

William P. Link  
Dartmouth College Oral History Program  
Dartmouth Vietnam Project  
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MARKOWITZ: This is Hannah Markowitz in Rauner [Special Collections] Library on Dartmouth College's campus on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2-17. I'm here with [William P.] "Bill" Link, and this is for the Dartmouth Vietnam Project.

So first of all, just thank you for making the trip to Hanover today—

LINK: Okay. Yeah.

MARKOWITZ: —to share your story. I really appreciate the opportunity. Just to start out at the very beginning, do you mind giving me some biographical information—you know, where you were from, where you grew up, your parents, anything of that sort?

LINK: Yeah. I was—I was born and raised in south Texas. I graduated from—I'm—I'm one of 11 siblings, and my dad was a worker—him and his brother bought a company, and they were in the propane business. And I went to the [U.S.] Naval Academy in 1960, and I graduated in 1965. And there—from there I went—from there, I was in the Navy for the next seven and a half years. And that's basically where my Vietnam experience happened, while I was in the Navy.

MARKOWITZ: Right. So growing up with 11 siblings, what—what was that like in Texas? Did you—what are some distinct childhood memories?

LINK: Well [chuckles], we—we lived on a ranch, and so it was—we were outside all the time. I think that—I think that my best friends, and sometimes they felt like my worst enemies, were my siblings, depending on the circumstances. But essentially, we all got along pretty well. There's 17 years between the oldest and the youngest, and so my younger brother now is—is 51, and I'm 75, so it's a—that's—my older brother, actually, is 77, so he's two years older than I am. So

that's the 17-year difference between the oldest and the youngest.

And five boys and four girls, and so it's, like—it was pretty even, and we all got along well. As a matter of fact, last—two years ago, we went to a reunion. Actually, it was a wedding, and all of us were there, and it was just really quite a blast, and so it's—it's an experience. Don't get me wrong. [Laughs.] You never feel like you're alone. [Chuckles.]

MARKOWITZ: You said that your father was in the propane business.

LINK: Yes.

MARKOWITZ: Did your mother work at all?

LINK: My mother was a nurse. She was a nurse before she met my father, and then when they got married, she stopped nursing for the next 17 years and then went back to public nursing once my younger brother was about a year old. And so she was a nurse, and she was a nurse until she retired. I don't know how old she was when she retired, but—but she had a nice, long life. She was 97 when she died.

MARKOWITZ: Wow.

LINK: So it was a—but, yeah, so she was a nurse, and he was—he was kind of—he was second in command, I guess, with his—his brother. His brother was a—they—they owned the business together, kind of, but I think my uncle was the primary owner, and my dad was a manager/worker bee, if you would, to the—to the business.

And propane is a big business in south Texas because that's the only way that you can get fuel to the big ranches around and stuff. They would all have propane tanks and stuff, so—yeah.

MARKOWITZ: So you were—you were born in 1942?

LINK: Nineteen forty-one.

MARKOWITZ: Forty-one, okay. And growing up, did you feel like World War II was present at all in your life? I know you were fairly young.

LINK: No, I was born in July of '41, and so I didn't—I didn't really feel like that was—there was much of a presence there. My dad—because he was—at that time, he was a—a telephone lineman. He was considered required by the country to maintain some of the communication systems and stuff like that, and so he was never in the service.

MARKOWITZ: Okay.

LINK: And so—and we lived out—in the country, if you would, in south Texas, and so it was really not a—it was not a big thing in our growing up, that I even remember. The only thing I remember about World War II is that I have an uncle, who I was named after, because I was born on *his* birthday, 25 years later, who was a—a pilot in the [U.S.] Air Force, and he was—he fought—he flew in Europe and flew in Korea as part of World War II. So that's the only part I know about World War II. I mean, that's the only part that was evident at that time. My Uncle Bill used to fly planes there, so that's what we knew then.

MARKOWITZ: What was your—what was your high school like in Texas?

LINK: It was—it was a good high—well, actually, let's see, I didn't go to high school—okay, I did go to—the high school I went to was a Catholic high school, St. Joseph's Academy, and it's no longer there, but as I say, I graduated in 1959 there, and it was—it was an all-boys school. We went to—you know, of course, we—I played all the sports that I could there, and I was in all the—I mean, we had theater and acting classes and stuff. And, of course, as an all-boys schools, some of us had to play girl roles [laughter], and I have some pictures of myself dressed up in my dress, and I looked very much like my mother—

MARKOWITZ: [Chuckles.]

LINK: —at the time, but—so it was just, you know, pretty much a regular high school. Being from Laredo, Texas, which is about 96 percent Mexican—Mexican-Americans that lived

there—in my high school class, which was 18 kids, so it's not big, there was two of us that were Anglos, so I was the—you know, we were two Anglos in the high school class. So it was—it was a different—you know, it's growing up as a minority, because that's what we were in—in—in Laredo. And two of my brothers still live there, and—and they are—both of them—you know, they're both minorities [chuckles], if you would. [Chuckles.]

So it's a different—you feel—you feel—you don't feel different at the time because that's the way you grow up, but as I've moved to the north—when I went to the Naval Academy, there's a big change, you know? You don't—you don't realize how the racial divide is until you get out of it, and it's—it's different. It really is.

MARKOWITZ: Did you ever experience any racial tensions in Laredo or—

LINK: No, I didn't. Maybe I'm too numb to have experienced them [chuckles], but I didn't feel like I did. I mean, it was, like, we were always—you know, it was—some of my best friends—as a matter of fact, when I went back to my 50<sup>th</sup> reunion at high school, we all—we speak Spanish, and, you know, we just talk, and—and we talk to each other, and it's just really a—a good relationship. And when my mom died and all my classmates came to her funeral, and it was just—it was kind of a reunion. You know, you get together at weddings and funerals, and that was just one of the evidences. So I didn't—I—I—again, I didn't experience or feel like I experienced any—any racial tensions or any racial biases at the time.

MARKOWITZ: Yeah, definitely. It seems like it was the norm.

LINK: Yeah, it was just a norm, just the way we lived, right. Yeah, yeah, yeah, so—

MARKOWITZ: So was it common for students from your high school to go to college after?

LINK: I think pretty much all—well, St. Joseph's Academy was a—was a—was run by the Marist Brothers [of the Schools], and it was—it was a tough school to go to. And all of the kids from there—and I—as a matter of fact, I still see a couple of them on Facebook and a couple of them that I communicate

with periodically, and they all went to further education. A couple of them have master's degrees. They were teachers and stuff at the University of Texas, some of those, so they—so they did go to further—have better degree—or higher degree education for them.

MARKOWITZ: So what—what factored into your decision to attend the U.S. Naval Academy?

LINK: Well, actually, as I said, my uncle was in the Air Force, and so I applied to the—the academies, if you would. Whenever you apply through your representative, you can apply to all three of the academies. Actually, I guess you could apply to the fourth, but I didn't know anything about the [U.S.] Coast Guard Academy at the time. But I applied to the academies, and it's a single application to the three academies.

And as the Air Force Academy is in Colorado, it's a—much closer to where I live, and, of course, my uncle was in the Air Force. I—I got an alternate nomination to the Air Force Academy, which was closer, but I got a principal nomination to the Naval Academy, so I took the principal nomination.

MARKOWITZ: What is the—what's the distinction between the two?

LINK: The academies?

MARKOWITZ: Alternate versus principal.

LINK: Well, principal nomination means I'm in if I accept it.

