know, they were all WASPs. Having a Catholic in the neighborhood was a big deal.

MANNES: Yeah.

And so you mentioned briefly the boarding school in New Jersey and the—in Switzerland as well, but what schools did you attend before that, growing up?

HINDMAN: Well, elementary school was Munsey Park Elementary School followed by the Manhasset High School, Junior High School, and then seventh, eighth and ninth at Manhasset Junior High, High School [Manhasset Secondary School], and then Peddie [School]. So the—the year that I spent in Switzerland was—was an extra year. My—my parents initially started me in—in—in kindergarten when I was four, and that kind of turned out to be not such a good thing because not only was I the smallest kid in class, I was very immature, and that was—that was the reason for sending me to Switzerland, was to try to give me a chance to grow up. There would be people who would say I was never grown up. [Both chuckle.] But that's kind of just in fun.

MANNES: Yeah. Can you tell me a little bit about actually going to school in Switzerland?

HINDMAN: Well, I—I don't know what to tell you. It was a boarding school. The school started with kids at my age, 11, and went all the way up to baccalaureate, so we had, you know, three or four kids at each age all the way up to 21. We had kids in the school from France, Germany. There were two boys who were cousins of the shah of Iran. We had, I don't know, kids from many different countries.

MANNES: Right. And what events—you said, again, Switzerland kind of shaped your childhood, but what other events shaped your childhood growing up?

HINDMAN: Hmm. Well, you know, I don't know, it's hard to—hard to say. Like I said, I was—I was always the smallest kid. I very early on wound up with a chip on my shoulder because people picked on me, and, you know, that's one of those things that I think is kind of a self-fulfilling—that you get picked on because you have a chip on your shoulder, and you have a chip on your shoulder because you're picked on, and so I probably was in—in a fight on the playground at least once a week—you know, a lot of times once a day. I, you know, was constantly fighting to, you know, get myself off the bottom of the pecking order [chuckles], I guess.

MANNES: Yeah.

HINDMAN: So that's—that's a—that's a important part of my—my psychology, I guess. I've always been very competitive.

MANNES: Yeah.

And what was it like growing up in the Cold War, under the Cold War? Kind of in the heat of it, too.

HINDMAN: Yeah. Well, okay, remember we're basically in sight of New York City, okay? So the—you know, we—we had the duck-and-cover drills all the time—you know, we had—the [unintelligible; 16:03] would yell, "Duck and cover," and you scrambled to get under your—under your table. If a nuke went off over New York City, you know, the blast certainly would blow out all the windows in a classroom. You know, I remember the four years that I was at Munsey Park, my classroom always faced west, so, you know, if there was—if there was nuke, it would be the bright flash and then, you

know, the shattering glass and everything catching fire. [Chuckles.] You know, you—you've seen [*The*] *Terminator* and *Judgment Day*—

MANNES: Yeah.

HINDMAN: —you know, all that stuff. You know, that's—that's all we grew up with. We grew up with worrying about that. You know, we grew up with—you know, if there was advance warning of an attack, we all went out and sat in the hallway with our heads between our knees. We practiced that all the time. So, you know, the threat of nuclear devastation was [a] very conscious part of our childhood.

MANNES: Yeah.

And so you mentioned briefly—you mentioned briefly that—that you saw, like, the—the Vietnam accords sort of happening around Switzerland, but did the—

HINDMAN: You know, I—I may have said that in the wrong way. I was totally unaware of the Geneva Accords [Geneva Agreements of 1954].

MANNES: Right, in retrospect, in retrospect.

HINDMAN: It was only in retrospect that I realized the—you know, the—the coincidence that—you know, the relative closeness in time of those events.

MANNES: Was this something that was discussed, like, within your family, be it the- what was happening in Vietnam or the Cold War?

HINDMAN: No, I don't think so. Let me—I'll mention one other thing from school that—that I do remember, is at that time, we had a kids' magazine called *My Weekly Reader*, and, you know, it was kind of a little, I don't know, like, a four-page magazine that—that we got in school. And I have very clear memories of reading about [the Battle of] Điện Biên Phủ and about, you know, the French being mired in the mud, fighting these Vietnamese Viet Cong. So I was kind of vaguely aware of Vietnam from, you know, I don't know, fourth or fifth grade at the latest.

MANNES: Mmm.

So outside of school, though, was this something that you would discu- —you said it wasn't really maybe discussed as much, but did your parents have strong opinions? Do your think their opinions sort of added to yours or shaped you?

HINDMAN: I don't believe so. I don't—I don't remember ever it being discussed at home.

MANNES: Yeah.

Did—how about—was military service ever discussed at home? Was that something that you thought about from an early age?

HINDMAN: I—I was airplane crazy from, you know, as far back as I can remember. My father brought home with him from—from the war recognition journals. The recognition journals—they—they looked like *LIFE* magazines, which probably doesn't mean anything to you because *LIFE* magazine doesn't exist anymore, but to me they looked like they were published by *LIFE* magazine. And they were divided—there was the offense and the defense half. There was—you know, half that was devoted to the Allies, and half that was devoted to the Axis. In each of those halves, half was aviation and half was [U.S.] Navy. And so they would cover one or two new Allied fighter planes or a fighter plane and a bomber plane. They would cover, you know, one or—you know, a couple of new ships, new classes of ships or, you know, upgrades to existing ships. And the same with—with—you know, they would cover a German fighter and a—and a Japanese fighter.

And my dad had those in the attic, and I would climb up in the attic, and that was literally climbing because there were no stairs to the attack; you had to climb. I would go up in the attic and spend hours studying those. I knew all the airplanes. I could—I could look at an airplane and tell you, "Oh, that's a B-52E [Boeing E-52E Stratofortress] because" so and so and so. Or "It's a—it's a B-52G [Boeing B-52G Stratofortress because it's got the chin turret and it's got this and it's got that." And I knew how many horsepower and

how many bullets, and I knew, you know, the facts for all of our airplanes. I—you know, I had assumed I was going to be a pilot from those very early ages, that I was, you know, going to be in the military and I was going to be a pilot.

MANNES: Was this—how did your parents feel about that, or was that not something you expressed to them?

HINDMAN: You know, I don't—I don't remember ever spelling it out for them, but I think they were probably aware. I don't know, we didn't—we didn't talk about that.

MANNES: So besides—besides [chuckles] going up in the attic, I guess, what else were you doing outside of school? Were you in sports or other extracurriculars?

HINDMAN: Yeah, I—I played—I played baseball. The thing that is shocking [chuckles] to a lot of people, when—when they know that I'm from New York, to say I was on the rifle team. You know, I was on the rifle team from the time I was 12. You know, the fact that a New York—you know, granted, Nassau County but still New York—high school had a rifle team that allowed young children to be shooting [chuckles] is shocking to people [chuckles], but—but that's the way it was. You know, that was—that was one of my favorite activities.

And, you know, just generally playing a lot. You know, we—the difference between the freedom of children today and when I was a child is immense. You know, when we were kids—you know, once you got a bicycle, hey, you were gone, man. You know, I—I roamed over an area of four or five towns, and, you know, nobody thought anything of it. You know, you got on your bicycle and you went places, and, you know—you know, go down to the shore and go fishing or just go ride around.

And so, you know, it's—today, even—even—even 40 years ago or 30 years ago, when my daughter was a child, she—she would never have been allowed to do that, you know? She was allowed to ride her bicycle up and down the sidewalk in front of our house, and that was it. You know, she couldn't just take off on her own. Even—even boys didn't get to do that. And it's, you know, the same now, I believe. Children aren't totally free anymore.

MANNES: Yeah.

So that brings us now to, I guess—to Dartmouth. So you're in high school, and how did you decide to go from Long Island to the middle of nowhere here in New Hampshire?

HINDMAN: Well, I think the first time that I heard about Dartmouth was my mother—you know, when I came back from Switzerland and, you know, I was just, you know, ga-ga over skiing—I learned to ski in Switzerland and loved it. And, you know, at one point my mother said something about, "Oh, well, you know, if you—if you really like to ski, Dartmouth College is a big ski school, and it's—you know, it's an Ivy [League] school, so it's [a] pretty good school." And I think that that's what initially planted the seed of interest in that I paid a lot of attention to Dartmouth.

But, you know, it wasn't my only choice. You know, I was looking at—at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], and I looked at, you know, a number of different schools. The summer of my soph- —my junior year, my dad drove me to New England to go look at schools. And, you know, it took me an hour to find a parking place in Boston, so that didn't seem real interesting to me. [Chuckles.] You know, some other places that I went to were nice, but we—we drove into—into Hanover, and I got a look at Dartmouth, and I went, "Oh, [chuckles; unintelligible; 26:30]. I don't need to see anything else. I've made up my mind."

And, you know, I was fortunate enough to get Early Decision, so I didn't go through all of the angst that the kids go through that have to wait to hear for where they got in.

MANNES: Right. So what were your impressions, then, when you finally came here as a student?

HINDMAN: Well, you know, I—I loved it from the beginning. I—I did have a problem with alcohol. I wound up my—my sophomore year—I was taking a course in partial differential equations, which was just killing me [chuckles], and I thought I was flunking out [chuckles], and I had a crisis of faith, and, you know, just everything seemed to crash in on me all at once, and, you know, so I went in the dean's office and said I

wanted to temporarily leave school. And there's a [holding on? 27:54] process. I don't know if you're aware, but—so I went through this [holding on? 27:59] process, and in the very last thing before you're out the door is [an] interview with the dean.

