

C. James Martel
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
The Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[BENJAMIN G.]

WEINSTOCK: This is Benjamin Weinstock here with Jim Martel. It is August 19th, 2015. We are in Rauner Special Collections Library at Dartmouth College.

So, Jim, if it's okay, I'd like to begin with a little bit of background information. Can you tell me where and when you were born, and what were your parents' names?

MARTEL: Well, I was born March 23rd, 1941. My father—I'm a Jr., so his name was Courtland James Martel, and I'm a Jr., so—he went by Courtland; I went by James, so I stuck with James, but—and my mother, Rita [P. Gatineau] Martel. And they both passed away a few years ago, so—and he—my father was a veteran of World War II. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And where are you from, again?

MARTEL: Sturbridge, Massachusetts.

WEINSTOCK: What was it like growing up there?

MARTEL: Oh, I was—I had a great childhood, really. I mean, we did all kinds [chuckles] of things. I mean, we were able to, you know, pretty much be independent. You know, we didn't have a lot of supervision. But, I mean, we didn't do—we just were able to roam around and play baseball, go fishing or, you know, do that kind of a thing, go ice skating, play hockey, play—you know, just say, "Well, this is where we're gonna be at," and that was—that was it. So it was—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: My brother and I talk about it all the time, how we had a great childhood.

WEINSTOCK: Was this more of a rural area or a small town?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, a small town area, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. Well, were you interested in the outdoors and nature in general, growing up there?

MARTEL: Yes, since we lived in the county, you know, we used to spend, like, summers, like, oh, camping out or playing baseball, going fishing or, you know, so we were outside a lot. And I was always interested in nature, forestry. Just it seemed a natural extension of our environment there, so—yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And can you tell me a little bit more about your parents? You said your dad was a veteran in World War II?

MARTEL: Yeah, he was in the [U.S.] Navy on LST-1067 [USS *Nye County*], and, you know, toward the end of the war, and my whole family, the Martel clan [chuckles]—all men went in the service, so at the time, I thought it sort of was a natural thing that you did. As you got older [chuckles], it was your turn to go in the service. So that's kind of the way I looked at it. You know, it was my turn to go in, even though there was a lot of antiwar sentiment back then. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Was there a lot of talk about military matters in your household, then?

MARTEL: Just generally, but nothing, you know, that was—it was just normal, you know, things about—when I talked to my father, you know—World War II, those Germans and Japs, you know, how bad they were, but I remember him saying, you know, “Those people are just like us.” And I couldn't—I couldn't really [chuckles]—it seemed like they were so bad, you know [chuckles], but really they—a lot of them are just like us, is what he tried to tell me, I guess.

WEINSTOCK: And what did your mom do?

MARTEL: She was a homemaker, you know, one of seven kids, you know.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: The oldest of seven.

WEINSTOCK: So what was it like growing up with that many siblings?

MARTEL: Well, it was—there was never [chuckles] a dull moment, you know. I mean, as the oldest of seven. There was always things to do. And, you know, we had a garden and things like that, and we—we each had our chores to do, so it was, yeah, typical big family stuff. [Chuckles.]

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Do you remember any other talks about politics or—what was usually the dinner conversation in your family?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah. Well, you know, it's kind of hard to remember what [chuckles]—what the dinner conversations were, but my family was religious. You know, they were Catholic, and I grew up, you know, with a strong religious connection. And so we—we stayed kind of within those parameters or so. We didn't—we didn't criticize the government. We thought, you know, that was—especially when it's a Republican government [laughs]—it was better. But it was—we talked about family. And, you know, we had get-togethers, and then, you know, golf tournaments, and those kind of things.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Do you remember when you first started having an ear or a mind for politics in general? I mean, I imagine—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —growing up in kind of the—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —last years of World War II—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: —was pretty influential.

MARTEL: Yeah, that's right. It was—you know, during the Korean War, too. You know, that was going on. And my family supported, you know, [then General, later President Dwight D.] Eisenhower, and I remember seeing the "I Like Ike" buttons. [Laughs.] And so we—we kind of, you know, went along with being a strong America and defense and all that. And since all my uncles and father and everything, you know, were in the military—you know, I thought, too, it's my turn, so that's why I kind of pursued that path out of college.

WEINSTOCK: So it was a proud time to be an American.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, that's right, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Sure. It's hard to relate to that today.

MARTEL: Yeah, know. That's right. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: That's right. yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So can you tell me a little bit more about your later years of childhood, I suppose? You know, maybe high school age.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: What was going on politically or just in general?

MARTEL: Well, see, I think we—I was fortunate, anyway, because I was in high school and getting of age before all the drugs started. You know, like, in the mid '60s on up, it started getting—it was more of a drug culture. You know, before that, we never were exposed—I was never tempted to—I never even tried any drugs. [Laughs.] You know, because it just wasn't part of our—you know, our normal society at the time.

So I graduated in '60. I was president of the class and that. [Chuckles.]

WEINSTOCK: Wonderful.

MARTEL: It was only—it was a class of 36, and we're having a reunion again, the 55th reunion, in September. It was a parochial school, a French parochial—a French-Canadian—was

taught by French-Canadian nuns, and it was—you know, I thought I had a good education. I, you know, took college courses when I was in high school at Holy Cross [High School], you know.

WEINSTOCK: So would you say in general that it was a pretty conservative climate?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah. I would say, yeah, yeah. So—yeah, it was—I had a good time. [Laughs.] I had a great—great high school, and, you know, we went on to—I took a finite math course at [College of the] Holy Cross. I mean, it was—they had made arrangements with the local college to go to take a—they didn't call it advanced placement; it was just a college course,—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —you know, before you even got to college.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. Did you play any sports?

MARTEL: Yeah, I played baseball and cross-country, yeah. Of course, it wasn't a big school, so if you had to play something [laughs]—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah. And it was interesting. Like, I wish I remembered more of my French, but there was—in the elementary grades, it was, like, French studies would be in the morning, English in the afternoon, and then they would switch sometimes. You know, it would be English in the morning and French in the afternoon. Things in French that were taught were, like, French language and religion, you know, in French.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: So it was—you know, that school is no longer [chuckles] in existence. There's no nuns left, I don't think.

WEINSTOCK: Right. Do you know if that was similar to other high schools in the area, this kind of multicultural, multilingual education?

MARTEL: Well, you know, I think—this was in Southbridge, Massachusetts, which had a lot of French-Canadian people came down and worked in the mills, okay. But then there were also lots of Irish and Polish, and each had their own church, yeah. That's kind of—that's the way it was back then, their own church, and they had their own school, so it's just—I don't know what their—you know, I'm sure their teachings were similar, you know, to ours.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah. But we had the biggest school there, not—the biggest parochial school, yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So after high school—you said you graduated in 1960?

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So the election of [President John F.] Kennedy had not happened yet.

MARTEL: No, that's right.

WEINSTOCK: Do you remember that at all?

MARTEL: Oh, yeah, I remember that.

WEINSTOCK: Can you tell me a little bit about that? Because, you know, a lot of people think—

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —that's a kind of defining moment.

MARTEL: That's right, it is because, you know, he was so dynamic and everything. I remember my parents, who were staunch Republicans—my mother had a picture of John Kennedy [chuckles] right in the living room. [Laughs.] You know, it was—you know, he was attractive, and, you know, he inspired a lot of people to think, you know, broadly about their—their role and in how they should relate to government, you know.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: They should “ask not what your government can do for you but what you can do for your country.”

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Do you think the Catholic connection had anything to do with your parents’—

MARTEL: Oh, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —really liking him.

MARTEL: Yeah, probably. Yeah, oh yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah, he was the first Catholic, you know, president.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And there was lots of controversy over, you know, is he going to take orders from the Pope or whatever? [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Typical fear mongering.

MARTEL: That’s right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah, so after college—I’m sorry, after high school did you go up to college or—

MARTEL: Mm-hm. Right.

WEINSTOCK: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

MARTEL: Well, yeah, we—we didn’t have much money, and—well, just to back up a little bit, when I was, like, maybe 12 years old or something—I’ll never forget what my father said one day as my brother and I were working up on the roof on a house he was building and pounding nails, and that was a day like today. It was hot and sweating, and, you know, I wasn’t too happy [laughs] as a kid. And my father says, “You don’t like what”—no, what did he say? He said, “How would you like to do this for the rest of your life?” And I said, “No, I wouldn’t want to.” And he says, “Well, you better go to college.”

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: And that kind of stuck in my head. And I was a good student in high school. We didn't have much money, but my aunt and uncle, who lived in Detroit, said they'd be willing to take me in, and so that would—and then I got a scholarship from American Optical Company. They had a scholarship every year. You know, you had to go in for an interview, and, you know, they picked a few students to give scholarships to. So a \$4,000 scholarship. And that covered me for four years. [Laughs heartily.]

WEINSTOCK: The times have changed, it sounds like.

MARTEL: Yeah, that's right.

WEINSTOCK: So it sounds like your parents were really big on inspiring a work ethic—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —and kind of getting you to think about your future.

MARTEL: That's right.

WEINSTOCK: How did that impact you?

MARTEL: Yeah, well, you know, so basically I just tried to learn as much as I could, and I really didn't now how it would all turn out, but luckily I was able to go to the University of Detroit in Michigan, and I majored in aeronautical engineering, because I liked airplanes, you know. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: How'd you get *that* interest?

MARTEL: Ach, just looking up and seeing airplanes. You know, it was the beginning of the jet age, you know, the [North American] F-86 Sabrejet, you know, and all these swept-wing airplanes. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: I thought they were the coolest looking things. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Did you ever go to any air shows, growing up?

MARTEL: No, no, no. But I used to collect, you know, pictures of airplanes and actually make model airplanes and stuff like that.

WEINSTOCK: So this fascination with planes started pretty young.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah. It started young. Actually, I wanted to be a pilot, too, so I took aeronautical engineering, which was a natural thing, for me anyway. I took—the University of Detroit—it's a co-op school, so you went to school five years rather than four, and the last three years were—you were doing co-op work: three months of school and three months at a job, a co-op job, so—

WEINSTOCK: What kind of job did you work there?

MARTEL: Well, I didn't work there. I worked at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. They had an Air Force Systems Division there, and they did all kinds of research work—you know, typical—student—[Chuckles.]

WEINSTOCK: I've been there with my Boy Scout troop.

MARTEL: Oh, did you?

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Is that right?

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Oh, yeah. I loved it there, you know, all the different things that they do there.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Can you tell me a little bit more about your years in Detroit? You know, were you there in '61 or '62?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah, so—

WEINSTOCK: So this is right as, let's see, Bay of Pigs [Invasion of Cuba] is going on—

MARTEL: Yeah, that's right.

WEINSTOCK: —and the [Cuban] Missile Crisis.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Can you talk about some of these events?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Were things getting more real or pressing?

MARTEL: Yeah. There was a—at that time, there was a lot of things going on, you know, politically: the antiwar and the—you know, well, the Bay of Pigs things that turned out to be a fiasco. You know, we didn't talk a whole lot, I mean, in a discussion type atmosphere; it was just, you know, this happened or that happened, whatever.

The school had Air Force and Army ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]. Yeah. I had to take—because I was an engineering student—all engineering students had to take either Air Force or Army [laughs] ROTC. [Laughs.] And so I took Air Force ROTC, and, you know, I liked it. I wasn't—I don't think I was, like, you know, that conservative. I just liked the idea of airplanes and military,—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —like that. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And it sounds like this was a little bit before we started seeing protests against ROTCs on campuses.