MARKOWITZ: Okay.

LINK: Alternate nomination means I have to wait for the principal nominee to not accept it [both chuckle], and then I could go. And so there's somebody there that is ahead of me. That's the alternate nomination, yeah.

MARKOWITZ: And were your parents supportive of your decision?

LINK: Oh, yeah. Oh, definitely. [Chuckles.] You know, with—with all of us around, if we were going to go to college, it was going to be on our own, pretty much, because they didn't make a lot of money or anything like that, and so—as a

matter of fact, I was the first of our family to go to college. I mean, four of the—only four of the 11 kids did get higher degrees than high school. Many of them had degrees in disciplines. My older brother was a—was an electrician, so he went to school as an electrician, but it's just—just the way it was. And so was this—not a question. You know, I was ready to go.

MARKOWITZ: Did you ever consider not doing one of the three academies, or did you sort of always know that you would?

LINK: Pretty much—I actually—I didn't apply to any of—or didn't even go out and look at any other higher education schools. I did not.

MARKOWITZ: So what was it like getting to Annapolis—

LINK: [Chuckles.]

MARKOWITZ: —from Laredo, Texas, or your first impression?

LINK: Well, it was really funny because it felt like—when you enter the Academy, they take away all of your rights, and then as you're there, they give them back to you as privileges. [Laughs.] That sounds—that sounds kind of morose.

MARKOWITZ: [Laughs.]

LINK: But, you know, it's essentially whenever you get in there, it's—you're "Yes, sir," "No, sir," and keep your chin tucked in and walk a straight line and that's it. It's—it's really very strict, at least at the time that I was there, and I think it is—it's still pretty strict, from a general perspective, but at the time that I was there, it was prior to their being co-ed—the Naval Academy. And, as a matter of fact, it was in my sen— it was the year after I graduated that the first co-ed went to the Academy, so that was in 1966 that the first co-eds went to the Academy.

So it was—it was different. And it was very difficult for me because, you know, being—whenever you're—whenever you're on a ranch in south Texas, the thing that you do is you have chores, and so you go out and do them, and you're very independent. Well, when you get to the Academy

[chuckles], they want to take those independents [sic] away, and then—and then build it up. So it—it was—it was difficult for me. No question about it.

MARKOWITZ: What was—what were some of the hardest things to get used to there?

LINK: Well, this is—you know, at the time, of course—I'm a little bit older now, but at the time, I think that it was having some of the upperclassmen, how—again, this is—this is an internal thing. I think having some of the upperclassmen, who thought that they knew better, having you do something in a certain way and a person that was brought up independently and felt that they knew the better way for doing it—that was—that was the toughest thing, is to—is to go against your nature, if you would, as you went forward.

MARKOWITZ: Right. What was—what was the atmosphere among the students at the time?

LINK: At the Academy?

MARKOWITZ: At the Academy. Were politics present?

LINK: [Laughs.] We didn't—[Chuckles.] Especially at the plebe year, politics was nothing. There were—I mean, we were obviously aware of the politics going around, and I was at the Academy when John F. Kennedy was assassination, and our—and—and at that funeral, we all marched at JFK's funeral, so I was in JFK's funeral as a—as a midshipman, marching in the funeral parade.

So we were aware of what was going on, and it was all part of our lives, but it wasn't anything that directed our lives in any specific way.

LINK: Outside of your naval training there, obviously, what did you study or do? Any extracurriculars?

LINK: At the Naval Academy? I was—I—in sports, again. I was—I was a wrestler. I was in the lightweight football program, which is 150-pound football program. And those are the two main organized athletics that I was in. You know, I played

soccer and lacrosse, and we did all those kind of things on the side.

I was also in the Spanish Club, and as part of that, I was a foreign exchange student in Peru for a half year or three, four months. And while I was there—that was one of the things that—that I did. I went to the Peruvian Naval Academy [sic; Naval Academy of Peru] for about four months, and then I did travel in Peru while I was there, but I did take classes at the Peruvian Naval Academy. So that's kind of the other things [chuckles] that I did.

MARKOWITZ: What was that like?

LINK: I mean, I was—oh, that was—that was—that was very interesting. Again, there was two of us that year that went there, and we lived in the dorm with—you know, I had thr- — I had two roommates. It was three of us in the room. We spoke Spanish all the time. We marched with them and I lived with them and ate with them. We went out on the town with them.

And then we did—during their break, as—we did travel the country a little bit with—with kind of a guardian, if you would [chuckles] that took us around, and we did go to a couple of places. We went to Saksaywaman, which was an ancient Inca area, where there was pretty much—it's in an area where the artifacts and everything were kind of underground, because they had to be dug in.

We did go to Machu Picchu, which is the big Inca ruins there. We did go to Toquepala [Caves], which is in the southern part of—of the country. And then we went to the Brazilian jungle, and I'm trying to think of the name of the town that was on the—on the Amazon River. And it's the last navigable port on the Amazon River as you're coming in from the west—from the east. It's the westernmost navigable port. And so that gives Peru a different—as a different country in South America in that it has a west coast and an east coast port, where pretty good-sized ships can come into, because they come up the Amazon River. The Amazon River doesn't look like a river when you're standing on the banks because you can't see the other side, you know. [Chuckles.]



And so—and that was quite a—and so it was interesting in traveling in those things, plus the fact that—of going to the Peruvian Academy, if you would, and just attending classes with them.

MARKOWITZ: Were there a lot of differences between the Peruvian Academy and what you were used to?

LINK: Well, I think that there—I think there were. There—obviously, there were. But because it was new and we weren't going to be there that long, it didn't seem to—[Chuckles.] It wasn't a big thing that just came out and slapped me in the face. I mean, we did march to classes. We did march to meals. We ate meals and stuff, and the meals obviously were different because they were—it was a different country and everything, but it—so—I don't—they don't stand out, if you would.

MARKOWITZ: So graduating from the Naval Academy, what—could you just walk through sort of, like, the expectations for graduates immediately after they finish school?

LINK: Well, before we completed school, we had our assignments, you know? And then from there we would—we would graduate and then, pretty much depending on the assignment, you either went directly to it or you had a little time off before you went directly to it. I mean, there was some Rhodes scholars that—who were going to have some time off, that went to England to do their additional education there.

But I was assigned to the USS *Nicholas* [DD-449] out of [Naval Station] Pearl Harbor [Hawaii]. And I was to be a communications officer on that ship. And prior to going there, I had to go and do communications school. And so I had to learn about the radios and Morse code and the different things that we would have to have, and to be able to take care of those equipment—

And also, part of it was something that we—it's—it's—it's ingrained in you at the Naval Academy but not really taught to you, is that I would be managing people there, and I didn't have people management skills, you know, that were really

taught to me. And so that was something that I—that the—the communications schools brought up and really kind of pointed out, that you would be in charge of, you know, electricians and radiomen and so on and so forth that are in charge of the communications. And so I was CIC [Combat Information Center] and communications officer on that destroyer.

MARKOWITZ: Did you have any input at all into your assignment, or was it sort of whatever they handed you?

LINK: No, no. We—we put down what we would like to do. I wanted to be a pilot. My eyes didn't allow that, okay? And now I guess that they do have some corrective surgery that can correct that, but at the time they didn't, and so I wasn't allowed to be a pilot, so I was going to be on the surface Navy, which is basically in ships.

