

Peter Hofman '68
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Karen Navarro

LIBRE: My name is Matthew Libre ('21) and I'm joined here today with Peter Hofman. The date is November 8th, 2019, and we are conducting this interview over the phone with the Dartmouth Vietnam Project. I want to start here by saying thank you so much for talking today, Peter, Mr. Hofman. It's great to have you here. And yeah, just to start sort of as a preliminary, just to begin things here, where and when were you born?

HOFMAN: I was born in New York City, New York City Hospital, on November 12th, 1946.

LIBRE: And did you grow up there?

HOFMAN: I grew up in a suburb of New York. I grew up in Scarsdale, New York, and was there throughout—my parents kept the house throughout my college career even.

LIBRE: Can you describe growing up there, and I guess some of your family life?

HOFMAN: Sure. Scarsdale's a suburb of New York, and my father worked and commuted to New York City basically his entire career. At the time Scarsdale had, I don't know, 15, 20,000 people. It was a small community, very suburban. We lived in not the wealthiest part of town. We lived probably on the only dirt road or unpaved road in town. When my folks moved there, they were probably one of the first Democrats to live in Scarsdale, and they were pretty active. In 1952 when I was six years old, I helped stuff envelopes for Adlai Stevenson, who ran against [Dwight D.] Eisenhower twice and lost. My mother's name was Adelaide, and at one point someone was talking about an upcoming campaign event and they said, "Adelaide will be there." Well, people thought it was Adlai Stevenson, but it was just my mother.

I have one brother, five years younger than I am. It was really a good place to grow up. We had pretty normal family life. My parents were pretty engaged in a lot of ways, and so we used to have lively conversations at dinner about any

topic, you name it. I was able to walk to elementary school and to high school. My junior high school was new. After I was in fifth grade, instead of going to sixth grade in my elementary school, I went to the middle school which was to serve all the elementary schools in town, so we bussed. But probably it's marked me for life because I never got to be the oldest grade in my elementary school.

What else? Had good friends. I also went to and worked at a camp in Vermont, a summer camp in Vermont, and most of the people who went to the camp were from Scarsdale, were friends, so that was really neat. But it was a pretty low key, low budget camp. It was on an old farm in the middle of Vermont. Probably one of the best experiences for me was that one of the counselors and his family were there. They were from Brooklyn and they were black. And Scarsdale was fairly lily white when we lived there. There was only one street in town that had blacks on it, and one of the kids in the family was in my grade, but that was it. Scarsdale was pretty lily white. I went back for my 30th high school reunion, and we took a tour of the high school, and it was interesting to learn that 25% of the students in the high school were non-white. They were all rich, but they were non-white.

The camp was a great experience, again, very low key, but enjoyed being outdoors. Where we lived in Scarsdale, we had small back yards, but did spend a lot of time outside. I think that was important for me, and pretty much always has been important. We had relatives who lived in the city, so we would go to New York City periodically, and enjoyed the culture the city had to offer. Trying to think of what else.

Oh, my parents I think wanted me to be a teacher. My father worked in business. My father worked pretty much his whole career in, at least when we were alive, in magazine publishing, and my mother was a stay at home mom, but she did things on the side, and ultimately she went back to work. And it was basically, well, for a while she worked for General Foods, and then she worked for the local school district. I was going to say my parents generally were private sector oriented in a way, although they were extremely generous with their charitable giving and volunteer work and that sort of thing.

LIBRE:

And you said, you had said earlier on that your family had been at least to some extent politically active. Can you talk a

little bit more about that? Do you think that really influenced your childhood? Did that inform you going forward? What was the political life sort of at home, but then also within Scarsdale generally? Were you some of the only people who had these political views? Obviously, there was little diversity, but was this shared at the time, your views?

HOFMAN:

Well, my parents were fairly politically active, and my mother was very outspoken, and I think, oh, and they were active probably in the PTA, and I think she might have been active in the League of Women Voters. So, we certainly did see that. And I think it was interesting comparing like myself with my wife. They never talked about stuff like this. I mean, their dinner table conversations were minimal, and it was never about what's going on in the world, whereas ours, I think, and I recall were frequently about that. So it created certainly a certain awareness, and I think also just their—you know, they weren't rebels in any sense, but they were active in the community. I think that obviously planted a lot of seeds both with me and with my brother. In terms of Scarsdale overall, I think over time more Democrats moved in, and my folks had a couple of good friends in town who shared their political views.

I'm trying to think. Yeah, I mean, I'm not sure what else I can offer, except I think, you know, growing up the way I did... I guess there's one other thing, too. Growing up the way I did, I think planted some pretty powerful seeds. But it's interesting how that evolved, and we'll get to that later. But one of the things that happened is that one of my best friends growing up—he was about a block-and-a-half away—his name was Graham Thomas. And Graham was a Catholic. And one day I came home from kindergarten and told everybody that I was a Catholic, because Graham Thomas was a Catholic, so I must have been a Catholic. And my parents decided they had to find some religion for me. And my father's family was Christian Science. My mother's family was Jewish, but her father died when she was 12, leaving them pretty poor, and she thought if God were just, God would not have taken her father from her. My father was probably more of a believer than my mother.

But, anyway, they had friends, maybe from the war, who were ethical culturists. And ethical culture is a humanist movement that was started in 1876 by a man, a rabbi's son named Felix Adler, and one of his mottos, one of his themes

was “deed above creed.” It’s how we live our life is the most important thing. And we went through, my brother and I went through the full Sunday school program there, and I consider myself an ethical culturist. And I think also that training and background had a lot to do with who I am and what I believe and how I live my life.

LIBRE: Yeah. So, that’s awesome. Can you explain sort of going forward your high school life, and then towards when you matriculated to Dartmouth, and how you ended up there, what brought you there?

HOFMAN: Okay. High school life was good. My best friends were probably the guys I went to camp with. I was in the band. I played in the orchestra. I played football, varsity football my senior year. I went out for the baseball team when I was a sophomore and found out that I needed glasses. [laughter] I didn’t make the team, but at least I got some glasses.

LIBRE: That’s good. [laughter]

HOFMAN: I did okay in high school. The high school had about, I think we had about almost 400 people in the class. And I did pretty well, and actually five of us ended up going to Dartmouth. My father was Class of ’36 at Dartmouth, so it was not a surprise that I applied. My brother also went. And one of the other guys from Scarsdale who went, his father was in the Class I think of ’37 at Dartmouth, and the other guys who went I don’t think had father connections to Dartmouth. I liked the idea that it was a rural campus. Certainly was exposed to Dartmouth during reunions.

I will say that I did apply early decision, but while I was waiting for the response from Dartmouth, I was working on an application to Cornell to their school of industrial and labor relations, because I figured if I couldn’t get into Dartmouth’s liberal arts, I probably couldn’t get into Cornell liberal arts. And we were in New York and I had won a New York State Regents Scholarship. And when I was accepted at Dartmouth, I asked my father, I said, “Dad, you know, if I go to Cornell, I think it would be a lot cheaper,” and he said, “No, you can go to Dartmouth.”