So, you know, we're sitting there, and we chatted, and then finally he says, "Well, okay, Ward, you know, when—when you're ready to come back, just let me know." He says, "You're in the top 16 percent of your class, so there's not going to be a problem of—you know, whenever you want to come back, you can come back."

And [chuckles] at that point, I'm, well, like, *Oh, crap! I thought I was flunking out! I'm in the top 16 percent?* [Laughs.] At that point, I said, "Well, yeah, I wish I could stay, but I've already signed all the paperwork." [Chuckles.] So I went back to—I went back to New York, and I got a job, and I went to Columbia [University] night school, just to keep my brain operating.

One of the things that we haven't talked about yet is every summer while I was at Dartmouth, I worked at Grumman Aircraft [Engineering] Corporation, building airplanes, so, you know, when I say airplanes have been my life, you know, from—from climbing up in the attic all the way till today, just about everything I have done in some way are related to aerospace.

MANNES: So you knew when you came to Dartmouth that engineering was something you were going to do.

HINDMAN: Yeah. Yeah, I did.

MANNES: Yeah. So when you got here, you joined the [U.S.] Air Force ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps]? Is that correct?

HINDMAN: Yep.

MANNES: Can you talk to me a little bit about what you did during that, how you got involved in what you were doing on that daily or so basis?

HINDMAN: Well, you know, once—once you're in ROTC, of course, there's weekly drills, so you get out on the—you know, back in those days, everybody was out on the [Dartmouth] Green Wednesday afternoons. You know, the [U.S.] Army took up half of the Green or around maybe more than half of the Green. You know, the Navy took a big chunk, and then there's this little [U.S.] Air Force thingie-dingie of, you know, a little more than a hundred guys; that's all the Air Force was.

And, you know, we had to take electives in aerospace science, so a lot of—a lot of the electives that—you know, courses that other people were able to take, I was taking target recognition and navigation and, you know, history, military history, stuff like that.

And, you know, so they—they gave us training in—in how—how a unit works. You know, things like, okay, somebody's got to publish the orders, which in those days meant typing up a mimeographed sheet, and if you have any idea what mimeograph is, it—it was a huge amount of work [chuckles], and you wound up, you know, with blue ink all over your hands.

And, you know, I guess I did—I did pretty well, you know, in all the different courses and the staff work so that my senior year I was cadet commander, which was a little awkward at times because I was also doing theater. My—my senior year, we did *Once Upon a Mattress*, and we did it twice. We did it once for Winter Carnival, and then we did it again for—for reunions. And we needed to have—you know, we needed—the hair needed to look like you're—you know, at the time of King Arthur, so we had long hair. So here I am, the cadet commander [chuckles], with long hair.

MANNES: [Chuckles.] Yeah.

HINDMAN: I was, you know, captain of the Air Force rifle team. I was on the Dartmouth varsity rifle team. For a while, I was on the drill team for the Air Force, but that—you know, it just took up too much time. I was—too many other things.

MANNES: Yeah. What—what was this experience like as a college student? Like, did it affect your relationships with people outside of ROTC? How did other people see ROTC?

HINDMAN: Okay, the—the—the times, you know, gradually changed. When—when I first got to Dartmouth, ROTC was looked upon fairly favorably. As—as the years went by, it became less popular. My junior year, the Air Force did away with the full program—you know, so that they—they no longer brought in any freshmen and sophomores. You went straight to the—to the senior program. And when they did that, a lot of the juniors and seniors quit because, you know, now there's nobody for them to practice command on. So when—when we finally or when I finally graduated and—and got my commission, if I remember correctly, there were only six of us that were left in my class.

MANNES: Mmm.

HINDMAN: So—now, the other—the other ROTCs, the Army and the Navy—they—they remained fairly large and did not cut their—their freshman and sophomore program. And in fact, my—my cohort, if you want to call it that, were almost exclusively ROTC members. My pretty much constant companion was another engineer who lived in my dormitory, and he was in Army ROTC, and, you know, the two of us—it—it became pretty obvious that, you know, the—the attitude of the college was changing.

I'll give you an example. Everybody knows when they heard that [President] John F. Kennedy had been shot and, you know, we, of course—I'm sure you're way too young, but maybe your parents would—would remember. You know, it was a common thing to ask: Well, where were you when you find out? What were you doing when you heard that Kennedy had been shot?

Well, I was down in the—in a laboratory at the engineering school, building a machine gun. George [D. Detlefsen, Class of 1966, Thayer 1967] and I had—you know, we—we had a—an assignment from a—an engineering class to build a working model of something, and, you know, George said, "Well, that sounds like—like a machine gun." And, you know, I agreed with him, and so we decided to be lab partners and

build a machine gun together. And, you know, we would—you know, when it was time to practice this thing, which we never shot at full auto—you know, it was always hand loading one at a time, but, you know, proving that the mechanism worked.

You know, we had to go out to—to gravel pits to be able to shoot it safely because we couldn't shoot it in, you know, the rifle range, which at that time was under the front steps of the Memorial Gym [sic; Memorial Field]—so, you know, here we are, walking across campus with a machine gun over our shoulder, one or the other of us, and George always dressed in fatigues and boots, and he was a very tall guy, so we really stood out. I mean, we talk about Mutt and Jeff [chuckles], you know, here he was, a six-foot-something guy, you know, and—you know, today nobody would even look twice, you know, at a couple of guys wearing fatigues. But at that time, you know, all of a sudden, it—people—people stared. You know, they didn't like it. But—

MANNES: [unintelligible; 37:46]. I'm sorry.

HINDMAN: The other guy—you know, like,—you know, typically some of us would get together, you know, on Wednesday afternoon, Wednesday evening, have a few beers. And the crowd—you know, that—that group that did that, there was—I was Air Force, George was Army, we had a couple of Navy guys, a couple of other engineers and civics students. It was—it wasn't all military, but it was mostly military that—that I hung out with.

MANNES: George was the Army ROTC friend.

HINDMAN: Right.

MANNES: You were friends, right?

HINDMAN: Yeah.

MANNES: What's his last name?

HINDMAN: His name is Detlefsen, and for reasons that I'm not going to go into in this interview, he wound up not getting his commission in the Army, but he—he was a computer geek

back before the word was ever created. Even as a—as a graduate student at Dartmouth, he was being hired by GE [General Electric] once in a while at a hundred dollars a day, which—at that time a hundred dollars a day was a princely salary. [Chuckles.] That was amazing.

MANNES: Yeah. And do you feel—and you said this really changed over time, the—like, the staring at the ROTC—at the cadets. That was something that you really noticed had changed over your Dartmouth experience.

HINDMAN: Yeah, yeah, because—remember, my Dartmouth experience stretched over, you know, almost seven years because it was ’61 when I matriculated. I didn’t graduate from engineering school until ’68, so that time period, you know, was a—an immense upheaval for our country.

MANNES: Right. How much did Vietnam factor into your life at all? Was that something you thought about often? Was it something that was discussed around campus often?

HINDMAN: You know, I don’t have a lot of memories of discussing it, but you know, it was—you know, it was always there. You know, we knew, you know, that we were going to graduate from college and go into the military. You know, when—when I volunteered for ROTC in 1961, you know, the war in Vietnam was not that big of a deal. You know, over the years, it grew and grew and grew, and, you know, so it—it was always there in our awareness at—you know. And it’s—it’s one of the things—you know, and I—I kind of—kind of regret to have to admit that I didn’t put my real effort—you know, my full effort into my studies at Thayer School [of Engineering] because I knew I wasn’t going to be looking for an engineering job when I left Dartmouth; I was going into the military, and I was going to be a pilot. And, you know, that was going to be the—you know, at least six years, the first six years of my—my life. So, you know, the—the war in Vietnam was very much part of my planning and awareness.

I had a girlfriend that I really cared about and, you know, was expecting to marry, and when we started talking about, you know, well, when are we going to get married, you know, my thing to her was, well, I’m not going go to war and leave behind a wife and maybe a child, and if something happens

to me, for them not to know—you know, for them to not know am I a POW [prisoner of war], am I dead—you know, am I going to come back horribly mutilated? I'm not gonna do that. I'm not going to get married until I'm home safe.

And, you know, we started counting the years—you know, I got to finish Dartmouth, I got to finish Thayer School, I got to go to pilot training, I got to go to [RTU? 42:42] training, I got to spend at least a year in Vietnam. Yeah, she said—she said, "Yeah, okay, good-bye." [Chuckles.] I mean, not quite that cold, but—but in effect that's what it was. You know, she recognized that hey, it was going to be, you know, five or six years before I was ready to be married, and she wasn't going to wait that long. So—so the Vietnam War had very, very specific effects upon my life.

MANNES: And were you worried as it steadily creeps—as the U.S. presence steadily creeps further and further and increased over the years you were at Dartmouth?

HINDMAN: [No immediate response.]

MANNES: For yourself. Were you worried about necessarily your involvement?

