

Thomas L. Miller '65
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Vietnam Project
January 25, 2016
Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[ANGELA L.]

NOPPENBERGER: Hello. I am Angela Noppenberger. I am interviewing from the Ticknor Room in Rauner [Special Collections] Library. Today's date is Monday, January 25th, 2016. It's 12:05, and we're starting this interview. I am interviewing Thomas Miller.

Mr. Miller, could you tell me where I am calling you at?

MILLER: I live in Woking, Surrey, England, about 16 miles southwest of London.

NOPPENBERGER: Great. Am I calling you in your home right now?

MILLER: I'm in my home, yes.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay. So let's start this interview. Could you please tell me your date of birth and where you were born?

MILLER: Yeah, I was born 14 January 1943 in the post hospital at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

NOPPENBERGER: And what were your parents' names?

MILLER: Martin D. Miller and Esther L. Miller.

NOPPENBERGER: And did you grow up in Oklahoma, or did you move?

MILLER: No, my dad was in the armor officer training school at Fort Sill. Just a second. [Speaking to someone else: What?] Okay. He was an instructor in the artillery school at Fort Sill, having just completed officer training, himself. I was born there. We moved from there shortly thereafter for a little while, to California and then moved back to the Chicago area, where I spent the rest of the war with my mother at her parents' home in Chicago, itself.

NOPPENBERGER: Did your dad serve overseas during the war?

MILLER: Yeah. He—he was with 11th Armor Division, which was part of [General George S., Jr.] Patton's Third [U.S.] Army after D-Day [Normandy landings during World War II], so he served through the Battle of the Bulge and ended up in Bad Ischl, Austria, where he was at that point a 28-year-old major—

NOPPENBERGER: Wow.

MILLER: —and became the military burgermeister of Bad Ischl for a short while before going back to the U.S., where he got out the army—

NOPPENBERGER: When did he come back to the U.S.?

MILLER: He got back to the U.S.—it would have been late 1945 or early 1946.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, so he was there through the end of the war.

MILLER: Yes, it was at the end of the war.

NOPPENBERGER: And did you have any siblings, growing up?

MILLER: I have a brother and two sisters, all younger than me.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, wow. So the oldest.

MILLER: Yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: And you were growing up in Chicago as the oldest—about how old were you when your father was away, overseas?

MILLER: Um, well he came back in, well, say, he came back in '46. I would have been three years old when he got back.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay. All right. So you were very, very small.

MILLER: Yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: Can you tell me about growing up in Illinois?

MILLER: Yeah. We lived for a little while on the southwest side of Chicago, and then my folks bought a house in Hinsdale,

Illinois, which is a suburb about 16 miles west of the city. It was a fairly active place. Good schools and active Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, things like that.

NOPPENBERGER: Were you a Boy Scout?

MILLER: I went to the local schools, and then Hinsdale Township High School [in District 86]. I was active in the Cub Scouts and the Boy Scouts. I am an Eagle Scout, or was an Eagle Scout. So did all of those kinds of things and learned about camping and [chuckles] living in tents and things like that—

NOPPENBERGER: [Chuckles.]

MILLER: —that became useful later on.

NOPPENBERGER: [Chuckles.] Great. What else were you active in, say, in high school, leading up to—

MILLER: I—I was a little bit active in the track, but at age 16 I got a part-time job working as a clerk in men's shop in town, so from 16 on, was—in my spare time, was busy working, although I did stay active in the Scouts till I was—till I was 17, 18, basically till I went to Dartmouth.

NOPPENBERGER: And when you were in high school, do you remember the sort of aspirations you had? Was Dartmouth really something that you'd been thinking about at that age already, or college in general?

MILLER: I was just looking for good—good universities. I actually only applied to two schools. I applied to Beloit College in Wisconsin and Dartmouth. Was accepted by both and decided to go to Dartmouth, partially because it was further away from home than Beloit. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Do you remember your career aspirations at that time?

MILLER: I didn't have any specific career aspirations, maybe going into law, which in the end I didn't do, but that impacted my major. I was a history major at Dartmouth, which was one of the things deemed good for law school, but I was also in ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps], so effectively—

NOPPENBERGER: Right. Let me—sorry. Let's—let's—let's get into your college years, then. So you had been working in high school. You'd applied to two colleges, gotten into both.

MILLER: Yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: Can you tell me if you knew you were doing ROTC at Dartmouth right away, or if that's something that you decided—actually, sorry. Let's go back one second.

MILLER: No, I knew I was going into ROTC when I went off to university. You have to remember, this was kind of the early days of the conflict in Vietnam, and draft was fairly active, and it just made sense to me to serve—do my military service as an officer rather than being drafted.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: I did have a discussion with my father, who suggested I do [U.S.] Air Force or [U.S.] Navy, but I couldn't fly because of my eyesight, and the thought of spending weeks or months of time on a ship was—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —horrible, so I chose the Army.

NOPPENBERGER: And what did your father—what branch was your father in?

MILLER: He was in the Army.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, okay. So what year is it that you're graduating high school and starting at Dartmouth?

MILLER: I graduated high school in 1961 and became part of the Class of 1965 starting in September '61 at Dartmouth.

NOPPENBERGER: And can you give me any first impressions you had at Dartmouth? You were moving there from Illinois, from the Midwest. What was it like starting school out here?

MILLER: Well, there were more green trees and more hills, and the snow was about the same as Chicago. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: But I liked Dartmouth. It was a pretty campus. There was more space on it then than there is now. So we did a lot of walking. And, I can't quite remember how I got involved, but I very quickly became part of the Dartmouth crew. I'm a relatively small fellow, so I was a coxswain [pronounced COCK-son]. And that was an new experience for me. My experience on riggers had been in canoes and things. So rowing was something new, and it was good fun and was a way to stay fit.

NOPPENBERGER: Great. Anything—any other clubs or organizations that you were involved with during your time at Dartmouth?

MILLER: I was a member of Alpha Delta Phi [now Alpha Delta] fraternity. I was a member of the [Dartmouth] Outing Club. AD has [cross-talk; unintelligible].

NOPPENBERGER: So you like—

MILLER: [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah, you really liked being active.

Can you tell me what it was like being in ROTC during that time? I know Dartmouth kind of had a history, especially during the Vietnam War, of being against ROTC or hoping that the college would get rid of it. Had any of those sort of conflicts of disagreements with the student body come up yet at your time?