So, I mean, it was less of a search than I’m sure a lot of other people go through to end up in Hanover [NH]. And, you know, obviously I was a legacy, and I’ve been having a

conversation with one of my classmates about a whole bunch of issues around educational equity, and whether Dartmouth could be doing more to attract first generation students and ensure their success, to attract rural area students. There have been stories about rural areas are really underrepresented in a lot of elite colleges. And one of the big issues is legacy, and the implications of that for equity, for upward mobility for people. So it's just, it's an interesting... I was maybe a benefit—I mean, I did okay in my boards. I did okay in high school. I did okay at Dartmouth. But, yeah, I was a legacy.

LIBRE: Sure. And going to Dartmouth, was there any political feelings you had going to Dartmouth at that time? Did you feel like this is something your—did you feel that the Dartmouth community had a strong political sort of consciousness at the time?

HOFMAN: No. I think what was interesting actually is between my—I graduated from high school in '64. My brother graduated from high school in '69. And to show you just the difference of the times, so the speaker at our graduation talked about, you know, *where will the Class of '64 be in 25 years?* or whatever it was. It was some kind of fluffy thing like that, whereas when my brother graduated from high school, the graduation speaker spoke all about political activism and *what can we do about what's going on in the world?* And he was much more active politically. I mean, he participated in sit-ins in military bases, and I think he was arrested once. And just those five years made somewhat of a big difference.

Obviously, Dartmouth campus got much more political as we got close to '69 and what happened with the takeover of Parkhurst and stuff like that. But, politics wasn't that much on my mind when I went. I think the reputation, as I recall when I was there, was that Dartmouth tended to be a more conservative campus than other Ivy League schools. But, you know, politics wasn't a big thing until later in the '60s, I think it's fair to say in general, at least the feeling that I had about what was going on on campus and what people were involved with. I mean, I started doing volunteer work. I mean, you know, I was in the band, I was in the glee club, I helped make bonfires. And I must say the bonfires today don't hold a candle to the bonfires we did. There are reasons for that. And I was in Green Key. But I also did some volunteer work.

One of the things I did was I recruited people to—
classmates, students, to give blood during Red Cross drives.

And so, it really wasn't until later, again '68, '69, where things got much more political because of the war. I remember going to I think it was SAE [Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity] had a session one night, and I don't know if Jerry Rubin was there or Abbie Hoffman was there, and they were doing their schpiel, and I was way in the back and I asked a question which they never answered, which was "well, you're planning on tearing all this stuff down, but what are you gonna replace it with?" and they really didn't have an answer for that. So in a way you could argue that I was obviously more conservative than they were. I did have friends who during graduation wore black armbands, and some might have walked out. I think the speaker might have been [Nelson A.] Rockefeller ['30]. I didn't do that. I actually was elected class president at the end of our senior year, but I didn't go as far as some of our classmates did at that time about the war.

LIBRE: So I guess, understanding that, when you first came to Dartmouth, obviously you had had at least to some extent a political upbringing. What were your first memories of the war then? And was it a big change for you to come to Dartmouth and all of a sudden not see as much of a political environment?

HOFMAN: No. Again, I wasn't as politically active, and probably wasn't that politically active in junior high school or high school. There wasn't that much, you know, it was the late—it was, you know, I started going to school in the early '50s. The '50s were pretty calm. There wasn't much going on necessarily. I mean, my parents were active about things. There was a lot of local stuff. I mean, probably my mother worked for Stevenson again in '56. And the very, very early '60s, again it wasn't that political. And so, I don't recall really doing very much politically in junior high school or high school. So, there wasn't that much of a change coming to Dartmouth. I didn't have expectations going to Dartmouth about being politically active. And I'm trying to think of classmates of mine, even...

LIBRE: Yeah, I guess to go back then, what were your first memories of the Vietnam War? To what you can recall, what

is your first memory of that being a part of your life or a part of the American life?

HOFMAN: Hum, good question. Well, obviously... well, it was probably in the mid to late '60s, probably after I got to Dartmouth, and I think early on there wasn't—I'm trying to think of then conversations and friends I had and what we were doing—there wasn't that much until things started getting pretty bad, and that was probably '68, '69. And up to that point, I don't remember. Probably one of the things that went on I think around that time might have been uproars about ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps].

LIBRE: Can you talk about that a little bit?

HOFMAN: Well, I think that there were people who were protesting ROTC being on campus. I don't remember that much about it. I know a decision finally was made to drop ROTC, and I know that many years later they brought it back. And I might have even had a roommate who was in ROTC, but I'm not positive.

LIBRE: Do you remember, speaking of the ROTC and youth participation in the war effort, what are your first memories then about the draft? Was that something on the minds of students at Dartmouth?

HOFMAN: It wasn't that big an issue, again, until maybe '67 and '68. And I'll tell you how it affected me, and you'll see. There was a change, and maybe I became more politically active myself as opposed to when I was stepping into for Adlai Stevenson, which was really my mother saying, "Well, do you want to help stuff envelopes?" and I said "sure." But I probably had more of a political awakening later on; this is as the situation changed. But, I was a 3-2 student at Tuck School [of Business]. And that meant that after my junior year at Dartmouth, I went to Tuck, so I had my senior year at Dartmouth was my first year at Tuck School. And there were 10 people from my class at Dartmouth who did the same thing at Tuck.

And I went through the first year okay, and again, what's interesting in a way is that it was a business school, and I wasn't going into business. And I got through the first year okay, but then draft situations came, and I had no expectation. I had a terrible draft board. I had no expectation

of what was going to happen. But, I didn't register for my second year at Tuck, because I expected to be drafted. And lo and behold, my draft board was really inefficient, and when registration came around—this was then the fall of '68, you know, I re-registered and I completed my Tuck School education.

And then the question is okay, so what's going to happen then? I decided, and this may be again a reflection of some seeds being planted by my folks, to apply to the Peace Corps. And there were a couple of—there were I think only two or three programs worldwide for MBAs [Master of Business Administration]. And I picked Peru, and maybe that was more conservative than going to Tunisia, but I did pick Peru over Colombia and Tunisia, and it was somewhat of an outlier. But it was interesting. One of my Tuck classmates had been in the Peace Corps before he went to Tuck, and we spoke about working, maybe after I got out of the Peace Corps, working together in a consulting company that would help US companies make direct investments to South America. So there was at least some sense in '68, '69 that I wanted to try to use business for good. And anyway...

But, I will say that I did go through—even though I decided to go to the Peace Corps, this was after we did job interviews and I interviewed with a whole bunch of companies, and I got a job offer from IBM, and I had worked in IBM over the summer, I think maybe my junior year possibly, or maybe after my first year—no, I'm not sure. But I had worked at IBM one summer, and when I interviewed with them I told them I wanted to work in an area that was more oriented towards helping other people. So, my interview took place at an IBM plant that they had set up in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of New York, with a goal of training and hiring local people for good careers at IBM. And I thought that was pretty neat. I also interviewed—it's hard to believe—but I also interviewed with Mobil Oil, and I got a job offer from them to work in the international treasures office.

I basically turned both of those down and went into the Peace Corps, and I imagine you would say the reason was I figured I wouldn't last very long in either of those jobs, and the Peace Corps did give me up to a two-year deferment. And that's what I did. And that's in a way really the last purely private sector work in a way that I did pretty much in my life. Anyway, so...

LIBRE: On that—sorry to interrupt you there.

HOFMAN: Sure.

