Ron Laliberte
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Vietnam Project
May 8, 2018
Transcribed by Karen Navarro

CAO: This is Karen Cao ['19] conducting an oral history interview for the Dartmouth Vietnam Project with Mr. Ron Laliberte, a resident of the Upper Valley. Today is May 8th, 2018, and Mr. Laliberte and I are at the Rauner Special Collections Library [at Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH]. Mr. Laliberte, I first want to thank you again for joining us today. I really appreciate you taking the time out of your day to conduct this interview with us. So, let's go ahead and get started with some basic background information. Could you tell me where and when you were born?

LALIBERTE: I was born in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, which is a small industrial town in the northeastern section of Rhode Island, in October of 1944.

CAO: And what were your parents' names?

LALIBERTE: My father's name was Ron, just like mine. My mother's name was Anita. That section of Rhode Island's a very ethnic French Canadian town where the French people came down from Canada, Newfoundland, to work the textile mills in the 19th century. And so, many of the people were French Canadian, as were both of them. When I was born, my father was in the Marines, so he was on his way to Okinawa. He was in the 1st Marine Battalion, and he was in Okinawa. So, he came home to visit me when I was born, and then went over to Okinawa, and then spent about eight months in the hospital, and then he came back. And, so I didn't get to know him until perhaps a year old or so.

CAO: And did he ever talk about these experiences growing up with you?

LALIBERTE: His wartime experiences?

CAO: Yes.

LALIBERTE: No. We don't tend to talk about that. It is funny that you asked that, though, because when he was about 80—he died at 89, which was about four or five years ago—he was

visiting me here, because he knew that I'd served, too, because I'm his son and I was gone and my wife was living in his town while I was gone. I asked him if he remembered the day that he was injured, because we'd never talked about it. And he said, "You just don't forget." And he mentioned that he was on Okinawa, which was a bad island, right? 7,000 Marines died on that island. And he was crawling up a hill, and a Japanese soldier saw him and rolled a hand grenade down on him, and it took his shoulder off. And he remembers being strapped onto a gurney and taken and getting last rites, and that was his last day. But, he thought it was over for him, because he lost consciousness, because he had been hit in the back first with a mortar, and when he was yelling for a medic, the soldier saw him and rolled a hand grenade down. So, he was lucky to survive. But he never talked about it aside from that, and I had to ask and he was 80.

CAO: Wow. All right, so, yes, bringing it back, did you have siblings growing up?

LALIBERTE: Yes. I'm the oldest of four. I have two sisters and a brother. All younger than I.

CAO: And were you close to them growing up?

LALIBERTE: No. I would say not particularly close, because there was a fairly significant age gap. My mother didn't have her second child until I was like seven years old. So, by the time I left home at 17, the next one down was 10, and then I think my younger sister was probably three. So, there wasn't a whole lot of interaction there, plus, you know, the gender issues, they're different.

CAO: And did you all grow up in Rhode Island?

LALIBERTE: Yes.

CAO: What was that like growing up? What was your childhood like?

LALIBERTE: Well, we were clearly, I would say by today's standards, lower middle class. We grew up in tenements, for the most part. I grew up in a tenement. Later, as they aged, they ultimately bought a house. So, I was kind of a tenement dweller, a six-family tenement dweller, very typical in

Woonsocket. And then, my father turned, I think it was 43, he bought his first home in the next town over, which is North Smithfield, Rhode Island. And that's where the rest of the siblings kind of grew up. I think they'd consider that more home than I. I never lived there.

CAO: You never lived at that house?

LALIBERTE: No, well, I would visit it, but I was never an occupant, full-time occupant.

CAO: And could you describe the tenements that you mentioned that you lived in?

LALIBERTE: Well, there were six family tenements, three in the front and three in the rear. You felt a member of the gentry when you moved from third floor rear to first floor front, [laughter] where the rent went up from eight dollars a week to nine. Right on the main road. And it was a very urban setting, and we walked to school and lots of cars on the road.

CAO: And at this point what did your parents do for a living?

LALIBERTE: My father was a factory worker back then. My mother was largely stay-at-home at that point. As we got older, my father got another career; she went back to work and worked on various assembly lines.

CAO: What was the other career that your father…

LALIBERTE: Well, when he was probably in his early 40s, a new plant opened up in North Smithfield, Rhode Island, and it was a plastic molding plant. And they were looking for someone to be what they called a color matcher, someone that—yeah, they made bottle caps, so they wanted someone that could come in and match these colors so that when they got a big order, they could make the colors appropriate and send it to Pullman Springs, and Pullman Springs would put them on the caps so they'd be the same color. So, he thought he would apply for that job, but he didn't know anything about colors. So, he went to the library, and he checked out a color graph, and he studied: yeah, you mix blue with red to get green. I'm wrong with my colors, but, you know… [laughter] And he applied and he got that job, and he stayed there for 25 years. And he was really good at it. And he became the head of that department, then became the head of quality

control. So, he just took a chance. Like so many people, if you don't have much of a net, you don't mind taking a chance because it's going to get better than what you have anyway. So, it worked out well for him.

CAO: It worked out well.

LALIBERTE: Yeah. So, it was his second career.

CAO: And your mother you mentioned also went back out to work?

LALIBERTE: Yeah, she worked in various assembly lines. So, there's a lot of jewelry manufacturers in the area, so she would go from one jewelry manufacturer to another working on the assembly line, putting beads together and things.

CAO: And as a child, what would you do in your pastime growing up?

LALIBERTE: I was involved in athletics. So I really enjoyed… I was a baseball player and hockey player and…

CAO: Jack of all trades.

LALIBERTE: Jack of all trades. So that kept me busy and that kept me active, socially and physically active.

CAO: And did you go to school in the area?

LALIBERTE: I went to the local grammar school. We walked to school and came home for lunch. And then, when I was in the seventh grade, my parents moved to that next town. It's one town over, it's North Smithfield, Rhode Island. It's Hanover to Norwich, it's that kind of thing. And so, I went to the seventh and eighth grade in North Smithfield, which was a little bit different, a culture shock, because that was more suburban and the kids were a little bit different, and they weren't city kids. But we did not have a high school. So, the town would pay for you to go to a high school, therefore gave us the options to take a test if you were so inclined to go to one of the private schools, and the town would pay.

So, in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, I had options of Woonsocket High School or Burrillville High School, which is where we wanted to go, but then they cut us off in the eighth grade because there were too many kids coming, so I

couldn't go there. So I took a test and went to Mount St. Charles Academy in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, which is, or was then an all boys Catholic high school run by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. So I stayed there for four years.

CAO: And was this experience different from your experience growing up? How did going here affect…

LALIBERTE: Well, I was a day student. And the school was half day student and half boarder. And the boarders were, many of the boarders were kids that maybe had had troubles in their local areas, New York, New Jersey, and their parishes got together, the parents from the parishes, and sent them away to this "boarding school," and I put that in quotes because it was, for them, it was quite a rigorous development. So, it was different. First of all, there were no girls there, right? And it was somewhat rigorous academically, a little bit more rigorous academically. So, it was different in that sense.

CAO: And what did you like to study in high school?

LALIBERTE: I don't think I was much of a… I was more interested in athletics in high school. And I was a very young person that went. That was it. I was still 16 when I was a senior. So, I had much more of an inkling towards the histories and the Englishes, rather than the sciences and the maths.

CAO: Was there any athletic coach that really mentored you or played an important role during this time?

LALIBERTE: There may have been outside of school in some of the other athletic teams that I played for, but I wouldn't say there so much.

CAO: And when did you graduate from high school?

LALIBERTE: I graduated in June of 1962.

CAO: And what did you hope to do at this point? What was your timeline thereafter?

LALIBERTE: Well, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I knew that I was very young at 16. I'd just turned 17. So, I decided that I might want to go to prep school for a year, to mature a little bit more physically and academically. So, myself and a friend of

mine applied to and went to Bridgton Academy [Bridgton,ME] in Maine, and that was a year of PG work, and then we took some of the things we were taking in high school, but teachers were a little better perhaps, so it was the algebra and geometry and English and French, and I played hockey and soccer there.

CAO: Was this one year of prep more academically focused, but you were also able to continue athletic activities there?

LALIBERTE: Yes, both of those things were true.

CAO: And how would you—I know that that was only one year—but how would you compare your high school experience to this prep school? What was different?

LALIBERTE: Well, what was different, I was a little older and quite a bit more serious, more dedicated, so it was reflected in my grades.

CAO: And, so at this point were you able to sort of figure out what you wished to do next?

LALIBERTE: Well, it was more a process of elimination. I kind of knew what I didn't want to do.

CAO: And what didn't you want to do?

LALIBERTE: I didn't want to be a chemist [laughter] or a mathematician. I wasn't good at working with my hands. That wasn't my thing. So, my assumption, then, and it had to have been probably earlier, too, but it manifested itself more then, was that I was probably going to do something that was people facing, something imaginative, and creative; imaginative, people facing, and competitive. Probably, therefore, somewhere in the business world. But, to that I was wide open. I didn't know if I was going to work in a hotel or work in a computer science firm. I didn't know.

CAO: So, what were your next steps after this? Did you apply to college?

LALIBERTE: Well, okay. So, not to get too far off the track here, but when I was graduating, a friend of mine whom I'd grown up with was two or three years ahead of me, and he was at Johns Hopkins [University, Baltimore, MD]. He was a pre-med and

was taking a year off. I think organic chemistry got to him, so he was taking a year off then. And he wrote me a letter and he said that he was working at the Fontainebleau [Miami Beach] in Florida, and that they owned a hotel in New Jersey called the Spring Lake Hotel, a Monmouth Hotel in Spring Lake, New Jersey, and why didn't I apply there? And we'd hook up. He'd leave Johns Hopkins and he'd be done with his stint in Florida and we'd hook up there. So, that sounded good to me because I didn't want to go back to the old mill town and living on a sidewalk. I didn't want that.