MILLER: No, they had not. They had not. And lots of the people that I knew and hung out with at Dartmouth were in the ROTC—you know, either Army, Air Force or Navy. The two fellows that were my roommates senior year both graduated and were commissioned at the same time I was.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay, can I get their names, please?

MILLER: Pardon?

NOPPENBERGER: Could I just get their names here? Two roommates, senior year.

MILLER: [Daniel J.] “Dan” Walden and Donald [McK] Boardman [both Class of 1965].

NOPPENBERGER: Okay.

MILLER: I think you’ve already interviewed Dan Walden. I’m not sure about Don.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay. It’s just always great to have names of more people, possibly [to] interview, and just to have on record, really, to know, because that’s what this project is really about.

Okay, so while you were at Dartmouth, you said that you were kind of considering law. What, did you still have that desire to study law during all four years of Dartmouth, or did you kind of get away from that?

MILLER: No, I kind of got away—got away from it and knew I was going in the service, so it was put on a back burner anyway. When graduation came around, I was offered a regular commission in the Army, and I accepted the regular commission because it didn’t involve much more time in the service, but it meant that I could do what I wanted, which was play in tanks and go to Germany. So I got to do both of those things. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Great. What year did you graduate?

MILLER: I graduated in 1965.

NOPPENBERGER: And so did you—

MILLER: Vietnam was just getting active at that point, really active.

NOPPENBERGER: Right. I was going to say, did you have any sort of anxiety or nervousness with the war picking up and knowing that you’d be getting into the service right out of college?

MILLER: No. No, that didn’t cross my mind at all, to be quite honest. Again, going off in the Army to Germany was a bit of an adventure.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: So you'd, [unintelligible].

NOPPENBERGER: Well, what about—

MILLER: Yeah, go ahead.

NOPPENBERGER: I was just going to say, well, what about any other sort of, you know, feelings on campus at that time? Do you remember the Vietnam War even being kind of part of conversation?

MILLER: We knew about it, but the antiwar movement had not really become active at that point in time because, you know, the Bay of Pigs [Invasion] and the big buildup took place during the year we graduated, so it was all kind of new. I have other thoughts since then,—

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

MILLER: —but at the time, no, it wasn't—it wasn't that active. In fact, we didn't know, in ROTC in those days, how many of us would actually go to Vietnam. That was not obvious.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay. So let's—let's get into the beginning of your military service, then. You just graduated Dartmouth. Did you have time to go back home, have a break, or were you—

MILLER: Yeah. The drill was—At the time, I had a car on campus, so I filled it with my things, drove home, dropped off most of them, and reported for active duty at Fort Knox, Kentucky, which was the Armor Officer School [sic; U.S. Army Armor School], because I had to do armor officer basic course, and that was, oh, I suppose, three, four months of training with tanks and things at Fort Knox.

And then, because I had a regular commission, I had to do either airborne school or ranger school, and because I was tank officer, being a ranger wasn't real useful, and airborne school didn't last so long, so I drove from Fort Knox to Fort Benning [Georgia]. Learned how to jump out of airplanes.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: Finished that. Drove home, dropped a few things off, and I reported to New Jersey, to Fort Dix, where I got on an airplane going to Germany. Arrived in Germany November of '65, just before Thanksgiving. The new lieutenant on the block. And immediately went to—to some training in a training base in Germany with the rest of my tank battalion.

NOPPENBERGER: How long were you in Germany for?

MILLER: I was in Germany a little over two years.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay. That is a long time! Did you enjoy your time there?

MILLER: Oh, yeah! Germany was great fun. A bit of cowboys and Indians. Met my wife and was married in Germany in September of 1967.

NOPPENBERGER: Where did you meet her?

MILLER: In Schweinfurt, Germany, where I was stationed. She's a German lady—

NOPPENBERGER: Was she a German local?

MILLER: She was. She was local. And there was a fairly active German-American discussion group in Schweinfurt that a number of us participated in, both because it helped us improve our German but it was also good fun socially. And it was about, you know, a bunch of young American officers and similar-aged German folks. We got together once a week, and we'd spend a half hour speaking English and a half hour speaking German about whatever was going on at the time. And then, being good young officers, we'd go off to the local beer hall and have a few beers before going back—

NOPPENBERGER: [Chuckles.]

MILLER: —to the post or wherever we lived.

NOPPENBERGER: [Laughs.] Do you still have a little bit of German?

MILLER: Anyway, met my wife through that group. But one of the guys in—in the discussion group, a German fellow—he knew everything going on in the neighborhood, so we found

ourselves involved in all kinds of festivals and fancy balls and things in the German community, which really made it a super experience. It was really a good experience.

NOPPENBERGER: That's great.

MILLER: Part of that, in June of 1967, was the most frightened I have ever been in my life, including being shot at in Vietnam. I got a phone call at two o'clock in the morning. "Lieutenant Miller, get into the kaserne, the barracks. We're moving out." And things were coming out of safes and bunkers that did not come out for alerts. We were going to war.

And I knew from war games that the longest I ever survived was 20 hours, so as we left the barracks, I was not filled with enthusiasm. It took about 12 hours to work out the problem was in the Middle East, not in Germany.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, wow!

MILLER: But nobody told us that

NOPPENBERGER: So there was—there was no imminent danger to you.

MILLER: As it turned out, no. But that's not what it felt like as—

NOPPENBERGER: Right, right.

MILLER: —we moved out.

NOPPENBERGER: Right. Of course. Of course, that is super alarming. So do you still have a little bit of German from those days?

MILLER: Oh, yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, that's—that is—

MILLER: We go back to Germany fairly regularly. *Ich kann ein bisschen Deutsch sprechen, ja, ja.*

NOPPENBERGER: [Laughs.] Oh, great! So what were your military duties while in Germany? I mean, it sounds like you had a great social life, but what were the sort of—

MILLER: Yeah no, I started out as a tank platoon leader in a tank battalion in 3rd Infantry Division, and then I became a company executive officer. And at that point, senior officers were being pulled out of Germany and sent to Vietnam, so I became a first lieutenant company commander fairly early, well, late '66. And then in '67, shortly after I got married, I was promoted to captain, so I'm now a 25-year-old captain of a, company commander of a tank company. And—

NOPPENBERGER: Did your wife live with you on base?