And that's the biggest part of the Navy, obviously [chuckles]—that's what the Navy is, you know? I mean, there are some—there are some surface jobs that if you do have handicaps—i.e., color blindness and other things that you can do—one of my classmates was—became a supply officer. His name was Roger [T.] Staubach. And he was, you know, the great big football player, and he has all kinds of awards, and he played for the Dallas Cowboys and so on and so forth. But whenever he graduated, he went to be a supply officer, and he played football for the Navy, the Navy team at the time.

But so it—there's—there's—there are—there are some things that you can put in for, but it's kind of—it's—it's not a specific; it's generally an area, if you would.

MARKOWITZ: What was the—what was the communications school like?

LINK: Well, it was basically learning about the communications equipment that the Navy had at the time. It was learning about the CIC, which is Combat Information Center, on a destroyer. It has all kinds of radars and radar tracking devices and how you track—it's just basically going to school to learn how these—how this equipment works and how you use it.

To be in charge of it, you should know how to use it, and so—and that's basically what it was. And so it was basically putting you inside of a—of a Combat Information Center and having you run through the different positions and—and learn about them and know how to adjust feed and gain and so forth so that you can look at the scopes and know what—what—what you're seeing whenever the—whenever the strobe passes. And so it's—it basically is kind of a hands-on training, but it's artificial, if you would. It's not real, but it's—it's hands-on training, and they—they run you through different programs like that.

MARKOWITZ: Great. Did you—did you have any background in any of that technology?

LINK: On the ranch in south Texas? No. [Laughter.] No, at the Naval Academy they do teach you—our degree was in—what was it called? Hmm. Well, we did go through some of that stuff at the academy because we—part of—some of our classes were out on the yard patrol boats, which is—they call them YPs. And those had all of these scopes and radars and so forth, and you would—you would do some of that. And so we did have some of that at the Academy. We did have some of that training, yes. And the communications equipment also.

MARKOWITZ: So the—the ship you were on, the USS *Nicholas*?

LINK: Right.

MARKOWITZ: It was a destroyer?

LINK: Right.

MARKOWITZ: Can you just elaborate a little more the function of the destroyer, especially during the time you were on it?

LINK: Yeah. The USS *Nicholas* was DD-449. It was the oldest commissioned destroyer in the Navy. It was older than I was at the time. It was in World War II. It was actually almost sunk in World War II. It was a—about a—it was—it was a destroyer that had some modifications done to it so that it could have what they call—it had a—a—it was an anti-submarine heli- —it was [an] anti-submarine destroyer.

It had specific sonar and radar devices that allowed it to do some anti-submarine searching. But as most destroyers, it was also a patrol and a— a guard ship. Whenever you're out in a fleet, if you would, of a carrier and some—and cruisers and so forth that are the major ships in a fleet, you have destroyers surrounding them that are kind of barriers to—to submarine approaches and so forth.

And we did—and we were—that's what the—that's what the *Nicholas* was, and it was—like I say, it was stationed out of Pearl Harbor, and we went to WESTPAC, which is the western Pacific area of operation[s], twice during the time I was there. And it was—and part of that time, as I mentioned in my bio, was doing gunfire support off of the coast of Vietnam. And so we did fire our guns [chuckles], you know. We didn't see anything because those guns can fire, I don't know, 17 miles or something like that. [Chuckles.] And so we just had some spotters that could spot, and we could shoot, and then they could tell us to adjust and so forth from that.

But it was a—but basically a shipboard life: six months out, into ports, you know, and you're pretty much living at sea, probably 85 percent of the time. The other 15 percent of the time, you may be in port, depending on the circumstances and so forth.

We did spend a little bit more time in port than we should have because we did hit a typhoon, and the ship had a main longitudinal, which is the main structure, fore and aft, that cracked because we hit a rogue wave that was about—well, our bridge is 42 feet above the water line, and the water came in the bridge. [Laughs.] And so—and so the wave was big. [Laughs.]

MARKOWITZ: Wow.

LINK: And so—and so it did—and so we did go into the Philippines at that time to—into dry dock and have to have that worked on.

MARKOWITZ: What were some of the other things that the destroyer was involved in when it was in the WESTPAC?

LINK: Any time the destroyer is out there, it's basically plane guard detail. Whenever the carrier is launching or bringing aircraft in from—from flights that they have to perform, and maintenance and so forth that they do periodically, the destroyers are called plane guards, and so they're off the stern of the carrier so that if something happens, they can race up and pick up the pilot or pick up the pieces. We did pick up a pilot while I was on board, because his plane didn't make it back and he parachuted out. So that's basically what they're doing out there. They're—they're guarding the—they're guarding the ship—they're guarding the main convoy, if you would, of ships from any foreign attacks.

We—at that time, of course, it was kind of—there was nothing out there that—that I can think of. We were pretty much—I mean, we did come up with—against some of the—not against, but we did meet some other navies and communicate with some other navies out there, but we didn't—but that's basically what the destroyers' job was, was a—as a protection for—one of the protective elements of the convoy, if you would. Yeah.

MARKOWITZ: You mentioned a big part of your job as the communications officer was sort of managing people.

LINK: Yeah.

MARKOWITZ: What—what was that like?

LINK: Well, it was different for me because, you know, having never managed people before—and I have a—a very hands-on management style. I don't give directions as much as I participate in the management and work with the people that I manage, and that carried on throughout my management career. But it was—it was basically talking to the people and taking care of their issues also, because we all have problems and issues, and working with them on those problems.

But making sure that they were trained appropriately and properly and making sure that they were—if they had any questions or concerns, that if I didn't have the answer, I knew I could go to one of my chiefs, who was very well read

in all of the particulars of the—of the area that we were working in, and he could help the individual.

But that was basically the job. Also to do performance reviews and to—and to work with those people. If there was any problems, try to get them through those problems, anything that happened on shore, making sure that you're a loving father, if you would. In other words [chuckles], you know, knock them down pretty good but make them understand what they had to do.

But also to support them and—and—and be their support, because, you know, you're—you're by yourself, and everybody's away from their family out here, and so the ship *has* to become family. And so it—and that's basically what the job was, was being in charge but being benevolently in charge [chuckles], if you would. I don't know if that's a good word or not.

MARKOWITZ: Do you feel like your ship did sort of become family?

LINK: Oh, yeah. No, there was no question about it. I can remember the captain—and I can remember the name—you know, the chief engineer was Buddy Small; the captain was Hofstetter [archivist note: spelling uncertain]. Now, this is way back when. You know, this is, like, in '66 and '67, so it's a long time ago. And—and I know that we did—and we went out on the town together, and we were—you know, if we were in shore patrol, we were in shore patrol together. But, yeah, I think that the ship *does* become a family, and whenever we get back to port, it really—that really evidenced because you don't kind of your own ways; you kind of stay—you know, you go to each other's houses when you're back in port, too, so it's—you really—that really becomes your family at the time.

MARKOWITZ: Did any problems ever arise on board?

LINK: Oh, yeah. We have—you know, we have—always have people who seem to buck the system or have an attitude that is kind of against the norm of the military strictness of the attitude—as an attitude. But I think that they—there was nothing that we really—there was nothing that caused

anybody to go to jail [chuckles] or anything like that for. But, you know, we always had people—

And then—and—and—and basically, in the Navy, the chief petty officers are the ones who kind of run the Navy, and they're the ones that, you know, you really work closely with and make sure that you—they know—there are some people in the Navy that are incredible at their job. And, I mean, whenever you—whenever you look at a person who can do their job so well but then when they get into public, sometimes they just—they—they—they overdrink or they—or something like that, and it—and it causes some real conflicts, and so working with the chief petty officer and working with those individuals and trying to allow them some leeway when they're in public but not getting too far away, but also knowing that whenever they're on the ship, I mean, you *have* to depend on them for some of the things that they can do, that they can do so well, you know. And they really—it's really a—it really does turn into a family, if you would, because you really know each other. I mean, you can't live that close and rub shoulders that close without knowing somebody.