So I applied, and my parents picked me up at graduation and I asked them if they'd kindly drop me off at [Boston] Logan [Airport], because I wasn't going home. So, they were a little shocked by that, but they were okay, so they dropped me off at Logan and I took a plane to Newark, New Jersey, had a suitcase and a laundry bag, laundry bag still full, and found my way down to the Monmouth Hotel, and I stayed there for four months. And it was a real experience that I will never have, I never have forgotten, because it was 150 kids from all over the United States, most of them older than I because there I was, I wasn't even technically a freshman yet, and there were juniors and seniors in college that came from Tennessee and New York. And Spring Lake was only an hour south of Manhattan, so going into Manhattan all the time for a kid that grew up on a sidewalk in Woonsocket was a really eye-opening thing. I loved it. I loved it and if I had the opportunity, I would have gone to the Fontainebleau, but I didn't.

So, I had already applied at several colleges, and so I ended up in September going back, going to school, which was at the University of Rhode Island [Kingston, RI]. And that wasn't my first choice, even though I'd gotten into some other schools that perhaps would have been my first choice, but other guys at Bridgton that I was with were going there. And they said, "Oh, you know, come on, it'll be fun. Yeah, we'll go and see a fraternity and it'll be fun. And we'll have fun there." So, I went, and I didn't like it at all. And I didn't like it—I mean, I did okay, but I'd just spent the year in Bridgeton, and I'd just spent four months in New Jersey, and the kids were older, and we were going back and forth to Manhattan, we're living on our own. And suddenly, I found myself in Adams Hall on the third floor with 17-year-old kids having water fights in the hallway. And it just wasn't me. I

was ready for something else. So I finished out the year, and I knew I didn't want to go back.

So I went back to New Jersey for another summer in New Jersey, and it weighed on me, because gee, I didn't want to go back and face that again. So, I remember there was a small business school in Hartford, Connecticut, that was more of my inkling. You know, you lived in an apartment, you lived in the city, you were on your own, you'd get a part-time job. And I applied to it in like August from that summer, and there were some openings. They let me in. And it was like a two-year business school that was associated with, or going to be associated with the University of Hartford. So you go there for two years, you get an associate's degree, you go to the University of Hartford, and, you know, you go on. So I applied there, got in, and moved to Hartford, Connecticut. So I was now 19 or whatever I was. I met four or five guys who had an apartment in town. It was all business. Yeah, the school was business, there was no dorm life, we're on our own, we could do what we wanted to do, which I just felt more comfortable in my own skin in that more loose environment.

CAO: So you adjusted better to…

LALIBERTE: Oh, yeah, and it wasn't that I was an outcast at URI; it was that *I don't want to do this for four years*. *It seems like I've lived this before*. So, I went to Hartford. And in my second year there—or in my first year there, I met a woman that turned out to be my wife. And before I graduated in November of my second year, so now this is November of 1965, we got married. So, we were very young. I was 21, she was 19.

CAO: Was this common during this…

LALIBERTE: It was more common than today, but not—it wasn't every other person. But we were both ready. You know, we were both just there and we were ready, so… So we got married in November. She was working at Travelers Insurance Company downtown. So I graduated in May, and my intent was to continue on to probably to two more years or a year-and-a-half, probably stay in Hartford. We liked Hartford, that whole area. But I got drafted. And I got drafted because, while I was still in undergraduate school, I'd had the year at Bridgeton Academy, a year at URI, two years in Hartford,

and so that's four years of deferments, and I was not in graduate school yet. And even though I was married, that didn't offset the draft status. So I was forced to join something. And I never had a proclivity to being in the military, my father's experience notwithstanding. I respected them, but it wasn't—I didn't grow up to be a soldier. But I knew that that's what I had to do.

So, in June of 1966, I joined the United States Air Force, and I left—I'd been married in November, so in June of '66 I left for basic training in Texas. My wife at that point moved to Rhode Island, and we got her a—I think at that point she was living with my parents. Yeah, she went to my parents while I was in basic training.

And after basic training, they told me that I was going to become an air-to-ground communications person. You don't have a choice, right? So, air-to-ground was I go to a site, and as aircraft come into the United States, I have headsets on with two frequencies in each ear, and they would call me once an hour to let me know where they were, what the altitudes they were flying, if there was any issues like a "Mayday" or something, then I would handle it, and there was a whole protocol to do that. Once they got closer to the shore, we turned them over to ground control. So, that required, though, about five months of tech school. So, they sent me to Mississippi for five months or so. And I graduated from tech school, and I came home in November. So, the timeframe at that point was, I got married in November of '65, I left in June of '66, and I didn't come home again until November of '66. So, in that first year I was gone for six months, roughly half the time. So, while I was in… Oh, do you have a question?

CAO: Yes, I want to bring it back real quick. So you said that your wife and you married in '65?

LALIBERTE: Yes.

CAO: I'm sure at that time, the news about the war was pretty prevalent everywhere.

LALIBERTE: Right.

CAO: What sort of effect did that have on you? Was it sort of at the backdrops or was it, you know, you were concerned that…

LALIBERTE: Well, it's more than a concern; you're living in it, and you talk to people that were coming and going all the time. And as a communications operator, I would oftentimes talk to pilots that were coming back from combat zones. And if there was a "Mayday," there was a whole protocol of what you had to do and to handle this, but one of the things was, "Where are you? What's the nature of your problem, and what do you have on board?" And if I had a "Mayday," everything would stop, and I'd get rid of all the other frequencies, and usually everybody would gather around and I'd put the speakers on so only he and I will be talking. And the last thing that he would tell me was what he had on board, and if there was a pause, if there was a pause when he told me what was on board, we knew what was coming, and all of us would just, our stomachs would sink because it would say, he would say, "And 741 pallets of human remains." And, you know, we would pause. And even my answer back to him was a pause. So, we lived in that. And of course, you read the newspapers, and my wife was… Well, while I was doing that, she was with me at that point because that's after tech school. So, after tech school, they sent me to a SAC [Strategic Air Command] base in Maine, Loring Air Force Base [ME], and that's where I did that air-to-ground work from that base for almost two years.

CAO: And this was in sixty…

LALIBERTE: I got to Loring in I would say October of '68, and I stayed there—no, I'm sorry, not '68, no. That would be '67, yeah. September of '67. No, you know what? That's wrong, too. Because I got out of tech school in September or October, November of '66, and that's when I went to Loring, September of '66, right.

CAO: So, bringing it back to my point. You mentioned that your father had been in the Marines. Was there any sort of inclination—how did you make your decision to choose between the Marines or the…

LALIBERTE: Oh, the Army or the Air Force? I just thought that it perhaps, I'm not thinking it too clearly, but I thought, well, maybe in the Air Force I would have more opportunities to learn a little bit more, to do something more career oriented, maybe something more people-facing. I didn't know what was going to happen to me later on, but at that point, that was my

thinking. It was four years instead of three, but I thought, well, maybe I could get something out of it and maybe take some education classes while I was there, too, and make the best of it. So…

CAO: So, right after this decision was made, you went to basic training?

LALIBERTE: Basic training in Texas, and then the tech school in Mississippi, Biloxi, Mississippi, which was a bit of a culture shock for a Yankee. [laughter]

CAO: And could you describe the sorts of trainings or classes that you took in both, in basics and in…

LALIBERTE: Well, basic, it was, you know, up early and running all day, and, you know, it was more about harassment. And then, of course, you'd have rifle training, and so on and so forth. It was just six weeks of changing your mindset from being a civilian to a military environment, which is kind of stripping you of your own identity, and learning to take orders in a more direct and unquestioning way.

CAO: And at this point, how did your family react to the draft?

LALIBERTE: Well, my family, their roots—they grew up in the Depression, and my father was one of 10, and he and all five—five boys, five girls—all five boys served in all the branches. Serving wasn't an unusual thing. It wasn't something that they talked about or even that they encouraged. But in my neighborhood, and with them, you get drafted and you went. Deferments were for another class of people. We were poor kids, well, maybe not poor, but certainly not deferment caliber. So, we assumed that we were going to go.

And when I was at Loring, the Air Force Base in Maine, our career fields, the nomenclature was that we were 293's, that's air-to-ground communications operators, 29350's, and our functions were what the military would call frozen, which means you were never going to go to another base except that one, but you were going to go to Southeast Asia. And you were going to go. So, we knew that this was a—we were in the line, the line was getting shorter, every week two or three of your guys would go, and your number was coming. And you could go anywhere. You could go to Tan Son Nhat [Air Base], you could go to Special Forces camp, you could

go anywhere. You didn't have any choice of what you did when you went there.

You had a question about tech school, though. Did I… What was the training like there?

CAO: Yes, this was in Mississippi.

LALIBERTE: Yeah. Mississippi, yeah. So that was, it was very concentrated…

CAO: On Air Force?

LALIBERTE: It's on communications, air-to-ground communications, so…

CAO: Could you explain what those are?