HINDMAN: Well, you know, you—you have to remember that, you know—and you're—you know, I'm—I'm assuming you're—you're still a Dartmouth student. Do you not still have this feeling of—of invulnerability? You know—you know, I raced cars. I raced—you know, raced go-carts—you know, 80 miles an hour with your butt one inch off the ground. I've done mountain climbing—you know, deep winter—you know, way, way out back—in the back and beyond and hiking in the winter. Back in those days, you know, there's—there's no snowmobiles that are going to come and get you. There's no—you know, helicopters that can go up in the mountains and get you back in those days. And, of course, there's no cell phones, no radios. If you run into trouble out there, you know, you're going to die if you can't get yourself out of it.

So that's the kind of stuff that I did, you know, for—worrying about somebody shooting at me? Hell, I'll shoot him back. [Laughs.] I just—it just didn't occur to me to be worried about

getting hurt. You know, I mean, realistically, yeah, to have to plan, but, *Nah, nah, it's not gonna happen to me.*

MANNES: That's interesting because you were saying how you were discussing with your girlfriend about, like, what might happen if you go to Vietnam—

HINDMAN: Well, but—

MANNES: —and you still [cross-talk; unintelligible; 45:09].

HINDMAN: But hat's—that's—yeah, that's the difference between—you know, like I said, realistically you know that things can happen. You—you have make realistic plans. But, you know, on the other hand, your heart says, *Nah, not gonna happen to me*.

MANNES: Right. Yeah. Well, you just touched on briefly a few things. So what—you mentioned that you liked to go to the outdoors. You raced go-carts, and before, you mentioned you did theater. So you need to talk to me a little bit about your life, I guess, outside of academics and outside of ROTC?

HINDMAN: Yeah. Well, I dated. Not a lot. I—you know, I was in engineering school, so there's—you know, you got—everybody else is taking three courses. You know, as an engineer, you're probably taking the equivalent of five because you've got your classroom work and your lab work. You know, the courses at Thayer were pretty tough. So, you know, there wasn't a whole lot of time for other stuff.

My—my freshman year, I was—I tried to be in everything. You know, I was in the [Dartmouth] Glee Club, I was on the soccer team, rifle team, squash in the winter. You know, I was—I can't remember what all—the French Club, [*The*] *Dartmouth* and the *Aegis*—you know, a photographer, so I went to everything and took pictures of everything. And then, you know, gradually, over the years, I pared all that down to where it was, you know, drinking with the guys on Wednesday night and, you know, being in shows. I was in, like I said, *Once Upon a Mattress* twice. I was in the opera, *Faust*. I was in—what do you call it?—*Oliver!* And there were a couple of other shows that I worked back stage.

And the racing. That was mostly summer activities at home on Long Island. My—my family was into the rally scene. I was doing rallies as a worker, supporting rallies from the time I was, like, 12 all the way up through, you know, running rallies. My sister and I were in—in the [International] MG 1000 [Rally] and won our class. The guy that my mother married, who is now 105—he was rally master for many, many of these—the International MG 1000 Rallies. And, you know, that's where my mother knew him from. and so we—you know, we—we ran those rallies. And when I was a Dartmouth, there were a couple of times that there were rallies that I got to go on, but I didn't get to do a lot of that.

MANNES: Mmm.

So before we move on to—I wanted to talk a bit about your experience at Thayer, but were there any other moments besides—besides, I guess, your decision to leave Dartmouth and then come back? And you can touch back on then again if you want to, but any other moments that really stood out?

HINDMAN: From my years at Dartmouth?

MANNES: Yeah, for undergraduate years.

HINDMAN: Ahh! Wow! David! [Laughs.]

MANNES: [Chuckles.]

HINDMAN: You know, it's—it's—you know, trying to—trying to pick things that stood out—you know,—

MANNES: What do you think shaped later decisions?

HINDMAN: —I—I remember—what's that?

MANNES: Oh, continue. I'm sorry.

HINDMAN: You know, I'll—I'll—I'll give an example of—of a class that I took that I found really exciting. The—well, you know, the number—the first course that you take when you take—when you go to engineering school is this class where they—they give you a—a real-world problem, and they break

you up into teams, and they say, you know, “You need to do something about, you know, fixing this.” So since—if I had two different sophomore years [chuckles], two different fall terms sophomore years, the first one that we did, our team tried to develop a self-propelled bicycle. And that was—that was very interesting.

The second time I did that course, we were doing [brackish? 50:54] water conversion, and the team that I was on—you know, we—we really busted out butts. You know, there was—there was a time period there of—of four days where we worked just non-stop on putting together our model, and, you know, I got a couple of hours sleep during that entire time. So there’s, like, three nights where, you know, I may have gotten two or three hours sleep and one night where I didn’t get any.

In the middle of that, I drove to Boston, you know, tires screeching all the way, because that’s back before there was a nice road to Boston. It was all two-lane blacktop through the woods. Well, not all of it but a lot of it. And so I had to go pick up a part for a model, and so we—we built a working model of a [unintelligible; 51:57] water conversion, and we won. And several of the guys that were on that team—when they graduated, they, you know, patented it and went to work, and they’re—you know, they built a big multinational company out of that.

But the one that’s much—somehow a way smaller thing but somehow really ignited me was a project that we did called Twinning in Alpha Brass. And we—we got to make these little round pieces of—of brass, and we had to polish them—you know, cut them and polish them very, very carefully so we could take pictures of the crystal structure, using an electron microscope. And then—then we put them in the—the pressure machine. And right now I can’t remember if we squashed them or pulled them apart, but we—we stressed them. We strained them to where they pulled and stretched, and then we cut them and—and examined them again under the electron microscope and showed the difference of what—what happens when—when brass is forced to stretch. And, you know, so we got to use the electron microscope, and we got to use all these other tools, and, you know, it’s just one of my memories of Thayer School that was just, you

know, a lot of fun—you know, just really interesting and fun. So that's—that's one of the things that, you know, for some reason really stands out.

You know, the different shows that I was in—those stand out.

Then there was one day where it was—I'm guessing it was my—well, actually, now—now that—now that I think about it, it was graduate school, so I don't know if want to cover this now, but I'm going to—kind of—you can [cross-talk; unintelligible; 54:11] for later.

MANNES: Yeah.

HINDMAN: I had—I had a brand-new car. My dad had given me a [Chevrolet] Corvair for—for graduation. And so it was—I think it was a Saturday night, Saturday afternoon. The freshmen had had their first football game. It was back when we had two different teams: a freshman team and a—and a—actually, there were three teams. There was the freshman team, the junior varsity and a varsity. And the freshmen had won their game, and I don't remember how, but I wound up hooking up with three freshmen from the football team, and—you know, because I guess I posted something and said I was going to drive down to Skidmore [College] to see some girl. And so I—you know, these guys said they wanted a ride. So I gave them a ride.

And, you know, we went down there, and back in those days you couldn't go in a girl's dorm. You know, you—there—they had a front sitting room, where you could sit and talk to a girl for a little while, and that was it, you know? [Chuckles.] And if you couldn't get her to leave with you, then, you know, that was it. You know, you got to maybe shake hands. [Chuckles.] Yeah, it was a lot different in those days.

So anyway, so I sat and talked to this girl for a little while, and it became obvious that nothing else was going to happen, so I went back to the girls dorm, where I dropped off these three guys, and, you know, I pulled up in front of the dorm, and I look around, and—and first I didn't really see anybody, and then I realized there's three knots of people, and, you know, I kind of walk over to the first knot, and I

realized here's one of my freshmen on the ground, getting the you know what kicked out of him by four or five guys.

And, you know, these are all football-size guys. You know, I'm five-four, okay? [Chuckles.] I start grabbing these guys and throwing them out of the way. And I, you know, pulled him up, and, you know, we went to another knot and did the same thing—you know, pulled a bunch of guys off. And, you know, so I eventually got the three of them and got them into my Corvair, and, you know, they're bleeding, they're moaning, you know, and I'm going, you know, *Okay, what do I do with these guys?* You know, I didn't know what to do with them.

So I drove all the way back to Mary Hitchcock [Memorial Hospital, not Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center], to the hospital. And, of course, the hospital in those days was right there on campus. And so I remember driving over Killington Pass. I don't know if you're familiar with the road to Skidmore. I'm sure guys don't have to go there anymore because you've got girls, as opposed to not—you know, if we want a girl, we got to go looking for them. [Chuckles.]

And so that—that trip through the night with three guys bleeding all over my brand-new car [chuckles] was—that always stuck in my mind. [Chuckles.] Fortunately, it was a cheap car. It was vinyl seats, and I was able to clean it up.

MANNES: Yeah.

So at—at Thayer, what was your—what was your specialty—was it aer- —was it aeronautical engineering?

HINDMAN: Thayer School at that time did not offer any specialization. They felt that, you know, everybody needed to know something about everything. You know, if—if you—if you get hired to build a bridge—oh, bridges have—you know, you got to understand the—the materials, you got to understand how to do stress and strain. And, you know, there's going to be electronics in a bridge nowadays. You know, you—you had to understand, you know, fluids and dynamics and heat and heat transfer, electrical. You had to understand everything. There were no specialties below the level of master's degree. So, you know, you—you go four years at

Dartmouth. Three of those years are Thayer School to get a bachelor of arts in engineering science. Then you spend one more year, and you get a bachelor of engineering. One more year, you can get your master of engineering.