MILLER: We didn't live on base. We lived off base, in an apartment. We weren't required to live on base. And because we were newly wed, the base housing was more for people that had families, and we didn't have a family yet.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: But [in] any case, we got married. As we left our reception at the officers' club Schweinfurt. I didn't notice it at the time, but I was told later that a number of my fellow officers' wives were wiping tears away as we left.

NOPPENBERGER: [Chuckles.] Why is that?

MILLER: Well, they all knew I had orders to Vietnam, but I didn't know that yet.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh. Wow!

MILLER: So we went off on our honeymoon and came back. I called in to the battalion, said, "I'm back. Do I have orders?" At the time, I had been in Germany longer than any other officer in the division, so knew I was due, and in the evening was told no. And the next morning, about 7:30 in the morning, had a phone call: "Miller, you need to get your act together. You have orders." And the only question was what unit. Where I was going was no surprise. So [cross-talk; unintelligible]

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm. Yeah. Was there talk of—was there talk of Vietnam already then? You say that most people knew that—

MILLER: Oh, yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: —you were going off. So you had an idea that this was the next step in your military life.

MILLER: Oh, yeah. That was, there was no question of that. If I had not been sent to Vietnam, I would have been very, very, very surprised. A number of—

NOPPENBERGER: How did your wife feel about that?

MILLER: —the people I had been working with had already gone to Vietnam, and we were starting to see a few people coming back from Vietnam.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm. How did your wife feel about you being—

MILLER: I don't think she was terribly excited about it, but we immediately got her a Green Card so she could go back to the U.S. My family took over from there. I had been told by one of my NCOs [non-commissioned officers] that there was only one way to leave a new bride when you went off to war. The sergeant told me, "You need to leave her barefoot, pregnant and broke."

NOPPENBERGER: [Chuckles.]

MILLER: But she did have shoes, so I didn't quite obey that.

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

MILLER: [Laughs.]

NOPPENBERGER: Well, I'm glad. [Laughs.]

MILLER: But—

NOPPENBERGER: So was the plan—had you been planning to move back to the States, then? Is that why she didn't stay in Germany?

MILLER: We had agreed that it would be good if she spent my time in Vietnam with my family in the U.S., among other things because if anything happened to me, my folks knew what to do, having been through [a] similar situation in [the] Second World War. And so she was welcomed into the family.

My Miller grandmother welcomed her as a new immigrant and presented her with an American flag lapel pin—
[Laughter.]

NOPPENBERGER: Sweet.

MILLER: —welcoming the new immigrant to the family.

NOPPENBERGER: That's thoughtful.

MILLER: But she got on—she always got on well with my family, so that worked out pretty well. And—

NOPPENBERGER: All right, so your wife is in the U.S., and you are leaving. Did you go straight to Vietnam from Germany?

MILLER: No. No, no. Back to the U.S. Spent Christmas of 1967 in Illinois with my family and my wife, and everyone got introduced. In early January, was sent to Panama for jungle training, more than anything, acclimation because I was going out of winter weather in Germany. So a couple of weeks in—

NOPPENBERGER: Can you tell me about that? Can you tell me about that?

MILLER: Pardon?

NOPPENBERGER: Can you tell me about that jungle training? What exactly does that entail?

MILLER: Mostly walking around in the Canal Zone jungle in Panama, eating strange things. It was—it was kind of interesting because, having come out of—having been an armor officer, things like compasses don't work on tanks. There's too much metal.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh.

MILLER: So you learned to read maps. And I seemed to be one of the few officers in the bunch that could actually read a map in the jungle, so I got to do lots of navigation. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Oh.

MILLER: But, no, it was—it was basically just learning how to move around in the jungle and what it was like. And, I must say—okay, I got acclimated, got used to the hot weather, but when I got to Vietnam, I spent very, very little time in jungle anything like Panama. We—I arrived in Vietnam and was assigned to 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. This is, again, an armor unit, and so we worked about a 150-mile radius around Saigon, and we were kind of a reaction force. So somebody would panic, and we would move, because we could do rather hostile things to the bad guys.

NOPPENBERGER: Well, can we get into your—into your first arrival in Vietnam? I'd love to hear about, you know, your reactions, any sort of feelings you had about, you know, being there in a country that was at war. Can you tell me the date that you arrived?

MILLER: I arrived in [the] tail end of January 1968. Tet Offensive of 1968 was just coming to an end, so I missed most of that hostility. I flew into Biên Hòa Air Force Base [sic; Biên Hòa Air Base], east of Saigon. I went through the replacement depot, but I had orders. Within 24 hours, I was in a helicopter flying to where the cav was based, which was a little bit further east of Saigon. And from there was connected up with the squadron or battalion that I was to become a part of.

Went there, and my initial assignment was as S3 air, or air operations officer, so the first, I suppose, four or five months that I was there, I was the fellow from headquarters that would talk to the Air Force when we needed air support. So I talked to [unintelligible] and things. I sent airplanes away because they did not have napalm.

NOPPENBERGER: Uh-huh.

MILLER: Napalm's stopping guys in bunkers better than high explosive. And that was my job.

Interesting asides while doing that job: I guess the most interesting one was a visit from a reporter from *The Washington Post*. We were in a firefight—

NOPPENBERGER: When was this? What year? Can you give me a timeframe?

MILLER: Still '68.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay.

MILLER: Would have been—I don't know, March, April, May. We were out west of Saigon.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay.

MILLER: This fellow just happened to come by, and I was on the radio, talking to our people on the ground and Air Force types in the air, and he sat around listening and taking notes. I asked him if he would like to go up and see what was going on, and he said, "No, I don't think I'll do that. I'll stay here," because where we were was pretty safe.

NOPPENBERGER: [Chuckles.]

MILLER: But he wrote his article that way. I read other articles, because my parents—if they saw our unit mentioned in any of the Chicago newspapers, would cut the article out and send it to me, so I was reading articles written by a young—I don't know how young, but a *Chicago Tribune* reporter, about firefights that I had been in.

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

MILLER: And what he wrote is not what I saw, and I know with 100 percent certainty he wrote it as if he was there, and I know he wasn't there, so he was—

NOPPENBERGER: Can you tell me some of the things that—that were incorrect in that article or—what was sort of indiscrepancies—[sic: discrepancies]

MILLER: Well, he tended to make it much worse for us than it was. And I guess what irritated me about it is he kept writing as if he were there, and clearly—I know he wasn't. So he'd probably gone to a briefing at Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), had a briefing and then gone back to his hotel and, sitting on the veranda, sipping gin and tonic and writing fairy tales.