LALIBERTE: What that is? Yeah. So, as an air-to-ground communicator, I would sit—I'm at a panel, a table like this, with a bank of radios. I'd have headsets on, and in each headset I would have two frequencies. And so, when a pilot left Germany, they would tell that pilot, "Once you're airborne, contact Loring on such and such a frequency, and you tell that guy at Loring where you are every hour: your flight level, what time it is, where you're gonna be in the next hour, what latitude and longitude, your speed," so on and so forth. And every hour he would check in with me, and if he didn't, I'd have to be calling him. So I had four frequencies, and if you were calling me on one frequency, you may not know that I'm already taking a call in the other ear perhaps, so I can't talk to you. But I hear you calling me. So, sometimes you'd get aggravated. So I'd have to stop what I'm doing here and say, "Hold one." I'd go to you and say, "Excuse me, there's somebody on the other line." The guy in the left ear didn't know that I had stopped listening, so I have to go back to him and say, "Could you say again all that for flight level 350, please?" So, this would go on, and sometimes I'd have four of them going on at once. So, it was like being a short order cook. And then if you had a "Mayday," then everything stopped, you had to clear everything, you had to tell everybody to go onto their other frequencies, and then you'd just pick that up and handle that going forward. So, that's what we did.

And we worked three shifts a day, eight hours a shift every day. Every day. So you worked two days of, let's say, 8:00 to

4:00, then you'd come in 4:00 to midnight for two days, and then you'd come in midnight to 8:00 in the morning the next two days. And in military style, if you worked Monday and Tuesday 8:00 to 4:00, and you came in Wednesday at 4:00, well, because you had left Tuesday at 4:00 and came in Wednesday at 4:00, that was your day off, even though you're working eight hours each day. And when you worked Wednesday 4:00 to 12:00 and Thursday 4:00 to 12:00, and didn't come in until Friday at midnight, well, that was your second day off. So, it was accepted, you couldn't do anything about it, you're always tired.

CAO: And did the trainings sort of prepare you mentally for the job, or was it more of a…

Cocci Yeah, the training, I'll go back to the training because I skipped over that a couple of times. The training was pretty rigorous. The training started at 6:00 in the morning, and we were about four or five miles away from the training center, so you were up at 3:00, eating at 4:00—I may be off a half an hour or so—getting in line, running three miles or five miles to the flight line, because that's where the classes were, go to school 6:00 to 12:00, with a 15-minute break, and it was non-stop, just non-stop. And it was all about this: typing, positions, listening for—you know, sometimes the tape would purposely be hazy and fuzzy and you'd have to get through it. And, then at noontime you'd settle up again, run five miles back, eat, maybe go back to the barracks and clean up a little bit, and then two or three hours of PT, then back to the dorms, and study because you had tests every Friday. And if you failed a test, they would recycle you back to the beginning, so you'd have to spend another week or two there. And if they recycled you twice, you were gone. They made cooks out of those people. So, you didn't want that.

So, it was quite rigorous, and you did it for five months. And you learned, like anything, like you find like in school you learn about, but when you go out on the job, you kind of really learn it, right? So, when we got to Loring, we get nervous. You're speaking to pilots, and they're anxious, and they've got issues going on, and, you know, you're just a kid listening to, trying to solve their issues, so you're a little nervous. But you get very used to it, and very articulate and easy and you can handle five or six going on at once. So, I

did that for about, I guess I did that from whatever date we said.

CAO: ’67?

LALIBERTE: ’66. From November of 1966…

CAO: This is at Loring?

LALIBERTE: At Loring Air Force Base, November, 1966. And I left Loring once I got my orders for my new base. I’ll explain that in a second. I left there in probably August of ’68. So, I was there for what was it, 18, 19, 20 months or so. And I left there because I got orders to go on this special mission, this thing called Task Force Alpha at Nakhon Phanom [in Thailand], and it was a very top secret thing, and they couldn’t tell me what I was going to be doing or what it was about, but they were going to send me to training, and while I was in training they were going to also process a top secret clearance for me. I had a secret clearance at Loring, but I needed a top secret clearance for this one.

CAO: How did this make you feel, no one really telling you what’s going on?

LALIBERTE: Well, that’s kind of the military way. That wasn’t uncommon at that point. You know, they’ve got a saying in the military, “need to know.” And you don’t need to know anything else that you don’t need to know, and it’s kind of a tunnel vision. So, there’s not a whole lot of questions. And if you start asking questions, they wonder why you’re asking the questions, so…

So, I got a hint, though, because I was working at Loring and I was working a late shift, and it was in an old Army barracks, and so the radio room was, you know, like this and out here, oh, there were some vending machines, and the doorway was as far out as your doorway was, and it’s all empty barracks. So, it was just a floor, so it was just a room and an empty floor and a door to come in. So, my headsets were long enough, the cord, where I could roll myself out and get something from the vending machine while I’m talking to pilots. So I roll myself out once, and I’m at the vending machines, and I see this guy coming in the far door, and I said *God, that’s unusual, because this is a secure place. Nobody should be walking in*. And I don’t recognize

him. I don't recognize this guy. He gets closer and closer to me and he says to me, "God, you're still here?" And I looked at him. I didn't know who he was. And he was my 1st sergeant that had left the year before me, but he had lost about 50 pounds. And I go, "Oh, God, Sergeant Glidden, I didn't recognize you." And he said, "Well, I'm back," because he was a career soldier, and he lived in Maine, so he's kind of finishing his last tour there, and then get discharged.

So, we're talking and I said, "No, I am still here, but I've got my orders. I'm going to this place called Nakhon Phanom, and I'm going to be in this thing called Task Force Alpha. They're not telling me much. I said, "What did you do, Sarge?" He says, "Task Force Alpha, Nakhon Phanom," and he was 50 pounds lighter. And I just looked at him and I said, "What can you tell me?" He said, "I can't say anything." And I remember he put his hands on my shoulder and he said, "Just talk to me before you leave. You'll be okay." So, you get apprehensive, right?

CAO: Were you nervous at this…

LALIBERTE: Well, you're beyond nervous, yeah, because your fate is sealed, that's how you feel, your fate is sealed. Yeah, your fate is sealed. One thing I wanted to mention, too, about my marital status, is that my wife was living with me at Loring Air Force Base. So, when I came home from tech school in that November, we moved to Loring Air Force Base, finding out at that point that she was about three months pregnant. So, she was really pregnant when I went in, but we didn't know it. So, she was three months pregnant when I went in. So, my daughter was born in March of 1967, on the base. And not to plead "boo-hoo-hoo," but they didn't pay people very well at all. My income—I know it was 1966—but my income was $135 a month. A month. With a wife and a child. Which is not possible even then, because the poverty level was $3,000 a year then. I was making $1,300. And we have to live in town because there's no base housing for enlisted guys.

So, most of the guys then had to send their wives home and move into the barracks, and spend another two years alone. But, I did not want to do that, so I called an accountant in town, and I said, "Look, I'm an accountant. I spent a couple of years working in school, and I worked for a CPA firm while I was in school." He said, "Do you need any money?" I says,

"Yeah, I just might." He says, "Because the last guy I had left. Why don't you come in?" So, I went in and he hired me. And I spent two years working for him, as well as my job. But, it was grueling, because on those days that I worked swings, those were the 4:00 to midnight swings, I would go in at his place at 8:00 in the morning and work until 3:00, go home and take a shower and go to work at 4:00. But on those nights when I worked from midnight to 8:00, I'd come home and take a shower, work for him from 8:00 to 4:00, get a little bit of sleep, and then, you know, you just did 30 hours a week, 30, 35 hours a week. But, he knew that he had me, too, because even then they were paying accountants, you know, $15, $20 an hour. Well, he paid me $1.50. But it was $40 a week. I was making $40 a week. But, $40 a week's $160 a month, which was double my income in the military. Still poverty. But, my wife could stay there. We're paying $65 a month for our unit. My daughter was born. My wife wasn't working. She couldn't, right? Little baby at home.

And so we stayed there until I got my orders to go to Southeast Asia. When I got those orders in like I'm going to say August of '68, they sent me to Eglin Air Force Base [FL] in Florida, a big, sprawling base where they did all kinds of special ops trainings of all type. So, they put us in a hotel room, because they didn't want us mingling with other GIs because of the nature of the security of this thing. I didn't have my top security clearance then. It was being processed. My mother was telling me that people with black hats were walking in the street asking people who I was.

CAO: Back home.

LALIBERTE: Back home, yeah. So, I went to that school, and what that school was, they were teaching what this mission was. And the mission was, they had salted or seeded the Ho Chi Minh Trail with seismic and acoustic sensors, seismic so that when the earth moved, it would be activated; acoustic, you could activate a sensor next to that seismic one and listen in to what was the cause of that. That was a concept that was developed by William [Robert] McNamara, then the Secretary of Defense, and a Harvard professor. They thought that, well, if they stopped the flow of traffic from north to south, they could curtail the size of the war, and they would get these Air Force communications people. Why us, I don't know, but they thought that we'd be best suited to cross-train and learn that.

So, we went to the school for, I don't know, a couple of months, and they taught us the lay of the land and what we're going to be doing. They had actually imported tapes from the field of the North Korean soldiers and their trucks, and they had us assess them, and listening for different sounds and movements and how we did it, and how to gauge their speeds. And by that time my top security clearance came in, and they said, "Okay, you're on." So, that was November 19th of 1968. And I remember that day, because we left San Francisco late in the evening, like 9:00, just a huge planeload of GIs, and we flew to Alaska, and then to Tokyo. And we crossed over the midnight line. You're going into another time zone, and it's a 12, 15, 16 hour flight to begin with, right? So, you're losing all these times. There was no sleeping that night, there was no sleeping on the plane.

So, from Tokyo they put us on a puddle jumper to Bangkok, slept on a duffel bag for an hour, and then you're kicked in the foot and they said, "You're in a two-engine jet. I'm gonna send you up in the jungles." So, I got to my base on the 21st of November. I left on the 19th and I got there on the 21st, because of the time zone things. And my anniversary was the 20th. My third anniversary was the 20th. So I missed that one. So, that one was gone. I said *that's kind of an ominous thing*. So, I get to the base so fatigued that, because sleep deprivation can be a devastating thing, and, you know, not sleeping for two or three days and time zones.