So for me, you know, I got my bachelor of arts in engineering science. I took my—you know, my courses for a bachelor of engineering, but at the end of my mas- —my bachelor of arts—when I finished that, that's when I got commissioned in the Air Force. So to get another year off in order to get my—my bachelor of engineering, I had to apply for a—a delay on going on active duty.

So I was in the inactive Reserve, and so at the end of my, you know, year to get my bachelor of engineering approached, I applied to the Air Force and said, "Okay, you know, I'm ready to go. Send me to pilot training." And, you know, I got a very nice letter back from them, which basically said, "Later, gator." [Chuckles.]

Because I was too stupid at the time to understand that the kids that graduate from the [U.S.] Air Force Academy—they get to go to pilot training first. And then there are other colleges that are preferred colleges. They get to go next. And then way down the road, then they start taking people like, you know, Dartmouth College.

So—so as I approached the end of that—that year to get my bachelor of engineering, I realized, *Hey, I'm not goin' in the Air Force. I'm gonna—so, you know, what am I gonna do? I might as well stay here.* And so I never finished my thesis. Well, since I wasn't finished with my thesis, I didn't graduate, so I got to stay on, taking classes, so I stayed through the summer, worked in the summer, and then I stayed and, you know, I took courses in the winter—I mean in the fall.

And then for winter term, I said to myself, *You know what? I don't trust 'em. You know, they keep saying*—you know, because I kept writing letters, and they kept saying, "Later." And, you know, I finally decided, *You know, I don't trust 'em. I'm not gonna pay for winter semester—winter term that I might not get to finish.*

So instead of—of taking classes, I buckled down. I worked on my thesis, which, of course, because I'd been working on all this time, kept growing and growing, and, you know, when—when I was done, my professor said—you know, it was very complimentary, something about that I advanced the state of the art in—in computer science, which was pretty cool to have on your thesis.

So it was February when they finally sent me a letter and said, "Okay, you know, now we're sending you into pilot training."

MANNES: Mmm. So that same year, I guess, when you're getting your—when you got your commission, there's a few big events that happen, like the Tet Offensive, the—MLK [The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.] is assassinated, RFK [Robert F. Kennedy] is assassinated, the Mỹ Lai [which he misprounounces as MY-lie, not ME-lie] massacre—some of those come later in the year, after—after you've already left Dartmouth. But can you talk a bit to me about 1968, your last year at Dartmouth? Especially regarding, like, the campus opinion of the military and ROTC, which was changing rapidly at that time.

HINDMAN: Well, actually, for '68 it was February of '68 when I went on active duty, and then I had to get special permission to leave pilot training to go—come back to Hanover to graduate in June of—of 68. And then I went back to pilot training. So 1968—you know, most of that year I was doing pilot training, which was very intense. You know, we—we would—if we were flight line in the morning and so we had to report to the flight line at, like, 4:30 or something in the morning, so we would do our flying, then have a lunch break, and then we would do our academics for the afternoon, and then the late afternoon we had PT [physical training] or, you know, parachute training or, you know, some kind of stuff like that.

And then you had to go home and study because, you know, it was a constant, constant study load. We didn't have a lot of time to be watching TV or, you know, being, you know—we were only peripherally aware of what was going on in the world. Now, you know, that may just be me. I graduated number two in my class. I missed one question on the first

exam. I never missed another question again. So, you know, I—I put my full effort into pilot training.

MANNES: Yeah.

HINDMAN: And, you know, actually I was not, you know, really paying attention to what was going on in the world. You know, I was obviously aware of the war. Most of our instructors that we had had come back from—recently come back from the war. But we didn't really talk about it. It was there, you know.

MANNES: Your instructors didn't talk about Vietnam, either, with you?

HINDMAN: Not really.

MANNES: Hmm. That's interesting. So your thoughts—so what were your thou- —you didn't think about Vietnam yourself, either? You were just busy on becoming a pilot?

HINDMAN: Yes. Yeah, I was—and, you know, the—the other thing is, my—my thought was that I was going to be a tanker pilot or a cargo pilot. You know, specially, you know, the tankers—you know, the tankers are the same as a [Boeing] 707, what the airlines are flying. In my mind, I was going to fly 707s in Vietnam and—or maybe out of Guam. And after my—after a year or two years in Southeast Asia I'd come back and—and, you know, fly the same kind of stuff here in the States for a couple, three more years, and, you know, then I'd get out and go fly for the airlines.

Then late in my—in my student time, I ran into a guy named Major Ward, who had been a 105 [Republic F-105 Thunderchief] pilot, and he—you know, he didn't really say a lot. We didn't talk about a lot. But, you know, he—you know, he—he told me—you know, I don't remember exactly what he said, but, you know, basically something to the effect of, "You'd really be wasting yourself to go fly—you know, tankers or trash haulers. You know, do something more with yourself than that." And, you know, so—and so I wound up—when I had the choice—you know, I graduated number two in my class; I had my choice of what to go apply, so I took 105s. I don't know, blame it all on Major Ward. [Chuckles.]

MANNES: Yeah. And can you—so can you explain to me what the 105 is? Because I don't come from an Air Force background.

HINDMAN: Oh, okay. [Chuckles.] All right, so in—in—in the '60s—actually, it starts—starts back in—in the late '50s, the Air Force tried to develop a whole new generation of fighter airplanes. The F-100 [North American F-100 Super Sabre] was the first supersonic fighter that could be, you know, supersonic and straight and level.

And then you had the F-101 [McDonnell F-101 Voodoo], the F-102 [Convair F-102 Delta Dagger], which was a delta wing, which is a—a departure from previous planes but an experiment. There actually was no produced F-103 [Republic XF-103]. The F-104 [Lockheed F-104 Starfighter] was a very small, maneuverable, fast jet. It was a point defense jet, you know, where it can take off, fly up and fly around the [home drone? 1:08:27], defend the [home drone? 1:07:29], but it's not going to go very far.

And then you had the 105, which was a big—you know, the 105 actually was more of a fighter bomber than a fighter. It was big. It's, you know, to this day, the biggest single-engine fighter that the free world has ever had. It was designed to carry nukes and carry—you know, go into the Soviet Union at supersonic speeds and—and deliver nukes from on the deck, right on the ground—you know, just a couple of hundred feet above ground. So it had a big bomb bay, and it had lots of—what do you call them?—wing stations that you could hang fuel tanks on.

Had a belly tank, so the idea was you took off, and as you climbed up and started burning off the gas, you punch off the tanks. You fly until you get into a bad area where they're likely to be shooting at you, and then you—by then, you should have burned off all of the fuel in your external tanks. You drop down and go screaming into the target supersonic.

So that—that airplane was designed for that role. It's actually the same role that the B-1 [Rockwell B-1 Lancer] was designed for. The B-1 was originally designed to go supersonic into, you know, the Soviet Union and drop nukes. Of course, it would carry a lot more nukes than [chuckles] a F-105.

But the F-105, in an environment where you weren't in a heavy- —heavily defended area, like, you know, the Soviet Union—the 105 could carry as much bombs as a B-17 [Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress] from World War II. It could carry up to 16 750-pound bombs. That's a lot of weight.

And, you know, it had,—for the time, it had the most advanced electronics, most advanced navigation systems. It was the biggest, baddest boy on the block. And it's what carried the weight of—of the air war against Hanoi. And eventually Hanoi got to be as bad a place as any place in the Soviet Union because they kept—the kept building SAM [surface-to-air missile] sights and—and gun sights—you know, initially it was 37 millimeter, then 57 millimeter, then 85 millimeter, and then finally 100 millimeter. You know, and 100 millimeter guns—you know, they'll reach out miles away, even before you're even close to the target to start, you know, setting off flack around you.

And then, of course, there were the SA-2s, the Guideline SAMs. And the 105s were the bomb carriers. You know, normally they were accompanied by the F-4s [McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II], which is an air-to-air fighter, which the Air Force inherited from the [U.S.] Navy, and then they had a lot of times a Navy F-4 would support the tack package too.

We would take off—you know, 16 airplanes, four flights of four, out of Takhli [Royal Thai Air Force Base] and four flights of four out of Korat [Royal Thai Air Force Base], and, you know, we'd go in in a mass attack. And first we'd take off and fly up to the—this is in Thailand—fly up to Mekong River, which is the border with Laos [which he mispronounced as LAY-ohs instead of LAH-ohs], refuel, and then from there run on up across Laos into Vietnam.

Their defenses eventually became, like I said, as intense as anything in the world except maybe around Moscow. More than half of the 105s built were shot down in Vietnam or were damaged and—and lost as a result of—of Vietnam.

By the time I got there, you know, we were no longer flying over the north. By the time I got there, it was, quote unquote,

"milk runs" because we were just bombing Laos and a little bit of Vietnam and Cambodia. That's South Vietnam and Cambodia. And most of the time, they didn't shoot at us. You know, there were—there were times that they shot at us. Sometimes it's—it's a—I don't know if it's a function of our training or it's maybe natural, but when you're right in a combat situation, you're not afraid. You don't have time to think about being afraid. At least I'm talking about myself.