LIBRE: When you weren't sure about going back to Tuck that second year because of the draft, were you afraid of the draft? What was the general sentiment behind that? Did you want to be drafted? Did you feel like it was something that was your duty that you were ready to fulfill?

HOFMAN: No, it was definitely, I was definitely concerned about the draft. I didn't want to go into the military. And I will say, you know, my generation's parents were in World War II, and it's possible that parents' experiences during the war would affect how their children feel about the military and war. My father, I guess he was really lucky, broke his ribs twice during basic training, and somehow ended up spending the entire war working for *Yank* Magazine, *Yank* newspaper. And, so he really never saw combat at all. And one of their best friends was in the Army and he fought in the Battle of the Bulge. I never really heard much about it, but just reading about it, it was a devastating battle. But no, I was not thrilled about the draft at all. I was not eager to fight in the war. I didn't think it was necessarily patriotic to fight in the war. So, by that time, I knew that's about what was going on, that no, I didn't say, "Sure, sign me up."

LIBRE: Sure. And what did your peers think about the Peace Corps? When you told friends and family around you that's what you wanted to pursue for the next two years, what was the general sense with them about the Peace Corps then, and the mission of the Peace Corps?

HOFMAN: I think, well, actually I think my parents were supportive. I think that the greatest reaction I got was from one of my Tuck School classmates, and he said, "Well, what's the Peace Corps? Why are you going to the Peace Corps? Why would you do something like that?" and I said, "Well," I said, "I think it'd be really worthwhile and I think it could broaden my horizons." And he said, "Broaden your horizons? That's a real interesting concept." Which kind of blew my mind. I mean, people, to have someone think that broadening horizons is an interesting concept kind of shows... I'm not really close with a lot of people I went to Tuck School with, and tend not to have been very active an alum of Tuck. I

mean, I got a good education there, I guess a general business education, and I got my first job in New Hampshire because I happened to have bumped into the dean's wife when I was looking for work and one of her best friends was the head of state planning in New Hampshire, and she introduced me, and I ended up getting some work. And then there's a whole 'nother story about Tuck.

But, the people who I met at Tuck in general were not as smart as Dartmouth students, and some of them were really narrow minded, and some of them went just to get a piece of paper, "I have an MBA." I'll mention something now even though it's out of sequence. I was—going to the Peace Corps was probably the start of a different approach that I had to what I wanted to do with my life, after having been given job offers from IBM and Mobil Oil, to go to the Peace Corps. I basically when I decided what I wanted to do after the Peace Corps, I wanted to work for the government, I wanted to be non-profit, I didn't want to have anything to do with private enterprise.

And actually when I came back from South America—and I will talk about my experience there because there are some things that are, you know, again relevant to the war, etc.—when I came back, I went to Tuck School and I said, "This is what I want to do. I want to work in government and I want to work in non-profits. Can you help me at all? What information do you have?" And Tuck School had absolutely nothing. And so, over the next few months I explored opportunities and name dropped Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, and I ended up writing an eight-page report on what opportunities there were in the government sector and the non-profit sectors for any other alums who were interested. And that was all Tuck had for a while about non-business opportunities. They obviously have come a long ways now and they do a lot more, but at the time it was just, you know, there was nothing there.

LIBRE: And did you feel—and I understand that this was in 1969 that you chose to join the Peace Corps, right? That was 1969?

HOFMAN: Right. No, it was... Yes, I was Class of—yes, it was '69.

LIBRE: Yeah, and so, and you had said that by that point Dartmouth had become sort of increasingly politicized and cognizant of

the war, and I guess sort of more involved in the anti-war movement itself. So did you feel that at this time there was a different—at this time talk was not sort of gaining the same political traction, the same will that the undergrad was having at that time?

HOFMAN: Oh, yeah, there's no question about that. I mean, there probably were some Tuck people who were interested, involved, engaged in one way or another. I mean, my roommate at Tuck ended up going to the Navy and had a couple of tours off Vietnam. He was on a destroyer. But, no, Tuck in some ways, maybe just except for those of us who were the 3-2 students, Tuck was pretty isolated in a way, and again, it was a business school and one of the things about Tuck was they had a policy in every course of unannounced exams, so you always had to be prepared. I mean, my schedule at Tuck School was much more regimented than my schedule at Dartmouth. I mean, you really had to stay on top of everything every day. You were supposed to anyway, and not everybody did. I certainly did, and the people I was close with and worked with did. But, I would say that it was generally more isolated, not as political as what was happening on campus. So, like the takeover of Parkhurst was in the spring of '69, but it was really undergraduates who were doing it. I don't think there was anybody at Tuck School who was involved in that.

LIBRE: Can you talk about that for a minute actually? Do you have any strong memories of the takeover at Parkhurst? I know that was one of the biggest Dartmouth anti-war...

HOFMAN: Just vague. I mean, I was not involved. Again, I was a Tuck School student. I was attending my second year. And we were certainly aware of what was going on and we were certainly aware that some people were being arrested, and it was a big deal on campus. And I know, I also think, you know, I think SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] may have been fairly active. And I can't remember, I imagine there were demonstrations on The Green or people standing vigil or whatever. It was... I think if I had been an undergraduate there, I probably would have been more connected to what went on. But again, Tuck in a way was a different world, and so I was not that directly engaged with what was going on. We were aware obviously what was going on.

LIBRE: Right. So, I guess going forward, can you talk a little bit about the process then of transitioning from Tuck to the Peace Corps, and sort of what that process was like? Where you went and how it sort of began?

HOFMAN: Sure. So, I was home not too very long after I graduated from Tuck, and I had 10 weeks of Peace Corps training in Escondido, California, [laughter] in a former nudist colony, which really upset the caretaker because we wore clothes when we swam and stuff like that. And I got unbelievable language training. The people that I was in the Peace Corps with were more politically aware.

LIBRE: Can you talk about that a little bit? Yeah, I feel like that must have been a big change.

HOFMAN: Yeah. No, I can talk about it, and the best example of it is when we got in country, we were supposed to sign a loyalty oath to the United States. And one of the statements in the loyalty oath was something about defending the country, whatever it was. And so there was a bunch of us in my group who refused to sign the loyalty oath. So I might have an FBI file, I don't know. But anyway, so we refused to sign a loyalty oath, and it took four or five months for the bureaucrats in Washington to figure out what to do with us. And finally what they said is, "You can sign the loyalty oath and you can put on the back of your oath your understanding of what it means to defend the country."

LIBRE: That's great.

HOFMAN: And so, there was a bunch of us and we did that, and basically everyone in this small group, this subgroup of us, I mean, didn't want to pick up arms. I mean, that was the thing. Anyway, so finally we did sign the loyalty oath, and that would have been in early in 1970.

LIBRE: Did you feel that there was a—I mean, that seems like a pretty radical change in political views from you sort of standing by, as not a bystander but someone not as involved during something like the Parkhurst takeover even a year prior, to now making a pretty bold and definitive statement against what I'm assuming is what you believed was the US sort of taking up arms when it should not have been. Do you feel like there was a big change in heart for you? Or was it

did you always believe that you never wanted to pick up arms at least to extend the arm of the US abroad?