So, I check in with the 1st sergeant and he said—you slept in hooches. Now, a hooch is a building built up on the ground, usually up on stilts or three steps, four doors to a hooch, eight GIs behind each door, but it's really just one building. There's a bunker between the first and second hooches and another bunker between the third and fourth hooch. So he said, "Well, that's your hooch right there. You're in the first door." He said, "I'll see you in the morning."

So, I crawl, because I'm so fatigued, and I crawl out of here and I walk up the three steps, and my door now is the first one on the right, and the bunker's on the left. It's about 7:00 or 8:00 at night. I put my hand on the handle and all hell breaks loose. All of a sudden, shots are being fired, GIs are running back and forth. They've got flak jackets on, helmets. They're yelling. Their M-16s are at the ready. They're

running, they're yelling and screaming, and sirens. And the sky is filled with helicopters. And suddenly dusk became dawn, because they were dropping phosphorus, looked like candles, from small parachutes, because obviously something was happening in the perimeter. I didn't know.

So, I remember leaning against the door. I hadn't even gone in. I'm leaning against the door and I'm watching this like it's a show, like it's surreal, and I'm saying, *Where in the hell am I? What is this?* I even said, *All I did was grab the door handle*. [laughter] *I couldn't have done this. I didn't trigger anything, I know that*. So, I said, *Well, maybe I better get in the hooch. Maybe this is not that safe*. So I open the door to the hooch, and it's totally empty except one kid. And he's stripped down to his shorts, as we all did because of the humidity there, and he's sitting on an upside down trash can, his back's to me, and he's stripped naked except for his shorts, and he's writing a letter. And you have to write like this, because the perspiration will drop on the ink. So, he hears me come in, and he turns around and says, "Oh, hi, how are you?" and "Where'd you come from? What base? What are you gonna be doing? I've been here for… Where will you stay here?"

CAO: As this is all going on.

LALIBERTE: This is all going on, this is all going on. So I'm wondering when he's going to say, like, *What's this?* I didn't want to be uncool. [laughter] So, I said—his name was Sweeney—I said, "Sweeney, what's going on out there?" "Oh," he says, "you'll get used to that." He said, "Somebody's probably just trying to penetrate the base or something." He says, "Don't worry about it. It's okay. Don't worry about it." And I said, "You know, I noticed that no one was running into the bunker. Like, they're going to the hooches and they're running around with M-16s, but the bunkers…" He says, "Well, how long have you been here?" And I said, "One day." He says, "Well, if you want to make it two days, never go into that bunker, because the bunker is where the little rats go, and the little rats go there, and the big rats go in there to get the little rats, and the cobra snakes go in there to get the big rats. You don't want to be in there, because you won't come out." And from that day on, not only did no one ever go in there, but it was very common for me to walk out and open that door and I'd see, yeah, a cobra snake walking out with its stomach all inflated. So…

CAO: And this was in Thailand?

LALIBERTE: This was in Thailand. Yeah, this was in Thailand, because it was northeastern Thailand right on the Mekong River, right across from Ta Khet Lao [spelling unconfirmed] where the flags of ownership would change on a regular basis. We were only five or six miles from Ta Khet [spelling unconfirmed], only 60 miles from the DMZ, and only 200 miles south of Hanoi. And the Ho Chi Minh Trail was right there. So, it was infested. It was really infested. That base was the staging ground for many things, many clandestine things, I would say.

CAO: Is this Nakhon Phanom?

LALIBERTE: Nakhon Phanom, yeah. That's why. It was a secret base, but not so secret anymore. It was a base that had squadrons of helicopters called Jolly Greens that were just humongous helicopters that would function to pick up downed helicopter pilots, because if a pilot gets shot down in Laos, he wasn't coming back, because you get executed right away. So, these birds would fly over, and they could be there in minutes, and they'd fly over with a squadron of A1-E's. A1-E's is a fixed-wing aircraft with two props on it, but they were loaded with rockets and machine guns, and they could fly low and keep low cover and keep the enemy away from that downed pilot. They'd send two helicopters in, one high and one low. If the low one got into trouble, they'd send the high one in. So, all of that downed activity was taking place there.

The raid on the POW base was staged and done from Nakhon Phanom. That was the raid on the base that wasn't there; that is, they had moved the troops, so it wasn't there. But, that raid took place from Nakhon Phanom. There was an incident called the "my boys incident." Well, that raid to rescue "my boys" was all done from Nakhon Phanom. So, it was an active base. The Special Forces were there, because they would cross—they would say, "Go over the fence." That' means "go over the Mekong River." Now, the Ho Chi Minh Trail was right there and they'd do all the clandestine things. They'd capture troops and they'd ambush and they'd do all kinds of things.

CAO: All activity.

LALIBERTE: All the activity was there. But the big activity, the center point of Nakhon Phanom, I would say, was Task Force Alpha. And Task Force Alpha's mission was to identify, track, and destroy trucks and personnel on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Ho Chi Minh Trail entered Laos, right up in North Vietnam, where it entered Laos, traveled down the left of Laos into Cambodia, and then exited—like a big horseshoe—exited in South Vietnam. Now, the misnomer is it's not *a trail*. There are hundreds and hundreds of trails, many trails, and many parks along the way.

And so, we would, after training, going in—we worked 12 on and 12 off, 6:00 in the night to 6:00 in the morning, 6:00 in the morning to 6:00 at night. Sleep was at a premium, because you really couldn't sleep. So, we'd sit there with a scope, and I'd have my zone, if you would, on the scope with seismic and acoustic sensors. As soon as I saw a seismic sensor activated, I would immediately activate an acoustic sensor and listen in. And oftentimes I'd hear trucks, and then I would identify those trucks. I would determine where they were on those tracks. And in this room, this room was much, much larger than this one, and it had a glass panel that went from your floor to twice the size of the ceiling. It was all glass. And this room was maybe 150 feet long. Behind that glass, there were stagings where GIs were on their stagings, riding backwards so that we could see looking at front all the activity on the trail, every trail, every truck, every intersection, every potential bombing attack coming up. We saw it all right there in real time.

So, I would listen for the trucks, listen for the people, identify them, feed that into a computer, and then if I knew—I picked them up at A. When they went to B—if they were traveling it, we measured them with something called clicks, going down in 3.2 clicks from A to B—I measured them to C. If they were still going down at 3.2 clicks to C, you knew when they were going to get to D. That information will be funneled up. I may get a tap on my shoulder and say, "Okay, listen up, at D we've got some jets coming in." So, again, I knew something then that those people and soldiers and truckers didn't know. I knew that something bad was going to happen at D.

CAO: These were the North Vietnam insurgents?

LALIBERTE: North Vietnam insurgents coming down, right.

CAO: The jets that are arriving are the US?

LALIBERTE: Yes, yes.

CAO: Getting ready to…

LALIBERTE: Getting ready. So, I would listen to them. I'd listen to them at all times of day and night, and sometimes at rest. And, you know, sometimes they were just like us. They're complaining about their 1st sergeant, they're complaining about their food, they're complaining about missing home. They were not much different. And we taped them. Whenever they had a conversation, I would tape it, because the government wanted to know. The CIA worked with us, and IBM was there, too.

CAO: Oh, so the CIA, so…

LALIBERTE: It was a joint effort.

CAO: A joint effort.

LALIBERTE: Yeah, the building housed Air Force, IBM Corporation, and the CIA.

CAO: And where did IBM come into it?

LALIBERTE: IBM was running all the technical facilities. We had a huge IBM 360 at the time, which is old now, but all the information that I was finding, they called us CIMGs, combat information monitors ground. That's what my role was, CIMGs. So, there were about 20 of us. Or roughly at any particular time. So, the CIMGs would pick it up, funnel that information, it'd all get processed into the computers, and maps would be drawn, redrawn, put on the big map in the back. IBM fellows were floating around all the time, pinstripe suits, sometimes flight suits. The CIA guys were there. The CIA guys would often come—you knew it was a CIA guy that would come in because he would have an attaché handcuffed to his sleeve, handcuffed, and a major or a lieutenant colonel would have the other key to take it off, and it might be, you know, bombing missions, or [inaudible]... So, that was there.

So, when I knew an attack was coming, it would really give you butterflies, because you knew the end was coming. And I could hear their voices, first calm, just everyday voices, and

then they would hear the jets at the same time that I heard the jets. But I knew that it was too late for them, because those jets were running at 700 miles a minute or whatever it was. They were going to be overhead. They couldn't get out of the truck, and those jets would just drop bombs and packets of small explosives. These small explosives looked like little rosin bags. They were green rosin bags, and they would flood the area and they were filled with chemicals, and if you stepped on one, it would take your ankle off or something. So, it was to seed the people in, so they'll drop the bombs and then seed them in with these small packets of explosives.

And sometimes my sensor would cut off right away, you know, one of those, when a bomb hit, but oftentimes I'd have one hidden and it wouldn't. And I could listen to, you know, sometimes the screaming, sometimes the silence, and sometimes after about two minutes, the truck would start up again, just, you know, and the GIs, we'd laugh at it, like, *Oh, my God! How did that happen?* And they'd start chatting away and go on. So, we missed or they got out of the way, or something. So, you know, we did that. We did that every day for a year. I don't know, it got more busy, and sometimes it got slower during the rainy season. It was maybe a little slower during the day. After the attack they'd send a jet to take pictures, and they'd come back and we'd look at the pictures to see what the damage was. Sometimes you couldn't see it because there was so much canopy. [Inaudible] you'd see something. But, it wasn't good. It wasn't… You did it, right? But…

CAO: Did you ever talk with other CIMGs about it?