Yeah, you see the stuff going off. You know, the airplane bounced around because there's stuff exploding around it. But you're concentrating on getting a job done, putting a bomb on the target, and after it's over, you go, *Damn that was bad!* [Chuckles.] But when it's happening, you—you know, that doesn't, you know, enter your mind. You're—you're thinking just about, you know, getting the tipper on the target at the right altitude, the right air speed, the right dive angle.

There is—you know, dive bombing is a—you know, it requires intense concentration, and it requires abilities that, you know, the majority of human beings don't have. You know, just like, you know, guys that can, you know, really throw a football and they can hit somebody who's running full speed 50 yards away. You know, very few people can do that. And, you know, there's not a lot of people that can do good dive bombing.

And nowadays, you don't even have to do that anymore because now you've got smart bombs. You just say, *Okay, I want the bomb to go there*, and as long as you release it somewhere in the neighborhood of—of where you need to release it, it's—you know, the bomb is smart and will—will hit the target.

MANNES: Right.

So I just find it interesting. You—you went from thinking you were going to fly, like, the kind of bigger, bulkier planes into deciding to fly one of the more dangerous planes in the Air Force. Was that something you were thinking about at the time, or you just—how—how did you go about making—I know you said you met this Major Ward, but can you go more—a little more into that?

HINDMAN: Yeah. You know, It's—if you had to pin me down and ask for a rational explanation—

MANNES: [Chuckles.]

HINDMAN: —there isn't one, you know? [Chuckles.] I—I did not build a spreadsheet and do pros and cons. You know, I do that about a lot of things. I—you know, I think things through. My wife complains that I—you know, I—I want to argue about everything and, you know, that—that—she never knows, you know, whether I'm for or against something because I'm arguing on both sides of it. I said, "Well, yeah, because I need to understand the pros and the cons."

And, you know, that decision—decision to become a fighter pilot—I can't really say I made in that rational fashion. It's—it just kind of—you know, I allowed myself, if you want to say it that way, allowed myself to be brainwashed by the overall ethos of the guys that I was with—you know, the instructor pilots—what I said: The majority of them were guys that had been fighter pilots

Another thing that I haven't mentioned is the pilot training that I went to at Sheppard Air Force Base was actually a German pilot training program. Germany has horrible weather. You know, trying—trying to find clear days when you can send just, you know, barely-learning students up to fly, because, you know, learning to fly, you've got to go solo. You've got to spend time alone in the airplane or you never mature. And, you know, there's just not enough clear days to do that kind of training in Germany, so the Germans set up a training program over here, at Sheppard Air Force Base.

Their airplanes, their P-38 [Lockheed P-38 Lightning] airplanes, T-37 [Cessna T-37 Tweet] airplanes, just like we use, but they were owned by the German air force, and they had German instructors. A lot of the instructors—a majority of the instructors were Americans. And some of the classes were all German. Our class was half and half: half American, half German.

The German boys that went to that program had already been to a pilot training in—in Germany, and only the ones

that were going to be fighter pilots came to this program over here, so the guys—the German boys that were in my class—they all knew they were going to fly the F-104. So, you know, they were predeposed [sic] to, you know, the fighter pilot attitude. And I found that, you know, I really liked the fighter pilot attitude. [Chuckles.] And I, you know—thinking about, you know, *I'm gonna go be—you know, just sit there and bore holes in the sky, you know, flying a—a transport, and I'm going to, you know, get out of the Air Force and then go do that for the rest of my life.* And I suddenly realized that I wasn't going to be happy doing that, that just sitting there, letting the airplane fly along at 35,000 feet just—you know, that wasn't going to be me. [Chuckles.]

Now, of course,—now that—now that I look back on it, I know people that have done that for their career, and they had the money to go out and buy their own little sport airplane and go out and do acrobatics and fly and go run around the country in their little sport airplane. And so, you know, sometimes question that decision. You know, *Maybe it would have been better to spend those hours just droning along* if you could build the cash to—to have an [unintelligible; 1:20:22] that you want, so—but anyway, I—I made the decision to go the fighter pilot route, and I've been a fighter pilot in my attitude ever since.

MANNES: [Chuckles.]

So when did you—so when did you finish flight school and actually go to Vietnam—or Thailand, I think you said?

HINDMAN: Yeah. Okay, so we graduated from—from pilot training in March of 2009 [sic]. Our beloved [President Dwight D.] Eisenhower passed away the day before our graduation, so our graduation was very much a subdued affair, and the big party and everything which we had all planned, you know,—the guys that had wives—men, permanent girlfriends—you know, the girls had spent, you know, a lot of money to get fancy dresses and all that other stuff, and all that went out the window because Dwight decided to pass away that day. He could have waited a couple of days, you know? [Laughs.]

But anyway, so—so then—then we all got sent off to a bunch of different schools. We went to—several of us

together went to the survival school up in Washington (that's Washington state). And, you know, we got to tramp around through the woods, learning survival techniques. And then they put us in a pretend POW camp, and they, you know, taught us some of the tricks to watch out for that might be used against us in that environment.

And we went to survival school for water survival, where, you know, they did all kinds of stuff like put you on a zip line and send you down this big long zip line and crash into the pool, and you wind up underneath a canopy, so now when you come up out of the water, you're underneath something; you're not actually out of water because this wet thing is right in your face. So they trained us on how to take care of that.

They—we had parasailing, where they had this little, like, a mini aircraft carrier, and they suited us up with a parasail and a big power boat came up and pulled us off, and we zoomed up into the sky and then did all our stuff as if we were bailed out of an airplane. Went down into the ocean and then got a lifeboat and floated around out there with the sharks.

They did—you know, we got several different training programs. I got to do a training program with the AT-33 [Lockheed AT-33 Shooting Star]. The AT-33 is basically a Korean War P-80 [Lockheed P-80 Shooting Star] with two seats, so it's a very, very old, single-engine jet plane, straight wings, big tanks out at the end of the wings. It's got 50-caliber machine guns in the wings, and it can drop bombs. But the advantage is that where the 105 drops bombs at 500 knots, the AT-33 drops bombs at 350 or something. And that difference in speed makes a huge difference.

You know, learning to—to coordinate all the different things that you have to coordinate—you know, flying at 350, you get almost twice as long to figure out what you're doing as in a 105, when you're at 500 knots. You roll off a perch in a 105 and drop [unintelligible; 1:24:55] and accelerate to 500 knots—you know, things happen just boom, boom, boom, boom and you're done. You know, if you don't know exactly what you're doing, if you don't know exactly where your eyes need to be in any split second, you're—you're not going to get the job done. And, you know, there's lots of guys in combat that crash just past the target because they get—

they're trying to get everything lined up, trying to get everything lined up, and, you know, that split second when they need to pull out passes, and when they do try to pull out, it's too late. They hit the ground.

So the AT-33 is—is a training that allows you to learn all the steps that you have to do but at a much slower pace than in the 105.

And then so I wound up—for 105 training, I went to Wichita, Kansas, which is McConnell Air Force Base. And, I don't know, right now I'm having a brain failure. I can't remember the date I arrived there. I'm thinking it was June of—of '70—no, '69. No, wait a minute. That can't be.

MANNES: That's okay. We can—if the date comes to you later, you can come back to—

HINDMAN: Yeah. Anyway, so—so the—the program—the training program for 105s is a six-month program. Really, the flying part of it, the academics and the flying could be done in three months, but I think that they stretch it out over that amount of time because it gives them more time to work on your—on your brain. You know, they—they—it's a process of brainwashing to a certain extent, to—that really allows you to face somebody shooting at you and just, you know, not let it bother you. [Chuckles.] You know, you know your job so well that—that you—that you can ignore the fact that somebody's shooting big explosive shells at you.

And it—it—and the mental training was just in the airplane. You know, it involves things just as simple as playing Ping-Pong. You know, we—we played Ping-Pong in—in the training room, and it—it was—it was for blood. [Chuckles.] You know, I mean,—

MANNES: [Chuckles.]

HINDMAN: —this is—this is not just Ping-Pong. "Oh, yeah, Ping-Pong, Ping-Pong." No, this is kill! You know, you've got to win. You got to kill them all, kill the other guy. You know, it's—it's, you know, a—it's reinforcing that attitude that I always had about, you know, pushing the envelope, pushing the en- —you know, always—always pressing. And so, yeah, so we—

In my case, I got sick at one point, and I missed a couple of weeks, and so they wound up pushing me back into a later class, so then when—when the class ahead of us, the class that I had originally been in—when they graduated, the—the, you know, the big decision makers in Washington [D.C.] had decided to close out the 105 program.

You know, I was telling you initially there was, you know, 16 airplanes from Takhli, 16 airplanes from Korat. There were two bases. Each base had three or four squadrons of airplanes. By the time I was getting ready to go over there, they lost so many 105s that they closed Korat, moved the remaining bases—the remaining airplanes to Takhli, so Takhli had four squadrons.

And then—then they finally started to realize, you know, hey, you know, the 105 is just—you know, there's—they're running out of them. You know, we just need to end the 105's involvement in Southeast Asia from the standpoint of the D's. There's two different kinds of—there's the 105D model [F-105D], which is a single-seat airplane, a 105G model [F-105G], which was a two-seater plane that had been modified with all kinds of special electronics, and it was used to—to attack the SAM sites. So that airplane—that airplane continued in service for many years afterward.