HOFMAN: Well, again, I never thought much. Well, I mean, if you look at a bunch of things. My father never fought in the war, so he never picked up arms against anybody. I was always brought up as an ethical culturist with the focus on doing what you can to help your fellow human beings and with everything else, life around you, and your life on this earth is the most important thing. Ethical culture doesn't take a position on the existence of the supernatural being or life after death or anything. But, you know, life on earth is, right now how you treat other people is the most important thing. So, I mean, fighting in a war, fighting to kill other people really wasn't there. I think the difference is I, I don't know if you could say I got radicalized, but I expressed it more than I ever did before. You know, I mean, refusing to sign the loyalty oath was probably a pretty big deal. And I guess it got to the point where I felt I had to do something tangible. And it might have been, I don't know, yeah, it might have been that. Finally I got to the point where, you know, now I'm ready. I might be a little slower to have taken up some of the more radical activities that people did on campus. I mentioned I didn't wear a black armband during graduation and stuff. But, I got to a point where yeah, *we gotta speak up, gotta do something*, and that's what we did.

LIBRE: Right. And so at this point, do you feel like that this was in a direct response to policies of the US? Did you feel like the US was sort of abusing its power abroad, and that the war itself was sort of being fought for the wrong reasons, even beyond just any war taking another person's life? Did you feel that the US was acting out of hand abroad? Is that sort of where you're going with that or...

HOFMAN: I think that was certainly one of the contributing factors to refusing to sign the loyalty oath which said we would defend the country. And I think most people at least at that point felt that what was going on there was not the rest of the country and we shouldn't be doing it. I mean, there was a lot of bad stuff that happened late '60s in terms of the war, and yeah, it was just it was wrong. I mean, on top of this, I mean, this was again when we first got into country, I will say that locals thought most Peace Corps volunteers were CIA agents, and told us so. When we went to... I was stationed in southernmost Peru, which was across the border from Chile,

and we did meet some middle class Chileans, and this was around the time when [Salvador] Allende was running for office, and they were very suspicious of us. So we were getting some external input, too, in terms of *gee, we're Americans, and it's better to be a Canadian than an American.*

And I guess one other thing we did in 1970—again, we finally signed the loyalty oath in the beginning of 1970, but after the Kent State shootings, many of us wore black armbands for a while. And we did it for a while as some sort of recognition, acknowledgement, so people would ask us about it. The problem was, it really wasn't culturally sensitive, because typically in Peru when you wear a black armband it means a family member has died. So, we didn't do it that long, but we wanted somehow to make a statement about that event.

LIBRE: Can you talk a little about your feelings of that event? What was your initial reaction when you heard about this? Because obviously you were far away sort of geographically from the US, but did you feel that this still hit really at home for you?

HOFMAN: Yeah. I mean, I got—well, I was going to say I was into Armed Forces radio—I'm trying to think how we got some of the news. Well, this is a sidelight, but it's relevant in a way. Right after Kent State shootings was Green Key weekend, and for some reason, a woman that I had met at Tuck, never dated, she was dating somebody else, I met her a few times, wrote me a letter. And my initial reaction to receiving that letter was, because she told me what was going on on the Dartmouth campus in May of [1970] after the Kent State shootings. So my initial reaction to getting the letter was, *oh, that's great. Tuck is letting alums know what's going on at Dartmouth in light of the Kent State shootings.* And, having a lot of free time on my hands, I responded, and we ended up corresponding a lot, and the woman, who's Phyllis, came down and visited me in 1971, and was supposed to stay for two weeks. She worked at Dartmouth. She changed jobs at Dartmouth in '71, I guess, and she came down to visit for a couple of weeks, and our passports were stolen, so it ended up being a month. That was our first date, and we're still on our second date. But, when she first wrote... [Matthew laughs.] You like that?

- LIBRE: That's great. That's awesome.
- HOFMAN: Yeah. Anyway, but when she first wrote, my reaction was, *This is about Kent State. This is about what Dartmouth is doing in response to the Kent State shootings. It's really great.* It helped me feel more connected with what was going on. I was thousands of miles away. So...
- LIBRE: And what was Dartmouth doing?
- HOFMAN: Pardon?
- LIBRE: And what was Dartmouth doing in response to the Kent State shootings?
- HOFMAN: Again, I don't remember that. I think there were demonstrations on campus. And I do forget. I'm not sure. I don't remember. I'm sure I have the letters somewhere in one of my boxes. It would be interesting to look at it again. But, anyway, it was hard being connected. I mean, again, you're talking about an era in which one of the best ways for me to get any kind of communications from the state was Armed Forces radio. There was no internet. There was no worldwide web. There was nothing. So, it was very easy to feel extremely isolated from what was going on. So, getting any information was something.
- LIBRE: And did you feel at this time that, were you then for this period not susceptible to the draft anymore? Did you feel as separated from the draft, as well, that you didn't believe that you would...
- HOFMAN: No, I didn't feel separated from the draft at all, because in 1970 probably they instituted the lottery.
- LIBRE: Can you talk about that a little bit?
- HOFMAN: Yeah. They instituted the lottery, and I mean, two things, well, you can say three things stand out. My number was like 125, which was not a safe number. One of the guys in my group got like 360, and he left the next day from the Peace Corps. His only reason for being there was to avoid the draft. And then, there was another guy who was kind of my mentor. He was a volunteer. He'd been there a couple of years before, who when he—he was the first one who got news about the results of the first lottery, and when he saw

me he said, "Peter, you're number one." Which I wasn't, but still, I mean, it was a low enough number that it would make a difference. So we were very aware of that and it did have an impact on people.

And as I said, some people just left. And there was more discussion, and I'm trying to think... Around that time there was a couple of people I think who were low in number, and I'm trying to think whether or not this was when I was in training, and that would have been a little before the lottery. There were people I knew from Peace Corps training who decided to go to Canada, or talked about going to Canada if they were drafted, and whose parents' reactions were "you're no longer a son of mine." And that hit home. You know, that hit home a lot. And there were a lot of people wrestling with *okay, what am I gonna do? And how are we gonna handle this? And how do I handle my values?*

And there's another story I'll mention, but it's out of sequence, is because there are some things that I did in the Peace Corps that I think are important. But, I had to come home early from the Peace Corps because of my draft board, and I had to have my physical. And I ended up not passing my physical. But there were two guys that I went down to, that I knew from high school, who had their physicals at the same time. And one of them was a minister's son, who had done all sorts of worthwhile things ever since he graduated from high school and helping other people. And the other was not a minister's son, but had also done the same thing, only working on non-profits, doing volunteer work, doing all of that. And they were both, they refused induction, and were both hauled off by the FBI, arrested and everything. That was really upsetting, even though I got out. There was just, there was something fundamentally wrong.

Meanwhile, there was a guy in line with us who was obviously in very bad shape physically, not any disease or anything. He was just really overweight and everything. And this was like the third or fourth time he was going through the physical because he really wanted to be in the Army. And even, actually if we had—we had to do all the tests and everything down in Whitehall, New York. And the first thing you do is take a written exam, and the soldier who came in and passed out the exam said, "Guys, you know, I just want you to know we're very proud of our record that 30%..." or

something like that, high percent "...of you guys failed the test. So, keep it up." So you had someone, you know, you had a guy in service who was on the inside who was saying, you know, "This is not a great thing. If you can fail, fail." Anyway, so I leaped forward to that.