LALIBERTE: Oh, yeah, yeah, constantly. But, you know, the mission was to get home. We wanted to get home. We weren't military guys. We weren't bred to do this. We got sucked up in this thing. And my wife and now two-year-old that I hadn't seen in almost a year is home. And friends of mine's daughters and sons were being born without even seeing them. They didn't know we were going to go home. So, the emphasis was, *How much time do you have left? And will you get home okay? Will you get home okay?*

And at one point, when the rainy season came, they didn't need as many of us that's required for that mission. So, they said, "We're gonna send seven of you TDY." Now, TDY, are

you familiar with that term? Okay. TDY stands for temporary duty assignment. So, what they do is they release you to another unit for a 30-day period. So, you're still attached to your unit, but they release you for 30 days, because there's a hole over there, and then after that 30 days, you come back. So, it'd be like a substitute teacher, right? A teacher's sick. You leave your school system. You go do it and then you come back to your school system, right? TDY assignments can last from 30 days to 60 days to 90 days, but these were going to be 30 days. And they're all going to be over the fence, over the fence meaning the other side of the Mekong River. So, you knew you were going to be attached to a special operations unit, an Army unit, because now you're going to revert back to your air-to-ground days, that expertise. You're not special ops anymore; you're doing your basic grunt work with the antenna and the radio. And we knew it was going to be hazardous.

So, he chose seven guys. He chose the single guys, and I have to say there was a bit of racial animus, and he chose a couple of black guys, and they went. And they were good guys. And one of the black guys that went was one of the kids, he had broken me in, this guy, McKethan [spelling unconfirmed] from Chicago, really a nice guy, two kids in Chicago, two daughters. He didn't want to go. Nobody wanted to go. And, so they went and, I remember one kid said, "Gees, why are they choosing me? I'm only 18 years old. Why are they choosing me?" Anyway. So, we all said, "Goodbye. You know, don't worry, you'll be back in 30 days." 30 days go by and they don't come back, and we talk to the 1st sergeant and we said, "Well, where's Mac? Where's McGowan? Where's Kiley? Have you heard from them? Their 30 days is over." "Well, they probably got extended, you know, got extended another 30 days." "Well, has anybody heard from them? What are they doing?" "No, but, you know, they'll be okay. They know what they're doing." 30 days go by, 60 days go by, 90 days go by, and no one ever came back. So, I don't know what happened to them, because I left in October, and they never came back. Assuming, I'm making the assumption that they finished out their tours in those new units and went back home. But all I can say is, they never came back. So I hope that they came back okay. I suspect so. Maybe that's wishful thinking, but I hope that's the case.

CAO: And they only did this one time with your…[inaudible]

LALIBERTE: Yeah, yeah, yeah, because we're only there for one year, right? There's one rainy season, and that's when they all left.

CAO: So, when you arrived, do you know that your date would be a year from arriving?

LALIBERTE: Yes. Oh, yeah, yeah, you got an end date. Yeah, and believe me, you're counting it down. And there's a whole—I don't know if other GIs have told you about this, but there's a whole procedure among GIs when they're coming home. When you have 30 days to go, you take a yellow ribbon from a bottle of Chivas Regal, and you tie it in your button hole here, but you don't tie it in a ribbon, you just tie it in a knot. That means you've got 30 days to go. When you're down to 10 days, you take that ribbon and you tie it in a bow. So, you can see these people on base with ribbons and bows, and you just wanted to stand next to them, because maybe there's some karma coming from them that might affect you.

There were two flights that left a day. There was a 7:00 flight in the morning and a 3:00 flight in the afternoon. So, if you were on the 7:00 flight in the morning, when that 3:00 flight in the previous afternoon left, that meant that you were next. That was a big term, "next." And that's when you put the lei. So you had that ribbon tied in a knot, and then you a lei over your neck, you're out of the field, you're processed out, you had that lei, you're drinking beer at the officers' club, you're waiting for your flight, and you're going home. So, that countdown started in Day One: one month, two months, three months… All kinds of the crosses on calendars and marks on hats. People wanted to go home. It wasn't gung ho, it wasn't "we want to kill somebody today." We just want to do our jobs and get home. And that was it.

CAO: Do you think most people felt like this was a job? This was a service, I mean?

LALIBERTE: It was a service that was thrown upon us. But we're Americans. It was our country. We didn't want to be there. More than enough of us wore the peace symbols when they couldn't be seen on the uniforms, on your socks or something. We were not, you know, we were not prototype military people. But we were there and we did our jobs, and it wasn't pretty, it was lonely, it was lawless, your family was back home, your daughter's—my daughter was growing. I

left when she was about a year-and-a-half old. I came back, she was two-and-a-half when I came home. I got discharged at Travis Air Force Base [CA].

Oh, one other thing, quickly. When I left there in October, I wasn't supposed to get discharged until the following June. That would have made my fourth year. So, I got orders to go to the Pentagon, which is weird for an Air Force guy. And I was supposed to go to Fort Cook, which is an Army base outside of the Pentagon, and I was to be working for a Navy admiral. And I was in the Air Force. So, a Navy admiral on an Army base, and at the Pentagon, none of this made sense, but they don't tell you, you know. It's not like you are going to be are going to be choosing your job. It's "just shut up and be there." And I thought, *Well, I guess we'll go there for seven or eight months, I'll pick up my wife in Rhode Island, we'll go to DC for six or seven months, and we'll go on with our lives*. But then I got another set of orders that said, "Well, since you only have eight months to go, we'll let you get discharged in Travis," Travis Air Force Base. Well, that was a no brainer, right? So, we spent two or three days at Travis going through the process.

But I remember getting to Travis, and they had let us go into town once because it takes a couple of days to get processed, and I mean, I had red dust in my nose, I was 30 pounds underweight. You know, living in the jungle for a year and hearing all those noises, and you're just not acclimated yet to society, right? So I was standing with two other GIs in front of like a drugstore in San Francisco, and this guy gets out of a car, a blue Volkswagen, with his girlfriend, 19, 20, 21 years old, and they're window shopping. And I said, "Oh, my God. They're window shopping. What kind of life are they.."

CAO: What a novelty.

LALIBERTE: What a novelty. How cool is that? They don't even know I'm here. They don't see me. I had to look between them, but they don't see me." And I thought they would say, "Hey, Ron, welcome back." You know, and I thought they would say that, not because I thought I deserved it. Because I thought they knew. I thought everybody knew. But, that's because your mind isn't functioning properly, I guess, right? I just thought they knew. I thought they knew my name. I thought they knew where I'd come from. I wasn't looking for a parade

or an accolade. I would have said, "Yeah, thanks. It was not fun, but I'm gonna get on with my life now." So, that was my first entrée to, I guess you'd call that apathy. And I hear stories about how GIs were spit on and they were condescending. And that never happened to me, because I went to the base, I got my discharge papers, I got on a plane, I flew to Providence, Rhode Island.

My wife, who I hadn't seen in a year now, because now it's close to my fourth anniversary, because I got discharged in late October. My fourth anniversary was in November, November 20th, so I was two weeks away, so I'd been gone almost a year. And she had my daughter in the car. Now my daughter is two-and-a-half. She was a year-and-a-half when I left. And I got in the car, and my daughter's in the car seat, and my wife's driving, and I sit down, and yeah, I'm kind of in a daze. And my wife says to my daughter, "This is your father." And, you know, my daughter looked at me. I just remember this look. She looked at me, she looked down and she looked up, she looked out the window. She didn't know who I was. She had no idea who I was. And I thought to myself, *Gee, I've got some work to do here*. I never said this, I never made it an issue, I just… It was nobody's fault. It's just the way it was. So, I got home, I took my uniform off. And my wife said I was quiet. I didn't know I was quiet, but she said I was very quiet for some period of time. But, you know, ultimately I needed a job. I had a wife and a baby. I'd lived on starvation wages for a long period of time. She worked while I was gone. She worked second shift and one of my younger sisters babysat my daughter.

CAO: What did she do?

LALIBERTE: She was working in a local lab, a little laboratory just doing testing. So, we went on with our lives. And I got a job. And I was met more with apathy. You know, I watched Ken Burns's series, right? And one of the guys in the series said, "You know, I've been home 40 years. And we didn't talk about Vietnam twice. Nobody's ever asked me about Vietnam. Two times." And that struck a bell with me, [inaudible] was only me, because I'm kind of quiet on that stuff.

But I'll tell you a quick story. So, I get a job, because I had worked two years with an accounting firm in Maine, and it was public accounting for a couple of years while I was in

the military. And I majored in accounting, too. I didn't want to be an accountant, but I needed a job, right? So, I got a job at a corporate conglomerate. And it was a big deal, because you want to get this job, and these guys that were on this corporate accounting team were ultimately being groomed to go out into the divisions to take over the accounting functions of these divisions. So, if you had an accounting proclivity, then that's good for you.

But there were about eight guys that worked in that department, all my age, 23 to 29. I was 24-ish, 25. Not one of them had ever served, ever, in any capacity. And that's okay with me, because I wouldn't have served either if I hadn't been drafted like this, right? It wasn't in my nature. In that year-and-a-half I was there, not one guy ever said to me one time, "How was it? What did you do there? Was it lonely? Was it dangerous? Can you tell me about it? Where did your wife live?" Not a peep. Not a peep. But the epitome of the apathy was, you still had a six year commitment to the military. And in those last two years, you're on something called inactive reserve. Inactive reserve was you just had to take a physical once a year, to make sure that you're alive and well, and if they needed you, they could call you back. So, there were no meetings, there was nothing, it was just a one day thing.