MARKOWITZ: You weren't—so you weren't actually doing your in-country service in Vietnam at this time, but you said you did make trips to the coast?

LINK: No, we just—we just—we were gunfire support off the coast at this time. Now, this was in 1967—1966 and '67, when I first graduated. And in 1967 I came back from that tour, and I was assigned to go to—the name of the school was—I can't think of the name of the school right now. But it was—it was in Newport, Rhode Island.

And the school was command duty officer school in Newport, Rhode Island, and that was a next grade up because I had been assigned a job as chief engineer on the next destroyer. The degree at the Naval Academy gave us a big—it was—it was engineering—it was an engineering degree, and so that degree at the Naval Academy allowed us to know a lot about engineering, but also the command duty officers school and chief engineer school that I went to in Newport really taught me more about the engineering part of—of the ship.

And I was going to be assigned to another destroyer [chuckles], and this time it was going to off the east coast. That destroyer was the USS *Brownson*, and we—and I was in that command duty officer engineering school for six months, and so in early '68—well, actually—yeah, it was in early '68 that I got out of that school and I was assigned to the USS *Brownson*, 868, DD-868.

And so I was stationed in Newport. And being stationed out of Newport, of course we did a lot of the different tours that we do. We—we went down to the Caribbean [Sea] and did some training down there with submarines—against submarines, and so we had—again, this was another anti-submarine destroyer. It had—had some special designs within it that allowed it to do some things that other destroyers couldn't do.

And it was during this time in 198 and '69 that I met my wife, and she was from Rhode Island, and we got married in September of '68, just before we deployed to go to the Mediterranean [Sea]. So we were going to go to the Mediterranean at that time, so we—this is all not Vietnam stuff.

MARKOWITZ: No, this is—this all very interesting, too.

LINK: [Laughs.]

MARKOWITZ: This is great.

LINK: But—so we went into the Mediterranean and—well, Jeanne and I had gotten married in September of—September 28<sup>th</sup> of 1968, and then the ship got under way. And she was a teacher in Rhode Island at the time, and the ship went over to—this is the EASTPAC now [chuckles], the eastern Pacific.

And we went—the first thing that we did is we went up to—well, while we were in WESTPAC, we did go down to Australia, so we did cross the International—the Equator down there. We had—right after we left Hawaii, we crossed the International Date Line going that way, but we went and crossed the equator. And, of course, whenever you cross the equator anytime, you have to be a “shellback.” And



“shellback” is—is a term that’s used in the Navy, and they put people who have never crossed it before through an initiation, where you have to bow down to all the chiefs and everything [chuckles] like that. But it’s—it’s kind of a—a—a ceremony, if you would, as the ship crosses the equator that you—you go through.

Well, when we were in—going off of—out of Newport, we went up to the north Atlantic, and whenever you cross that line, which is the—what is that called? Hmm. Anyway, you go through another initiation because now you’re not crossing the equator but you’re crossing the—the—the northern—the northern line. So you get up there and you go up to—we went up to Norway and to—so we did get into Copenhagen [Denmark] and Norway and so forth.

But—so we—those are all events that we went through. But we did finally go into—after Liverpool, England, and—and Spain—I don’t think we went into Portugal, but we went all around into Barcelona, Spain, and then that’s—and at that time, my wife came over, and we did some traveling in Spain a little bit there. And then she port-hopped with us, because then we went to Gaeta in Italy, and she came, and we met in Italy, and then we drove [to] some different places there.

But, again, the ship was—was doing a little bit different work because it was not in a convoy, if you would. It was kind of on its own, and it was doing different ports, and just kind of a show-the-flag—we did have a carrier with us, but it was—when you’re in the Mediterranean, it’s nothing like when you’re in the western Pacific, which is so huge. But in the Mediterranean—and so we—it was more of a show-the-flag, go into ports.

We went into Turkey and Istanbul. We went into Greece and—and, of course, Italy and Spain and Morocco and, you know, into different ports while we were there and pretty much did a lot of work with foreign navies—you know, combined work with the Italian navy—you know, the different navies that we would work with and do just some—some drills, if you would, with those navies.

And then we came back from the—we came back from the Med, and I’m trying to think when we got back. We got back

in '69—in '69, and then I was assigned to go to Vietnam. And so we took our car and packed it up and drove across country to San Diego, California. Actually, we were in Coronado, California, is where we went, off the island there to the naval shipyard.

And at that time, my wife was very pregnant. [Both chuckle.] And I went to the Vietnamese language and counterinsurgency school in Coronado. And so I had—went—you know, was—I don't know the length of it. At this point, it's hard for me to remember the length, but it was—it was five days a week, six hours a day, Vietnamese language. Okay, so we would learn—just digging in from the beginning and start learning how to speak the Vietnamese language, because my assignment was already determined. It was going to be an American adviser on a Vietnamese riverboat. And so I had to learn the Vietnamese language to do that.

And as part of that, we went through a counterinsurgency school. That was done to give you a taste of what it would be if you were captured, and so we went through the waterboarding and—

MARKOWITZ: Oh, wow.

LINK: —and a lot of the—the rough stuff that—and we had—they had people that were trained in doing that, who seemed to enjoy it, but [chuckles] I don't know if they did or not, but it seemed like they did at the time. And so we went through some of that. But the primary part of going there was the Vietnamese language school.

And I went to Vietnam in February of '70, and I was assigned to Hải quân hai hai nam [archivist note: spelling uncertain], which is Vietnamese ship 229, and it was—I think as I said in my bio—was a landing ship that used to be a French ship, but it had 50 Vietnamese officers—50 Vietnamese on board, officers and men. And my duties at that time, because I was an engineering officer in *our* Navy, was to work with the engineering officer in *that* navy, on that ship specifically, and the maintenance of the engineering plant.

And since I was a command duty officer under way, for operations, I was to work with the captain of the ship for operations, and so that was my—that was my advisory role, if you would.

MARKOWITZ: Right.

LINK: On board with me was an enlisted man who was to work with the enlisted in some of the same kind of roles, primarily in engineering, is where—is where he was. He did have some deck functions, but mostly was in engineering.

And so, yeah, I went over there in February of '70 and was over there for 365 days, 17 hours and 21 minutes, but I didn't count. [Laughter.] And so it was—

MARKOWITZ: Remember that date to the dot. [Both chuckle.]

LINK: Yeah, and so—and—and while I was in country, it was—it was—and we were on the Cừu Long [Province] and somewhere down in the [Mekong] Delta area, and I could look at the map and tell you exactly where. And then we'd come back in to Saigon, at the time, Hồ Chí Minh City now, but at the time was Saigon.

And we would go into port, and we would go out with the—I mean, the officers that were on the ship were now—I was part of the ship's com- —complement, and I would just spend time with them. When we would pull into villages, we would walk hand in hand because the men hold hands over there, and so I would walk hand in hand with either the CO [commanding officer] or the XO [executive officer]. And that's the command officer or the executive officer. Those are the CO, XO.