And so anyway, you could argue that in a relatively short period of time I did get more political, more active in that way, and more maybe outwardly I'm acting my values. Another... So, anyway, got to country, [laughter] dealt with the loyalty oath, and then went and started doing my job. In May or June, I can't believe I don't remember the date, of [1970], there was a killer earthquake in Peru. It killed 50,000 people. And people in my zone, well, throughout the country, Peace Corps volunteers were recruited to help with earthquake relief. And we went up to, I think our base was a northern city called Chimbote, which was on the coast. It's a fishing village. And one of the things I remember from that whole experience was it was probably as close as I could have gotten to what a war zone was like. Everything devastated, everything flattened. I remember at one point we were walking high in the Andes in the middle of nowhere, and just houses destroyed from the earthquake.

But there were a few things that were really interesting about that experience, and I actually went up twice to the earthquake zone. The first time we went up, it was kind of emergency, getting people evacuated, etc. And what Peace Corps did was they contacted people who had been nurses in the Peace Corps, and they signed up to come back and help. So we had a group of, I don't know, half a dozen of us, three people from where I was based in southern Peru and two nurses. And we initially were based in Chimbote, and the US Army was there and the Marines were there. And there was a helicopter ship, I don't know, I think it was called the Guam, but I'm not positive. And they had Chinooks and Hueys that were flying up into the Andes for rescue missions, for reconnaissance, all that kind of stuff.

And, so we were assigned to the Marines. And we became friends with them. And they, finally when things cleared up enough, they flew us up to about 12,000 feet or so in the Andes, and we started going down towards the village, and someone came up and said there was an old lady who had a fractured skull. The roof fell on her. And so I had to run up the mountain, it's 12,000 feet, to tell the helicopter guys they

had to pick up this lady. And they did. And you talk about culture shock. This village we were in had no vehicles. They were a 12 hour walk from the nearest town where they had vehicles. And she was flown by helicopter to a hospital ship.

But, while we were waiting to fly up there, we became really good friends, and one of the Marines actually gave me his boots. And our discussions were interesting. I mean, they worked so hard. For every hour of flight time in a helicopter, they had multiple hours of maintenance. And the Marines were really proud. The Army lost some Hueys, crashed in the Andes. I mean, it's really thin air and they're really not designed to fly at 12,000 feet. The Marines didn't lose one. And, but the thing that really got to me was how much it meant to them that they were working to help people rather than kill them. And it was, you know, that obviously stayed with me for 50 years, whatever. But it was really something. I mean, they really cared. They did everything they possibly could. They worked above and beyond the call of duty, and it meant a lot that they could help people. When we...

LIBRE: Oh yeah, carry on.

HOFMAN: No, it's okay.

LIBRE: No, no, no, please.

HOFMAN: So, we evacuated that woman and we set up shop. We had equipment. We had tents and everything. And the village had been pretty much devastated, and we were there to help them. Our goal was to, for the nurses to treat anybody who needed treatment, and for us to do a damage assessment, so then we can identify areas that needed more immediate support. And so, we were there to help them. So, we were unpacking and we were in our tents, and people came down from the village with food for us, which totally blew our minds. I mean, these are people who had lost everything, and yet they were giving to us, the people who were supposed to be helping them.

Anyway, we walked throughout the region. The nurses vaccinated a whole bunch of people. And I forget how many days we were there, but a fair number of days we were there. After we pretty much covered the whole area that we could cover, we headed—we were ready to go. We packed up everything, and they were going to lead us down, it was a

12-hour walk down the mountain from where they were. And the leader of the town had a little ceremony for us. And they gave us a carving, it must have been from an animal horn, of a condor, which was the bird of the Andes, with a thin piece of gold in its mouth and a letter from, it was from the pueblo, the people of this small town to the people of the United States and, you know, basically thanking us in very effusive language for what we had done and how much we'd helped them and everything. Again, these are people who had lost everything, and it was, we couldn't believe, it was very touching. And we, of course, gave it to the Peace Corps office in Lima, and I don't know what ever happened to it. But, it got to each of us, I guess. And things like that change you. I mention that, and you'll see. You know, I think when you have experiences like that, you do want to dedicate your life to helping people.

LIBRE: Yeah. Can you talk a little about, so that was the reception you had in this fairly remote mountain pueblo.

HOFMAN: Very remote.

LIBRE: Yeah, very remote, obviously. Did you feel that, was that distinctly different from your reception and how others viewed you as Americans, despite working at the Peace Corps, but you as Americans in a place like Lima or other places where they would see the news of what was going on in Vietnam and the way the US was interacting with the broader world?

HOFMAN: Well, you know, I think a lot of the people that we met in Peru—again, I told you that a lot of people thought we were CIA—but there wasn't that much talk among—there was probably some talk about the war, but not as much. Oh, there was just something that I thought of. The reception in—well, we didn't really spend that much time in Lima, but—I should have written a note when I thought of this. I'll think of it later. And there really, I think in our local town where we were stationed, I don't think there was that much awareness. It's possible... one of the guys in my group taught at a university in Lima, so they might have faced more questions about the war and that sort of thing.

I think what's interesting in a way is that part of the time I was there, I worked for the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Agriculture had a whole bunch of pickup trucks

which they were able to use to go out into the country and do agricultural extension work and that sort of thing. Those pickup trucks were bought by the Alliance for Progress, which was a [President John F.] Kennedy program. And I seem to recall me being in some people's houses and seeing Kennedy's picture up. And I think that's how some people thought of the US maybe in more favorable terms.

But, you know, what I had to do... I mentioned the black armbands, and people asked what it was about, so we had to explain to people what had happened, and it's not like they knew. I mean, what's interesting to me, yeah, it's just we had to explain to them everything that was going on. It was not clear to them what we were doing, why we were doing it. So I would say, more so in Chile than in Peru... Chile has a well-educated, had a well-educated, informed middle class, and the people that we met when we were there were middle class. So, they knew what was going on, and they were much more aware of what the United States was doing, and they reacted more, and we had to convince them that we were there really to help people, we really were; we weren't CIA agents. We really were Peace Corps volunteers and this is why we were there and this was what we were trying to do.

One of the side things, and I don't know how relevant this is, but one of the side things, just how misplaced some foreign aid is. I mentioned the pickup trucks. It was practical; it was a smart thing to do. Years and years later it was really key to the [US] Department of Agriculture to do anything in the field. But there had been, in the mid-'60s there had been a severe drought, so the World Health Organization paid for and they installed a sorghum plant, processing plant, and they imported the sorghum to process. They don't grow sorghum where I was. So they used it once, and it rusted away.

One of my jobs, my first job, I was assigned to, because of my MBA I was assigned to the local branch of the government's development corporation. And someone in the mid-'60s had read a book about industrial parks, and, you know, and *build it, they will come*. So, every meeting sized, you know, every place that was big enough in Peru built an industrial park. And this Tacna is where I was stationed. Tacna built an industrial park. And they had roads and they had lighting and they put sewers in, and it was empty. So the goal of the government development corporation was to fill a

park. And my job working there was to try to identify opportunities and to do feasibility studies to see whether it made sense.