So I get a letter from the government, Department of the Army, "You will be at Quonset Point at 0700 on September 17th." Then on the bottom it said, "Your employer will let you off for the day under Code" such and such, you know, typical government bureaucracy, a half printed sheet. So I go in to my boss, and I say, "Gene, I've got to take this physical. It's about my 1-A physical. And it's not fun, but I've got to do it." So he looks at it, and I could see him frowning, like he didn't like it. He's frowning. And then he gets to that bottom paragraph where the government says he has to let me go. And he goes, "Well, I guess I have to let you go." He says, "But, I'm going to charge you a vacation day." So I was, just like you, I was frozen. I was frozen there. And then he said something else that's just so engrained to me. We were sitting in his office, and he says, "If I don't do that," and he makes a sweeping gesture with his hand like Moses separating the Red Sea, he goes, "it wouldn't be fair to these other eight guys out here." It wouldn't be fair to let me not get charged a vacation day to take a physical, poked and prodded for a day, after spending three-and-a-half years in

the military, while they had six years to get their careers going, they all had homes, they had multiple kids, they were three levels ahead of me on salary. But it wasn't going to be fair for me to take a day off and them not get one. So, that to me was the epitome of apathy. He didn't not like me. We got along fine. We were friends. We socialized a little bit.

CAO: Where do you think this apathy comes from? Is it the length of the war?

LALIBERTE: I don't know where it comes from.

CAO: How it's so deeply engrained…[inaudible]

LALIBERTE: Yeah, I guess they just didn't get… Was it selfishness? Was it guilt because they didn't go and I did, and so they don't want to talk about it? I don't think it was so much that. I think it was they just didn't care. They didn't care. It was another group of guys that served. "Poor you, but this is business now. Too bad that that happened to you, but this is business, and if you want to take a day off, I'm not penalizing all my eight guys who never went anywhere while you were in that rice paddy." Now, I stood there, and I was stunned, but I didn't say a word, because there was no way I was going to beg, no way, not for the people we left there, not for my friends, not for me. He could have taken a month of vacation days, I was gonna suck it up and go home, and get hit with the vacation day. And so, that's what happened.

Well, you know, that backfired a little bit on me, because I didn't want to suck it up and give him the advantage. And I don't want to make this too long a story, but one of the people I had to deal with in my function was his boss's boss. It's a woman. And her life was accounting. She had no family, she was dedicated, she was not a person you could chitchat with. She was kind of all business. And when she was done with you, she'd wave, you know. There was not too much small talk. Mrs. Hamblin was her name. She lived there. She worked there all her life. But I had one of my small functions dealing with Mrs. Hamblin. She was cold, but I got along with her fine. And I had some Treasury checks to take down to her or something. So I said, "Here's your Treasury checks, Mrs. Hamblin." We go over some of the numbers, and I was leaving and she says, "I see you're taking next Wednesday off." I said, "Yeah, I've got a physical I'm gonna take." She goes, "Ginger's got you down as a

vacation day." So I said, "Well, like I said…" She said, "What's that physical about?" I says, "Well, you know, I've got this one year thing. I'm gonna take a physical." She didn't take her eyes off the desk, but her eyes started welling up, and she said, "You're not gonna get a vacation day for this." And she just gave me the brush, like "get off." She didn't want to talk. "Get out of here."

But then I went back upstairs. And a couple of days later, Gene, my boss, says, "I see you talked to Mrs. Hamblin. I guess I won't be charging you for that vacation day." And that bothered me, because I knew that he thought I had complained to Mrs.—which was not the truth. She had just caught it and I mentioned it, and she voided it. So, anyway, that's my apathy thing. And it's been that way forever.

CAO: Thank you for you sharing. I guess I'd actually like to go back to, I've been thinking about this for a while, but… So, you were in Thailand at the base in 1968.

LALIBERTE: Yes, November of '68.

CAO: This was right after Operation Rolling Thunder had…[inaudible]

LALIBERTE: Well, the Tet Offensive had happened in March of that year. And of course, Martin Luther King [, Jr.] had been shot in, what February or March of that year, and Bobby Kennedy was shot in September or October of that year, all of that before I went there, but that same year. So, there was much tension, much racial tension on base.

CAO: Could you speak more to that? Did you see any specific examples?

LALIBERTE: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, there was a lot of condescension in words between blacks and whites. And the black troops were angry, and rightfully so. Their leader had been shot. Kennedy had been shot. They were fighting a war that they had been sucked up into, and they knew it and we knew it, too. So, it wouldn't take much to spark a confrontation between whites and blacks. You'd be at a club, and they'd place some soul music, and a white GI would play some country and western. That's all it would take. Fists, and they all had guns, and I'm not saying the guns were like—but they had them, you know. And it would start the confrontation.

And you'd get assigned to a unit, like I did to my hooch, and if you didn't like the unit you were with, or you had friends in another unit, you could ask for a transfer and go to another unit, and you could leave. If there was an opening in that unit, you could go to that unit. And ultimately it became a black unit, because the black kids, the black soldiers, wanted to be with themselves. And so, occasionally, like a friend of mine's a schoolteacher with me at Loring, he came over doing what I did about three months later, and he got assigned there. And I mean, it was no uncertain terms, they didn't want him there. He didn't want to be there either. So, he looked around to see if he could be like a fraternity, rushed by another platoon. So that happened. And sometimes gangs would develop. And I remember one time they told us we could no longer check our mail after 9:00 at night, because there were some roaming gangs.

CAO: Of military personnel?

LALIBERTE: Yeah, military personnel against other military personnel. So, I'm not saying it was rampant, but you could feel the pulse. And there's tension. Yeah, there was tension. And you could see that in the chow hall, there'd be the white table and the black table. You may see that in the dorms here, but I don't know if they're doing that nowadays. That's just the way it was. And it wasn't yelling and screaming. It wasn't a lot of animus. But they wanted the separation and they were bitter. And they were bitter. So, if there was something on television and they didn't want it, or if the other guy didn't want it, they'd go up and change it. It would start a war. So, it was uncomfortable.

CAO: Yeah. And when you left in '69, did these secret operations continue on?

LALIBERTE: Yes. They continued on for two or three more years, and then when Hanoi was taken over by the North Vietnamese in '74, '75?

CAO: '75.

LALIBERTE: Yeah. The headquarters for Hanoi was moved to Nakhon Phanom. So that's where the ultimate fifth operation, or whatever they call themselves, that's what…[inaudible]

CAO: [Inaudible]

LALIBERTE: Yeah, everybody came, the whole organization, everything. All of our Vietnam efforts were now housed in Nakhon Phanom for the last four or five months. So, yeah. So, was it effective? Was this effective? And that's what—I'd always wanted to know that answer, because how effective were we in stopping these trucks? Were we stopping thousands? Were we stopping hundreds?

CAO: How many do you reckon?

LALIBERTE: Well, here's what we know and what we don't know, and I think maybe Mr. Miller knows more than this, and maybe you can ask him when you see him. I'm sure the North Vietnamese have their files and they would know. If you asked me a binary question, did I have to answer it "yes" or "no": Did this work? "Yes" or "no"? Did we stop the flow of traffic from north to south? Keep in mind they only needed 200 tons of supplies to keep their armies going for a month. So, theoretically if you had a one-ton truck, you'd need 200 trucks to get by, right? Well, the answer to that was clearly "no." We didn't stop the 200 tons from getting there. Maybe it's because they sent 250 down, because you don't have to be a supply chain expert to know that if we're getting 20% of them, say you send 250 down, you still wind up with 200. It certainly wasn't effective from a cost basis, because we were spending on average $50,000 to destroy a $5,000 truck, right? So, it wasn't effective that way. Was it a thorn in their side? Were many of their trucks and people destroyed? I'm sure that's the case, because in the documentary [*The Vietnam War: a film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*], the North Vietnamese—I think it was the seventh documentary talking about the Trail—that the North Vietnamese lost 20,000 men on the Trail, so many that they had 72 cemeteries. So, I often, after hearing that, I couldn't help but wonder myself how many of those people, how many of those voices were in my ear? How many of those trucks that those 20,000 were on that I saw that I gauged that I watched that I heard the bombs coming in on?

So, you know, it's disturbing. I don't dwell on it. I don't wake up in the night with sweats. I didn't have a life living in a foxhole like so many other of my brethren over there that had PTSD. I never suffered from that. But, you do have memories. People have asked me, "Do you remember these

things?" And the answer is "no," because it's analogous to a computer back perhaps when you started using computers. If you wanted to access data on the drive, you sit at the type room and you accessed the information that you wanted, an arm would go on, get that data off the drive, and bring it in and you'd see it. But now you have flash memory. You don't have to do that anymore. You've come up with an idea and it's in front of you. You don't have to go get it. Well, that's what it's like for me. I don't have to go get it because it's always there, it's in flash memory. So, I see Sweeney and Savage and Cole and Schneider. I hear the aircraft. I see the sights, I see the board. I'm not saying I can't go through my day without doing that, but I don't have to think very far, because it's flash memory for me. It's right there. But, you know, I raised a family and kids, and I've got grandkids, and I had a business, and we're okay. I don't limp, I don't have any mental deficiencies.

CAO: What would you suppose are some positive outcomes or lessons that you were able to bring into your life thereafter? I mean, you said you ran a business, you were able to sort of continue on.