MARTEL: Yeah, that's right. That's right, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So were there no bad feelings towards ROTC at the time?

MARTEL: Yeah, a little bit, you know, but not—not a widespread thing. It was—yeah, I mean, we would go to different schools and,

you know, visit other schools around with their ROTC units, and you'd march in these big assemblies. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Of course, the Air Force isn't famous for marching, so— [Laughs.] We didn't do that well.

WEINSTOCK: Can you tell me a little bit more about Detroit in general?

MARTEL: Well, yeah, that was kind of—because, you know, coming from a small town in Massachusetts, coming to Detroit—and my aunt and uncle had this nice little brick home, but it was right next to—you know, you could almost reach the next home over. And they had a little lot, and it just—I couldn't believe—you know, it was so—so crowded and everything. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Sure. So it was a lot different than—

MARTEL: Yeah, it's a lot different.

WEINSTOCK: —what you grew up—

MARTEL: Yeah, it was a whole lot different. But, you know, they were good. And, you know, my cousin—he's the same age as I was, so he went to University of Detroit as well, so we both were going at the same time. He majored in—well, he started out in pre-med, but then he went to accounting.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: So we used to study together. [Chuckles.] Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And I imagine the city was a little more vibrant in manufacturing—

MARTEL: Yeah, that's right.

WEINSTOCK: —than what it, what's now.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, it's—it was starting—I mean, you know, whites were starting to move out to the suburbs, and blacks were starting to move in, you know, closer in-town developments, like the one we were in.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And, of course, I remember at the time, that was a real concern. You know, what's property values going to be and all that.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: So, yeah, it—and today, that house—I mean, it's all integrated in there, and it's not really looking as well as it did back then.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: I mean, that's just the way it is, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Can you talk a little more about that process? What was your family's or your feelings towards this kind of emerging integration?

MARTEL: Yeah. Well, I thought it was—I was for it, and they were against it, you know. But I thought of it as if it can't happen here in America, where can it happen? I mean, if we can't integrate here in America, it's probably not ever going to happen anywhere.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: So the University of Detroit was even further in the city, so it became apparent early on, you know, that was going to be surrounded by, you know, a diversity of people in there.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah. But it's still going. It's still—you know, they're still in business now, but—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: —entirely different [laughs], yeah, look to it.

WEINSTOCK: Do you have any particularly fond or memorable experiences from college that you'd like to share?

MARTEL: Well, let's see. We—since I lived with my aunt and uncle, you know, I wasn't living on the campus. That's one thing I

kind of missed, you know, in a way, because you didn't get to—get that same college atmosphere. But, on the other hand, I had a home-cooked meal [chuckles] every night. [Laughs.] Yeah. So—

And the other thing was, you know, you couldn't kind of get together with fellow students and work on—as an engineering student, you get lots of homework, and you got to, you know, stick with it and do all these things, so you kind of get—tend to get together with fellow students. “How do you solve this problem?” [Laughs.] Or whatever. Which I couldn't do, but—

Yeah, I got involved in ROTC, and when I said, “I want to be a pilot,” of course, they give you aptitude tests and all of that, and actually they paid for flying lessons while I was in college, so—

WEINSTOCK: Were those expensive?

MARTEL: I don't re—

WEINSTOCK: If you had to pay, yourself?

MARTEL: No, I didn't pay for—if I had to pay for them myself, it would have been quite expensive, so—

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: But I was in the flight instruction program, and I got to go flying [laughs]—yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Sure. This was as you were an undergraduate?

MARTEL: Yeah, as I was an under- —yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And was that only available to the aeronautics engineering students or just the ROTC students?

MARTEL: Just Air Force ROTC who passed the physical and, you know, aptitude testing for pilots.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah. And so they basically—I just flew in, like, a little Cessna 150. It was just to see if I had any aptitude at all for

flying. I mean, they don't want to spend a lot of money [chuckles] on you if you don't—if you can't fly.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So you knew you wanted to be in the military at that point.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah. Well, I was in the fraternity, too.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Theta Xi fraternity, and that's when I had my first beer. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Can you tell me a little bit about the fraternity? How did that—

MARTEL: See, the University of Detroit didn't have any houses like you have here at Dartmouth.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: You had to get together at members' houses.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: And so that's where we had our parties. And, you know, there was quite a bit of drinking, you know, going on, as you might expect.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: And I had a little Volkswagen Bug [Volkswagen Beetle] at the time, and I remember driving back from some of these parties. I would have surely not—you know, I was not in any condition to drive. [Chuckles.]

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah, but back then—you know, they weren't [chuckles] as strict as they are now. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Was the University of Detroit coeducational at this point?

MARTEL: Yes.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, it was.

WEINSTOCK: Was that different from other schools in the area, or did you not have a sense of that?

MARTEL: Well, there were—yeah, it was coeducational, but, you know, here's a—as an engineer, there were no women in my classes. [Chuckles.] That's the way it was if you're an engineering student.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And even when I went for my master's, you know, no women in engineering. But Ph.D., there were a few women, so I've seen a change [chuckles] going—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Can you talk a little bit more about these first flying lessons? I can imagine that was a real thrill—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —you know, being up in the air—

MARTEL: Oh, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —for the first time.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah, it was. It was a—well, the first flying lessons were at Detroit Municipal Airport [Coleman A. Young International Airport, formerly Detroit City Airport], you know. I forget—you know, I forget what his name was now, but he used—we used to go up, and he, you know, would go over a kind of a remote area and do some—some aerobatics and that kind of thing and then come back to the airport and do some touch-and-go landings. Finally I soloed—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: —there at the airport. I actually—I did a cross-country flight which I'll never forget because it was from Detroit to Jackson, Michigan. You know, you're following a map on the ground, and you're looking at the ground and flying the way you want to go, and then land at another airport and then come back.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: And on the way back, I was coming back, and I saw something straight ahead, and it was a black—something black. And it was coming at me, and it just flew right in front of me. It was a [Martin] B-57 [Canberra]. You know, it's a small bomber that—you know, I guess—I don't know why he was as low as—I was just in the way. But, you know, he just—[Makes whistling sound signifying the B-57 whizzing by.]—flew right in front of me, and that was—that was a little close.

WEINSTOCK: Bigger than your plane.

MARTEL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, definitely.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah, you had the small one.

MARTEL: That's right. That's right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Huh.

MARTEL: So, you know, I didn't get many hours there, maybe 40 hours or so of flight instruction. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: How do you even start learning how to fly? You know, I assume you can't just—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —take the wheel, so to speak.

MARTEL: Oh, yeah. Yeah, you just take the wheel.

WEINSTOCK: Really?

MARTEL: [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah, you just go up and, “Okay, here’s”—of course, there’s a ground school. You have to learn, you know, about the instruments you’re using and that kind of thing, and then you—you know, you’re taught “this is the altimeter, horizontal attitude indicator,” you know, all the different instruments. Now it’s—you know, they don’t have any more, but it’s all these heads-up displays. But—and you learn by doing, and you can’t be shy. “You have it.” “Okay, I have it.” You know, and then in the Air Force it’s the same way. You got to—they put you in unusual attitudes and everything. “Okay, you have it.” “Okay, now, get out of this dive” or whatever you’re in. You don’t know what you’re in until you open your eyes.

WEINSTOCK: Huh.

So jumping back a little bit,—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: November 22nd, 2063—

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that’s right.

WEINSTOCK: I assume you knew it would come up.

MARTEL: [Laughs.] Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: It’s certainly a big day.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Can you tell me a little bit about that day? Do you remember where you were when President Kennedy was shot?

MARTEL: Yeah, I was, you know, of course, in Detroit.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: At the Simpsons. That’s my aunt and uncle. And it just—it was like everything stopped. You know, the president was

shot. And you stopped what you're doing, and listening for any, you know, reports. Had the TV on. And it's kind of like disbelief. You couldn't believe that was happening at first. And then we—I guess it was—it was almost like you're—you're in a state of shock or something [chuckles] for a while—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —when that happened. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: You said your mom had a picture of JFK.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Do you remember *her* reaction to it?

MARTEL: Well, since I wasn't there, not exactly. You know, I'm sure she was very upset. You know, she loved Jack and Jackie [Jacqueline L. (Bouvier) Kennedy Onassis]. You know, Jackie was quite a—

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah. And since Jackie was a French—not French-Canadian, but she was a French extraction—you know, my mother thought she was [chuckles]—she was great, you know. And she turned out to be quite a person, actually, to—and go through that whole thing.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And so we kept watching the news, and I don't recall—well, you know, he's a Democrat or Republican. It was just he's the president and he's shot. You know, that's—that's highly unusual. [Chuckles.]

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Do you think, just kind of broader speaking, that America really changed around that time, or was there, like, a heavy feeling in the air or a feeling that times were changing somehow?

MARTEL: Well, probably both, you know.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: It's kind of "What's happening in this country?" Things *are* changing now. All these things going on. And it got worse, actually, you know, with [President Lyndon B.] Johnson, and he—you know, the Vietnam War. We got more involved—

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: —after that. So, yeah, it was—and then, you know, this drug thing and watching the hippies. [Laughs.] You know? [Laughs.] You know, protesting, you know? "No, I won't go," whatever. And—and—you know, I didn't like them back then, but I guess I had to see their point later on. I mean, it was—it was not an easy time.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah, so also, taking a step back again—in these kind of—well, I guess in your first couple of years of college, '61, '62, '63—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —you know, America was involved very limitedly in Vietnam.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Was there much of a sense of that, or did it really not start hitting the home, so to speak, until '64, '65?

MARTEL: Yeah, it was—because when I was in ROTC and so forth, I remember thinking, *Well, you know, this Vietnam War. It'll be over by the time [chuckles] I graduate. You know, it's just—*

WEINSTOCK: A Korea situation.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah. *It's gonna be over. I'm not gonna worry about being involved in it.* But [chuckles] that's not the way it turned out.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So 1965, you finished Detroit, right?

MARTEL: Yep.

WEINSTOCK: And where do you go from there?

MARTEL: I got married. [Laughs.] Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Did you meet your wife at school?

MARTEL: No, at—in Sturbridge, Massachusetts.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah. I came home from college, you know, and I already had—I was going to go in for pilot—I was supposed to report for pilot training in November, November of '65. So that summer, I was home, and I worked construction, you know, in a local—a bunch of guys I knew, construction work.

And I met my wife. She was working in a bank, a local bank. You know, I guess she was impressed with how much money I had.

WEINSTOCK: [Chuckles.]

MARTEL: [Laughs.] But—no, so—yeah, we went on a few dates. Our first date was at—to, you know, a local race track, you know? Automobile race track. And with some friends. And then from there—you know, I went off to pilot training in Georgia, Moody Air Force Base. But, you know, we knew we had a feeling for each other, and we thought, you know, a lot of the same things, and we felt we had a lot in common.

WEINSTOCK: Right. So it sounds you couldn't escape the engines and mechanics, so to speak. First date at the race track,—

MARTEL: [Laughs.] Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Off to pilot school.

MARTEL: [Laughs.] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, that's right. You know, being able to fly jets, you know, that would be—that was what I wanted to do.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So where'd you go from there?

MARTEL: Oh, pilot training. I went to Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, Georgia. It's a one-year assignment, and you fly three different kinds of airplanes. You start out with a, you know, the little one, and you gradually move up to—you're fly the supersonic [Northrup] T-38 [Talon], you know, which I love. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. Sure. You started with the [Cessna T-]37 [Tweet] and the [Cessna T-]41 [Mescalero], right?