NOPPENBERGER: And was he writing it as if, you know, you were the bad guys, or was he—you know. You say he was making it much worse for you. What do you mean by that?

MILLER: That our casualties and things were worse than they were.

NOPPENBERGER: As in, like, more people had—more Americans had died?

MILLER: No, more of our people hurt—

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, okay, okay.

MILLER: —than in fact did.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay. Just making it a bit more dramatic, then.

MILLER: Yeah. Understand, I was in an armored cavalry unit.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: We had armored personnel carriers, we had tanks, we had our own artillery, we had our own attack helicopters, and we could do bad things that infantry units weren't able to do, so—

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

MILLER: —the bad guys—

NOPPENBERGER: In terms of more damage—

MILLER: —didn't like us very much. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: In terms of you were able to do more damage with tanks and things like that.

MILLER: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: Is that what you mean?

MILLER: But [to] put [it] in context: I wasn't there, but I saw it afterwards. At the tail end of the Tet Offensive, my squadron was sent into Biên Hòa City to relieve the Vietnam Army, South Vietnamese Army, III Corps headquarters. So the cav

came rolling in with their armored vehicles and red-and-white guidons waving in the wind, and there were generals and colonels and majors coming out to shake the hands of PFC [private first class] truck drivers because these guys hadn't been able to get out of their bunkers to go to the latrine without being shot at from across the street.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: So we came in, and we're now working for a South Vietnamese general. And he told our boss, "Go out and stop the sniping." So tank company, a cav troop and a mixed company of cooks and clerks from 101st Airborne [Division] went out to stop the sniping. Well, most of the sniping was out of buildings across the street, and the solution was a 90 mm tank round with a delay fuse through the wall of the building, which stopped the sniping but was kind of hard on the buildings. So when I got there, there were six city blocks of Biên Hòa that were no more than three or four feet high, anywhere.

As that was coming to an end, our boss, our commander, our lieutenant colonel got a call from the American general in the area: "Colonel, get your butt to my headquarters now." And our boss was going to be fired for damaging Vietnamese property.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, no.

MILLER: So the colonel's driving up there in his Jeep, heart in mouth, career in tatters, and the Vietnamese general called the American general and told him what a great job the cav had done, so the boss got a medal instead of the sack. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Oh!

MILLER: [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Wow!

MILLER: It kind of describes how things worked.

NOPPENBERGER: That is very informative. Wow! So then were you, I guess, active every day or could you kind of describe to me maybe a typical day for you in Vietnam, if there even was such a thing, or was it more, you know, you had to play things—

MILLER: Most days—most days you'd get up wherever you were, get breakfast. We rarely failed to have a hot breakfast, even if we were in the middle of nowhere, because we—

NOPPENBERGER: What kind of breakfast would that be?

MILLER: Oh,—

NOPPENBERGER: Food wise?

MILLER: —scrambled eggs, bacon, orange juice. Understand, we could pull mobile kitchens behind some of our tracked vehicles.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh. Okay.

MILLER: And because we had helicopters, what we would do would be from our base camp we would fly in a hot meal at night—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —in formal containers, but also eggs and things for breakfast. And we had a couple of cooks out there, that would cook a hot breakfast in the morning. So the only time—the only time really that we ate field rations was lunchtime, with rare exceptions.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: Usually the rare exceptions—because we were moving someplace. So we—we lived a lot better than a lot of other combat units did, but, again, it's—that's the way cavalry operates. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm. So you wake up. You have your breakfast.

MILLER: Had my breakfast. Go in, see what was going on. Typically, if we were in the field, we would have some units going out, sweeping some area, just to see what was going on. Most

days, nothing was going on, so they'd go out and come back. And have dinner and maybe listen to Armed Forces Network and go to sleep. Every once in a while, we'd get mortared at night, but we'd put out sandbags and things, so unless it fell on you, which was pretty rare, you didn't get hurt.

NOPPENBERGER: What's it—what's it like to live under that kind of—I mean, I would call it stress, knowing that there was a possibility of being mortared at night and, you know, living out in—

MILLER: Well, you could get mortared at night or shot in the day- —I guess—

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

MILLER: —you get a defensive reaction to it. At least I did, that, you know, if my number came up, my number came up, and it wasn't worth the energy to worry about it, so get on doing whatever the job is.

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

MILLER: We did learn—you learned to pay attention to what was going on, I guess is the way I would put it. So caution, yes. You got running out in the fields by yourself, not normally. And just pay attention to what's going on. But—

NOPPENBERGER: Were you living in—were you living in tents at all times? You, You, from what I can gather, you sound like you were a pretty mobile unit, constantly on the move.

MILLER: Well, we had—we had canvas that moved with us, so we would put canvas off the sides of the vehicles and things like that. We carried some tents around with us. If we were in base camp—I lived with several other officers in a—in a big round tent that had sandbag walls around it. But—

NOPPENBERGER: Sleeping on—sleeping on the floors, sleeping on cots?

MILLER: We were sleeping on cots in base camp, and if we were out in the boonies, we would throw fold-up field cots in our tracks, so either sleep inside the armored vehicle, or you

sleep on one of these cots outside the armored vehicle, under some canvas.

And if we were gonna to be someplace for a lengthy period of time, we'd get bulldozers and dig trenches so that, you know, you were basically in a hole in the ground,—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —which literally meant if the mortar round didn't come through the roof, it was unlikely you'd be hurt.

NOPPENBERGER: Mmm. And during this time, were you able to talk—I mean, obviously not talk but communicate regularly with family and your wife back home via letters or anything like that?

MILLER: Well, letters I sent home every day. And one of the fellows in my company was an amateur ham radio operator, and I had a very good single-sideband radio in the back of my Jeep. And so he explained to me frequencies and how to connect with a ham operator in the United States, so as—

NOPPENBERGER: Wow.

MILLER: —as long as we were someplace where there were lots of people on the radio, so they couldn't track us,—

NOPPENBERGER: Uh-huh.

MILLER: —the command would have been "CQ [code used by amateur radio operators as an invitation for any operators listening to respond], CQ, CQ, land mobile, Vietnam." And I'd get connected to a ham operator somewhere in the U.S., who could patch me through a telephone to call home.

NOPPENBERGER: Wow! That's amazing!

MILLER: Now all I had to do was teach my wife how to deal with, "How ya doin', hon? Over." [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: [Laughs.]