LALIBERTE: Yeah. Well, coming from the roots that I came from, I think I already knew how to suffer. So, I don't know that I needed this. But I certainly learned that complaining doesn't do it, the nature of the mission is all that counts, life can be binary in some cases, I'm not afraid to take chances. I've always taken chances, because I know if you don't take a chance, you don't have a chance. I think I've instilled that in my kids and it seems to have worked in what they're doing in their lives. You know how to live in a rougher environment. And I think anybody that's ever served—I mean, you'll get this from the other interviews, I'm sure, that you pick something up, mostly positive stuff about what it was like. Look, I'm glad I did it. Even this, I'm glad I did it. But I wouldn't want to do it again. You know, I did my shot. And if they had called me in that sixth year saying, "You've got a top secret clearance. You've got to come back in and do something," that would have been a tough pull. So, I wanted to get my civilian life going. I paid my dues, and I wanted to get it going.

CAO: So, you did not imagine that this would happen joining the Air Force when you made the decision back…

LALIBERTE: Oh, no, I didn't know what I was going to do, but I never thought I was going to be with a top secret clearance laying on the Ho Chi Minh Trail guarding trucks, and with those hours in that heat, and…

CAO: Could you actually—I would love to hear more about the base and the climate, the surroundings, if you could describe that?

LALIBERTE: Well, the base was cut out in the jungle, seven square miles, I think, cut out in the jungles. It was stripped of vegetation. The vegetation was stripped back perhaps a mile or so around for preventative measures. It was heavily guarded, not only at the gates, but we had a Thai Special Forces outfit that was surrounding the base in the jungle. We had our own MPs [military police] in the jungle with dogs. We had our own sensors all over the place. So, we had good coverage. It's not to say they couldn't get in from time to time or come in with a taxicab driver, which I think happened once. Somebody came in. They came in and they threw a hand grenade into the waiting area of the NCO Club [non-comissioned officers], and the NCO Club was a narrow hall, and in these narrow halls were slot machines and pinball machines and the roulette machines, so there were a lot of GIs gathering there all the time. And somebody threw a hand grenade in there and it was torn up, a tremendous amount of damage. I don't even think they found the person. So, that would happen. That happened after I left. That happened in 1970, and I left in '69. But, that first incident that I had…

Oh, I remember another time. They were going to show us a movie, and, you know, we hadn't seen movies in a year. And so, they put us next to the flight line. They got this little field projector and some GIs got a hold of a popcorn machine. Sounds simplistic, but to a GI, anything that resembled or smelled like home was a big deal. That popcorn machine was a big deal to us. We could smell the popcorn, *we're back home again*. And so you'd load your jacket up with beer and two bags of popcorn, and sit down, and waiting for this movie, and the movie was that famous Civil War movie that won the Academy award. "Frankly …"

CAO: "…my dear I don't give a damn." *Gone with the Wind*.

LALIBERTE: Yeah, yeah. *Gone with the Wind*, exactly. So, we didn't care. It could have been Shirley Temple. We didn't care what it

was. So, we get there at 7:00. It's finally getting dusk, and we're ready. You know, we've had three or four beers at that time, and the popcorn's half gone, and we're getting ready. Suddenly there's an announcement, "Activity on the flight line. Activity on the flight line. We're closing this down. We've got people coming in over the flight line, unidentified enemy. We've gotta close this down." But, you are so complacent after eight or nine months. We didn't move. And we heard, "Oh, boo! Come on. Come on, play the damned movie. This is ridiculous. Play the movie. Let them come. Play the movie." And, you know, "This is an order. You will move." And the MPs came up and they dispersed us. So, we never did see the movie. But, that's how complacency had set in, too. I saw Bob Hope there, too, when I was there. Bob Hope, you know, the comedian.

CAO: Oh.

LALIBERTE: Yeah, so he came. He came with his beautiful group of young women. And I had only been there for October, November, and he came in December. And I remember going to this show. And he was funny. I'd been there two weeks, and he was funny and laughing. And everybody, just some guys had their leis on because they were leaving the next day. Some people had their ribbons on, tied ribbons. And I wasn't sure about all that nomenclature at that point. So, I'd been there two weeks, but it seemed like two years at that point. So he gets to the point at the end and he starts singing, or his group starts singing Christmas carols, *Silent Night* and what-not. And I see the somber look of all these GIs just lost in these songs, and I looked like a spectator, because I'd only been there two weeks. And I said, *50 more weeks? No way. 50 more weeks of this? No way*.

CAO: And did you have a calendar?

LALIBERTE: Oh, yeah, everybody had a calendar. Yeah, after a while you get tired of the calendars, particularly if you're with a friend. If you're in there three months, you go, *Oh, my God, it's been three months. I don't know what six more months look like, or nine more months look like*. But, that's the worst.

CAO: Yeah. And also, so back when you were in Loring in Maine, you mentioned that the sergeant had also been at this base?

LALIBERTE: Yes.

CAO: Did anyone else from Loring also come up with you, or were there…

LALIBERTE: Yeah, yeah, okay, so not initially. But, about three months later, I'm at NKB [Nakhon Phanom Base] and I'm now accustomed to the normal day-to-day thing, and it's another quick story. So this kid knocks on my door, and it's a kid I was stationed with at Loring, who did the same thing and he went to the same school after I did. And he was my schoolteacher, the guy that I told you about.

CAO: Oh, yeah.

LALIBERTE: He had a son. Same thing, his wife was in Rhode Island living with her parents while he was gone, and he went to Eglin [Air Force Base, FL] like I did, and then Loring like I did, Keesler [Air Force Base, MS] like I did. And he was not at all happy with the living conditions that they put him in. So he saw me, he said, I want to live with you. So, the routine was not unlike a sorority, a fraternity or a sorority. You bring this kid in, and he meets the other guys in the hooch—we had eight guys in the hooch—and I said, "Oh, maybe. Yeah, maybe not. Maybe." They vote.

CAO: So, there is definitely a total ecosystem there.

LALIBERTE: Oh, yeah, a little ecosystem, yeah. And so, the tradition is he would bring something to us, and usually it might be a bottle of whiskey, a 6-pack of bottles of beer. So he comes into the hooch, and it's raining, raining badly. In the hooch, it doesn't stop raining in the hooch, because the roof doesn't meet. It's like this. So you get this fine rain coming in and it creates a mist in the hooch, so you're always in a poncho, you're always wet, you're dripping. It's always wet in that hooch. You're bed's wet, everything's wet. So he comes in and there's only like three or four guys in the hooch, because the other guys are doing their thing on the Trail, whatever. And they're in their bunks.

So, his name's Al. So, he said, "Oh, I've got something for you." He was Italian and his wife was Italian, his whole family was Italian. So he takes his rucksack, and he takes out of the rucksack the largest can of Franco-American spaghetti that you had ever seen. [laughter] It was like you can't get this at BJ's. It is this big. I don't know where or how he got it.

So, one of the other guys said, “Geez, how do we open it?” So he started opening it with a bayonet, he had a bayonet with him and he’d do two or three cuts and then peel it off, and two or three cuts and peel it off, and finally with a pliers he got this thing open. And we had a hot plate. We had our mess kits. So he pours this Franco-American spaghetti—have you ever had it? No, okay, you’re not missing anything. It’s got a unique, I’ll say aroma; some people might say smell. But, aroma’s good. It’s very unique.

So, it’s cooking, and suddenly the guys that were in bed smelled it. And they get up. And I remember this guy, Fred Waring, he got out of—but he’s wearing his trench coat like we always had to do because it was raining—and he didn’t walk over to where the thing was, he just kind of glided. He looked like he was in a monastery or something. His feet weren’t moving, he just glided over to this. Didn’t say a word because he probably had slept for two hours, right? But he smelled this Franco-American spaghetti. And each one of us got our mess kits, and we doled some of this spaghetti into our mess kits. There were probably four of us. And we started eating it. And we had been chatting before, you know, “Where are you from? What did you do? What base are out of? What are you gonna be doing? What’s it like?” And suddenly as soon as we started eating, all conversation ceased. Not a word. And everyone, everyone was immersed in that sensory perception of when you were nine-years-old, and your mother had made a can of Franco-American spaghetti for you when you came home from school, and that’s what you remembered, and you were eating that memory in total silence. And every once in a while, you took your fingers—not polite—you took your fingers and you put it over the spaghetti, and you walked over to a trashcan and you poured the water out of it, the spaghetti, because it was filling with water because it was raining inside. And it was cold, but you didn’t know it was cold because you could still taste the flavor of that spaghetti. And we ate that thing until it was all gone. And Al said “thank you.” We said “thank you.” And he wasn’t accepted. [laughter] They didn’t like him. “Who was that guy? That guy, he’s a wuss.” [laughter] So, he was not accepted, but he still hung around us from time to time. But that’s the kind of experiences, you know, it’s kind of a side experience of a GI that was what you think of when you’re there.

CAO: So, I'd love to hear a little bit more about, so you went back home to Rhode Island.

LALIBERTE: Yes.

CAO: And how did you end up here, sort of in the…[inaudible]

LALIBERTE: Well, it was a circuitous route. So, I go to Rhode Island, and my wife picks me up at the airport, and it's October 23rd, 1969. We go back to her $65 a month apartment, and I said, "Well, now I've got to get a job." So, I was underweight, physically underweight. And I felt as though my head was okay. I mean, my wife said I was quiet, and I had that incident with people I thought they would know me, but that didn't last very long. So I got a job ultimately at that accounting firm, the corporate accounting firm. And I realized that I didn't want to be an accountant. I mean, to me it's boring. People like it, and I don't want to discourage you in your major—and you're not an accounting major, I know.

CAO: I do need to do accounting.