And we would go to different places, and we'd eat, and as I've said to many people, I'm one of the few people that I know of that didn't lose a pound when I was over there. I loved the food. I ate it all. The duck's blood soup was not my favorite, but [chuckles]—but I did—I didn't have any problem with the food. As a matter of fact, the only time that I was stressed was when I went back to Saigon and I went and had the greasy hamburger at the O club [officers' club] [chuckles], and that did me in a couple of times.

But, no, I—I—I don't feel like we accomplished or were accomplishing anything. I—I do feel like at the time—and I have not kept touch with them, but I did make friends while I was over there with these people. I was able to communicate with them. I was able to work with them. I did get—we did get shot at. We did get hit. I have my—I just brought it, just for the heck of it. [Apparently turns to get something.]

MARKOWITZ: Oh.

LINK: I have my Bronze Star, —

MARKOWITZ: Oh, wow!

LINK: —with my combat action ribbons. This is the Bronze Star. No, that's not the Bronze Star. The Bronze Star is a bronze star.

MARKOWITZ: [Chuckles.]

LINK: This is the Bronze Star. There are—this is the Vietnam Service Ribbon, this is Combat [Action]. My—my—my Bronze Star did have a combat V on it because I was in combat. My Vietnam Service Medal has actually two—I got—I got two stars on that, which is two—two combat actions while I was in Vietnam. And, again, the Bronze Star does have a combat V on it, as you can see there, so—

MARKOWITZ: Wow.

LINK: That's—those are some of the medals.

MARKOWITZ: Yeah, thank you for bringing those.

LINK: And even the—this is so that I have a lapel—a Bronze Star lapel pin—

MARKOWITZ: Oh okay.

LINK: —that I can wear anytime. And so I was there, Vietnam. [Both chuckle.] I—I—I did—I did some things, and I didn't get—I don't know—I don't know what I did for that, but I—I

got it from somebody with—with a combat V on it, so—so I didn't—while I was over there, we did get hit a couple of times. I was fortunate. I didn't get wounded. Some of the people on our ship did get wounded. And, I mean, most of the rivers over there that you're in—many of the rivers you're in, you can throw a rock across. They're not that wide. And so shooting somebody from those shores [chuckles] is not very hard.

We—I made sure one of the—one of my directives to the captain was that we would never, ever anchor the ship in the—in any of those waters, and I would—I told him that if he did, then I would raise all kinds of hell [chuckles] and I would not stay on the ship.

One of my compatriots, one of my American guys that was over there, was on another ship like that, and they anchored one night, and the sappers [Viet Cong or North Vietnamese Army soldiers who penetrates perimeter or other defenses and sets off explosives] blew his ship up, and the ship sank in 17 seconds. And so it's something that you don't want to do, was to keep it—you want to keep the ship moving.

And so that's kind of what—what we did. As I said, I was over there, and we did—in those times, I think we did three tours out of Saigon at the time. We were only in Saigon for maybe a couple of weeks whenever we'd come back in, but after that, we would go out. And we went—we went to the southern part of Vietnam on one of the tours. We went to the central part of Vietnam on—on one of the tours. And I think that was the first tour, actually. And the last tour that we went out on that ship was more north of Saigon, so that's—

MARKOWITZ: Wow, that's really interesting.

LINK: [Chuckles.] Well, I—

MARKOWITZ: Definitely a different role than you—I feel like you often hear about in terms of service in Vietnam.

LINK: Yeah, well, many of the people serving in Vietnam—I mean, I had some friends that went over on PT boats or Swift Boats [Patrol Craft Fast (PCF)], and so that's American crew, and American—American American. And in—in many of the

Army or Marine Corps—I mean, Air Force was pretty much up in the air, away from it. But they are also in—in an organized group of Americans that are doing something. And our position in—in—in that was in the advisory group of in Vietnam. We were MACV, military officer advisory groups [sic; Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] or something like that. I'm trying to think of what the whole name was.

But, anyway, we were in a—in an advisory group, and that was my position. It was on board a ship, and I did—I had the—the captain's chair was on the starboard side, and my chair was on the port side. I had a .30 caliber machine gun on my chair. I shot it. Several times. But that was what our role was at the time, so—

MARKOWITZ: What was—do you remember what your perception of sort of the Navy's role in Vietnam was while you were on the destroyers, before you got your—

LINK: No.

MARKOWITZ: —assignment?

LINK: I didn't—I didn't—before I got my assignment there, I didn't—I did not know—I had, of course—you know, John [F.] Kerry and his Swift Boats and all that, and PT-109 [chuckles] [Motor Torpedo Boat PT-109], you know, and all that kind of stuff. But—so—I—I—I did not know of the advisory role, okay. I only knew of—of a role—you know, like, when I first was there, we were gunfire support off of Vietnam. When I—and then you hear about PT boats and SEALS [U.S. Navy's **S**ea, **A**ir, **L**and forces] and—and the different kinds of actions that are taking place there. But they're all actions within an American command, okay?

And—but—and so this role—I started learning about it whenever I went to the counterinsurgency school and Vietnamese language school, because they said that that's what I was going to be.

MARKOWITZ: [Chuckles.]

- LINK: But I had no idea of what it really meant until I got on board and met the captain and met the executive officer and started doing it, you know.
- MARKOWITZ: Looking back on it, do you feel like that schooling—?
- LINK: [phone sounds] What's this? Woah. Somebody's calling me. I'm just going to hang up. Not a number I know.
- MARKOWITZ: Oh, yeah, I never take those. They'll leave a message if they really want to reach you.
- LINK: Yeah.
- MARKOWITZ: Looking back on it, do you feel like the schooling that you got in—when you were in California was adequate or accurate?
- LINK: Oh, I think the schooling was adequate, but I don't think that we—I don't think that we accom- —I accomplished anything. I mean, you know, I met some people. Separated from my wife. Nothing was—I guess meeting the people was probably the only [chuckles] positive thing of the—of the tour.
- I don't know what was going to be expected—you know, we didn't accomplish anything at all, as far as I am concerned. We—we toured up and down the rivers, and, you know, it's—and so, again, I don't know what our role was—what—what—I know what my role was supposed to be, and I think that I did help the skipper learn how to navigate. I think that I gave him some—some pointers and so forth while I was on board: one of them, “Don't anchor this ship.”
- MARKOWITZ: [Laughs.]
- LINK: But I also helped him in some of the shipboard maneuvers because, again, I was qualified on destroyers, and I was, you know, a—two and a half years I was on destroyers, and I became qualified at all of the functions of a destroyer, from—from docking to getting under way between ships, from anchoring and from—all of those—those actions.
- And also as a chief engineer, I knew quite a bit about the engine room and about the—they had diesel engines on that

ship, and so some of our—some of our—not the main engines, but some of the secondary engines were diesel, and so I knew something about maintenance of those things because I just learned from the chiefs that were on board.

But so far as the action of being in Vietnam on a river boat, I don't—I don't think I accomplished [chuckles] anything, you know, really.

MARKOWITZ: Do you feel like you had—did you go there with a goal or sort of a mission and feel like you accomplished that?

LINK: No, actually, my—my mission was basically to make sure that I—I did the job that I was being asked to do: i.e., help with engineering—help—help the—the commanding—the officer in charge with ship handling and to help the engineering officer with engineering. And that was my role. But—and I think I did that. I think that that's something that they—they did not have—it did not appear that they had the training that we have in our Navy. Obviously, it was kind of a new Navy that they pulled together, and kind of a quick Navy. And I don't think that those people were—the people that were assigned to those positions did not have the training that we had. And so I think that I did that as part of the role.