MARTEL: Yeah. Yeah, that's right. Well, it was the T-41, which is just a Cessna 172. That's the first one. Again, that's to test just to see if you have any flying aptitude. And then the T-37 twin-engine, small jet, you know, and then the T-38 was a supersonic jet.

But the guys during the—you know, I met during the pilot training—we still get together. [Laughs.] Because we all went different ways after that, but, you know, it was, it was a fun time.

WEINSTOCK: What was Georgia like? I can imagine it's quite different from either place.

MARTEL: Oh, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: [Chuckles.]

MARTEL: Georgia was so hot, and going out, you know, to the flight line and getting in an airplane, and it was a day like today. It was really hot. Of course, there was air conditioner in the airplane, itself, so it didn't—

WEINSTOCK: Good.

MARTEL: Yeah. Oh, yeah. It did cool off after a while.

WEINSTOCK: So how did these planes compare to the first planes that you flew up in Michigan? Completely different or—

MARTEL: Well, the T-41 is similar because it's just a Cessna prop engine airplane. Then you get into jets. You know, the little T-37 was a nice little airplane and a very sturdy airplane. You can imagine you had a bunch of student pilots out there [chuckles] and what they can do to an airplane? [Chuckles.] And it, you know—we did all kind of—I mean, we did spins and all kinds of aerobatics in that airplane.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: And then it was—in flying it, you know, it was very slow to react. Like, if you're on approach, coming in for a landing, you had to decide soon if you're going to go around or not; say, if the approach was too low or something?

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: You had to realize that soon because by the time you pushed up the throttles, it took a while for the engines to spool up, and all of a sudden the power would come up. Yeah. So that was [what] I remember about that airplane.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: My first solo in that airplane, too, I'll never forget because—

WEINSTOCK: What happened?

MARTEL: Well [chuckles], you know, we went to—my instruction and I—we went to an auxiliary base, where they often took students to—because it was away from all the traffic and everything. You could practice touch-and-go landings. And so we did a few landings, and then the instructor says, "Lt. Martel, just pull over to the side here and let me out." So he got out. And he said, "Okay, Lt. Martel, go kill yourself." [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Why'd he say that?

MARTEL: [Laughs.] Why? Well, I mean—so I was going solo, you see?

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: "Go kill yourself." [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Trial by fire, right?

MARTEL: That's right, yeah. So—but—okay, so I'm taxiing out to take off, and it just seems like I heard a lot more things [chuckles] about the airplane, you know, different, you know, pumps going or this going or that, you know, and all these different sounds I hadn't heard before, or noticed, so—but I took off and went around and shot a few landings.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah. So that was—but I'll never forget it. He said, you know, "Go kill yourself." [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Which airplane was this in, again?

MARTEL: This was a T-37.

WEINSTOCK: T-37, okay.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Can you tell me a little bit more about life on the Air Force Base? What was that like? Did you guys have down time or—

MARTEL: Yeah, we did have down time. It was—you know, had PT [physical training]. You know, you had to do all your exercises in PT, stuff like that. And then you had classwork, go in for classwork. Then you'd have maybe flying in the afternoon, go up and do flying. And every day—you would fly just about every day, you know. And weekends didn't mean anything. You kind of—[Laughs.] It's another day, you know.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And you had—they had, of course—you had to get so many hours of this, so many hours of that, so—and you flew with different instructors. And if—if you weren't doing well, they would wash you out. You'd get washed out. That's what they call it. And it happened, you know, quite a few times—you know, one of your classmates washed out. And they went to

something else, probably in the Air Force, a navigator or something like that, but—

And so you went through the whole thing, and at the end of the year you got your wings, which was, you know, like a big graduation. My parents came down and all that. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Were you—what happens when you get your wings? Are you ranked then or—

MARTEL: Well, you—I was a second lieutenant.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And is that because you were ROTC in college?

MARTEL: Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. If you're ROTC, you enter in as an officer—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —you know, second lieutenant. [Laughs.] Which, you know, I couldn't get over because people were saluting me.

WEINSTOCK: [Laughs.]

MARTEL: "Why are these people saluting me?" "Oh, you're an officer." Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So they'd come late to the party.

MARTEL: Well, it was, like, when I got to Moody Air Force Base, this sergeant came out to pick me up, and he saluted me, and "Yes, sir" and "No, sir." *Well, okay, this is military*—there is a distinction or, you know, there's separation between officers and enlisted [men].

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: But, I mean, we all work together. But it's not—yeah. Yeah. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: So how long were you at Moody?

MARTEL: A year. Yeah, it's a year. At the end of the year, you get your w- —and then, depending on your ranking in class—you know, depending on your academics, your flying and everything, they give you a ranking. And then you put down your selection: What airplanes would you like to fly? Top three.

WEINSTOCK: What did you pick?

MARTEL: Well, I picked—I wanted to be a T-38 instructor.

WEINSTOCK: Okay. And that's supersonic, right?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then the second choice was a [Boeing] B-52 [Stratofortress], and I don't remember what a third choice was. Yeah.

But there's another important thing that happened in that time. I got married. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: All right.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So did you want to stay at home then or—how did your future plans work out with your wife?

MARTEL: Yeah, I didn't—you know, one of my options was a [McDonnell Douglas] F-4 [Phantom II] fighter, but if I get an F-4 fighter, that was straight over to Southeast Asia, to Vietnam.

WEINSTOCK: Sure. Far away, away from home.

MARTEL: That's right. Yeah. Which I didn't want. So I—I didn't get the T-38 instructor, but I got a B-52 assignment, which turned out to be pretty, you know—it was a challenge, plus I ended up [laughs] over in Vietnam anyway.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So now that you have the B-52 assignment, where do you go next?

MARTEL: Well, then you have to go to what they call upgrade training. You're just a basic graduate from pilot training, okay? Now each one goes to different upgrade training, depending on what airplane that they—

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: —they got, so I had to go to Castle Air Force Base in California for the upgrade training. But en route before that, I had to go through [U.S. Air Force] Survival School training up in Spokane, Washington.

WEINSTOCK: Okay, so you hit all four corners of the country.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, that's right. Yeah, yeah, yeah, it seems it. And that was, like, in February, because, see, my B-52 assignment—that was—that's in Strategic Air Command.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And their main mission, of course, is to—you know, the Cold War—nuclear mission. So if we got shot down, we'd probably be shot down over Russia somewhere, so they took us up to Fairchild Air Force [Base] in February and put us through [chuckles] survival training.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And this is in Washington?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Did you guys go out into the mountains at all for this sort of training?

MARTEL: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: How was that?

MARTEL: Well, it was—it was—well, it was cold, and there was about two feet of snow [chuckles], and so we—they start out with—it was—yeah—they start out with simulating, "Okay, you're shot down. You land behind enemy lines. The border is over there. You've got to get through all the fences, and all of the

fences they've got there along the border to the other side, the friendly side. Here's a bayonet you can use to probe for mines and stuff." You know, they start you off in the middle of the night. Dark. Okay. [Laughs.]

So, okay, so you're very cautious, you know, going along, and kind of probing because if you hit one of these mines a flare would go off.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Okay. *Dummy! You know, you gotta go back.* [Laughs.] So anyway, so we—anyway, I got through most of that, and you know what? It didn't make any difference because they captured you anyway, at the end.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: And so [chuckles]—and then they—okay, you're captured by these—actually, they're airmen, and then they play the role of Russian or, I don't know, east European guards, you know, with an accent and all that kind of thing.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: So they make—okay [imitates Slavic accent], "Lt. Martel, you are number 45. That's your prisoner number." [Laughs.] And so—and they put you in a cell and—you know.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: This buddy of mine—we're in the same time. He was number 56; I was number 45. And so we still refer to that today. And that's just of like—you know, they bring you into a prisoner of war camp, simulated. Simulate—and likely interrogation methods. "Oh, you're married? Oh, I know your wife. Yeah, she's"—yeah. All this stuff. It's just—it's fake.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: But—

WEINSTOCK: Does it still scare you or—

- MARTEL: Well, it gives you an idea of what it might be like, and that's all they're trying—if you say, "Get—get lost."
"All right, you're out."
- WEINSTOCK: Wow.
- MARTEL: "You're out."
- WEINSTOCK: So you had to go through it.
- MARTEL: You had to—you had—if you want to give up being a pilot and, say, you're out at this point—no, you're not going to do that. But, you know, I remember the commandant. He had this black uniform and a bull whip. [Laughs.] And we prepared this big pot—they gave us some food. We hadn't eaten in, like, three days. "Oh, here's some beef and some potatoes and carrot," and "Oh, yeah!" So we formed a detail, and made a big stew, you know, and it was cooking away. And he comes over. "Oh, you guys made a nice stew. That smells so good." Kicks it over. You know. [Laughs.] You know. I mean, you're ready to take a swing at—you know, it's just, like—it's almost like [a] fraternity, you know? [Laughter.] Yeah. But anyway, that was it.
- And then you go to, you know, upgrade training, and that's where you—
- WEINSTOCK: Yeah. And so that's at Castle Air Force Base, right?
- MARTEL: Yeah.
- WEINSTOCK: And what was California like?
- MARTEL: California was nice because, you know, we were married then, and young couple. And the good thing about the military is, you know, you meet all these people, and you're all in together, and you just bond together, I guess, because, you know, the wives get together and all that, and so—
- WEINSTOCK: So your wife was with you.
- MARTEL: Yeah, she was—
- WEINSTOCK: And was there military housing or—

MARTEL: Yeah. Well, our first—we got married in September of '66, and so we were still at Moody at the time, so we just rented a small mobile home there, near Moody. But then we went to Castle. We rented an apartment, and there were a whole bunch of other, you know, Air Force people in the rest of the complex.

WEINSTOCK: Sure. And so this was upgrade training for the B-52, right?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And obviously a very different plane than—

MARTEL: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's right.

WEINSTOCK: —the T-38 and the—

MARTEL: That's right.

WEINSTOCK: —741s [sic; T-41s] you were flying.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: What was it like making that shift?

MARTEL: Well, it was very, you know, disappointing [chuckles] as far as—

WEINSTOCK: You like the supersonics.

MARTEL: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, yeah. A -38 was, you know, a nice little airplane, and you could do aerobatics with it and all that. The B-52 was, of course, a big, lumbering—you know, 450,000 pounds.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And it—it was not supersonic. It was subsonic and all that.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: But—so you start out as a copilot in a B-52, so you're learning more system, fuel management and electronic—all that stuff.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And I've heard that there was a less than affectionate nickname for the B-52.

MARTEL: Oh, yes, that's right.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: A BUF [pronounced like buff; Big Ugly Fellow], right.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's right.

WEINSTOCK: [Chuckles.] So being in the B-52, you said you started that as a copilot.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: What is the copilot's task?

MARTEL: Well, you have to be able to fly the airplane but not refuel—you don't have to be able to refuel it. You had to be able to land it and all that kind of stuff. And basically, you know, you're, like I said, making sure that the fuel balance—you know, there's fuel in the wings and in the fuselage. You got to make sure it's evenly distributed because the center of gravity in a certain zone there. Yeah. And so—so you would figure out—for each mission, you would figure out where the center of gravity was, and if it's within limits, you know, from the manuals. And then you would take care of all the radios, most of the radio work.

WEINSTOCK: Okay. Was it roomier inside the cockpit than the other planes that you flew?