MILLER: So the ham operator could [unintelligible]

NOPPENBERGER: So you did get to—

MILLER: —the transmission switch.

NOPPENBERGER: Uh-huh. So you did get to speak to your family while you were in Vietnam,—

MILLER: Yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: —or to your wife.

MILLER: Not regular, but periodically, yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: Wow! That is—I mean, that must have been really, really nice.

MILLER: Well, you think of—you think of the technology that exists today.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: This thing was the size of—I suppose a portable record player.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: But I was talking on the radio to somebody that was—what?—10, 12 thousand miles away?

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah. So does that mean—I'm sorry, I'm a bit unfamiliar with the technology—does that mean the operator would be listening the whole time and switching the—

MILLER: Yes. The ham—

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, interesting, interesting.

MILLER: The ham operator would be listening, yeah, so we didn't talk about secrets and what was going on in the war,—

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

MILLER: —just what was going on at home. No, you know, as I said, I had a very good sergeant when I went off to war. So my number one offspring was born in—

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, she was pregnant.

MILLER: —June of 1968, halfway through my tour in Vietnam, so there were some phone calls to see how that was going and how he was getting on.

NOPPENBERGER: A little baby boy! What was his name?

MILLER: Sean. [Archivist Note: spelling uncertain]

NOPPENBERGER: Sean. Oh, well, I mean, that must have been very hard to be away from your—you know, the baby.

MILLER: Yeah. Well, I met him for the first time age—he would have been what? Four months old?

NOPPENBERGER: Oh.

MILLER: In October of '68. Went on R&R [rest and recuperation] and met my wife and son in Hawaii for a week.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh! So you got—sorry, can you repeat that date that you had, you said, a week off?

MILLER: A week off. It would have been October of '68.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay.

MILLER: So flew to Hawaii.

NOPPENBERGER: Great. You flew out—

MILLER: And Uncle Sam paid for that, and Uncle Sam paid for my wife and son to fly there, so—

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, that's nice.

MILLER: —I'm not certain on a captain's salary, I could afford it. And spent a week in Hawaii, and then she went home and I went back to Vietnam. But that's the first time I met him.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, wow! Did you know when you were going back—if that was October, did you know how much longer you had to serve in Vietnam for?

MILLER: Yes, yes. I did, the tour in Vietnam at that time was a year, and so—

NOPPENBERGER: Okay, so—

MILLER: —I had arrived in January, and then I went home in January of '69.

NOPPENBERGER: So—

MILLER: [cross-talk; unintelligible]

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah, let's just talk—oh, sorry, keep going.

MILLER: So you know, finished the tour. Again, I can just describe it as an adventure. It wasn't the kind of fun that Germany was, but I was doing my job, and—

NOPPENBERGER: Well, can we talk a little bit more about—

MILLER: [cross-talk; unintelligible] with any extra holes or pieces missing, so I was okay.

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah, that is very fortunate.

Just a little bit more about your time there. I'm sure you would have been in contact with Vietnamese. Was there a big presence of Vietnamese soldiers in your—in your company or just with you at any time?

MILLER: We did a lot of work with the South Vietnamese Army. I had South Vietnamese sergeant, Sgt. Sanh [Archivist Note: spelling uncertain], as an interpreter, and he was a bit of an interpreter and sometimes guide as to how to behave when we went places. But our experience with the Vietnamese was—other than the ones that were shooting at us—but in general, they were friendly and surprisingly happy people with all of the nastiness going on around them.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And I—I guess, looking back—let’s just say I come away from Vietnam with a few scars. The biggest single one is complete disrespect for any of our politicians.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: They have no idea what the—

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah. Was there a lot of political—yeah, was there a lot of political dis- —either discussion or discourse—

MILLER: Not when I was there.

NOPPENBERGER: —that was happening?

MILLER: This happened when I got home. Those people don’t pay any attention to the local history or cultural. The American forces had spent all of World War II working with Hồ Chí Minh and General [Võ Nguyên] Giap, fighting against the Japanese. And then they got caught up in the [U.S. Senator Joseph R.] McCarthy era and “Red under every bed” and, oh, my God, we’ll go protect the South Vietnamese after the French left, because everyone was worried that the Chinese were going to take over Southeast Asia.

NOPPENBERGER: Right. Communism, right.

MILLER: Oh, yeah. Well, Hồ Chí Minh had gone to school and trained in Russia. He was a communist, but he was not Chinese communist. And none of them paid any attention to the history. The Vietnamese people spent a better part of a thousand years getting rid of Chinese overlords.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And if you look at the end of the Vietnam conflict in 1975, the first thing that happened was a bit of a border conflict on the north border with China, which was essentially the Vietnamese telling the Chinese, “Stay away.” Well, it would have been that way anyway. So a whole bunch of American kids died, and somewhere between a million and two million

Japanese people died because politicians had no idea what they were doing. And I find that a bit frustrating.

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah. Did you have any of that frustration while you were actually in Vietnam?

MILLER: No.

NOPPENBERGER: Was it, you know, being in contact with—

MILLER: No, no, no.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh. So—

MILLER: This was—

NOPPENBERGER: So—

MILLER: This was [cross-talk; unintelligible].

NOPPENBERGER: Even though your experience—

MILLER: Looking back on the experience.

NOPPENBERGER: Right, right. Well, I mean, did you see most of the war from—from your tank, from your cavalry? Is that the—

MILLER: Saw most of it from the cavalry, so out of an armored vehicle or out of a Jeep or out of a helicopter. We did things that you wouldn't think of doing. So, for example, flying around in helicopters, it was safer to fly; it was safer to fly between the trees than above the trees.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, wow.

MILLER: And that may not be obvious, but when you're between the trees, it's much harder for somebody on the ground to take aim and shoot at you.

NOPPENBERGER: Really!

MILLER: Really.

NOPPENBERGER: Is it because they can't see you or because—

MILLER: Well, they can't move quickly enough.

NOPPENBERGER: —you're just closer to the ground?

MILLER: You're going—

NOPPENBERGER: Oh!

MILLER: —70, 80, 90 miles an hour between the trees.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, okay.

MILLER: If you're up higher, they have a clearer view to take aim and shoot at you.

NOPPENBERGER: Right, right.

MILLER: So we learned to do things like that. But that's back to being careful. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm. Right.

And, I mean, I'm sure it was nothing like Germany in terms of a social life, but was there any sort of recreation? Any chance for that?