My comment about what we were doing over there is much larger than that. An example: We were getting shot at. We were getting hit. And so I called in for gunfire support, and I called in, and I did not use—I did not use the coded call-in information, and I got chided for not using the coded call-in information. And I said—and when I went back to Saigon and met with the officer in charge, I told him—I says, "Look, if I call in with the coded information, then those guys are out there listening to me. They know the coded information. So I'm giving away the coded information! So why should I call in with the coded information? They know where I am. They're shooting at me! [Both chuckle.] You know, so it's, like—and so I was—I don't know. I—I got a Bronze Star. You know, I guess they decided I was maybe a little bit right.

MARKOWITZ: [Chuckles.]



LINK: But—but I think that that’s—that’s part of—and—and—and I think maybe that was also part of the fact that it was—we were kind of under the Army, in my role.

MARKOWITZ: As a—as an adviser?

LINK: As an adviser, okay? And so it was—and—and—and so we were calling in to the Army, and we were not under the Navy, who was—who was in charge of the patrol boats and, you know—and that kind of stuff. So maybe that was the difference that was there. I don’t know.

MARKOWITZ: Right.

What sort—what sorts of combat were you involved in? More specifically.

LINK: Well, like I say, you know, we—we would—we would—we would get hit with rocket propelled grenades from the—from the shore, and we would fire back. Several of the people on board were wounded. This happened at least twice. And there was some small gunfire, small fire—you know, small arms fire also from the shore that we responded to. We had some .50 caliber machine guns on board, and so we did kind of rake with those, the guys that were in charge of those. I had my .30 cal[iber semi-automatic carbine] beside me, and I would rake with it on my side, and the captain was raking with his on the other side. And so it was—we were all wearing our vests and—and helmets and so forth [chuckles], but that was kind of the—the action that we saw.

I did not see anybody [chuckles] on shore. We were just shooting at—because they were shooting at us and we could see some gunfire coming from there, so we were shooting in that direction. It was just a directional. I don’t know if I hit anybody. I don’t think I did. I just was doing this [pantomimes action]—

MARKOWITZ: Right.

LINK: —with—holding the trigger down, you know.

MARKOWITZ: Right.

LINK: And that was kind of it. So that was the true combat action if you would that I was involved in.

While we were on board that ship, whenever we went down to the southern part of Hòn Chuối—Hòn Chuối in Vietnam. It's an island off the southern coast of Vietnam. We did stop vessels that were out there, little fishing boats and so forth, just in case they were any VC, Viet Cong, on board those boats, and we did some searches. That was one of the roles that that ship did take on.

But other than that, that was—that was probably the closest that we came to doing any patrol, if you would, is when we—when we—when we got out on the rivers, because the rivers—when you're on the rivers, I mean, there's not a lot of patrolling in there. [Chuckles.] I mean, they're not very big. [Chuckles.] And so—I mean, you just—we didn't see a whole lot—every once in a while we would see a junk (they call them), the Vietnamese junks that are fishing junks and so forth. They were on the rivers. We would see them periodically, but not very often. Where we did stop, some of the boats were down in the—off the southern coast of Vietnam.

MARKOWITZ: How did—how do you feel your ser- —your service there as an adviser was different from people who were just within the U.S. Navy, still? Sort of not interaction with—

LINK: Well, my role was not a combat role, at all—at all, at all. And I think that the others—even the people that were on the Navy Swift Boats were in a combat role. They were looking for interdictors, and—and they were searching for those kind of people. My role was not that. My—maybe the ship's role was that, but my role was not that. My role—any of the combat action that I was in was adjunct to my role.

MARKOWITZ: Okay.

LINK: And so that was kind of the difference, I guess.

MARKOWITZ: Did you enjoy interacting with the Vietnamese Navy?

LINK: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Well, I—I can't say the Navy. I can say with the people on board the ship, you know. Again, when

you're on board the ship and you're getting close, you become semi-family, if you would. But I enjoyed interacting with them, and, you know, like I said, we would walk in the villages way out where—don't know where they were. And—and we would sit down and—you know, and eat and have, you know, a meal and so forth. And so, yeah, I think I got along pretty well with them. Didn't have any evidence of—of not getting along well. And the fact that both my enlisted support and myself came back from that mission, and we came back home [chuckles] was—was the good part of that. And we did leave before anything was turned over and all of that stuff ended, because we got back home—

I got back home in—in—in '70, and so, like I say, my daughter was a little over a year old when I got back, but—well, not quite a year old, actually, when I got back. But—and I did take some time off and—and meet my wife in Hawaii a couple of times, whenever I was over there. We went, and so we had some rest and relaxation, or R&R, as you would call it. And I did have a couple of those while I was over there. But it was not anything, in any way, shape or form, adequate to the fact that we hadn't been together, you know, for that time.

I don't know if I would do it again or not or if I would even think about signing up for it again, but, again, it was an experience, and I guess I can say that I went to Vietnam and I came back.

MARKOWITZ: You—you mentioned earlier that you—you felt like you sort of didn't accomplish—your ship, at least, didn't really accomplish anything there?

LINK: Yeah, I don't think that the ship accomplished what its role was. Obviously, the VC took over. [Laughs.] So, I mean, we did—I guess we did do what they were supposed to do on their patrols. I—I'm assuming that—I don't know what the captain's orders were or anything like that, but, you know, like I say, we did patrol the rivers and we did go down to southern Vietnam and—and check out some of the—the boats that were there, to make sure that there was no VC. We didn't ever see anybody that was arrested or anything like that.

So I—I don't know that the ship—I don't know what the ship's pure role was. I know what my role was on the ship, and so—and I guess I wasn't really involved in what the ship's role was; I was just there as a—as an adviser.

MARKOWITZ: Did you have any thoughts on, like, the greater Vietnam War at the time, you know, what— what [unintelligible]—

LINK: You know, it was—I was pretty naïve at that—I didn't—I really didn't—I thought, *Well, you know, the U.S. is doing it, so it must be right.* And—and I guess I probably would be a little more questioning now. But I—I don't know—at the time, I was—I was—that was my assignment, and so I was going to do it, you know.

MARKOWITZ: Right.

LINK: That was about it.

MARKOWITZ: So you—so you got back to the U.S. in '70?

LINK: Yes,

MARKOWITZ: And was your wife—your wife and your daughter were still in California at the time?

LINK: They stayed in Coronado. We had rented an apartment there, and—and they stayed in Coronado all of that time. They—I guess—actually, when—when I—when I left—my daughter was born in April; I left in February, and when—when she went—she went back to Rhode Island to be with her parents when Nichole was born, and then she with Nichole came back to Coronado, and they were there. And there were some other Navy wives there, so that was, again, another family, if you would, that—that would—support group that was there. And so she was there whenever I came back, yes.

MARKOWITZ: You—you were in Vietnam for 365 days,—

LINK: Seventeen hours, 21 minutes.

MARKOWITZ: But you didn't count.

LINK: I didn't count.

MARKOWITZ: Was there—was there ever a possibility of you going back there or you sort of—

LINK: Not me! [Laughs.]

MARKOWITZ: Did you—you knew it was over.

LINK: I knew I was—I knew I was finished. No, I—I wouldn't have gone back. You know, that was not—that was not something that I would have done. Right.

MARKOWITZ: What was—what was your plan for when you got out?