MARTEL: Well, yeah, bigger than the fighters, but there's not as much room as you might think in there.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah, because it's just a big airplane filled with bombs and fuel.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: [Chuckles.] And that's basically it.

WEINSTOCK: Can you practice dropping bombs in California?

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Were they live, or—

MARTEL: No. No, most of the time it was electronic scoring.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: You would fly to a bomb plot somewhere, and they would—they would electronically score you—you know, where you released. You'd have this tone, "Bombs away," and they would—they would give you scores. On occasion, we did drop, you know, a practice bomb. That would just be like a puff of smoke or something or other, to see.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Did this give you any sort of different conception about your task? You know, you were flying planes, doing acrobatics [sic] before, and now all of a sudden—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —you're flying something that's dropping bombs.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: What does that feel like?

MARTEL: Well, it was—jeez. You know, this thing is—you know, can't do much as anything as far as flying goes, but I remember my first flight back at Dyess [Air Force Base], I flew with this old Major Fowler, and he was, you know, an old-time pilot, and he let me fly formation with another B-52. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Yeah, that was the—

WEINSTOCK: What was that one like?

MARTEL: That was the only time I ever flew formation in a B-52.

WEINSTOCK: Huh.

MARTEL: And we used to do it in fighters all the time.

WEINSTOCK: Can you explain what that formation was?

MARTEL: Yeah, it was basically—you know, there was another B-52 I'd just pull up alongside and flew in formation, back a little bit, sort of a echelon formation.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah. And it was—you know, I was talking to the other pilot, so he knew I was there.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: So it was—you know, it was—it was unconventional, but it wasn't illegal. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And you said this was at Dyess?

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And so when did you move from Castle to there?

MARTEL: Well, Castle—then after Castle we had to go to nuclear training. You know, you had to know all about atomic bombs, and you had to get 100 percent on the exams.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: They're being precautionous.

MARTEL: Yeah, they don't want—there as no passing grade of, you know, 65 or whatever. [Laughs.] That's not—you know, you got to get 100 percent.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And if you didn't get 100 percent, you stayed and you studied until you got 100 percent—

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: —on exam. Because it makes sense. Because you don't want people fooling around with nuclear bombs—

WEINSTOCK: Absolutely,

MARTEL: —making mistakes and all that kind of thing. So we had to go to Fort Worth [Texas] for that training.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: And then from there to Dyess.

WEINSTOCK: So as part of Strategic Air Command, you already knew that you would be flying with potentially nuclear bombs on board.

MARTEL: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Okay. And did you know you were going to Vietnam already, or—

MARTEL: No.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: No. We just went to Dyess, and our main mission was nuclear bombing. And so to do that, you know, they put, like, six B-52s on alert, already armed with the nuclear bombs on board, ready to go. And they would put six crews on alert. You'd stay at the alert facility. You know, you'd live there for—anywhere from four days to, like, a week.

WEINSTOCK: And this is still in Texas.

MARTEL: This is in Texas, yeah. Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. That's right. Yeah. And then—so you sat there, waiting for the horn to go off.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And when the horn went off, you ran out to the airplane, got on board, started up the engines, waited for a message, which told—you know, you had to authenticate it. It could tell you, you know, to just taxi down the runway and then come back, or it could say, "Take off and then await further message" or something like that.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Yeah. So you never knew, you know,—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: —what's going to happen, but—so that was the main mission. And we alternated—you know, crews would spend a week to, you know, sometimes four days, three days or whatever on alert.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: And then in between times, you would just fly practice missions.

MARTEL: Okay.

MARTEL: But then the other mission was temporary duty missions to Vietnam. Your crew would be assigned to six months, to go to Andersen [Air Force Base]—you know, Guam, Okinawa or Thailand—

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: —and fly bombing missions there.

WEINSTOCK: Okay. So these practice nuclear bombs. Where were they going to go if actually called upon, out of Texas?

MARTEL: Well, if they were going to hit—for Russia—

WEINSTOCK: And did the planes have that large of a range to go from Texas there, or—

MARTEL: Well, you had refueling along the way.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah. Yeah, you had to meet up with a tanker, you know, get refueled. But then, you know, you had messages—finally, you had a message that gave you authorization to go.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And, of course, you had all your—your target—you had your target with you. You know, you had all the flight plan, when you received the—the strategy was to—to avoid radar—was to descend at low level and then come in over your target at low level—like, 200 feet.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Yeah, because, you know, Russians—it was harder for them to defend against that.

WEINSTOCK: Sure. And so these missions would have only potentially been to Russia. There were no plans to send you guys over to China or North Vietnam.

MARTEL: No, no, not at the time. It was Russia. I mean, Russia was the main enemy at the time, the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics]. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah. But luckily, you know, we never had to even—I never had to take off with a nuclear weapon. They were on board, but I never had to take off with one.

WEINSTOCK: What did it feel like having a—even being in that situation?

MARTEL: Yeah. Well, you—

WEINSTOCK: Do you think you—I mean, I know you would have done as told, probably.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: But, you know, there's a certain gravity associated with—

MARTEL: That's right, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —having that responsibility.

MARTEL: That's right, yeah. You know, most of the missions were—you know, we called them "people killer" because they were aimed—targeted towards cities. See, the missiles would probably take out the military bases first, but the bombers would be targeted toward—

WEINSTOCK: Civilians?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah. Nothing to, you know, take—

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Yeah. And so—yeah. Luckily, it never happened. And that's I guess the whole purpose of, you know—it was called mutually assured destruction (MAD, spoken as a whole word). That was the strategy. Each side had all of these nuclear weapons, and if it ever went off, we would just have annihilated each other.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah. So—

WEINSTOCK: So when did you first leave Dyess to go over to the Southeast Asia?

MARTEL: I think it was '68. Yeah, I went over. And our first child, Patty, was born—I was scheduled to go over, but the first child, Patty, was born prematurely, and the crew I was supposed to go over with—well, I talked to the commander and said, "You know, I just had, you know, a baby girl, and I'd like to stay home for a little while." Fine. So someone else substituted on the crew, so I was transferred to another crew, which was pretty—pretty good, I thought.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah. And then it was only a few months later; then I was on—going overseas—

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: —to Vietnam.

WEINSTOCK: And this is 1968?

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Do you remember if you went over before or after [the] Tet [Offensive]?

MARTEL: It was—that was right after Tet, I think. See, I went over, like, five or six different times.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: So they were—I don't remember—I could find out exactly when—when it was, but it was during '68, '69 and '70,—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —those three years I went over there.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

So to go back a little bit, these years really is America's escalating its involvement in '65, '66—

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —all the way to '68 and '69. What was going on in your mind or was there any chat on the Air Force base about, maybe, "This war is longer than we thought" or—especially an event like Tet.

MARTEL: Yeah. That's right, yeah. Yeah, it was—you know, of course, in the military you don't question a whole lot, you know. I mean, you're all in this together, and I wondered, *Well, is this gonna continue or what?* You know, since I was married, had a child, okay? And my enlistment was—re-enlistment was coming up, so you—the way it works is one year pilot training and you're committed for four years, so after five years you have to re-enlist for another four years.

WEINSTOCK: Wow. Okay.

MARTEL: Okay, so that was going to be, like, in '71. So I was thinking—you know, I discussed it, you know, with Lynn, my wife, and it didn't look like the Vietnam War was ending soon.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: So I filed for a DOS, a date of separation.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: That meant, you know, when I came up in '71, that was it. I wasn't going to sign up for another—another term, four-year term because I was thinking, *If I'm gonna get out, I'd rather get out early than put in, you know, all these years*, and then when you get too old—[Chuckles.] Anyway, I ended up going back to graduate school, but anyway, so—

And there was a funny, you know, story about that, too, because I had a date of separation for about two years, and no one ever said anything to me—you know, the wing commander or anyone—until I was in the upgrade program to become an aircraft commander.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: And I got called in to the deputy commander's office. "What's this about a date of separation? Here you are, in the upgrade program. Going to make you an aircraft commander. And you're gonna—you're gonna get out?" I said, "Yeah." "Well, we can't have you in the program." I guess that's it, then.

WEINSTOCK: Family was more important.

MARTEL: Yeah. Well, anyway, as it turns out: "Well, you're no longer in the upgrade program." "Okay." So it wasn't more than a couple of weeks later, he calls me back in. He says, "You still want to be an aircraft commander?" [Laughs.] I said, "Yeah." "Okay, you're back." So I ended up being an aircraft commander about eight months before I finally got out.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: But, see, this is in the wartime situation, so they need—they needed, you know, aircraft commanders, so—you know, I thought it was a challenge, you know. You have to air refuel and all that kind of thing, so—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. So back to 1968, when you're first starting to go over there.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Before we actually get to your involvement over in Southeast Asia, I'd like to talk a little bit about some things that were going on in the home front .

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Of course, it's the year [the Rev. Dr.] Martin Luther King Jr.] is assassinated.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: [Senator Robert F.] "Bobby" Kennedy.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: The counter-culture movement is really starting to mature.

MARTEL: That's right.

WEINSTOCK: I mean, I can imagine it looked like everything was changing.

MARTEL: That's right.

WEINSTOCK: Especially on a military base. I mean, what did this all look like?

MARTEL: Well, the military bases—you know, we never saw any protesting by the soldiers, or I didn't, anyway. And the crew members didn't tend to try—you know, they didn't identify with the protesters at all. We thought we were serving our country, and, you know, it was hard. There was a lot of

controversy at home, but this was our job, and we're gonna do it, you know.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: So you kept reading about it in the paper, and, "Those damn hippies," you know? [Laughs.] And so that was sort of the attitude. But I never—since we flew generally from base to base, which—we flew to—we never went through civilian airport terminals. I never got harassed or anything by protesters, because we never went through, you know, a civilian air base. I was always going through a military base.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: When you flew a B-52 over, you fly one back or whatever.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: So I didn't have that bad taste in my mouth, how they—you know, a lot of Vietnam vets, really to this day,—

WEINSTOCK: I've heard.

MARTEL: Yeah, I mean—and I can understand how that would make them feel, you know,—

WEINSTOCK: Absolutely.

MARTEL: —to be spit upon and all that. But—so, you know, we were aware of things going on, and the war wasn't going that well.

WEINSTOCK: Another Kennedy is assassinated.

MARTEL: Yeah. Yeah, that's another—yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: I mean what was it like? Just—

MARTEL: Oh, yeah, this is terrible. I mean, here we are. This doesn't happen in America, you know,—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: —that our leaders are assassinated. That sounds like, you know, a Third World country. But those times are very trying times, I thought. And at the time, I guess I just did the best I

could and tried to keep family life going and do my part in what I thought was a worthy cause at the time. Of course, it was—you know, the rationale was the domino theory. Okay, well, jeez, we gotta stop the communists here because if we don't, they'll take over this county, they'll take over that country and so forth. So I bought into that because it was what we had to do.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And as far as kind of the culture *you* bought into, were you—what kind of music were you listening to back then?

MARTEL: [Chuckles.] Well,—

WEINSTOCK: Or did you have any favorite sports teams?

MARTEL: Well, I've always been a [Boston] Red Sox fan. [Laughs.] But, you know, coming back from bombing missions—you know, like, flying from Guam, it was, like, a 12-hour mission: six hours over to Vietnam and six hours back.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: So on the return mission, you know, I remember the navigator—he was a county-western fan [laughs] so he had country-western tapes, so he'd put those on the intercom on the way back so we, you know, we listened to Tammy Wynette and all of those. [Both chuckle.] All those songs. But that was—and every now and then, they'd have bands, USO [United Service Organizations] bands come over and—

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Entertainment and stuff like that.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: None of the counter-culture music, though? Was that not popular among the military then?