MILLER: Not a lot. If we were in base camp, there was an officers' club where you could go have a beer and listen to some music, but—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —you know, there wasn't the same mingling with local people, at least where—where we were. I can't speak—

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

MILLER: —for people that were in Saigon, for example. But—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —we spent a little bit of time in Saigon, playing palace guards, but didn't really mingle with local people when we were there.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

Okay, so you mentioned a few—coming away from Vietnam with a few scars, the first one, you know, the distrust of politicians, and we've discussed your distrust of journalism from your kind of first-hand experience with, you know, stories getting twisted or not told from true, first-hand experience.

MILLER: Yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: Are there any other scars that you came away from, either physical or mental? I mean, anything else that you'd like to talk about?

MILLER: Well, no, I have no physical scars, fortunately. I had a bit of aggravation because when I came back in '69—by then, the antiwar movement was active, and my sister, who at the time was a student at the University of Colorado, was part of that, so we solved that over a couple of six packs of beer, explaining to her that she didn't really understand what was going on over there.

NOPPENBERGER: What—what—what kind of explanation would that have been? I mean, I'm sure, as a college student, she didn't have the same exposure as you did. What—what did you kind of talk to her about?

MILLER: Well, what my experience had been and that what she was hearing in the press at best was not 100 percent accurate—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —and that if she wanted to pick on people, picking on returning soldiers was the wrong thing, that she ought to go pick on politicians.

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah.

All right. So let's kind of get back to Vietnam again. Is there—I mean, are there any other experiences that kind of stick out to you, any kind of defining moments or—

MILLER: I guess the really defining one: My wife and I went back to Vietnam three years ago—

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, wow.

MILLER: —so 45 years after my first visit.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay!

MILLER: It's open for tourism. It's still a communist country, but it doesn't get in the way of anything.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: The prime minister at the moment is a South Vietnamese gentleman, not a North Vietnamese gentleman.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: The war is clearly over.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: The people are welcoming. The commercial development and the tourist development is phenomenal, but it was interst-

NOPPENBERGER: Did you go back to any—yeah, did you go back to any of the places that you'd been familiar with during the war?

MILLER: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, we ended up in Saigon, so walking around in Saigon, went by where the American Embassy used to be. It's now a consulate, but I had one of my vehicles parked in front of the front door for every evening for about three weeks when we were playing palace guard.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: The InterContinental Hotel [InterContinental Asiana Saigon], famous from *Good Morning, Vietnam*, is still there. But the

street that goes behind the InterContinental Hotel, the street name had changed, so I had to ask our tour guide, about a 40-year-old Vietnamese lady, “Why was the street name changed?” And [to] put it in context: She didn’t know it had been. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, wow!

MILLER: So it must have been changed [when] she was either an infant or before she was born.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: But we took a tour out to tunnels of Củ Chi [District], where we had spent some hostile time during my first visit.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And they’ve turned part—a little tiny bit of it—into, like, a museum. So I walked around that, which was kind of interesting. I’d seen similar things when I was there the first time, but it was interesting. But it was—I was just really, really pleased to see that they’ve gotten over it and they’re moving on—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —in constructive, healthy ways.

NOPPENBERGER: Wow!

MILLER: So it was a super visit. It really was.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, I’m really glad to hear that.

Just kind of going back towards—back to your first visit—so you were back—just so that I can get, like, a good idea of how your time there—and when—when exactly were you doing palace guard duty?

MILLER: That was in the summer—no, no. Yeah. No, it was in May of ’68.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay, okay. So you had palace—palace—palace duty, working in the cavalry for the majority of your time there. Is that right?

MILLER: Well, I was with the cavalry the whole time I was there.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh. Oh, okay. And then you had—

MILLER: I started out as an operations officer, and then I became a troop commander, so—

NOPPENBERGER: Okay.

MILLER: —about six months in a staff job and six months in a command job,—

NOPPENBERGER: Okay. And was there any—

MILLER: —which is part of the normal tour.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, okay. Was there any particular reason that you were promoted. Is it something that just happens over time, or was there a particular event that led to that?

MILLER: No, this was the normal thing. I was a captain when I got there.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And—but the first job I had was a junior staff job, calling for someone that was a captain. And I think, at least in our unit, a lot of the people that got there early on spent a bit of time in staff, one place or another, just to get feet on [the] ground with people that had been there and knew what was going on. And then company commanders went home, and those of us that had been there for a while became company or, at least with the cav, troop commanders. [A] troop in the cavalry is like a company in anything else.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay.

And then you had the chance to see your son and your wife in Hawaii, I believe you said October of '68?

MILLER: Yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: And so then what—if you were leaving in January of '69, what were those last few months like?

MILLER: It was a quiet time from a combat standpoint,—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER —but other than that, it was pretty much the way it had been through the whole year. We didn't have a lot of hostile fire at the time. We spent an awful lot of time sweeping areas to the west of Saigon, so looking for people coming into South Vietnam from the Hồ Chí Minh Trail, so occasionally we'd have a minor little firefight, but the bad guys tried to stay away from us, so it was generally pretty quiet. I mean, things that were hard were—particularly when I became a troop commander, if one of my kids got hurt, I had the pleasure of writing home to his family, and sometimes that was a bit of a challenge, but it was part of the job, so it was something you did.

NOPPENBERGER: Right. Was—so you were—as you say, the bad guys were staying away from you, and I apologize if this is a sensitive subject: Did your cavalry company did it see a lot of casualties or a lot of injuries just over the span of that year, or were you relatively safe?

MILLER: No, not many.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay.

MILLER: I had, I suppose, half a dozen lads wounded and two or three killed. A couple of company troop commanders that I knew were killed in firefights, so I knew people that were killed.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: Or wounded. But as I say, we just didn't take the kind of beating that some of the infantry units took.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: Just the kind of unit we were.

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

MILLER: There were—there were good days and less good days, but—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —you know, it's like all things. You reckon if you're doing okay 51 percent of the time, you're doing better than most folks, or many folks.

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah. Yeah. And how much of Vietnam did you see over the span of your—of your year there, do you think? I mean, it sounds like you did a lot of traveling and you saw a lot.

MILLER: We worked, well, as I say, we worked 100-, 150-mile radius around Saigon, so I was as far west as the border with Cambodia,—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —as far south as kind of into bits of the Mekong River Delta,—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —as far east as the South China Sea, and then we got, I suppose, 100 or so miles north of Saigon into [a] big rubber plantation area that was owned by Michelin, so the Michelin rubber plantation. And then various villages and fields in between. You know—I don't know, have you ever been in the tropics?