And so, I worked with a local businessman who had a factory in a different part of the city, and it was his idea, the idea of the government corporation was he would expand and go into the industrial park. And the analysis I did just showed it didn't make any sense, and that's what I put in my report. And we were a local office and all reports had to go to the regional office. So, when the report came back from the regional office, you wouldn't believe how feasible this thing was. It was gonna be fantastic! So, my last task for this development corporation office was to talk to the man who ran the company that was going to move over, and I said, "Don't believe the report. The change is not worth it. Don't do it." Which is really not what they wanted me to do, but that's what I did. And I ended up working for the Ministry of Agriculture for the balance of my time there.

But when I was at the development corporation, I was given a book of one-page feasibility studies done by a group from the University of North Carolina that had a USAID [US Agency for International Development] contract, and the range of projects they talked about, it was for this reason. The range of projects they talked about was like a special steel mill and, you know, maybe electronics, whatever else. And the primary reason for doing it, to justify it, was "because there isn't one in the area." I mean, the fact that there weren't the natural resources to do it and there wasn't a market for it really didn't make any difference. I mean, somebody made a ton of money on garbage. And that's how unfortunately some of the things were run.

The Japanese were very active at that time in South America. They had built a hydroelectric plant that served the area, and were going to do other major infrastructure projects to help that were really productive. I guess another thing that stands out is there was a copper mine in the mountains not too far from where we were. It was Southern Peru Copper Corporation. It was a subsidiary of Anaconda. The Americans who worked there would come down to our village periodically where I was stationed and be your typical Ugly American, no attempt to try to learn the language, loud, inconsiderate. I never went to the camp where they were, but apparently they were all white picket fences, ranch

houses just like in the United States. And the worst thing about it was that they took up an entire river valley, river, which took their mine waste out untreated to the Pacific Ocean, and they built a one-foot wide channel to carry clean water. And this is the company that never would have done it under those—at that time in the United States, but *hey, it's cheaper, so we're just gonna pollute the whole valley and the Pacific with our mine waste.*

And I saw other examples of that when I was down there. Just very upsetting. And again, I ended up working in environmental areas for a long time, including water pollution and stuff, and again, I never forget that, and it's just, again, one more thing against American business, and I didn't want to be part of that.

LIBRE: Yeah. So, can you talk a little bit more about what do you think the US's goal was when USAID and the Peace Corps was doctoring and redacting some of the remarks that you had made, you know, talking about the feasibility of things?

HOFMAN: Oh, it wasn't the Peace Corps. It was the Peruvian government's economic development corporation based at the regional level. And the way the Peace Corps works is that the host country has to request volunteers for specific tasks. It's not like the US pushes volunteers. It's really a pull situation. And I think the Peace Corps has to evaluate whether or not they think a Peace Corps volunteer can help and make a difference, and that sort of thing. But, the US, at least when I was there, didn't force volunteers on people. It was more requests from the host country. No, this was an example of a government agency that was charged with doing something that didn't make any sense, and they had to make it happen. And they didn't care whether businesses were successful in their industrial park. They just wanted to fill the park. I mean, you can see things like that probably in the United States, as well.

So, all sorts of things coming back, like, you know, you talk about the rich get richer and the poor get poorer? In our city, which had 35,000 people, so it was pretty big, there was a family that owned the car dealership that had major markets, that purchased agricultural crops when they were harvested, and could store them, and then wait until the market went up, and then sold them. You name it and this family was in the business. And, you know, it was just kind of a typical

thing that sometimes you hear. Other things that pop into my mind, just a lot of learning. I mean, Peace Corps is a great experience probably—well, the volunteers definitely get more out of it than the country does. But, these countries have been battling problems for hundreds of years. And, you know, in a space of two years, what difference can you make? And some volunteers actually were able to. I met some volunteers from Ecuador that had a really interesting program that were able to see tangible results in two years.

In order to accomplish something, you need people to take a risk and be the early adopters. And if you don't have that, things won't happen. So, one of the guys I was with, who had been there before me, worked with an agricultural cooperative, and the head of the coop was willing to take risks and expand. And this guy actually upped for a third year in the Peace Corps just so he could work with the coop. And they produced olives and maybe wine, and worked really hard and it was great. And then, a day before he was to leave country after his third year, the head of the coop dropped dead from a heart attack, and you knew it just wasn't going to go anywhere after that.

I had a project that I was working on. Rightly or wrongly—I mean, you can ask the question—the economy, at least where I was, and I think it's probably true, I think you can generalize, had a lot of inefficiencies in it, but those inefficiencies enabled more people to at least live, eat. Everybody got a little bit. Nobody got a lot. So, for example, there were women who would take milk from Peruvian farmers in 5 or 10 gallon milk cans, and travel across the border into Chile and sell the milk, and they took a piece. So, the farmers didn't get as much. The women got a little. And then the women filled their milk cans with contraband which they brought back to Peru and sold on the black market. Not very efficient, but they were able to support their families. And one of the projects we worked on was to try to help farmers by having them sell directly to Chile, and eliminate the middle man, which was a problem. But, it was able to take place because it was a dictatorship when I was there, which reminds me of something else.

I got in country in September, and elections were coming up in November in the States, so my mother writes me and says, "So, honey, do women have the right to vote in Peru?" And I wrote back and I said, "Mom, nobody has the right to

vote in Peru.” But, one project I tried doing—this gets kind of the first mover or early adopters—I was working in the Ministry of Agriculture. I was trying to set up a farmers’ market, and there were a few farmers who were willing to do it, but just not enough. I mean, people are very conservative, don’t want to try anything new because it’s risky and it’s really, it’s a challenge. The other thing, how—the role of women just was so stark. It was the women who were responsible, the women who did the business, the women who kept families together. And men drank a lot. Terrible generalization, but in a lot of cases in the rural areas, that’s what it was like.

LIBRE: Right. How did this, I guess as you’re experiencing this there, it’s obviously some of these things were sort of disheartening to be a part of a US organization that in many ways, it was helping to some degree, but to some degree you feel like there were problems abroad that were sort of hard to address. How did you contextualize yourself and your role in the Peace Corps as sort of a—as an arm of the US being there to try to help? How did you see yourself in comparison to the US’s effort in Vietnam? Did you feel at least that the US was trying in doing a better job, you know, with forces like the Peace Corps rather than sending in a military force to try to institute regime change or enforce policy...

HOFMAN: Yeah, I think, I mean, the people that I worked with really cared. In general, the people I worked with really cared about the people and wanted to try to do the best that they could. Yes, we were representatives of the US government, but I think we really interacted with people on a person to person basis. We were just kind of blessed to be able to be in that, have that opportunity. And I think each of us had a certain ethic—and I’ll touch on this in a minute—each of us had a certain ethic about working and doing the best we could, and helping the people that we could.

And, you know, in some ways I think the most help that I provided was maybe during the—I mean, the most tangible help was during the earthquake relief. I mean, we know we actually did some stuff there. I know I planted seeds with some of the people I worked with. I know I saved this one businessman some money, maybe going bankrupt, by not going into the industrial park. I think we were also good ambassadors of the United States, maybe at a time when

the United States really needed good ambassadors, but that's not why the Peace Corps was started necessarily, although maybe. I mean, we had expertise. We had some knowledge. So I think from that point of view, it was yes, we were representatives of the US and the people who thought we were CIA certainly tied us to the government, but I think a lot of the relationships and everything that we had were personal.