MARTEL: I don't think—no, no, it wasn't, not that I remember, you know.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah. Most crew members, you know, were—I mean, they're not—I mean, you did get into some, you know, occasional problems with someone maybe drinking too much, but in general, no one wants to fly with a drunk crew member, so you're not going to want to encourage any of your buddies to get drunk if you're going to be flying,—

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: —yeah, a mission, so—

WEINSTOCK: So you said this was—you were talking about Air Force runs from Guam over to Vietnam. Was Guam the first base that you arrived at in Southeast Asia, or—

MARTEL: Yeah, that was the first base you went to as a—as a—you know—

WEINSTOCK: What was *that* like? I mean, now you're in just a completely different part of the world.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, well, Guam actually is a nice place, really. Andersen Air Force Base is very nice. I mean, we lived in air conditioned, you know, bachelors' quarters.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: And so it was—and then we went to the officers' club for dinner, and they had, you know, Filipino waiters there. You know, you had menus and stuff like that. It wasn't anything like—

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Yeah. It wasn't anything like, you know, the poor G.I.s on the ground.

WEINSTOCK: Not what the infantrymen get.

MARTEL: No, no, that's right, yeah. And we often looked down and saw the fire going on down below and the rockets and the flares.

They had parachutes with, you know, flares suspended beneath it to light up the area sometimes.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: So we—we—I can't say that we roughed it—

WEINSTOCK: [Chuckles.]

MARTEL —while we're doing that, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: What were your first couple of missions like, going from—

MARTEL: Well, the first couple of missions were like most missions over there, okay? We flew to try to interrupt the supplies coming down from North Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh trail.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: So what they would do—they would, you know, drive trucks and stuff down the Ho Chi Minh trail, and then they'd pull off the trail, you know, into the jungle somewhere and try to hide. And, you know, the troops would come down in different—so they would try to hide in the jungle, and intelligence would gather information and—you know, "Well, there's a truck concentration here" or whatever.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And they'd give a target, and you'd take off and try to wipe that out, but—so most of the time it was along the Ho Chi Minh trail, and that's in South Vietnam, so you didn't get any antiaircraft fire or interceptors trying to shoot you down, or missiles.

WEINSTOCK: Your main goal was just to interdict these supply lines.

MARTEL: That's right. Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Were you ever bombing over Laos then, or—

MARTEL: Well [chuckles], we flew over Laos.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah. We were one of the first crews to go over Laos to—

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: —to—not to bomb, to determine what would make a good radar return.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Because when you bomb, you've got to triangulate off of tanks here or this feature over here, whatever, to your target, so—

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: They didn't know what would be a good radar return, you know.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: So we just flew over and picked out different features that would make good radar returns, but we never bombed there. I never did, anyway.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. What were the types of bombs used?

MARTEL: They were 500-pound bombs, most of them.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: So each B-52 would carry 108 500-pound bombs.

WEINSTOCK: Heavy payloads.

MARTEL: Heavy, 60,000 pounds. And we would fly in three-ship formations, you know, and create sort of like a one airplane is leader here [demonstrates], and one airplane here, and another airplane on the other side, and just carpet bomb that whole area.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: So after we went through, there was not much left—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: —standing, so—

WEINSTOCK: And what do you see from up there? What is it like? I mean, does it fly relatively high or relatively low?

MARTEL: Well, these were, like, 35[,000] to 40,000 feet.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah, which is like what a typical airliner flies.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah. And, of course, you don't see much of anything because you can't see down. You're looking, you know, out.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: But the bombardier sees—you know, he's—he's got radar, and he—he can see what's going on down—

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: —and then goes after you if you hit any secondary—if you have any secondary explosions as a result of hitting, say, a gas deposit or depot or some kind of thing, you'd see, you know, a bright, you know, explosion or whatever.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: What did the ground look like from up there? Just the general landscape.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: I mean, it just—it probably looks like a different world than America, I'm sure.

MARTEL: Yeah, it was just mountainous and very—you know, jungle. A lot of it's jungle.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. Was it pretty, or—

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, it's pretty. But I never got to actually be in Vietnam. I was flying over it. But then around Pleiku [Air Base] I went—it looked like a lunar landscape up there because of all the bombing. It was all, you know, bomb craters all over the place.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Did you feel like you were doing anything? Like, you were making an impact? Or do you know at this point that it was kind of just beyond you?

MARTEL: We used to get intelligence briefings, in pre-flight, when we had a mission, okay? You'd go in for a pre-flight before. They would give you bomb damage assessment reports of previous missions. [Chuckles.] And a lot of times, you know—well, you know, He got three water buffalo and a—you know. [Laughs.] You know, you knocked down a bunch of trees and all this. And, well,—but then other times, you did hit something, you know. It depended on intelligence and how fast we could get the bombs on target, because sometimes, you know, the enemy would move before—you know, before we got there.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: How accurate do you think those were? I mean, I can imagine that sometimes it's very difficult to assess the—

MARTEL: Yeah. Well, I think they would—you know, you only got these assessments a week or so later or—you know, they had teams down there that flew in to where the strikes were and—from the air and on the ground, they kind of gave, you know, a rough estimate of what kind of damage was done.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah. But those missions, you know—then, when we went north, in North Vietnam, that's when—you know, it's a little more dangerous.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Because you had MiGs (Kikoyan-Guervich MiG-21s) and SAMs [surface-to-air missiles] and all that.

WEINSTOCK: Were you still flying out of Guam when you started going over North Vietnam?

MARTEL: Yeah. The way it kind of worked is, you know, you flew maybe for a month or two in Guam, and then they'd send you over to Okinawa and fly a few months there, and then over to Thailand. And the difference was in flying time. In Guam it was, like, twelve hours; in Okinawa, it was, like, eight hours, and in Thailand it was four to five hours, so—

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: You liked those shorter flying—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Were the bases different from one another?

MARTEL: Yeah. You know, they were all—well, like Kadena [Air Base] in Okinawa—it was—they had a golf course there. [Laughter.] Jeez! [Laughs.] And, you know, it was—I mean, it's probably the nicest officers' club I've been to.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Yeah. So it was, you know, pretty nice. You'd get back from a mission, and, you know, you head for the officers' club.

WEINSTOCK: Sure. So when you started heading to missions up north, were you still hitting the kind of beginning terminus of the Ho Chi Minh trail—

MARTEL: No.

WEINSTOCK: — or was this actually the military bases?

MARTEL: Yeah, military bases.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Actually, you know, missile—missile launchers and that kind of thing, military targets. So they would—the North Vietnamese—they knew, you know,—well, the B-52 was not that good as far as shooting down fighters because it was designed back in, you know, World War II era, so all we had for defense on the—in the tail was four .50-caliber machine guns, and there was a tail gunner there.

WEINSTOCK: Pretty light by aircraft standards, yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah, that's right. That's right. They could just—but we did have—like, for heat-seeking missiles, we had these flares that we could shoot out flares, and the heat-seeking missiles would go after the flares rather than our engines.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Also had, like, chaff, little aluminum strips that would—

WEINSTOCK: —throw off radar, or—

MARTEL: Yes, throws the radar off, year.

WEINSTOCK: Wow. And so was this as you were being pursued by the MiGs?

MARTEL: Well, the MiGs—we usually had, like, [Republic] F-105s [Thunderchiefs] flying below us and F-4s flying above, so the F-105s—they would try to intercept any MiGs coming toward us, and the F-4s, too.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: But their tactic was to—because they knew they would get shot down—if they fly too high, a MiG would come low and then try to get under the formation and pull up and come right up under us—

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: —and then fire and then get back down again.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah. So I never—I never saw, you know, a MiG or anything like that, or a missile, but they were—you know, they were launched. And I got out just before the big attack on Hanoi, which was in December of '72.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And during that—I got out in February '71. But in December '72 is when they shot down about 15 B-52s.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Yeah, they shot—yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Were those surface-to-air missiles that took them down, or—

MARTEL: Yeah, mostly. Mostly, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Wow. So no close calls over North Vietnam, though?

MARTEL: Well, we had close calls. Like, if you were sitting there—you know, you had—there's six people on a B-52. One of them is an electronics warfare officer.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: And he detects radars and stuff like that, and so when he says, "Lock on radar. Lock on. Begin evasive action"—[Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: You know, the blood pressure goes up a little bit.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: It's not too easy to evade in a B-52, right?

MARTEL: Well, it's—actually, it's pretty good because you start maneuvering—

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: —this, and then if it's—then you start pumping out chaff, and it confuses their radar. And so, you know, you go back and forth. Evasive action. It seemed to be pretty effective, you know, but not always. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So about how many combat missions did you fly?

MARTEL: I counted 87 combat missions, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Which is not a lot. A lot of people have a lot more than that, but—yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah, but it was enough. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. And what division or air wing group were you in?

MARTEL: Yeah. Well, see, I was in the 337th Bomb[ardment] Squadron.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: And 96th Strategic Air [sic; Aerospace] Wing.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: It doesn't mean a whole lot. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: You know, you'd have to look it up.

WEINSTOCK: And I see that its patch has kind of a dragon figure on it?

MARTEL: Yeah, dragon. Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Interesting.

MARTEL: Yeah, sort of like a—I don't know if those are lightning bolts or—it says right here [laughs] what it means. But this a book I put together of our—one of the crews I was on. You know,

the aircraft command- —we were on Crew S01, which means Select—we were the top crew at Dyess. And so we were selected to go over to try to help, you know, crew the air crews there. I was the copi- —where's my picture? Oh, this is me here. Okay. That's me in here, and I guess I switched pages because usually the—here's the aircraft commander, Chet Thurman.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: He was a major. And then there's radar navigator. He's the bombardier.

WEINSTOCK: Are you in touch with any of these guys still?

MARTEL: Yeah, with Chet Thurman.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: And this—Don Emmons—he was the guy that had country music recording.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: [Laughs.] Yeah. And he was gunner. Now, this is electronics warfare. [Unintelligible], he was the guy who really you know, was able to detect all these radar signals and see if they're a threat or not.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: And this is the gunner. He's an old head gunner sat back there with his .50-caliber machine gun. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Sure. Wonderful.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So can you talk to me a little bit about, I don't know, life on the bases? You mentioned that you had some R&R [rest and recuperation] time every once in a while.

MARTEL: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: What was that like?

MARTEL: Well, naturally, whenever you get R&R time, that was away from, you know, the everyday grind. So one R&R, we went to Bangkok, the whole crew, Bangkok, Thailand. And we took, like, a, you know, these boat cruises up and down the river, you know, and stopped along—they had all these restaurants. And then we went to—I've got movies of all this, you know. We went to—sort of like a cultural place, where they had displays of, you know, Thai dancing, Thai fighting—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —and, you know, Thai dress. The elephants—you know, how they use the elephants out in the forests and all that, so—yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: So it was—it was, like, three days, you know. We got to see something different.

And then also in Thailand they actually had arrangements with one of the local fishermen to take you out fishing. You know, if you had the time, you could—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: He and his son would take a bunch of G.I.s out fishing, you know, so that was kind of fun, too.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Did this have any sort of maybe humanizing effect on you?