NOPPENBERGER: I've been to Central America, which is a bit tropical.

MILLER: Well, have you ever been in the tropics in monsoon season? And rainy season?

NOPPENBERGER: I have not. [Chuckles.] I have not.

MILLER: Okay. Well, [to] put [it] in context, one day we pulled into some dried-up rice paddies, and the rain came down, and

the rice paddies that had been dry suddenly had six to twelve inches of water in them. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Wow.

MILLER: And we spent the next three days pulling armored vehicles out of the mud. [Laughs.]

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah!

MILLER: Things like that were part of the adventure.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm. Wow! That must have been—I can't imagine that, with all—especially with all the gear that I'm sure you had on you. It must have been not—not comfortable.

MILLER: Well, it was wet. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Right, right.

MILLER: But the coldest I've ever been was one day in Vietnam, when I got soaking wet and I couldn't get dry for about 36 hours.

NOPPENBERGER: Wow!

MILLER: You know how cold it gets in Hanover, and Chicago's just the same.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And I was colder then than I ever was in Hanover or Chicago.

NOPPENBERGER: Wow! That is not something you would expect to hear from Vietnam, but, I mean—

MILLER: No. But, well, it's—I was suffering at the end from hypothermia. I couldn't feel the tips of my fingers, and—

NOPPENBERGER: Wow!

MILLER: —things like that. But you get dry and wrapped in a blanket, you're warm in 15 minutes.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm. Wow! That wet—I mean, yeah, that wet really does something.

MILLER: Oh yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: So then—so did you ever have to deal with extreme heat, though, on the other end of that?

MILLER: Not like desert or anything like that. Hot, hot, hot was maybe 90, 95 degrees.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay.

MILLER: Which compared—well, that's no worse than Chicago was in the summer.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

MILLER: But it doesn't get terribly, terribly hot there, and it doesn't really get cold. The day I was feeling so cold, it was probably never colder than about 75 degrees.

NOPPENBERGER: Okay.

MILLER: But you get wet, and—

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

So then your last few months in Vietnam, wrapping up—was there any sort of preparation that you had to do to get ready to go back to the States? Were you—did you know if you'd be heading directly back home or if you had some debriefing?

MILLER: No, no, no. No debriefings. There was a period of about 10 days or so, turning over command of my company to the new commander, so inventories and checking that the equipment that was supposed to be there was there, that kind of stuff.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: But nothing unexpected and nothing unusual. And went to Biên Hòa, got on an airplane and flew into San Francisco, and changed airplanes and flew home to Chicago, where I spent a week or two on leave, and put everyone in a car, and then we drove to Fort Dix, New Jersey, which was my next assignment, my last assignment. Moved out there for a little over a year, and then got out of the Army, and—

NOPPENBERGER: What were you doing at Fort Dix? What was your assignment?

MILLER: I was—initially, I was commanding officer of the headquarters company of a training brigade, because Fort Dix is a big training base.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And I did that for about nine months, and then I was reassigned as a defense attorney in the military court system at Fort Dix, so—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —this is getting guilty guys out of trouble. [Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, wow! So you did have—you ended up doing a little bit of law, then? Is that—

MILLER: A little bit of military law, yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: Uh-huh. Okay. And how was adjusting back to the States, to being with your family? Was that—what was that like?

MILLER: Oh, that was good.

NOPPENBERGER: Good, good.

MILLER: I had no—had no big problems, and it was a good experience, and we—I guess we enjoyed our time at Fort Dix.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And—

NOPPENBERGER: Why did you decide to—I'm sorry. Keep going.

MILLER: I decided to leave the Army. On my way to Vietnam—on my way to Panama, actually, I was stopped in Washington—

NOPPENBERGER: Oh.

MILLER: —to find out what my next assignment would be after Vietnam, and what I really wanted to do was go back to Germany, and—

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah.

MILLER: —given what was going on at the time, that was not going to happen, so I just made a decision: By the time I get back from Vietnam, I will have served the time I'm obligated to serve, so I'll resign my commission and find somebody else that'll send me back to Europe.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh!

MILLER: So [chuckles], I—

NOPPENBERGER: Well, yeah, you knew what you—where you wanted to be.

MILLER: Yeah. So I went back to Chicago. With the time I had spent in the military actually made it quite easy to get a job, so I—

NOPPENBERGER: Really!

MILLER: —got a job—

NOPPENBERGER: What_

MILLER: Lots of people were looking—

NOPPENBERGER: Why is that?

MILLER: —for ex-officers from the military at the time.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh! Why?

MILLER: Because they had experience—

NOPPENBERGER: —was that a particular appeal.

MILLER: —dealing with people.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh!

MILLER: And in unusual situations, so—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —I was hired by Continental Illinois National Bank [sic; Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company of Chicago] as an operations officer, and went to work for them and enrolled to do an MBA at Northwestern University at night.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And spent three years—well, no, two and a half years managing the bank's night IT [information technology] operations, and then I was assigned to the international department. And about a month after I finished my MBA program was assigned as an operations manager to the bank's London branch, so would have been, I suppose, June of—no, it was April of 1970 we packed up the whole family and moved to London.

NOPPENBERGER: And did you—did you have any sort of—I mean, you—you mentioned your sister being part of the antiwar—did you ever have any other discussions with your family—parents or other siblings—about, you know, politics or your time—or your time there in general, if they had any sort of reaction to that?

MILLER: The only one that had much of a reaction was my sister. My father, as a veteran, just wanted to know what had gone on, but when I was writing home, I would write part of a letter to my wife, to be shared with the family, and then part of the letter that was just to her, so they kind of knew what was going on day by day as I was there.

But my father wanted to talk about it, and I think probably, compared to lots of people that came home, the fact that I had somebody to talk to that understood the experience—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —made life easier, I suppose.

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah, that does help, I'm sure. And your mother? Any sort of reaction? I mean, you being her son, I'm sure it's a bit different.

MILLER: No, it was—well, it was just that everyone was happy to see me home in one piece.

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah. Yeah.

Any other sort of—I mean—any other issues that you ever ran into with antiwar people now that you were home as a veteran? Did anything ever come up?