LALIBERTE: Yeah, yeah. I never wanted to do it even in school. I majored in it because I thought it would be a good basis to go on to other things in business, because you have to know that basic stuff. So, I wanted to sell. I like face to face things and I wanted to sell. So, I saw an ad for a company called Litton Industries, and they had developed a division that sold computer systems to accountants to do write-up work, all general ledger or whatever, write-up work. And I knew write-up work well, because I had spent two years doing write-up work. But I had never sold before. And I knew that I had to get out of Textron—that was the conglomerate, mostly because I couldn't live with that comment when he told me I was not fair to these guys. I wasn't bitter, but it burned me up. I didn't want that environment.

So I interviewed four or five times after work. I had no sales experience, none. But he was a GI, the guy, I mean, he was a Second World War GI, so he liked me. But I had no sales experience. He says, "You know, we hired two guys before you. They failed miserably. They had no sales experience. So, I'm going to have you interview with my boss, but, you know, he's not gonna go for this. He's going to like you, but he's not gonna go for this. So, we go to a restaurant and I interview with the boss, Charlie Grabonstein [spelling

unconfirmed], just a wonderful guy. So, we come back and I said to Jim, “What did Charlie think?” “Oh, he likes you. But, he’s not gonna hire you because he’s afraid.” He said, “They’ve hired five guys in Boston. But,” he said, “It’s my decision. Charlie said it’s my decision. But if you don’t work, it’s my job.” [laughter] So he said, “I’m gonna do it. I’m gonna do it.” So, I was so happy and proud to get that job.

So I went to work selling computer systems for Litton Industries, working for Jim Campbell. And the stars lined up. I don’t know what it was, but I just, I made it happen. I sold half a dozen systems. I was the Salesman of the Year one year. And yeah, I did okay. I did okay.

And then, Litton decided to close down that division because it wasn’t technically up to snuff with the others. So, there’s a company called Digital Equipment Corporation. You ever hear of them? They were the inventor’s name. It’s an age thing how it got going. But, Digital was the original founders, developers of the mini-computer. It started at MIT, and founded by a guy named Ken Olson, and he started this mini-computer revelation, where everything before was main frames. He said, “No, you can have a tube on your desk, you can interact, and blah, blah, blah.” And they were alive. They were *the* company to be in in Massachusetts. I mean, they grew from 50 people to 130,000.

And they had different divisions. What they would do is they’d make their computers and sell them to other people who would house them in their own products, and then resell them. So, they were the only end marketplace. So, if you had a drill press, you would take their PDPA, which is their box, put it in the drill press and go do something. Or if you worked in a lab, you’d put it in your lab, and, you know… But they wanted to start a commercial division, people who could sell their systems to businessmen. They were looking for a couple of guys. There I was at Litton. I was not technically competent at all, because my little Litton system was a bookkeeping machine, and they had really sophisticated stuff.

So, I interviewed for a job in their business section, and again the guy liked me. He said, “You don’t have any of the technical expertise, but you’ve got—some of us are starting the division. Come on on board.” That was my huge break, an enormous break. I worked for Digital Equipment

Corporation for four or five years. I went up the ranks. I sold big systems, I sold to banks, I sold to insurance companies, and developed a team, and really learned the technology, and, you know, that guy was my mentor. He was my mentor. A terrific human being.

CAO: And did he know that you had gone to…

LALIBERTE: Oh, yeah, oh, he knew. He knew. We never talked about it. No, no one in that organization ever did either. All my age group, that never happened. But they all knew that it had happened. And I felt that that's one of the reasons why he hired me. I felt it was, because I was a little bit behind everybody else, but he knew where I had been and what I had been doing. I was very successful at Litton, so he brought me on board.

So I stayed there for four or five years, and then like all companies, they get big and it had imploded a little bit, and I always wanted to start my own thing. So, I joined forces with another person who was in the executive search business, because I knew computers and he knew that business, so we joined forces. And I stayed with him for two years, and then I really wanted to do it on my own. So, on October 23rd, 1979, just a fluke, I hung my own shingle out on 60 State Street in downtown Boston, the Laliberte Executive Search firm, ten years to the day that I got out of the military, right? That was October 23rd, 1969. October 23rd both times, ten years apart. Coincidence. Just a coincidence. So I started on 60 State Street, started building up my business, and by then my son was born. My son was born in '71, November '71, two years after I came back. And we lived in Massachusetts by then. We built a home in Plymouth, Mass. My kids were brought up in Plymouth, Mass, down by the Sagamore Bridge. You know the Sagamore Bridge?

CAO: Yeah.

LALIBERTE: Lived right down by the bridge. Spent 24 years there, built the practice up, coached baseball, coached hockey, stayed home every night with the kids. I didn't want to travel, because back in these days, I'd been gone all the time. I wanted to be home for dinner, and I wanted to do things my way. So, did that. And then, my daughter had graduated from St. Lawrence [University, Canton, NY], and my wife and I used to leave Plymouth and go to St. Lawrence from time

to time, cutting through here and going up there. So my daughter graduated. She decided to make her home in Burlington, Vermont.

CAO: Beautiful.

LALIBERTE: Yeah, beautiful town. And she was an author and an editor of a magazine at that point. So, she was doing that. My son was still in Chicago, but then he came home. He came home from Chicago. He'd worked out of Chicago for a while for William Merson, a big consulting firm, and he came back to Boston and worked for another consulting firm. And then he went to the high tech industry himself. And so, he was in Boston and she was in Burlington, and the kids were gone now. The dogs were gone, the kids were gone. So we said, "We've been here forever. Let's do something different." So, we had liked this area because we had stayed here en route, and we figured, oh, we'd be just in the middle of the two kids. Shep was in Boston doing his… She's in Burlington. And so, we moved in 1999. And I still had my practice, because I was 52 or whatever it was. So, I continued with that practice, because my practice was all over the United States. They didn't care where I was. I was doing some European stuff, too. And I continued it for, I don't know, 10 more years. But I let the tide ebb, you know, just slowly and slowly. And then finally, I said, "Okay. I've had enough." So, now we just live here and we visit both kids, and we'll be here for some time, I don't know how much longer.

CAO: And so, being in this area, obviously very prominent Dartmouth alumni. Have you been able to talk to other folks about their war experiences also while here?

LALIBERTE: Oh, we talk about work experiences, because I live in Quechee, [VT] and most of the people who live in Quechee almost entirely come from somewhere else. Most of them had a business background.

CAO: So, the war experience?

LALIBERTE: Oh, the war experience. No, no. It doesn't come up. No, it doesn't come up. No, it's the same thing. That hasn't changed. And I don't bring it up. So, I mean, they know. And maybe an occasional comment. "How long were you there?" or something. But, there was one guy that had served. He was an ex-West Point guy, and he'd served as a tank

commander in Vietnam, and he was a really good guy. And he and I would chat, because we had kind of lived the same kind of life, and he would talk about details. But, unfortunately, he was on a road trip back to Florida and got hit by a car and was killed. So, he's gone. So, no one… We don't… It's like verboten. Why? I mean, you would have as good an insight to me. I just say it's apathy. I don't know.

CAO: So, was the Ken Burns screening one of the first times that you've been…

LALIBERTE: Oh, flashback? Oh, well, I've seen others. Whenever there's a documentary, I've watched it. And I've watched the movies. I watched *Platoon*, and I've seen *Deer Hunter* a number of times. And I can relate to the terminology, you know, the lifestyle, the terminology. The Sean Penn movie made with Michael Fox, I forget the name of it. Are you familiar with that one? Yeah. That was a little more vulgar, I guess. But I understood, too. I listen to those and it floats me back. But I don't dwell. You know, I'm going to go home and have lunch and go on with my life.

But, I've never had a PTSD kind of moment. But I have to say, and I never mentioned this to anybody, just last summer, I was in my yard. It was April or so, and the mulch was like now, kind of disheveled from the winter. So, I was at the fence and I was raking the mulch back into under the fence, because you come out into the driveway. And a mouse or a mole or something jumped up. And it startled me. It just startled me. And at that very second, there was a truck coming down my road in first gear, just like I used to hear. And I dropped the rake, and I put my hands over my ears, saying, "What are the coordinates of this guy?" And I'm looking. I'm dressed like this and I'm looking at a fence in Vermont. I go, "Whoa, what the hell was that?" [laughter]

CAO: It just came out.

LALIBERTE: It just came out. And then, yeah, I put it back, and I said, *Oh, it was just a funny coincidence that that truck came in in first gear*, because they were always in first gear, because the trails are bumpy. But that was it. And it was minor. I didn't take any meds. It was just that one little sound. I went on and had a glass of water and went on with life. So, it's there, I guess, but nothing compared to all of these guys that had lives and duties and jobs that were in the field, in the

trenches. I've had friends like that that were much, much worse than mine. I was alone and I was in earshot of all this happening. I could see it happening. I could hear it happening. I was involved. And I know that my results had some impact on a cemetery somewhere, you know, so…

CAO: There's that compelling...

LALIBERTE: Yeah, there's enough there, but it's, again, I'm glad that I was there, I'm glad I did it. I wouldn't want to do it again and I wouldn't recommend it for my son. I never did. Now, had he done it, I would have been proud, and I wouldn't have said, "Don't." But, I never volunteered for it. And my wife would have put much more resistance than I would, because she lived with it through me, too, you know. She was very nervous about the whole thing.

CAO: All right. Do you have anything else that you would like to add to this interview?

LALIBERTE: I don't think… You tell me. We hit all the bases, and Loring, and Nakhon Phanom, and yeah, where we were and what we did.

CAO: All right. Well, I think this is a good place to stop.

LALIBERTE: Okay.

CAO: Thank you very much for participating…

LALIBERTE: My pleasure.

CAO: …in this interview with me today. And I'm going to stop this.

[End of Interview.]