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Because I know they're not Vietnamese, but—

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —all these people have a very different culture, and—

MARTEL: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's right. Oh, yeah. Yeah, the Thai people—you get to know the Thai people—or, I mean, at least the ones we knew, which seemed to be pretty happy,

you know, day-to-day type people, and they were just happy to have, you know, simple things.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: But, you know, they were friendly, and, you know, they would—of course, one of the things, when you're a G.I., you go—you have this shopping list for stuff in Thailand. It's famous for jewelry.

WEINSTOCK: Really.

MARTEL: Yeah. So, like, when we went to Bangkok, most of us went to these jewelers to buy rubies or opals or these kind of things, because that was the thing to buy.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Like one guy said, "Yeah, you can broke saving money over there" because [laughs] all these great deals, you know. So I bought some—quite a bit of jewelries there in Thailand for my wife.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. Was it a lot cheaper than it was back, you know?

MARTEL: Yeah, I think it was cheaper, you know. But it was—it's a different culture, of course, than ours because you have to bargain.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: You say, "Oh, no, that's too much," you know?

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. [Laughter.]

MARTEL: And they go back and forth, so—yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. Any other memorable events from your R&R time?

MARTEL: Yeah. Well, we went to—like, the—I forget the name of that beach in Thailand. Pattaya Beach I think was the name. Yeah, we went to this resort, another three-day thing, okay? We stayed in this nice hotel. There were a lot of Europeans staying there. And we rented a power—a speed boat.

WEINSTOCK: [Laughs.]

MARTEL: This was on the Gulf of Thailand, and that's where there's a lot of sea snakes, too. But anyway, we rented a speed boat, and we went waterskiing. You know, we just—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: —go out there—you know. Go water—Oh! I've got movies of that, too, us going waterskiing. We were so sore that day! [Laughs.] Because we weren't used to doing any stuff like that.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: I mean, it just sounds like a completely different world, you know, as soon as you go back to the—

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Back, yeah, yeah. But it was good to get away. I think that's why they do that, just to get a change of scenery from the—because the way these missions work out, you're, you know, living, say, in a BOQ [Bachelor Officers' Quarters] and they post—okay, if you're Crew whatever, S01 or whatever, your name, Crew S01, you're flying Black 3. You know, at two o'clock—takeoff two o'clock in the morning or something like that, you know? [Laughs.] Or you're a standby crew, you know, in case someone can't—they're sick or something; you take their place.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So towards the end of your involvement over there, did your ideas of war start to change at all, or—

MARTEL: Well,—

WEINSTOCK: I know you said you followed orders, and—

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —did as you were told, but I can imagine at some point it got a little tiring.

MARTEL: Well, actually I liked—I would have stayed in the Air Force if it wasn't for Vietnam, and I didn't see any end to it.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Because, you know, I had—you know, I was a young aircraft commander, and, you know, I had a great crew, and, you know, things were—I mean, as far as the Air Force was concerned, I guess I was, you know—my OERs [officer effectiveness reports] were pretty good. That's officer evaluation [sic] reports.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: But then, you know, I got out, and I thought, *Well, fly with the airlines*. But that was during a Depression.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: I explained to you, what do you do if you don't have a job? You go to graduate school, right? [Laughs.] So that's what—but—so—you know, I was still, you know, hoping things or following things, you know, in the news about what's happening in Vietnam.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And I remember being very upset in 1975 when, you know, we pulled out.

WEINSTOCK: It was all for naught,—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —it seems, yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah, because, you know, 58,000 of us—not me but, you know, 58,000 people, Americans died in that effort, and for what? You know. And I remember writing a letter to the editor: "How can Congress not approve this funding? Because, you know, look it, it's just gonna mean we all fought for nothing."

WEINSTOCK: Right. Yeah, so kind of to that moment, the fall of Saigon, you know, was just 40 years ago.

- MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- WEINSTOCK: Just recently. You've kind of already said that it was I guess somewhat of a bitter moment, but how do you think that the rest of America felt about it? You know, obviously there's kind of a lot of feeling of futility: Why did we do all this? But there's also, I have to imagine—[Sighs.]—a sigh of relief that “we're out, finally.”
- MARTEL: Yeah. Even before that, I think. That's why Congress didn't approve the funding, because it didn't seem like the approach we were doing would result in anything positive.
- WEINSTOCK: Right.
- MARTEL: You know. The South Vietnamese never did, you know, pick up the—the mantle or whatever of fighting for their country, so it was one of those things we finally said, you know, “Enough is enough” and got out of there.
- WEINSTOCK: Yeah.
- MARTEL: But, you know, I still felt, you know, that, well, we did the right thing. We tried to help these people. And—you know, it just didn't work out.
- WEINSTOCK: Right. Do you think it could have somehow been different, like you said, if the ARVN [pronounced AR-vin; Army of the Republic of Vietnam] training had gone better?
- MARTEL: Yeah.
- WEINSTOCK: A better leadership strategy?
- MARTEL: Yeah. I think if—see, what was—South Vietnam—you know, their government was not the best; it was, you know, corrupt,—
- WEINSTOCK: Right.
- MARTEL: —and so I don't think the South Vietnamese felt, you know, it was any better than the, you know, North Vietnamese government, even though it was communist.
- WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: I don't think they really felt it was any better, so they didn't really fight for it. Yeah. I mean, to think that a communist country, that their—their soldiers defeated, you know, a free—I mean, the most powerful country in the world, basically, you know, and they were not, you know, very well equipped or anything like that.

WEINSTOCK: Right. It was hard to get the people on board.

MARTEL: Yeah, that's right, but they were dedicated to their cause, and the South Vietnamese weren't.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah. Made a difference. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So now that you're out, you come back home [in] '71 or '72? What was that?

MARTEL: Well, you know—again, I was—I got out in February of '71.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: But I went over, like, five times, so I was back and forth, you know, so you'd come back for a month or two, and then you—and back at Dyess and head back out to Vietnam.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah. So—but, you know, I finally got out in February of '71.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Which was kind of scary, in a way, because I didn't have a job or anything.

WEINSTOCK: Wow. What was your wife doing at the time?

MARTEL: Oh, she [chuckles]—she was, you know, an Air Force wife.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And when we got married, I gave her a book: *What Every Air Force Wife Should Know* [Laughs.] Which she didn't read. [Laughter.] We still talk about that today, how, you know, you're supposed to support your husband's career and all that.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: So she—you know, she was—and a funny story, too, was that while in the Air Force, you know, had top secret clearance, and we'd get these top secret briefings and all, on alert, and, you know, I'd come home, and she'd say something like, "Well, I heard you're going to this crew, a different crew." "Really? No, I just—we just came from briefing, and no one—that was never mentioned or anything like that."

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Sure enough, two or three times, her source of information was correct. [Laughter.]

WEINSTOCK: She knew more than you did.

MARTEL: Yeah, she knew more than I did. You know, they had a different avenue of information [chuckles] obviously.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah, but—yeah. But anyway, yeah, so I get out in '71, and then I—coming back to Massachusetts, and I wanted—I had heard about this new thing, environmental engineering, you know, about the environment, as a new—this was in '72. The Clean Water Act was getting going, and the University of Massachusetts had a program in environmental engineering, so I went there. [Chuckles.] The semester had already started two weeks into the semester. Talked to the chairman of the department, Dr. [D. D.] Adrian. I said, "Well, I'd like to, you know, try this environmental engineering." And he says, "Well, but you're two weeks"—I said, "But I'm two weeks late, so maybe I should start in the summer semester." He

says, "Well, what are you doing tomorrow?" [Laughter.] I says, "Nothin'." "C'mon over."

WEINSTOCK: Get right in that.

MARTEL Get right in it, you know? And that was a transition, too, because, you know, the academic situation there was entirely different than the military, so—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —it's getting used to the academic situation again, so—

WEINSTOCK: Were there any other veterans?

MARTEL: Oh, yeah. That was a good thing about it.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: There are lots of other Vietnam veterans, and we had the best grad faculty league football team. [Laughter.] Baseball team. [Laughs.] Whatever. You know. Because. So. Yeah, I went there for a year, you know, and then finished my master's thesis.

WEINSTOCK: Okay. What did you start working on? What was your—I know it was environmental engineering.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: But did you focus on anything in particular, or—

MARTEL: No, just general. Like, water supply and waste treatment type things—you know, treatment, cleaning up polluted water—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —type things. And my first job was in a small consulting firm, you know, in Northampton, Mass., but I only worked there about a year because they ran out of money, basically. Yeah. You know, small firms—they get money and they, you know, they don't have money, so they lay people off.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: I ended up going from there back to the University of Massachusetts to be a research associate—

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: —there on campus,—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: —that kind of thing.

WEINSTOCK: Well, it sounds like—it's surprising that it ran out of money because I know that this is kind of going on right at the time where I guess one of the better sides of [President Richard M.] Nixon, his environmental policies—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —and these fields of environmental engineering—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —really start—

MARTEL: That's right.

WEINSTOCK: —yeah, to mature at this time.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Did you have a lot of confidence that this would be something that you would pursue for the rest of your life, or—

MARTEL: Well, like anything else, that appealed to me, that topic, and so I pursued it and, you know, was working at the University of Massachusetts, doing research at a facility that was looking at different types of waste treatment processes, you know, and testing different processes. And, of course, they had a facility there that was equipped with different types of treatment processes, and so I was in charge of that. And a lot of the graduate students in environment engineering would conduct their research there, so it was a great learning environment.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: You mentioned that there were some other veterans in these classes.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Did you ever talk with them about Vietnam, or—

MARTEL: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: We all talked about Vietnam and different experiences. You know, most of them were, like, in the Army and what they went through and what they saw. You know, it was an entirely different experience for them.

WEINSTOCK: Did it surprise you to kind of hear how different your experience was from theirs, or—

MARTEL: Well, no because, of course, it was in the paper. You read about their experience—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —you know, what they went through. And drugs. Like, my whole time in the Air Force, I never saw any crew members doing marijuana or anything like that.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: I'm sure some did,—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: —but I never saw any, because of the situation. I don't think you'd want to fly with anyone stoned, either.

WEINSTOCK: Right. Absolutely.

MARTEL: Yeah, if you're—so—

WEINSTOCK: But that was going on, the Army men.

MARTEL: Yeah, that was—yeah, yeah, in the Army I think you're more likely to encounter that kind of thing.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah. So that—you know, read about it and I understood their situation, but it was entirely different.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And so back to the research that you're were doing at the University of Massachusetts, where did you go from there? Did you land another job, or—

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, I happened to see a letter on the desk of one of the professors there, Dr. Adrian, yeah, from the U.S. Army Cold Regions [Research and Engineering] Laboratory [CRREL] in Hanover, New Hampshire—

WEINSTOCK: Oh, right!

MARTEL: [Laughter.] And they were looking for someone to do research and land treatment of wastewater.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Okay? I guess this person sent out a letter to all the different colleges around, and I read that. *Hanover, New Hampshire. Yeah. Well, Dartmouth—that's a nice area. I wouldn't mind going up there.*

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: So I came up for an interview, and, you know, they have a panel there. Of course, typical government thing. They have a panel, and they interview you and all that, and so I was given—offered the job.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: That's how I ended up here.

WEINSTOCK: And this was at Thayer School of Engineering, or—

MARTEL: No, I was at CRREL [pronounced CREL0L]. I was offered the job to work at CRREL, doing research in land treatment wastewater, initially anyway.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah. So that—you know, that was a hundred miles north of Amherst, Mass., you know, where I was working before.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And so when I drove up there, I thought it was great. I thought it was beautiful. [Chuckles.] You know, skiing and all this stuff up here.