LINK: Well, actually, when I got back, I—I wanted to have shore duty because I had been on two destroyers and in Vietnam, basically. I've been married for just about four years and had been with my wife for 11 months, total time, and never more than four months was the—was the long shot.

And so I wanted shore duty. I wanted to come back, and my plan was to stay in the Navy and to go to shore duty, and I—if not shore duty, I wanted to go and get my master's degree. And so that was—

MARKOWITZ: What—sorry, what does shore duty entail?

LINK: Well, it means that I would be assigned to some 9 to 5 job—

MARKOWITZ: Okay.

LINK: —on shore, and I would go home every night for some period of time, you know, and, you know, whatever that time was, a year or two years, whatever the assignment was. And that was kind of what I would like to be, you know, and it would be an officer in the Navy at some base, doing some administrative whatever, you know, either training or whatever. But it was—it was shore duty [chuckles], you know.

But they had assigned—they said, "Okay, well, no we have your next billet is going to be an executive officer," which is the second in command, "on a destroyer, going back out to

sea.” [Chuckles.] I said, “No, no, no, no, you didn’t—you don’t understand.” And so I said, “No. If I can’t get that, then I want to go to get my master’s degree.”

And they said, “Okay, well, we can send you to Monterey, California, for your master’s degree in weapons.” And I said [chuckles], “No. You stu—” Again, “You don’t understand. I don’t want weapons. I want a master’s degree in business.” [Chuckles.] And so—and they said, “No. Well,”—and so I said, “Well, I tender my resignation.” And they said, “Well, okay, we’ll accept your resignation, but we’ll hold your spot open for a year so that you can come back in without losing any seniority.”

And I applied to Northeastern [University], and I got accepted to Northeastern, and I decided since that was going to be a one-year program—actually, the program is a two-year program to get the master’s there, and I said, *Well, okay, well, since they’re giving me one year to make my decision, I’m going to try to do the program in one year.* And I did the program in one year. It was a lot of—away from home again, you know. And—

MARKOWITZ: Your family still stayed in—

LINK: No, they—they came—they came—they came back east. As a matter of fact, we started living in—with her parents in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, but then we—we moved to a little apartment in Bellingham, Mass., and then I rode the train in every day and went to Northeastern, because there was a train station not too far from there.

And so I went and got my master’s degree in business and graduated in 1972 with my master’s in business, and then I didn’t go back in the Navy. I went to work using my master’s degree, and the first job I had was with Nashua Corp[oration], Nashua Corporation in Nashua, New Hampshire.

MARKOWITZ: What was it like being a veteran in Boston, at Northeastern, at the time when you got back?

LINK: I don’t think—I don’t—I don’t know that anybody kne—there was a couple of us there, but I don’t know that in general that

it was known that I was a veteran. I didn't—I didn't [chuckles] wear anything to show anything. I didn't show a flag or anything like that. I just was another student. I was a little older than the rest of them, but I was another student getting my master's degree.

MARKOWITZ: Did you—what were your general opinions on the war continuing throughout that time? Did you—were you at all vocal about it, or—

LINK: No, no, no. No, I was—I was kind of—I don't—I didn't advertise that I was—that I had been in that. The fact that I was in the Navy was kind of generally known, primarily because I graduated from the Naval Academy, but I didn't advertise anything about the Vietnam War, the fact that I was there or anything like that. It's just one of those events in my life that didn't seem to go anywhere, you know? It was—it was just one of the steps to my—my life.

MARKOWITZ: Was there—was there any antiwar movement present at Northeastern?

LINK: I wasn't involved in it.

MARKOWITZ: Yeah.

LINK: I don't know about it. Yeah, I—and, again, this is in '72, so it's probably pretty much over by then because it all ended [chuckles], you know, not too long after that, so it was—so—I mean, I graduated in '72, so—when did it—when did it end?

MARKOWITZ: Seventy-five?

LINK: Seventy-five or something, yeah, yeah. No, it—it wasn't—I wasn't involved in it, and I wasn't part of any protest or anything like that, yeah.

MARKOWITZ: Okay.

LINK: Yeah. I just had my head down,—

MARKOWITZ: [Chuckles.]

LINK: —studying so that I could finish my degree and get going and so forth from there.

MARKOWITZ: Did you ever regret turning down any other opportunities in the Navy, like the destroyer or—

LINK: Well, you know, all things being equal, it would be a great place to have retired from. I don't—I—I don't know how it could have changed. I don't know what it would have done to our life, our married life. I—I—I—I do sometimes regret that I didn't retire from the Navy, if you would, because it would have made life now a little bit different, you know, and so—but I don't know how much different. I—I—I really enjoyed my—my time in industry. You know, I—I went to work, became a manager of a digital facility and Digital Equipment Corporation, which is now no longer a corporation. And I was a manufacturing manager when I graduated from Northeastern.

And then I went to—then I guess Compaq Computer [Corporation] bought Digital, and then Hewlett-Packard [Company] bought Compaq [chuckles] and so on and like that. And so it was that—that was the—and I was working in Nashua at the time.

MARKOWITZ: Was that first job what brought you to New Hampshire, your job with Nashua Corporation?

LINK: No. The job with—with Digital—

MARKOWITZ: Oh, okay.

LINK: —brought me to New Hampshire. When I graduated from Northeastern, we came—we went to—I went to work for I think it was New England Business Service, and we were living in Amherst, New Hampshire, at the time. I think. No. I went to work for Nashua Corp. as a manager, and we were living in Amherst, New Hampshire, at the time.

And then, working at Nashua Corp., I went to work—I moved from them to New England Business Service at—in—that's in Mass. I'm trying to think of the name, Chelmsford or someplace like that in Mass. And I was still living in Amherst.



And then I went to—staying with New England Business Service, started working in Peterborough, New Hampshire, which—they had a—they had a little facility in Peterborough.

And then I got the job with Digital Equipment Corporation in—in Maine—

MARKOWITZ: Okay.

LINK: —and so we moved up to Maine. And I was manufacturing manager for the Digital—for the manufacturing facility there. And from there, I moved to—to Salem, New Hampshire, as—and I took charge of an engineering group with Digital. And we were—we had some labs that we were doing testing on, and we were testing on certain equipment.

And then I went to Nashua and started managing a larger lab there, a computer lab there. And so I went from manufacturing management to technical management, if you would, lab management, and managed engineers in those places.

And then, when Compaq bought and then H-P bought—shrink, shrink, shrink—

MARKOWITZ: [Chuckles.]

LINK: And so I was going to get laid off. I got laid off in January of '03. Yeah, January of '03.

MARKOWITZ: So it was about 20 or 30 years that you were moving around—

LINK: Yeah.

MARKOWITZ: —with those different—okay.

LINK: Yeah, with a different—well,—but I—so I have my—I was with Nashua—I was with Digital Equipment Corporation long enough to receive a pension from them,—

MARKOWITZ: Okay.

LINK: —and so—so. But, yeah, so I—and so I—I was terminated in or laid off in January of I think it was '03, and then that summer I worked at a golf course and dih, dah, dah. But in November I was hired by the college, and—I think they were just checking me out because I was hired as a worker bee—you know, climb under the table, you know, “my computer doesn’t work,” and so “Well, you gotta plug it in. Maybe it’ll work.”

MARKOWITZ: [Chuckles.]