But they—they planned to close the 105s in—in 1970. So the—the guys in the class that I was in, that graduated ahead of me—when they graduated, they were told, "Gee, we're really sorry, but we're not sending new pilots to—to Thailand, so you're gonna have to find another job." So, I mean, these guys were—they were—I mean, this is incredible, horrible disappointment. You had been training for this for basically a year and a half, and then not get to do it.

MANNES: Yeah.

HINDMAN: So actually getting washed back, which—when I got washed back, I thought it was a bad thing; it turned out to be a good thing because my class—we did get assignments to—to Thailand. So I arrived in—in—at Takhli in May of 1970. And in November, they—they started closing the wing, and we

flew our airplanes back to the States, and then they decided, you know, that I—you know, we hadn't been over there long enough to get a counter. You had to spend at least nine months in Southeast Asia for it to count or you would get sent back again.

So—so they sent me back to Nakhon Phanom [Royal Thai Air Force Base], which is an outpost just right next to the Mekong River, right across from Laos. And so there, I was a computer [fack? 1:32:35]. You know, I would—they had been dropping—what do you call them?—sound sensors all up and down the Hồ Chí Minh trail, and you need to understand, the Hồ Chí Minh trail was not one trail. It's actually a huge network, dozens and dozens of little one-lane roads, you know, with—they're just roads through the jungle. I mean, there's no—there's no surface, no asphalt or concrete; it's a [fant? 1:33:09] and dirt. And, you know, these little roads wind through the—through the jungle.

And, you know, we had figured out where most of them were, and they dropped these sensors, and then that was all tied together into this thing called [Operation] Igloo White. So I was sitting there with a computer—a big computer screen in a big, bunkered building. It was actually a pretty cool way to run a war, you know, because I got on my big screen, and I can see the network of—of trails. If there's trucks moving down the trail, I can see, you know, indications that says, okay, it looks like there's three trucks in this little convoy, or a single truck, or, you know, whatever. And it gives me how fast it's moving and, you know, different information about it so you can figure out what kind of truck it is, some kind of—get information like that.

So I'm looking at that. I've got a—a technician on my right. Most of the time it was a very good-looking blond captain, and then on my left I had a radio operator, sergeant. And, you know, nothing's going on. I'm going to—you know, "Sarge, here's five bucks. Do you wanna run down and get us a pizza?"

MANNES: [Chuckles.]

HINDMAN: You know, this is the way to fight a war. [Laughs.] And, you know, sometimes, you know,—we were—we were supposed

to get fighters. Every so often, we were supposed to get a fighter and be able to coordinate and be able to—the system would forecast: Okay, this convoy looks like it'll be at this point at this time, and then we'd tell the—the airplane, the F-4s that had [unintelligible; 1:35:10]. Supposedly they had time on target capability, and, you know, we would say, "Okay, we want you to hit Point, you know, X-321 at such-and-such a time. And, you know, you'll hit the trucks."

And that almost never worked. [Chuckles.] It wasn't—it really wasn't very good. On the other hand, every once in a while we would get a Navy A-6 [Grumman A-6 Intruder], and Navy A-6s had moving target indicator radar, so they could just fly along, and we would tell them, "Okay, we've got movers in this general area." And they could fly along, and their radar would penetrate the jungle canopy and would—they could see where the trucks were, and they could drop directly on the trucks. And we could see immediately when they killed the trucks. You know, that actually worked pretty well.

So—so I worked every night and then tried to sleep in the day, and since I wasn't an air crew member, they—you know, the quarters that they had for us were like giant corn cribs. Do you have the background to know what a corn crib is?

MANNES: I'm not quite sure. [Both chuckle.]

HINDMAN: Okay, because a corn crib is—is a building that—first it looks a little odd because the walls slope outward as they go up, so the top is wider than the bottom. And the walls are made of slats to let air flow through, and so they're—they're slatted so the wind can—whatever breeze there is can go—blow through there. But the sun doesn't actually shine in except, you know, at different—at special angles. And then it's got screening so you don't get a lot of bugs.

And the—the area where Nakhon Phanom is is kind of highlands, not really high but it's high enough that it cools off in the evening, so it might be, you know, 90, 100 degrees during the day, but the evening is—is, you know, not bad so that—you know, it's not too bad to sleep.

Well, I was in, you know, air conditioning. You know, it's, like 65 degrees. We were wearing our coats in there during the night, and in the daytime it's 90 degrees. I'm trying to sleep. So that was—that was one of the more uncomfortable—

MANNES: Yeah.

MANNES: —times. You know, of course, nothing compared to the poor grunts out there sleeping in the jungle. You know, I've got all the comforts of home. I've got a little maid that takes care of my clothes and, you know, washes the clothes, puts them away and cleans the room. I would, you know, try to be nice to her in that, you know, I'm just laying there on my bunk with nothing on. I'm naked. But I would put a towel across my privates so she didn't have to see that [chuckles], but it's—sleeping was—was a little bit of a challenge.

And then while I was there, once a month, in order for me to get my combat pay, I got to fly in an OV-10 [North American Rockwell OV-10 Bronco]. Now, an OV-10 is a turboprop. It was developed specifically as a counterinsurgency airplane, so it was, you know, designed for the Vietnam environment. It's got two pilots—you know, front and back. Lots and lots of canopy space so you can, you know,—not like a jet fighter, where there's just a little canopy, you know, where the canopy rails come up to your shoulder. Here, the canopy rails are down, you know, by your waist. You really can see out.

It's got a cargo area behind the back seat that's big enough for maybe a dozen guys, especially if they're Vietnamese guys. Or you could get half a dozen paratroopers back there. And the doors—the back doors could open, so you could parachute out of it.

And it had—it carried rockets, so it could fly around and—and mark a target for—and—and we flew these guys all the time when I was flying 105s because they would—a lot of times, they would get there before we did, and they would spot what it was we were trying to hit, you know, which might be down in the jungle and hard to see, and so they would put a smoke rocket on it and we would try to hit that.

So one story that I can tell you: My last flight in a OV-10, we took off in the dark and arrived over this part of southern Laos just as—as the sun was starting to come up. And there was another [fack? 1:40:41] that had spent the night there, and he had been putting in a—a flight of QF-4s [McDonnell Douglas QF-4 Phantom II drones], and they'd been attacking an area of—a storage area. And one of the F-4s had made a mistake. They misread their altimeter. They got concentrating too hard on something, and they went in the jungle.

And so a guy told us—you know, he said, "I don't understand this. There as a huge fireball. You know, it was right here, but I can't find it, and I'm—I'm bingo. I'm almost out of fuel. I gotta go home." You know, and so we spent the next two hours flying around that area, trying to find evidence of this fireball to be able to identify the exact location of where this—this airplane went in. And we never found it.

Years later, just like five years ago, I was reading a story about a lieutenant colonel whose remains had finally been found in Laos and was being returned to—to this country. And they gave, you know, particulars about, you know, his—his—his mission and what happened to him. And I realized, *This is the guy who, you know, was the one that we spent, you know, my last mission looking for.* That was a great feeling of closure to know that those guys finally came home.

HINDMAN: Yeah. Okay,—

HINDMAN: So I've been talking nonstop here for an hour and three quarters, so [chuckles] you need to stop me and ask me whatever else things you need to ask.

MANNES: Yeah. I just have a few questions just going back to what you were talking about. Which unit were you in? Because it sounds like you were flying. You were trained to be a fighter—fighter bomber, but you also had these other duties outside of the plane. So which unit, I'm asking, did you serve in? And what was the duty, I guess, of that unit.

HINDMAN: In—in Viet- —in Southeast Asia, I was assigned to the 357th Attack Fighter Squadron [sic; 357th Fighter Squadron].

MANNES: Mm-hm.

HINDMAN: And then when—when I was at Nakhon Phanom, I was assigned to Task Force Alpha, which at the time was hush-hush, you know, super secret. You know, nobody was supposed to know we had all these sensors on the Hồ Chí Minh trail, et cetera.

You know, in the years after that, I—I was sent to Laredo [Texas], where I was in the—ooh! I don't even remember the name right now. But, you know, I was instructor pilot at Laredo. That's where I met my wife. They sent me to Vance Air Force Base, Enid, Oklahoma. There—that was—again, I'm having a brain failure. I don't remember the unit. But if these unit numbers are—are important to you, I can send you that.

MANNES: Yeah, that would be very helpful.

HINDMAN: Van- —from Vance I went to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base [near Dayton, Ohio], where I was in foreign technology division, which is a division of [the U.S. Air Force] Systems Command. Basically, I was working for Defense Intelligence Agency, and I was studying the—the Soviet ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile] threat, so I wound up actually writing the book—the book SS-11 [Sego, a Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile] ICBM system is in the National Library. It's classified.

And, you know, I—I was not a rocket scientist, but I had rocket scientists working for me. My—my title was ballistic missile systems engineer. And I had, you know, guidance guys and propulsion guys and reentry vehicle guys, all kinds of scientific specialists working for me, providing me all the—the details to be able to write that study that was pretty much recognized as the final word on the Soviet's SS-11 ICBM, which was their equivalent of our [LGM-30] Minuteman, except they had to be better than us. You know, they built 1,000 of them. We had a 1,000 Minutemen.