WEINSTOCK: Absolutely.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: What year is this that you first come up to Hanover?

MARTEL: Oh, this was, like, in '77.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: My wife had a different reaction when she heard “Cold Regions.” [Laughter.] “Ice engineering.”

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: [Laughs.] “Where are you taking me?”

WEINSTOCK: What do you think attracted you to that?

MARTEL: Well,—you mean that location and the—

WEINSTOCK: Or, you know, I think a lot of people would kind of shy away from “cold regions engineering.”

MARTEL: Yeah. Well, yeah, no, I don't know. Cold never bothered me or—you know, I was—yeah. The thought of skiing, I thought,

would—you know, just living up in New Hampshire. It was more rural and—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: But we still had Dartmouth, though, which is a good, you know, thing to have [chuckles] in a rural community.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And, yeah. So, but, you know, actually, it kind of comes back to Russia, too, because I worked—as I worked at CRREL, one of my projects—on this land treatment project?

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: At the time, there was a scientific exchange between Russia and the U.S. on treating wastewater, so—

WEINSTOCK: Sure. So things have been warming up.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's right. It was [President James E.] "Jimmy" Carter [Jr.]. Things were kind of, you know, warming up. And so anyway, the Russians came to CRREL to see what we were doing, and I was offered the opportunity to go to Russia,—

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: —you know, the old enemy.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. You couldn't have imagined that.

MARTEL: No, no, that's right.

WEINSTOCK: —ten years ago.

MARTEL: That's right. That's right. Yeah, yeah. So I got to Russia, and, you know, and saw, you know, what Russia was like.

WEINSTOCK: Where were you in Russia?

MARTEL: Well, Moscow, Lening- —well, it's St. Petersburg now.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

- MARTEL: And Kiev [Ukraine].
- WEINSTOCK: Sure.
- MARTEL: Yeah. Kharkov [Ukraine] and all those places.
- WEINSTOCK: Yeah. And how did it I guess compare to what—you expected it to be—
- MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.
- WEINSTOCK: —a *Dr. Strangelove*[or: *How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*] you know, kind of—
- MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, it was—because, you know, myself and this other guy, you know, American guy—he was from Mississippi Waterways Experiment [Station]. We both went. And I got to see things a little bit differently from their side, I mean, as far as—you know, the scientific exchange was one part of the visit, but it was also a little bit of indoctrination into—
- WEINSTOCK: Sure.
- MARTEL: Because they would bring you to some Russian memorial or some Russian thing during half the day or something. You know, say, you'd have your scientific discussions in the morning, and in the afternoon you'd go to some war memorial or some ballet or, in St. Petersburg, the [State] Hermitage [Museum] and all these different places.
- WEINSTOCK: Sure. So there was an effort to show culture—
- MARTEL: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, yeah. And, you know, from their viewpoint, I got to—I never realized it before. You know, I thought Russia was just one big country. But it's all these different republics that really don't identify themselves as Russia, you know, like the Ukraine, you know. When we traveled from Russia to the Ukraine, the car stopped, and the Ukrainian drivers—they got out and had, you know, a celebration. "We're in the Ukraine now."
- WEINSTOCK: [Laughs.]
- MARTEL: [Laughs.] *What does this mean?*

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: You know. And so—and they call it the Great Patriotic War. The Second World War was the Great Patriotic—and they lost, like, 20 million people.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: So it was—yeah, very different. Of course, in going there, talked to, you know, military people. As a B-52 pilot, I mean, I don't think there's anything they don't know already about the B-52, right?

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: I mean [laughs], I shouldn't have to worry about [chuckles]—yeah. And they—they agreed. If they—you know, if they don't know all there is about a B-52 by now, they're not a worthy enemy. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Right. Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: How long were you there for?

MARTEL: A couple of weeks.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah, so it was—

WEINSTOCK: Do you like traveling in general? I mean, were you happy to see different culture?

MARTEL: Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. It was—and I found that people—people want—in general want to show you a good time. I mean,—

WEINSTOCK: Absolutely.

MARTEL: —everywhere you go, I mean, they want to show you a good time, show a little bit about themselves, and as long as you go with the flow and just kind of—you know, I could—one story I'd like to tell or I tell is about we were—we went to—see, the way it worked there, we had two interpreters, and then we had a driver, and he took us to wherever we wanted to go or wherever the interpreter said to go. And after—this was in—in Kiev. And after a meeting, they took us to this memorial of the largest tank battle in history.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: In Kharkov. And it was, like, 2,000 tanks from the Russians and the Germans fought in this plain, and the Russians finally won, but—so they took us to this memorial, and it's this broad, huge thing that they have out there, with depictions of all the battles and all this. And they arranged for this veteran of the battle to give us the description of what happened there.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Of course, he's speaking in Russian.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: So—and we're listening in—and the interpreter was telling us what happened and how, you know, the Russian soldiers, you know, just sacrificed—I mean, they really fought like tigers, you know, in that battle. But it was—you know, it was rather somber, and there's just kind of a somber music in the background. And I remember leaving, how—jeez, you know, wow, this was just terrible, you know.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Just feeling really down about this. And then so you know—you get back in the car, and we're heading back to Kiev, and all of a sudden the car pulls off to the side of the road across this field, heading for this line of trees.

WEINSTOCK: Wow. You had no idea what was going on?

MARTEL: No.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: "What's going on?" We said, "Well what's happening here?" They didn't say anything. And I looked at the American, you know, Dick, and I said, "Jeez, did we say something wrong"—[Chuckles.]—"or did we do"—so we pull over, you know, to the line of trees. We get out, and there, in this clearing, was a table all set up for a feast.

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: With all the local dignitaries there, yeah. You know, they had a barbecue, basically—like, wild boar and all these other things here.

WEINSTOCK: This is outside?

MARTEL: Yes, this is outside.

WEINSTOCK: Uh-huh.

MARTEL: But, you know—[Chuckles.] So—but if you've ever been to a Russian feast, you know, they love vodka.

WEINSTOCK: I bet, yeah. [Chuckles.]

MARTEL: So they'll get up: "I have a toast." They'll get. "I toast to this"—you know, that. Oh. And so you're all supposed to—and the vodka is in these, like, little juice glasses.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: But it's pure vodka, so you drink it, and,, you know—but I couldn't drink the whole thing down. I just—[Laughs.] And, you—"Oh, you didn't drink—you didn't like the toast?"

WEINSTOCK: [Chuckles.]

MARTEL: "Oh! How you didn't like the"—"I liked the toast, but I—I just can't drink the vodka." "Oh. Well, gee, that's—if you really like the toast, you should drink all the vodka." He didn't drink all his. [Laughter.]

WEINSTOCK: So it was very cultural.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah. That's right, yeah. And so—

WEINSTOCK: Wow.

MARTEL: Yeah. So we—but I learned, you know, there's no way I could—you know, and they like to do this, you know, at these events a lot.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: But the other guy I was with—he got very sick.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So you were the smart one.

MARTEL: Well, yeah. And he—and he got—at the end of the exchange, they asked, “Well, is there something that you would suggest, you know, at the future exchanges?” and stuff like that. I said, “You know, I thought people were very friendly and everything, but most Americans I don't think are used to drinking [both chuckle] vodka like that” or whatever.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah, so—but that doesn't make—you know, to them, that's—that's their culture, and that's—they're used to doing that, and so—and I'm sure things didn't change, but—I thought I had to at least say, you know, we're not all [chuckles] able to drink that down.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. Well, that—yeah, that sounds like a real interesting experience,—

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —not something that everybody gets.

MARTEL: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: And actually, while you were saying something about Russian involvement in World War II, it reminded me of your father, and I—I actually wanted to ask: How did your father I guess view Vietnam, especially after being—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —a military man in World War II? Did he see it as kind of a generation complaining about being in war, or did he also maybe realized that this was something really different than World War II?

MARTEL: Yeah. Well, I think initially he, you know, was for our military action there, you know. I don't know. My mother was probably more ambivalent to that. But then as time went on, I think he realized that, you know, this is not the same as World War II. It's not—it's not a winnable situation.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: You know. We should get out and do it. But, you know, he was—he was—both my parents were proud when, you know, I became a pilot and, you know, was in the military, although my mother, you know, was scared to death, you know.—

WEINSTOCK: I bet.

MARTEL: —of being a pilot. She did not like, you know, me being a pilot.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: [Laughs.] Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Were they still in Massachusetts?

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So once you got back from Russia, did you come back here to Hanover?

MARTEL: Yes. Yeah, yeah, I came back.

WEINSTOCK: Did you ever get to go visit your parents? They weren't too far away.

MARTEL: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Of course, we went down. We had—every year, we had a family reunion and a golf tournament.

WEINSTOCK: Uh-huh. Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah. In fact, the golf tournament was—you know, my aunt and uncle that let me live with them while I was going to University of Detroit—as it turns out, there were two big families in Sturbridge, the Martels and the Simpsons, and one Martel married a Simpson, and so—they're the ones that moved to Detroit, so every year—so we would have a Martel-Simpson golf tournament and a reunion and all that.

WEINSTOCK: Wow. Sounds like a blast.

MARTEL: [Laughs.] Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Was your mom Simpson?

MARTEL: No, my mother was a Gatineau, you know, but her—my father's sister was a Martel who married a Simpson. And every time they would come to Massachusetts for a vacation in the summer, they would initiate this Martel-Simpson get-together. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Right. And there were a lot of you guys?

MARTEL: Yeah. I mean, there were, like, twelve kids in the Martel family, my father's family, and I think there were eight in the Simpson family, and they lived near each other, so it was, like, you know, a natural [chuckles] get-together—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —type of thing, so—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah, and so we—and now this golf tournament is over now because the two people who started it, Martel and the Simpson, are now in their upper 90s and they can't make it anymore, so—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. Huh.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Well, I guess back up to Hanover.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Have you stayed in the area since? I know you live in Enfield [New Hampshire] now, right?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, we bought—

WEINSTOCK: You've been here ever since?

MARTEL: Yes.

WEINSTOCK: The late '70s, early '80s?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, we've been here. But we have a place in Florida now we go in the winter. Yeah. Yeah, we—we're fortunate. We have a place on Mascoma Lake [in Enfield, New Hampshire], and, you know, it has a nice beach and everything. Now the grandkids come. [Laughs.] Yeah, and they, you know, have a great time. So I get to tell my stories, and, you know—[Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Sure. Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So have you been—yeah, you said you tell your stories. You know, a lot of Vietnam veterans only started telling their stories recently,—

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: —and a lot still won't, but have you been more open to telling stories, and if you are, do you think that's because maybe you were in the Air Force as opposed to on the ground?

MARTEL: Yeah. Most of the stories I tell—you know, you don't dwell on the negative aspects. You got to tell the stories that—you know, some of the crazy things that happen or whatever. That's—I mean, you don't want to tell grandkids depressing stories. I mean, I didn't have a depressing time, but, you know, it was—it was, you know, things that happened: How I

think my pilot training class—we're probably the closest pilot training class ever to graduate from Moody because we've gotten together about every five years—

WEINSTOCK:. Wow.

MARTEL: —and just kind of—you know, the old stories come out. They're not, you know, depressing stories. They're, you know, "When I was a pilot, you know, we did that," you know.