MILLER: I was lucky. No, I did not have any problems with that. And even with my sister—she was just being a typical young college girl being silly. But that's just kind of how my sister was at the time. It wasn't hostile.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And I didn't have any of the problems, fortunately, that some people had with crowds of people outside airports, spitting and throwing things. I didn't—

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

MILLER: —experience anything like that.

NOPPENBERGER: That's fortunate.

Did you ever stay in contact with—I mean, of course, you had your second trip a few years ago, back to Vietnam? What year was that, by the way?

MILLER: Nineteen—2013.

NOPPENBERGER: Twenty thirteen. Okay, okay. But did you ever stay in contact with people that you met there or join any sort of veterans associations?

MILLER: I met very few close friends in Vietnam.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: It was easier not to.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: I had people that I worked with, that I respected, and you know, off and on I've had contact with a few of them. I have contact with a number of people from Germany.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, wow.

MILLER: Germany was much more—

As I say, it was cowboys and Indians and social stuff.

NOPPENBERGER: It was a different experience. Right, right.

MILLER: It was a very different experience. But I didn't make many close friends in Vietnam because it was easier not to. If somebody got hurt, it was easier if it was at arm's length.

NOPPENBERGER: That's understandable. Did you ever get in contact with any sort of, like, reunion groups or anything like that? I know that's, that's pretty popular.

MILLER: For a while, was involved in a reunion group of the cavalry, but because I was—by the time that got active, I was living outside of the United States, so—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —there were e-mails and things going back and forth, but I just wasn't in a position to join the festivities. Let's put it that way.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

MILLER: You know, as I say, I was back in the States for a few years, then moved to London for six years, and back to the States for about a dozen years and moved to Japan, and from Japan back to the U.K.[United Kingdom], and we've been in the U.K. now for about 22, 23 years.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: So contacts in the U.S. are not what they once were.

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

Well, then, any other sort of ways Vietnam has impacted you or any other times that you have returned to any sort of military experiences with it or anything else that you can say in your post actual—

MILLER: You see the movies and things. They're all kind of fairy tales. As I say, I was a history major at Dartmouth,—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —so I have an interest in the history and the cultures of that part of the world.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And that perhaps is where I get frustrated with the political types.

NOPPENBERGER: Right.

MILLER: But—

NOPPENBERGER: When you say “movies,” do you mean—do you mean sort of like Hollywood films about Vietnam?

MILLER: Yeah, Hollywood films.

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah.

MILLER: I suppose I get a chuckle out of those kinds of films. Films that I've enjoyed: *Good Morning, Vietnam* was an interesting one, but a fairy tale. *Band of Brothers* was more interesting.

Saving Private Ryan, not my experience, but I can appreciate what was going on. That kind of stuff, I find interesting.

NOPPENBERGER: oh, okay.

MILLER: But—

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah, I mean, to compare it to your actual life is something else, I'm sure.

MILLER: Yeah. Since we've been here in the U.K.—you may or may not hear much about it in the U.S., but—

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: —people here are going through reunion around the First World War, so a hundred years ago.

NOPPENBERGER: Oh! Great.

MILLER: So there's all kinds of things going on here about what went on in the First World War.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And I guess I've become—

NOPPENBERGER: Well,—

MILLER: —a bit of a—in my old age, have become a bit of an anarchist. If I had my way, there's a in Whitehall, not far from No. 10 Downing Street, is a statue to Field Marshal Haig, who was the British commander in [the] First World War.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: And if I had my way, his statue would be pulled down and defaced because of what he and his like did to an awful lot of young English soldiers.

NOPPENBERGER: Do you mean—do you mean the soldiers that they were commanding?

MILLER: Yes.

NOPPENBERGER: Or—oh.

MILLER: Well, they were incompetent. It wasn't until the—

NOPPENBERGER: Well, this actu—go ahead. okay.

MILLER: It wasn't till the very end of the First World War that they got over Napoleonic war tactics, and when you have rapid-fire artillery and machine guns, people running across a field in a line is just not a very smart thing to do, but they did that in a big way for—what?—three, three and a half years? So the casualty rates, compared to my war, were incredible, just horrendous.

NOPPENBERGER: Well, that's actually a bit—that brings me to a new thought. Since you have been living in the U.K. for such a long time, does the Vietnam War ever come up, really?

MILLER: Yeah once in a while.

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah?

MILLER: You know, people here will ask questions: What was it like? And things like that.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm. But it doesn't have the same sort of—the same maybe—the way they would think about it wouldn't be the same as an American who might have lived at that time—

MILLER: No, absolutely not.

NOPPENBERGER: or even living in the country, it's very different.

MILLER: It's more—it's more curiosity: What was it like?

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

MILLER: Because lots of tour companies are arranging tours to go out there. "Is it worth taking a tour there?" [Chuckles.] Those kinds of questions.

NOPPENBERGER: Interesting.

MILLER: But, you know, it's a different experience than people in the U.S. had.

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah.

Well, is there anything else that you'd like to say about anything: your time in Vietnam, your time at Dartmouth, anything else?

MILLER: Not—not really. It's been interesting. It was interesting coming back to our reunion last June.

NOPPENBERGER: Dartmouth reunion.

MILLER: Yes, it was our, Class of '65's fiftieth. And one of the sessions during the reunion was "Class of '65 and Vietnam."

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: Good discussion. And quite a number of us at one time or another ended up there.

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm.

MILLER: But I guess to me the single most interesting part of it was a transcript of a discussion between [President Lyndon B.] Johnson and [Secretary of Defense Robert S.] "Bob" McNamara, Robert McNamara. So the president of the United States and head of the Defense Department [U.S. Department of Defense], Secretary of Defense, and as far as I could tell from the transcript, it's not clear they could find Vietnam on a map with names, much less—

NOPPENBERGER: Oh, wow.

MILLER: —understand any of the culture and the history, so—just went on to confirm my thoughts about the politicians.
[Chuckles.]

NOPPENBERGER: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Yeah. I'm sure you—I mean, actually being there is much different than talking about it—

MILLER: Oh, yeah.

NOPPENBERGER: —a political—yeah.

Well, anything else?

MILLER: No, that's all—that's all—

NOPPENBERGER: Yeah, this was a—

MILLER: It got interesting for you.

NOPPENBERGER: Well, this was a really full discussion, and I am super pleased with it. I will wrap it up for us. This is Angela Noppenberger interviewing Thomas Miller. Thank you so much, and I am going to end this recording.

[End of interview.]