MANNES: Right.

HINDMAN: They built 1,000 SS-11s. And then they built 30 more, just to have a few more than we did. [Both chuckle.]

MANNES: So while you were in—while you were in Vietnam as a pilot, was it what you expected? Is it what you wanted out of being a pilot? Because you'd been, of course, dreaming about that since you were a kid, and now you finally were in the Air Force in Vietnam.

HINDMAN: You know, I—I don't think I thought about it that way. I didn't—I really—I really didn't build any expectation in my mind about what it was going to be like. I mean, I—I knew from the press, you know, what life was like in Vietnam, because it was pretty nasty. You know, in—in—at Takhli, we had our own little mini-dormitory. We had a—a—a building with four—or six rooms, two guys to a room. We had a kitchen, although we never used it other than to, you know, cook up drinks. It had a sitting room and a TV, but we didn't spend a lot of time there other than just to play poker. Mostly we spent time at the officers' club or sleeping or briefing or whatever.

So, you know—you know [chuckles], so—you know, we had all the comforts of home. You know, we had—had maids to take care of our—our house, and, you know, there were cute Vietnamese—they're not Vietnamese; they were Thai girls at the officers' club to, you know, serve drinks. And, you know, we had, you know, good, well-cooked meals, three squares a day.

And then, you know, you went out to fly combat, and when you got back, you climbed out of your airplane, and they wrapped a cold, wet towel around your neck and handed you your favorite beer and drove you over to debriefing, and you debriefed and then went off and went back and did it again. [Chuckles.] You know, it was, by far—if you—if you have to be in combat, that's the way to do it. [Chuckles.]

MANNES: Yeah.

HINDMAN: One other thing that I'll try to talk about very briefly is as the war wound down, they—they were not flying us every day. You know, we would—they would schedule to fly us, but we didn't actually get to fly. And I got bored sitting around, so I volunteered to help out in the information office, and then the information officer got PCS'd [permanent change of station]

back to the States with no replacement, so I wound up being the guy. I ran the base paper. I ran the local—you know, the TV and radio station. I was the wing commander's—what do you call it?—liaison with local—you know, the local base, because we're—you know, we were actually a tenant on a—a Thai base. The actual name was Takhli Royal [Thai] Air Force Base. So—we were just a tenant, so, you know, I had to meet with their commander.

You know, I wrote the wing commander's column. I took pictures. Yeah, I was the base photographer—you know, at least the combat photographer. So I did that for fun, which, you know, goes along with all the stuff that I did in college. You know, as I said, I was base paper, you know, yearbook, and I did all that stuff when I was in—in high school and college, so I did it again for Takhli.

MANNES: Gotcha. And so when did you become—you mentioned you were the Air Force instructor. Was that while Vietnam was still going on?

HINDMAN: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, we were still training guys to go to war. In fact, one of the memories that I have of something that really upset me was at a—a graduation party. You know, we were all, you know, standing around the students who graduated. They had got their assignments. They were getting ready to go leave. And I hear these two students talking, and this—this one guy said, "Oh, I'm really glad I got C-130s [Lockheed C-130 Hercules]." He said, "I couldn't—I couldn't go and—and be shooting people. You know, I just think that's wrong." And, you know, I wanted to punch this kid. [Chuckles.] "Okay, so you're flying C-130s and that doesn't make you involved in the war? You know, you're delivering bullets to guys that are going to go kill people with those bullets. So—but because you're just flying the airplane, that means that you're not involved in this?" You know, I was—it made me sick.

MANNES: Yeah. Can you tell—what—can you tell me a bit more about that kind of coming back from actually being in Vietnam and being in combat to trying to teach people who had never been in there before?

HINDMAN: Oh, you know, I—I—I've talked to people, especially, you know, Army types, that had to come back through—you know, through commercial aviation—you know, guys,—you know, having all kinds of nasty things said to them, having blood thrown on them—you know, all kinds of horror stories that I've heard. You know, I never had any of that. I flew my own airplane back the first time I came home, and the second time I came home, I came home on a—a contract airplane, so I went—we landed at Travis Air Force Base [in California], so I never experienced that early nastiness.

You know, they sent me to Laredo Air Force Base [in Texas]. You know, Laredo—you know, you're in a Mexican culture. You're—you're on the border. I experienced, you know, discrimination as a *gringo*, you know, being, you know, not respected because I wasn't local. But I never experienced anything because I was in the military.

As far as the training goes, the way training is set up—you know, we weren't training guys to be fighters; we were just training them to be pilots. The vast majority of guys that go to pilot training come out of pilot training as copilots. You know, they're going to go sit in the right seat of a C-130, a KC-135 [Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker], and C-141 [Lockheed C-141 Starlifter]. They're—they're not going to be leaders right away. It's going to take them years to grow into, you know, being the pilot, being the guy that hits the buttons. Except for the ones that choose—that choose to go because, you know, that's—you know, they—you get to make your choice, so whether—if you want to go fly fighters—because—that want to do that, want to do that.

In fact, you know, it was one of the things that, at least in my class—most of my class wanted to go fly fighters, but, you know, there was only one 105. There were three F-4s, and they were all back seat, which again means you're a copilot. So, you know, the majority of the class, the Americans, I should say, because the Germans—the Germans all went to the 104, but the Americans—you know, they were here to fly KC-135s. We had a [Lockheed] WC-130. We had—you know, and actually a WC-130—that was a—it actually turned out to be more of a fighter than some of the others because he wound up hauling drones up along the coast of Vietnam

so they could drop the drones off and they could go in and—and see what was going on in North Vietnam.

So, yeah, the training program—you know, as an instructor and as a student—there was no training on how to be a fighter. It was just training on how to fly an airplane.

MANNES: So what were your thoughts, then—I guess—I guess you'd still be a Air Force—when did you get out of the—or when did your, I guess, tour end, as the Air Force instructor? I don't know if "tour" is the right word.

HINDMAN: Okay. I guess—I'm not quite sure I got you. I was at Laredo for two years. I was at Vance for two years. So I spent four years there as an instructor pilot, and the last two of those years, I was chief of T-38 [Northrop T-38 Talon] academics, so I was both—both a platform instructor, academic instructor and also a flight line instructor.

MANNES: Okay. So what were your thoughts—because I guess you'd still be in the Air Force then—on the cease fire in '73 and when South Vietnam finally fell in 1975?

HINDMAN: Well, I was—I was sad. I—you know, I felt that we had betrayed the South Vietnamese. I—you know,—I—it—it's—it's hard to—it's hard to explain that during—you know, I—I've had this discussion with other people, where they talk about—about things, you know, that everybody knows from the '70s. And I say, "Well, I don't know any of that." You know. Well, I got all the way through the '70s, even into the '80s. I was working 14 hours a day. You know, I—you know, you—you asked how I thought—thought about things. I didn't really have time to think about things, you know? I was working. [Chuckles.] You know, especially in the training, in pilot training environment, both as a student and as an instructor, you know, I was either teaching class or in class, and I was either, you know, flying as a student or—or instructor as a flight instructor. My days were full. [Chuckles.] You know, I wasn't watching a lot of TV.

MANNES: Yeah.

HINDMAN: I wasn't paying that much attention to the world.

MANNES: How about reflecting back after the fact, though?

HINDMAN: Yeah. I—I don't understand the question.

MANNES: I'm sorry. On the cease fire in '73 and the eventual fall of South Vietnam, after you finished your military service, have you reflected back on that?

HINDMAN: You know, like I said, it—it made me sad, and I—I felt like—

MANNES: Right.

HINDMAN: —we had betrayed the South Vietnamese. You know, we kind of—kind of set them up. You know, we—we promised to be there and help them, and then we didn't go help them when they needed help. I have—I have friends in this country who were children during that time, and so a lot of my—my current feelings about it I think may be colored by listening to them talk about what it was like to have to leave Vietnam under such, you know, really intense circumstances, to—to be able to come to this country.

MANNES: Yeah.

So what—so you decided to become a career officer, even after your six years of service had finished.

HINDMAN: Yeah. Yeah. You know, everybody hates [President James Earl "Jimmy"] Carter [Jr.], but what very few military people recognize or, if they recognize it they won't admit they recognize it—Jimmy Carter gave us the military people the biggest pay raise we ever got in—I can't remember exactly what year it was, in '72 or '73 maybe, somewhere around in there or somewhere during his term. He gave the military a huge pay raise. And when he did that, all of a sudden I went, *Hey! You know what? I can live on <u>this</u>. This is good! I can—I can fly airplanes and have fun and—and—and afford to live on it,* whereas, you know, before, you know—

One of the things I left out is—is when I graduated the first time from Dartmouth, I had a summer job at Western Electric [Company]. I was making $725 a month, which at the time was really good. I mean, I was a programmer. I was making good money. When I went in the Air Force I was making four

hundred a month—you know, so it's, like—like a 50 percent cut in pay [chuckles] to go, you know, defend my country.

And so then all of a sudden, you know, Carter gave us this huge raise, and I'm thinking, *Yeah, all right! I can stay here and do this.*

MANNES: Yeah. So could you tell me a little bit about your military life, then, after the Vietnam War? You mentioned the—working for the DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency] on the ICBM book?