WEINSTOCK: Right, Yeah.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. I mean, it sounds like you still have a lot of camaraderie with them.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: I guess kind of while we're on the topic of reflecting, have you ever been to the Vietnam [Veterans] Memorial?

MARTEL: Mm-hm. Yes, yeah. Oh, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Do you remember the first time seeing that? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

MARTEL: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's—yeah, that was—I think it was '94 I went there, because we—I was in Washington, D.C., at the time and went to the Vietnam Memorial, and I looked up one—one—one guy who ejected over—in the Pacific Ocean, over the Philippines somewhere, and he never was found since, but anyway—it's just a feeling. You know, I mean, it just hits you, all these names on the wall and all these young people really gave the ultimate price, and, you know, I was one of the lucky ones, really. I mean, you see—I go to the VA [Veterans Affairs] and see some of the—you know, the veterans there, and, you know, a lot of them are in rough shape. I don't have any of those issues, but—yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: So the Vietnam Wall I think is very worth going to, anyone to see that, just reflect on what's—

WEINSTOCK: Absolutely.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I tell the grandkids, “Beware when you hear the drums start playing and the band starts playing and the drums start drumming and the bands start playing—be careful what they’re telling you. You know, this call to war is not, you know, something you want to take lightly.”

WEINSTOCK: Absolutely.

MARTEL: Yeah. So. Yeah. It’s—it was worthwhile going to.

WEINSTOCK: Absolutely.

MARTEL: Yeah. I go—go the VA, even. You know, for eyeglasses and stuff like that.

WEINSTOCK: Did your political—political thoughts or ideas change at all as a result of the war, do you think?

MARTEL: Well, I think—you know, I—my family was very Republican, and I think, you know, I was Republican, but now I’m definitely a Democrat, and it’s not—it’s—you know, it was a slow process of gradually, I don’t know, thinking and seeing what happened, I don’t feel that, you know, the Republicans are looking at or inclined to base policies on evidence. They’re inclined to go a lot more on belief and tradition and more conservative things, whereas, you know, as an engineer, you know, scientist I kind of think of things a little bit differently—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —than I did back then. I was very upset when I found out that the justification for, you know, Vietnam, for increasing our forces was the Gulf of Tonkin incident—

WEINSTOCK: Sure, back in ’64, I think.

MARTEL: Yeah. Was—yeah. Was Johnson and on that flimsy thing. It’s not even—you know, it may not even be true. It’s probably not even true. And to actually, you know, send in troops like—oh, God, that was really like a kick in the stomach, you know?

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. And, you know, like you said, you would tell your grandchildren when the band starts playing, and I think that Vietnam taught a lot of people that lesson.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: It's interesting to see how that goes.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Do you think being an environment engineer really also kind of—

MARTEL: Yeah. Well, it changes your focus, yeah, to the environment, which, you know, we've got to protect.

WEINSTOCK: Absolutely.

MARTEL: War does not protect [chuckles] the environment very well. It's something you've got to—you've got to preserve because there's only one—one planet, I mean, that we can get to right now.

WEINSTOCK: Sure. Did you continue to work with the [U.S.] Army Corps of Engineers?

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: Till I retired. I retired from the Army in—

WEINSTOCK: So you were career U.S. Army in some capacity, or military—

MARTEL: Well, military. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because one of the advantages was because all my military time counted toward retirement time because I was, you know, still not in the military. Working at CRREL, I was in civil service, but it counted, you know, to retirement.

WEINSTOCK: Right. Was that important to you?

MARTEL: Well, it is important because, you know, there's very few people who retire with a pension these days. Pensions have long—are going—going away. And oftentimes, people can't retire. You know, they just have no—excuse me—they just have no financial resources, not enough to retire at. So, you know, if there were opportunities to earn a higher salary in a private sector—but I thought, *Well, I think I'll—I like what I'm doing. I'll just stick, you know, in the government.*

WEINSTOCK: Did you enjoy it? Were you mostly up here?

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Did you do other projects elsewhere?

MARTEL: Oh, yeah. Other—I got to travel a lot of places—you know, mostly the cold climates—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. [Chuckles.]

MARTEL: I didn't mind. Alaska—I went to Alaska many times and the Scandinavian countries. But Russia was kind of a highlight because that was, you know, a scientific exchange, and, you know, it doesn't happen that often.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: Yeah. I got to see, you know, a former [chuckles]—

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: —enemy.

WEINSTOCK: Did you think back on it when the [Berlin] Wall finally came down?

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Your Russia trip?

MARTEL: Yeah, that's right.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. What was going through your head?

MARTEL: Well, we were on—

WEINSTOCK: You had been there.

MARTEL: That's right. That's right. Yeah. And Russia—of course, we were concerned that we were being watched the whole time, and then, you know, we saw—in driving around, we saw radar installations and military bases and all that kind of thing. And then Russia was—you know, a communist system is very—oh, gosh, it's—you know, they can't get anything done.

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: I remember when we got to—at the end, you have to sign a protocol saying: Okay, here's what we did, and here's the next step. And so the Russians said, "Oh, well, here's the protocol. Why don't you just sign it?" And we said, "Well, it's in Russian." "Well, we can't—it's on the weekend. We can't get anybody to translate it for you." "Well, I'm not signing it." [Laughter.]

WEINSTOCK: You mean they were doing that on purpose, or just to kind of get you guys to sign your life away, or—

MARTEL: Well, yeah. But, see, I mean, if you—I mean, I wouldn't sign it. And Dick says, "It's probably all right." I said, "No." After being in the, you know, Strategic Air Command [chuckles], I'm not signing anything I don't understand." So they said, "Oh, well, we'll take you to the American Embassy."

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: So they did. They took us to the American Embassy, gave it to—and he read it, and he said, "Yeah, it pretty much is on the up and up. It just says what he said," but—

WEINSTOCK: Better to be careful, right?

MARTEL: Yeah. It's, you know, one of those things. It's not a good policy to sign anything unless you know what you're signing. Yeah. But to see the Wall come down and how it happened just—you know,—

WEINSTOCK: Did you ever think it could happen?

MARTEL: No, I never thought it could happen. And now with, you know, [Vladimir V.] Putin trying to bring back the Cold War—I mean, he seems—jeez, what a waste! Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Well, yeah, finally back—back here. Have you done any flying since, after that?

MARTEL: Yeah, when I got back, it just so happens at CRREL—had a flying club. They had a little Piper [J-3] Cub, you know, which is just the opposite end of the spectrum from a B-52. It's a little—

WEINSTOCK: It's a little prop plane, or—

MARTEL: Yeah, a little prop plane, a tail dragger. And so I checked out in that, and actually, I flew—while I was in graduate school down in Massachusetts, I flew a twin-engine Piper. You know, I had my certification and a multi-engine land license. I could fly, you know, any multi- —once I got checked out, so I had my pilot's license reading "multi" and, you know, land, instrument rating and all that. I ended up just flying that Piper Cub up here until—until the Army discovered, in their inventory, this ancient Pipe Cub that was up at CRREL, in the—

WEINSTOCK: It wasn't supposed to be there?

MARTEL: It somehow escaped attention, and it stayed up here for a long time.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: But they finally reclaimed it and took it back, probably at some Army base somewhere, to be part of an aero club there. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Have you flown since then?

MARTEL: No, I haven't flown since. That was—that must be, like, 15 years ago now.

WEINSTOCK: Do you miss it at all? [Chuckles.]

MARTEL: I still love airplanes, and, you know, I keep track of what's happening with, you know, the B-52s. There's a association, and they're still flying the B-52.

WEINSTOCK: Have they been modified a lot, or—

MARTEL: Yeah, they've—you know, it's a large airplane, a lot of—you know, they change out the avionics and whatever inside and upgrade this, upgrade that, so there's, like, 70 of them still, you know, in the inventory.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: And so these things were first built in 1954, you know, so—

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: It's—[Laughs.] It's been in the—and they keep checking structural integrity and all that, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Right. But a durable design.

MARTEL: Yeah, as long as you don't come up against, you know, say, a modern air force with modern, you know, missiles and all that. It wouldn't do well under those circumstances.

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. And, you know, you said your job had allowed you to travel a lot. Have you gotten to go back to Southeast Asia at all, or—

MARTEL: Well, no.

WEINSTOCK: Do you want to, or—

MARTEL: Well, you know, that's the thing that is really striking, is that it's a tourist destination now. [Laughs.]

WEINSTOCK: Yeah, Vietnam is, you know, pretty warm tensions with America.

MARTEL: That's right. And when you have friends, good friends that live on Mascoma Lake, who travel a lot, and they went to Vietnam, and he has a picture of him standing inside of a B-52 bomb crater.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah

MARTEL: You know. And it's just—you know, how things have changed!

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: And he said it's a great place to go, you know?

WEINSTOCK: Absolutely.

MARTEL: See, but I guess if I actually went to Vietnam—I was never *in* Vietnam, so it's not like I know, I mean, that much about it. I just flew over it, so—

WEINSTOCK: Right.

MARTEL: I suppose I—you know, I wouldn't have any objections to going there, but I guess if you live long enough you get to see what [laughs]—what happens as a result of—yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah. It's interesting how things have gone full circle.

MARTEL: Yeah. That's right. Yeah, yeah.

WEINSTOCK: So now in retirement, you're still just in the area, and—

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah. Well,—

WEINSTOCK: So you keep up with some of your buddies from flight school.

MARTEL: Yeah, flight school and Air Force, and I do a lot of work, you know, in the environmental area. In charge of water quality on the lake. Do sampling and that kind of thing. I've got a little business that I—I've got a patent on a invention from CRREL that I've started a little business on.

WEINSTOCK: What does that do?

MARTEL: Well, it's a—basically, it's a dredge, a mini-dredge for cleaning out lagoons and that kind of—or ponds or whatever, you know?

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: It's something I developed for an Army base up in Alaska.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: And I—with, you know, family, and I work at the cemetery. [Chuckles.] In Enfield. I just like to keep busy—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —and stuff like that. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Wonderful.

MARTEL: In Florida I volunteer at an environmental center, giving tours or working on trails or that kind of thing.

WEINSTOCK: Right. And do you have any interaction with Dartmouth today?

MARTEL: Well, the only—like, when I was at CRREL, I took two courses here at Dartmouth prior to going to Colorado State [University] for my Ph.D. And I guess that's basically the only association with Dartmouth—you know, formal. So I took a couple of courses in the Thayer School, yeah, and then—so—

WEINSTOCK: Did you like it? Or how was Thayer?

MARTEL: Oh, I liked it, yeah. It was a lot faster than I was used to because it's only, you know, 12 weeks or something. I forget. It was only 12 weeks, so you got to stay right with it. It's not like a semester, like I was used to,—

WEINSTOCK: Sure.

MARTEL: —used the semester system.

WEINSTOCK: Yeah.

MARTEL: And I took statistics and design and analysis of experiments or something like that. Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Still in Enfield?

MARTEL: Yeah, still in Enfield. Both my wife and I—we—we—you know, we have a clam bake, you know, on the Fourth of

July. All the grandkids come over, and—you know, we have two daughters.

WEINSTOCK: Okay.

MARTEL: And so we have—have a good time. [Chuckles.] Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: All right. Well, I think that's about all I wanted to cover.

MARTEL: Yeah.

WEINSTOCK: Thank you so much for coming. I really do appreciate.

MARTEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, yeah, thank *you*.

WEINSTOCK: And I wish you luck in all of your future endeavors.

MARTEL: [Laughs.] All right. Thank you.

WEINSTOCK: Thank you

[End of interview.]