I want to mention something else, because it's pretty amazing. The second time we went up to the earthquake relief area was quite a while after, not tons of time after, and it was in a city that had been around 10,000 people, and there was a camp set up, well, huge operations set up for the international community. There were people... There were Russians there. Russians had a mobile hospital. A Peace Corps volunteer had an emergency appendectomy in the Russian hospital. There were really people from all over the world, and we were all there to help with the relief effort. And, you know, at night we'd get together, and there were some German volunteers, and the German volunteers spoke Spanish and they spoke some Russian, so we communicated with the Russians through the Germans using Spanish. And what hit all of us was, *look how the world can pull together after a disaster, and why does it take a disaster to do that?*

The one thing that we thought was funny was that the Russians insisted that all their male workers wear slacks and white shirts and be clean shaven and everything, and the Peace Corps volunteers were there in jeans, work shirts, long hair, beards, whatever. [laughter] And the people just called all of us gringos. They couldn't tell the difference. But again, that was something where people were really working hard to try to help others. It just it happened to be after a disaster.

LIBRE: Can you talk about going forward near the end of your time at the Peace Corps, and sort of returning home, what was that like?

HOFMAN: Well, can you hold on a second? We heat with wood and I have to feed the fire.

LIBRE: Oh, of course. Yeah, absolutely, no problem. [pause in tape]

HOFMAN: Well, I had to come back. We traveled by land to come back to the States. I'm trying to think. Phyllis came down. That was our second date, and we traveled with a friend from Texas. And let me think, anything earthshaking about that? Probably nothing earthshaking about that. But, I remember being back, and probably the first time I saw friends from college was at the Dartmouth-Harvard game, and, but maybe before that. I was home for three days and my mother said, "Okay, time to get going, time to find a job." But, when I met my friends at the Dartmouth-Harvard game, they were really worried about me, because I think pretty much all of them knew what they were going to do. They were all set with their lives and everything. And they were upset with me because one, I didn't know really what I was going to do, but the most worrying thing was that I really wasn't worried about it. And they were very concerned about that.

I knew that I wanted to live in a rural area, and again, I think it partly was from being at Dartmouth, and so I looked primarily in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. And I wanted to work in government or a non-profit or something like that that helped people. We lived with Phyllis' sister in the Boston area for a while, until we knew where we were going to go. And it was really just trying, on my own pretty much, just trying to search out the type of opportunity that I felt would be meaningful and appropriate for me to do, given what my values were and what I wanted to try to do with my life.

LIBRE: Right. Can you—sort of a timeline now—what was the date now when you got back?

HOFMAN: So I got back in the end of—well the fall of 1971. And I failed my physical on November 10th of 1971, and started looking for work pretty much right away. And I got a job in New Hampshire at the beginning of 1972, and started—let's see, how did that work? Was it... or it might have been the end of '71 that I got the job? It was late '71, early '72, I started working for the state planning office in New Hampshire, in Concord, New Hampshire, and that's where we lived for a while. We lived in Concord for a couple of years and then moved to Canterbury, which is a small town north of Concord, and lived there until 2013, so there for 38 years.

LIBRE: And when you get back in 1971, the fall of 1971, what was the political feeling sort of surrounding the war at that time?

HOFMAN: Ah, ah, ah, thought of something else. To the extent that we could monitor what was going on with the United States, we did. And one of the things, and I don't know when I made this vow, but one of the things that I committed myself to was when I got back to the States, to do everything I could to try to defeat [President] Richard Nixon.

LIBRE: Why was that? What made you think that?

HOFMAN: It was the war, and everything around that. But it was the war. And, so when we moved to Concord, New Hampshire, we got involved politically in the election, you know, canvassing, whatever. I mean, [Senator George] McGovern never had a chance, but we worked our buns off to try to defeat Nixon.

LIBRE: And were your thoughts at the time that Nixon had sort of made false promises to the nation, saying that he was going to get the US out as soon as he could?

HOFMAN: He probably did. I think I was just building up over all the things that had happened while I was out of the country. It wasn't just the false promise, because a false promise was part of his campaign, and he didn't talk about his false promise until, I don't know, was it sometime during '72? So, it was all the things that happened, all of the things that the US did from '69 to '71, maybe a little before that, but that just prompted me to do that. It, was it the war? It was the war more than any campaign BS that he used.

When we were—and I'm trying to think—we were home at some point in the summer of '72 during the Republican Convention, and my mother had some cousins who were visiting us, and I don't know how old Cousin Rose was at the time. She might have been in her 80s at least. And she walked into the room where we had the television, and Walter Cronkite was saying, talking about the new Nixon—you know, because he had run in 1960, lost, and then he was running for re-election again—"This is the new Nixon." [laughter] And Cousin Rose said, "Hell, he's the new Nixon. He's the same son-of-a-bitch he always was." So, you know, they were political people in my family.

But I don't think it was a campaign promise that he said, "Oh, we have a way to get out of the war." It was just everything

that had built up and everything that had happened over that period, that we were aware of anyway. And, you know, I spent a lot of time doing it. It didn't do much good, but it's something that I just felt I had to do.

LIBRE: Getting back, what would you say your main takeaways from your service in the Peace Corps were?

HOFMAN: Boy, a lot. Some of the things I've shared in terms of the role of women, in terms of having people be able to take a risk to try to improve their lot. There are some imponderables. I mean, what do you do about an economy where the inefficiencies enable more people to live and survive versus an economy in which some people are much better off and a bunch of people can't survive? I mean, the big things, the big takeaways were of how I wanted to spend my life. I wanted to work to help people, and help the environment. I mean, that river, that whole river valley polluted by the mine kind of stuck with me. And actually, one of my first jobs when I came back was working on a water and land use plant for the State of New Hampshire. So it was about the environment; it was about helping others. It was how big the challenges are for these countries.

And I guess there are two other things that I didn't think about maybe to share. I don't know if it's relevant or not. One of them was one of my friends from Dartmouth who was a year ahead of me somehow, maybe he signed up for the National Guard or something, and he had to take training on Parris Island, and I got a postcard from him when I was in the Peace Corps. And it was a picture on the front of it of bayonet training, and the postcard said, "The lesson of the bayonet is to kill, to kill without mercy. It's fun if you happen to like killing," which he didn't. The other was that I mentioned before one of the guys who was in my Tuck School class had been in the Peace Corps. He was in Ecuador before. And we had talked. I'm going to get something to drink quickly.

LIBRE: Yeah, absolutely.

HOFMAN: We had talked about doing something together. Well, after Tuck School, he got a job with an advertising agency in New York City, and he ultimately got the Hershey account. And so, we wrote back and forth a couple of times. And I had one letter I sent with how frustrating things were, it's hard getting

things done, and everything. And he wrote back and said, "Peter," he said, "you accomplish more in one day than I accomplish in a year." And that was really depressing for me, that there's somebody who actually had been in the Peace Corps, know that you could make a difference, and knew that his life was kind of meaningless. And so, I never made as much money as most of my classmates, but I've always been able to look myself in the mirror and I've always been able to be passionate about what I do and how to be consistent with what I think's important. And I think I can attribute a lot to my parents, my upbringing, being an ethical culturist, a lot to my Peace Corps experience. But if it had not been for the Vietnam War, maybe I would have joined IBM or Mobil or something, and things would have been a lot different.