HINDMAN: Yeah.

MANNES: So could you tell me a little more about that or other things that you were doing?

HINDMAN: Well, so, you know, it was—it was basic intelligence work. You know, you're trying to get information from satellites, trying to get information from things that have been picked up from, you know, intelligence and signals intelligence. We had airplanes flying out of Alaska, flying along the coast of the Soviet Union, so when they launched their practice—you know, their tests, their ICBM tests and they would launch out of far western Soviet Union, close to Turkey, fly all the way across and then have their reentry vehicle enter on the Kamchatka Peninsula [in far eastern Russia], so we had airplanes take pictures of that so we could get information on their reentry vehicles.

You know, it was—it was a multifaceted study of what they were doing. Yeah, it was—it was very exciting, very interesting, and, you know, a lot of it is still classified. I can't talk about it. And even—there's probably a lot of it that's been declassified, but, you know, nobody's told *me* what was declassified,—

MANNES: Yeah.

HINDMAN: —so I don't know what I can talk about and what I can't. But, yeah, I got to travel around the country, briefing generals and admirals on—on the Soviet threat. It was a very—very interesting job.

And from there I went to Air Command and Staff College down in Alabama, Montgomery. And then while I was there,—up until that point, Tactical Air Command listed me as attack resource. And, in fact, just before I took the assignment to the school, I had an assignment to go fly F-4s in Germany. And I gave up the F-4 assignment to go to that school, thinking when I came out of the school I would get an even better airplane, because the F-15s [McDonnell Douglas F-15 Eagles] were coming out.

But actually what happened is the Tactical Air Command had a change of personnel policy, and they said, “No, we don’t ever want to see your ugly face again.” So I had to find a new command, and the only other command that drops bombs and shoots bullets is Strategic Air Command, so I went to Strategic Air Command, against my wife’s advice, and that was a huge mistake because I was a fighter pilot, and they saw me coming, and they said, “Oh, here’s comes this cocky fighter pilot. We’ll just squash him like a bug.” And they did. They put an end to my career. [Chuckles.]

So—so I spent several years flying B-52s, which had its challenges. I mean, a B-52 is—you know, people make fun of it, but it’s—it’s a—it’s a challenge to fly it really well, and I did enjoy that part, flying, you know, through the mountains at 500 miles an hour in something that big. You know, again, if you screw up, you die. And you take guys with you. [Chuckles.] So—so that was challenging, and I—and I enjoyed that challenge.

And after B-52s, I went to—I got an assignment to Panama, where I was Air Command—I was a air traffic contro- —not air traffic controller, just a command post controller. I did command post control for two years in the command post at Howard Air Force Base.

And then I spent a year as a deputy for inspections. And so that—that was another really, really fun job that I had, where every—every three months I got to do a major disaster exercise, so, you know, one day I’m throwing bodies out of the back of a pickup truck on a runway, pretending that there’s been an airplane crash and there’s bodies all over the runway. You know, that was—that was a fun one. And

another one—well, you know, time for all the—all the disasters that I—I managed.

MANNES: [Chuckles.]

HINDMAN: I managed several disasters, and that was—that was a lot of fun, to force the different units on the base—you know, especially, you know, it's, like, the hospital and the security police and the—you know, weapons—the guys that take care of weapons that have been, you know, dispersed. You know, make all those guys exercise and show—and show that they know how to take care of—of a serious situation. So—so I did that for a year.

And then was up in Maine for part of the year as a—in a command post up there at Loring Air Force Base, and my wife had some health issues, so they send us here to Fort Worth [Texas], to Carswell Air Force Base. And here, I was in the operations plans, doing plans for, you know, bombing the Soviet Union into the Stone Age. And so I was working with B-52s, but I wasn't actually flying B-52s. And that's where I retired in 1988.

MANNES: Right.

So what—so what have you done since finishing military service?

HINDMAN: Well, I moved across the runway. The other side of the runway from Carswell is Lockheed Martin. At the time, it was General Dynamics, so I got a job there in F-16s [General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcons], working advanced programs of F-16s, helping to sell F-16s to foreign countries. And I did that for three years.

When the [Lockheed] A-12 was cancelled, they had to lay off a whole bunch of people, and even though I had nothing to do with the A-12, I got caught up in that. I got laid off.

And I have—couldn't find a job, so I prayed about it a great deal, a lot of—a lot of prayer and soul searching and self- —I was being told to go back to flying, and I'd actually go out and pay money to get a license because due to a misunderstanding on my part, I left the Air Force without a

license, so I had to go pay to get one. I could do a bunch of flying and get my license and applied to all the airlines. Nobody in the airlines was interested in a 45-year-old guy with 3,000 hours of flying training—or, I mean, flying.

Today, they would snap me up in a heartbeat [chuckles], but at that time,—

MANNES: Yeah.

HINDMAN: —they had so many younger guys coming out of the Air Force that they didn't want somebody at my age. I did get a job with a local company, flying around, and so I worked for Howell [Instruments, Inc.] for a year as a—basically just go out and show the flag, go out and tell everybody how wonderful Howell Instruments is. And I did that for a year. Then after the wall came down, their business collapsed, so I got laid off from there.

Took me six months to find another job. I had a job with Menasco [Manufacturing Company] on the F-22 [Lockheed Martin F-22 Raptor] landing gear. So I worked there as a maintainability engineer, picked up liability, safety, logistics, support analysis. After two years there, the [U.S.]Congress, in their infinite wisdom, stretched out the F-22 program, the EMD [engineering and manufacturing development] program. They stretched it out, made it twice as long, but they didn't change the money, so all these companies, you know, had to cut people because they only had half as much money per year. So I got laid off from there. [Chuckles.]

So again I was looking for a job. I eventually wound up back at Howell Instruments, doing software tests. And so at each of these points, I had to change my career. You know, I went—different, different kinds of things but all basically being an engineering but different kinds of engineering. So at Howell—those were seven years that I worked there—I went from writing software tests to writing specifications to writing manuals. I wound up as supervisor of software tests and supervisor of technical publications and had personnel conflicts, shall we say, with the president, and he kept trying to get rid of me, but the vice president kept stepping in for me. The vice president of engineering defended me. He said, "No, you can't get rid of him. I need him." [Chuckles.]

Yeah, he needed me because I was working 70 hours a week [chuckles], seven days a week, 10 hours a day. And so he was getting, you know, the work of two people out of me. [Chuckles.]

And—but then when the—after the, you know, the, you know, 9/11 [2001 attacks]—again, the Howell Instruments business just went right in the crapper because everybody stopped flying. Commercial stopped flying, the military stopped buying stuff. All they were spending their money on was gas and bombs. And so I got laid off again. [Chuckles.]

And fortunately for me, Lockheed was hiring at that time. I got back to Lockheed, so now I've been at Lockheed now for going on 15 years. I'm working F-22. I'm working—a little bit of design, mostly proposals.

MANNES: That's [cross-talk; unintelligible; 2:11:39].

HINDMAN: But all the different jobs that I have had [have] given me a background that allows me to—to look at things and understand the scope, because I've done all these things. You know, I've done all these different kinds of engineering jobs, so it means that when I look at a proposal, I—I—you know, it's much more useful—

MANNES: Right.

HINDMAN: —for me than it would be for somebody without that experience. So even though it felt bad every time I got laid off, it actually was good for me [chuckles] because it forced me into new fields.

MANNES: Right.

So how do you reflect back now, after all your years in the military and out of the military, on your military service?

HINDMAN: Well, I think I said this before: I made the decision to become a fighter pilot, and I've been a fighter pilot ever since. It's an attitude. I mean, you probably haven't heard it, but there's a military expression: Once a fighter pilot, always a fighter pilot. And—and it's—it's true. If you're a successful fighter pilot, it's because you're willing to go right out to the edge of

the envelope and push the edge of the envelope, and, you know, you believe in making things happen. And you—you're willing to put yourself at risk to make things happen that you think need to happen.

MANNES: Yeah.

HINDMAN: So it is—it is who I am. And I kind of was before—as I said, because I, you know, raced—you know, rode motorcycles, climbed mountains—you know, did all that stuff that I did. And so it's who I am.

MANNES: Yeah.

And I guess my final question, then would be: How did your experiences in and around Vietnam shape your life after the war, today, et cetera?

HINDMAN: [Sighs.] Well, I—you know, I—I don't know how to answer that. You know, I think the last two hours has been the answer. It's—it's who I am. You know, I—I'm an F-105 fighter pilot. Everything else has just been the result of that. I'm—I'm on a Facebook fan page with, you know, dozens or hundreds of other 105 aficionados. And, you know, the—the guys that were crew chiefs talk about their airplane, you know, and it's *their* airplane, you know, number 4-5-6 or whatever it was, their airplane. And they cared for that airplane, and they still care for it today. You know, whether—whether it went to the bone yard or scrap heap or it's sitting on a pedestal someplace outside some Air Force base, you know, these people still—it's—it's a major part of who they are.

And, you know, I'm on that maybe not every day but almost every day—you know, I don't always have part of the discussion, but I enjoy everybody else's discussion because it's who we are.

MANNES: Right.

So thank you so much.

[End of interview.]