LINK: And—and then in January of '04 I was made the director of IT and Programming Services [Information Services] for the [Dartmouth College] Development Office. So that’s why I think that was just a [chuckles] really work, you know. And so—and then—so I managed the—the IT and Programming Services for the Development Office, from '04 till—must have been '09 or something like that.

MARKOWITZ: Was your—was your wife working at all at this time, or—

LINK: Yes, she was working at—she was a nurse. [Chuckles.] She got her nursing degree—as a matter of fact, she got her nursing degree in—in New Hampshire, at Tech, New Hampshire Tech[nical Institute, now NHTI, Concord’s Community College]. And—and when we went up to Maine, she was nursing. She was a—she nursed at some industry nursing. She was—she was on-site nursing for some different industry places. When she came back, she worked at Catholic Medical Center in Manchester [New Hampshire].

And then, when I started working at the college in '03—'03, '04—when we moved up to this area, she stopped. She retired from nursing, and so—but, I mean, now she—she volunteers at David’s House. You know, that’s the—you know what David’s House is.

MARKOWITZ: Yeah, is that the—that’s the—

LINK: That’s where—

MARKOWITZ: Or what—which one is David’s House?

LINK: David's House is—is the one that they—that kids' parents can stay at—

MARKOWITZ: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

LINK: —when they are there in—at the [Dartmouth-]Hitchcock [Medical Center]. So they can stay there.

MARKOWITZ: Yes. Yes. Okay.

LINK: And so she volunteers there once a week, and that day happens to be today. We both volunteer on Tuesday.

MARKOWITZ: Okay.

LINK: So we take off. But anyway, so she—she volunteers there, and but she did—she was a nurse also.

MARKOWITZ: And what about your—your daughter?

LINK: Our daughter. Well, you know, she's—my daughter now—you know, in 1970 she was born, so she's going to be 47 in April. In the meantime, we had a son ten years later. [Chuckles.] And so he—he was born in—in 1980. And at that time, we were living in Maine, and so we were—actually, we were living in New Hampshire when he was born, but we moved to Maine shortly thereafter.

And so my daughter is—works for the State of Maine. She has a degree in—in business also, undergraduate degree. And she is a manager for some thing in the state office, you know, one of those things. And my son is—he—he's a teacher at a private school in Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania]—actually, near Pittsburgh; it's in—it's the Kiskiminetas Schools for Boys [The Kiski School], in Saltsburg, New Ha—Saltsburg, Pennsylvania.

MARKOWITZ: Okay.

LINK: So that's what he does.

MARKOWITZ: Did you Navy service ever sort of play into conversations with your kids, your family life later on?

- LINK: Well, as a matter of fact, my son thought about applying to the Naval Academy, but, you know, it was kind of a Johnny come lately [chuckles] application, and it was not—so, yeah, it—it did, but neither of them thought about going into the service, and neither of them were ever on a—any kind of assigned position or any kind of a—you know, to go into the—into the military or anything like that, so, no, they're both in their lives right now. We have three grandchildren from my daughter. My sons not married. And they're living their lives.
- MARKOWITZ: I guess they were—well, your daughter was pretty young when you came back. Your son wasn't even born yet.
- LINK: No. [Both chuckle.]
- MARKOWITZ: Did they ever ask about Vietnam, or—
- LINK: Well, once in a while they'll—asking me about the service, not—not so much about Vietnam.
- MARKOWITZ: Right.
- LINK: And, because, you know, I still have the pictures of the ships that I was on and—and my graduation sword and that kind of stuff, and so they—you know, they—they're—they know that I was in the Navy, and they probably read my license plate and all that kind of stuff, so—but there's not a whole lot of conversation about it right now. It's just part of my life that was not really part of theirs.
- MARKOWITZ: Right.
- LINK: Yeah. So.
- MARKOWITZ: Do you feel like being in the Navy has at all influenced your politics now, or—
- LINK: I don't think that being in the Navy influenced my politics at all, no. I—I think that—you know, I—I have to say that I don't think being in the Navy influenced my politics, no. Being in the military did not.
- MARKOWITZ: Okay.

LINK: Yeah.

MARKOWITZ: And did you ever—have you ever considered going back to Texas, or do you—do you like this area?

LINK: [Chuckles.] I—I love New England. I—we—you know, I go back and visit, and when my mom was alive, I'd go every year for two or three weeks and—and be there, kind of the—when she was alive, what we would do is because there was 11 of us, you know, we could each take a month and be in ch—

MARKOWITZ: Cover the whole year that way.

LINK: And cover the year that way. [Both chuckle.] And so it was kind of a—and so—and at the time, when she was alive, we did that.

But, again, I've really—I really enjoy New England. I like to ski. My wife doesn't. The snow has not allowed too much of that this year. [Chuckles.]

MARKOWITZ: Sadly.

LINK: I love cross-country skiing, and it's not allowed any of that. I've done it twice, I think, and once I fell down.

MARKOWITZ: [Chuckles.]

LINK: And so pretty much—I like New England. I think that—I don't think we're going to stay in New England until we die. I—I know that we—we—we go to Florida for two months every year. At one time, it was one month, and now it's two months. We do like to take trips. We've been on three-week trips to Spain and to France and to—and we're planning one for Portugal now.

We went out to the West and did the canyons tour and toured, you know, Zion and Bryce [Canyon] and the Arches [sic; Arches] [National Parks] and did—did those, just seeing things. A year ago July—a year ago June, a year from June, we—I went down to—four of my brothers—we went and did

the canyon—what is it? Chisos, I can think of all the Chisos Basins. It's the Bi- —Big Bend National Park.

MARKOWITZ: Oh. In Texas.

LINK: We went—we went to Big Bend and spent a week there, you know, just the four of us.

MARKOWITZ: Nice.

LINK: One of them couldn't make it, but four of us did. We canoed on the Rio Grande [River] and hiked and did that kind of stuff.

So just trying to—you know, there's still quite a bucket list of things to do and see. And—and I don't know how much longer that—because my—my travel agent is my wife.

MARKOWITZ: [Chuckles.]

LINK: She does all the planning and, you know, the rental places for everything for going to Portugal, this time, and so we'll—we'll see how that goes. And, you know, as we get older, it's—you know, at some point in time, we know that we're not going to be able to continue doing it, but—my memory is not what it used to be. [Laughs.]

MARKOWITZ: Do you volunteer a lot up here? You said—

LINK: I'm—I volunteer one day a week at the riding aren- —at the riding stable, and that's—that's from my old south Texas roots.

MARKOWITZ: Yeah.

LINK: Because we lived on a ranch and I had horses all the time. I am—I volunteer at the association that we live in, Eastman [Community Association], so I do volunteer there. At this point, I don't know how much longer, but I'm the chairman of the environmental control committee there, and so tomorrow morning, 8:15, we go out and check out some places and stuff like that. Every week we have a team that goes out and looks at some of the changes that people want to make and see if they can be approved.

MARKOWITZ: Okay.

LINK: Generally, they are approved. But, so—yeah, I mean, that's—and—and then we volunteer every other—every other Wednesday evening at a food pantry in—in Concord [New Hampshire], because we lived down there for so long. We've been volunteering there for about 25 years. And so we do that.

And then other things pop up here and there, but we do volun- —do volunteer at some places.

MARKOWITZ: Nice.

LINK: Yeah.

MARKOWITZ: Well, if there's nothing else you want to add to the story—

LINK: [Chuckles.] I can't think of anything else. [Chuckles.]

MARKOWITZ: Thank you so much. That was—that was really great.

[End of interview.]