LIBRE: Wow, yeah, that's amazing. What I understand from that, that the Vietnam War itself pushed you into something that for all intents and purposes was not a good thing, pushed you to do many good things throughout your life. I think that's very admirable.

HOFMAN: Yeah, I guess so. I guess you can look at it that way. And I know... you know, I've met people, I've met veterans from the war. And I think that we don't understand how much of an impact war has on people. We don't fully appreciate it. And I don't know, man's inhumanity to man. We only have one planet. Can we get along? I know it sounds idealistic and stuff, but just my experiences kind of have reinforced those feelings, I guess, and that's what I've been trying to do with my life, to get along and make the place a little better.

Actually, one of the things that I've been really active with over the past year is the Class of '68 has launched on Homecoming Weekend our community service project. And what it is, we are reaching out to the entire class with our own Google group and website data online catalog, and asking classmates and their spouses and partners to document the community service work that they've done in enough detail so that it can inspire others and help others do more. And we've created a public space on our class website so people can see some of the activities that people have done. And I've also sent information to the William Jewett Tucker Center [Hanover, NH] and to the Center for Social Impact, and we should have an article in *The D* [*The Dartmouth*] this week, I think, about it, and so we hope to

inspire some more students to get involved with community service work. And I know my classmates will be more than willing to or eager to talk to students about what they've done, and in some cases maybe open some doors for them. Which is apropos of nothing. It's just still trying to do good work if I can.

LIBRE: Oh, you certainly are. And I think yeah, we can all learn a lot from that, and I want to thank you so much for sharing all this today. Was there anything else? Is there anything else you want to communicate or come across?

HOFMAN: I don't know. I think, well, I guess one of the things... The second time I went up to the earthquake zone, and this time the Peace Corps recruited former volunteers who were architects and engineers to come down, and we traveled around the region we were assigned and training people when they rebuilt their homes to do it in such a way that it's less likely for people to be hurt. And what happened is a lot of the homes were made out of adobes, really heavy blocks, but nothing tying the walls together. So, in some places where the earthquake hit, the walls fell out and the whole ceiling collapsed and killed people. In the other cases people ran outside, but the walls collapsed outside, so they killed them that way. And what the engineers and architects were doing was showing people how they could rebuild their homes and tie the walls together, which is just a very person to person, low tech appropriate technology response to a problem, which I felt was really neat, very productive, very helpful. And a lot of times I think you don't have to get too fancy about foreign aid. I think some really basic stuff can take people a long way. I'm trying to think of... I don't know, I've probably talked long enough.

LIBRE: No, no such thing.

HOFMAN: But there was... Well, I guess one thing was interesting to me, and, you know, the Peace Corps has evolved over time and... I have to get more water, hold on one second. One of the volunteers that I met, we did a no-no. You're not supposed to go to Rio de Janeiro during Carnaval. But tons of Peace Corps volunteers do and it was fantastic. But I met a volunteer there who worked in Tierra del Fuego, which is at the very bottom tip of South America, and he was a roofer. And he loved this job. I mean, in the summer he roofed for like 17, 18 hours a day, and in the winter he could only help

people put roofs on for, I don't know, six hours a day or whatever. But, I mean, there are good ways to do foreign aid and to help people, and I think in some cases the Peace Corps got it right.

One of the mandatory things we had to do in Peace Corps training was to watch a movie that had been made by the Peace Corps to teach a lesson. It was about community development volunteers in Colombia in the mid-'60s. And they had internalized some of the local people's complaints, and maybe even went one step further and got them more organized to fight the government about various things and injustices and stuff. And the lesson was: *it's really not our place*. And there were a lot of discussions that we had amongst ourselves that we should only do what we're asked to do, and not try to impose our values on them, in terms of the natives. And, so we were always really conscious of how to act, how to respond, how to help. And unfortunately I think there can be a lot of misplaced help. But, I thought that was interesting. And one of my classmates was a volunteer. Dartmouth used to send a lot of people to Peace Corps, and I've got a bunch of classmates who were in Peace Corps. I was in touch with one of them recently who was in Colombia, asked him whether he saw that same movie, because it came from there. But, is that relevant or not? I don't know.

LIBRE: Oh, absolutely.

HOFMAN: It's about being sensitive to the local conditions. And I guess, I know what I was going to say, which I think is important. So many of us have been blessed in their upbringing and their family life and their economic well-being. It is very difficult if you're in that situation to understand people who aren't as fortunate as you, and certainly having an overseas experience like the Peace Corps, and there are other opportunities, I think's really important.

And we had two kids, and one of them participated in an American Friends Service Committee project in Mexico. And we never had as much money as a lot of families that our kids were friendly with growing up, and so I think our daughter felt kind of deprived sometimes. And she called us when she got to Mexico, and the locals had picked her up at the airport and taken to their home, and the girl who led that group to greet them asked my daughter if she was rich. And she said, "Dad, I grew up with a roof over my head, so I had

to say yes, I was rich.” I think it’s—unfortunately our other daughter never had that type of experience, but I think it’s so important. And you can read about it and you can see movies or whatever, but I think it’s important and useful for people to experience and actually live in areas that aren’t as blessed perhaps as what we had. And you don’t have to go overseas. You can do it in the United States, too. And I think that’s really important. So I’ve been a really big proponent of national service of any kind.

Oh, that’s something that just hit me. When the lottery came out, and probably because my number was 125, I did a lot of thinking, and I probably even have my notes from that. I read a lot when I was in the Peace Corps. I had this hugely long diary when I was in the Peace Corps, and I also saw a lot of movies. You have a lot of time on your hands. And I remember a lot of the thoughts that I had about people sitting in Congress may or may not have had military service, but their beliefs that in order to get the spoils of an American economy, American society, you have to be in the military and kill people, and how wrong that was. And how many of those people actually served? And most of them didn’t.

But, a lot of that went through my mind, just trying to think, *okay, how is this country run? How do you become a true citizen? Why is military so important?* because I thought it needn’t be. *And what right do people have to put others at risk and put them in situations that they really shouldn’t be in?* When, I don’t know if you remember, and I’m not even sure which election it was, Wesley Clark ran for President a while ago. It might even have been, I don’t know, maybe 10 years ago or more. He was a former general. And in a way, the good news about being in New Hampshire, although I understand now that the legislature has passed a bill that you have to have a New Hampshire license plate, a license in order to vote here, because they don’t like college kids voting in New Hampshire primary elections. But, I supported Wesley Clark in the primary because he was a general who knew what the horrors of war were, and of all the people running, would probably be the last person to get us involved in military action where we really shouldn’t be. And that might be counterintuitive, but...

And that’s probably it. I don’t know. Do you have anything else?

LIBRE: Oh, yeah, this has been incredible. Thank you so much for being here today, for sharing all this. I think that there is a lot, you have a lot of profound and deeply, actually incredibly well integrated into the Vietnam story, and the Dartmouth story, as well. And I want to say thank you so much again.

HOFMAN: So I hope so. Well, I appreciate what you're doing. I appreciate your taking the time and listening. I think this is really worthwhile. There's no question that that era had a big impact on our lives.

LIBRE: That's right.

HOFMAN: And I was one of the lucky ones in a way. Not "in a way." I was one of the lucky ones.

[End of Interview.]