Robert Worthington '61
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Karen Navarro

SCHNEIDER: So this is Walker Schneider ('19) with the Dartmouth Vietnam Project interviewing my narrator, Mr. Robert Worthington. It is February 21st, 2018. I'm in the Ticknor Room in Rauner [Special Collections] Library in Hanover, New Hampshire. And Bob is in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Bob, before we get started, I just wanted to thank you again for participating. I'm really looking forward to our talk.

WORTHINGTON: Go ahead.

SCHNEIDER: So, Bob, let's start off at the very beginning. Where and when were you born?

WORTHINGTON: New Milford, Connecticut, which is in a small town, southwestern Connecticut, 5 May 1937.

SCHNEIDER: And can you tell me about your family growing up? What was the structure? What was that environment?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. We started out living in New Milford. My father worked in the local bank. My mother was a nurse. When World War II ended, 1945, my family which consisted of me, a sister, June Worthington, who was two years younger than me, another sister, Diane Worthington, who was four years younger than me. Our family moved about seven miles away to another small town, very small town called Bridgewater in Connecticut. We lived in a rented house there for one year, then we moved away another six miles or so to a town called Roxbury. Roxbury in the '40s was a small farming community, but it had a lot of people that worked in New York City. They would commute. They'd drive about 30 minutes to a train station, hour-and-a-half, two hours on train into New York City. We had actors, actresses, writers, artists, a variety of people in the arts and entertainment industry, and I grew up there. It was a town of about 500, maybe to a thousand people.

I went to school through eighth grade in a three-room schoolhouse. I grew up in a rural community working for local farmers and spending as much time as possible

outdoors, fishing, hunting, camping. My parents would let me buy just about any type of firearm that I needed, so I had rifles, shotguns. They had no problem with me putting a pack on my back, taking a rifle, some fishing gear, and going out for several days just camping, living on my own. When I graduated from eighth grade, went to a regional high school in Washington Depot in Connecticut. It served as a high school for about nine communities. In my class, I was the only male from Roxbury. I think we had in the class about 14 females and seven guys, and I went there until I graduated in ’55, and then entered Dartmouth College as a freshman.

SCHNEIDER: So, you were young enough then to remember at least some bits at the latter years of World War II. Do you have any memories from that period?

WORTHINGTON: Yes. When Hawaii was attacked just before Christmas, I remember that I was in the living room in the house we lived in New Milford, Connecticut, playing with my train, and all of a sudden my parents, some other adults, had a real emotional problem because of what happened when they heard about it. And I recall that, and the memory I have is it bothered the adults quite a bit. I had an uncle who enlisted in the Marines in the late ‘30s, and he was with the Marines in the Pacific, and so I followed the war where he was crossing the Pacific as my parents would get information. And then when the war ended, he came back and lived with us for a few years. So that was my recollection of World War II.

Also, my mother served as an aircraft observer, and when she would go out to a tower to do her tour of duty, so to speak, looking for aircraft, identifying and reporting them and so forth, she would take me with her. Other events I recall, my father was an air warden. We would keep water in sand in the attic. We would have blackout curtains at night. I can recall rationing. I can recall collecting metal, scrap metal, filling out papers with information on bonds that we got. So, I have a fair recollection of things that occurred during World War II.

SCHNEIDER: And is that where your intent to go into the military was begun?

WORTHINGTON: Probably, because of my uncle. One day he had short leave, and before he went overseas in the Pacific, he came home,

and he brought his rifle with him with his bayonet. And it was a 1903A3 Springfield 30-06 rifle that the Marines used at that time. And I just thought that being in the military would be adventurous, it would be interesting, and he was a Marine, so I thought quite a bit of the Marines at that time.

SCHNEIDER: And were you ever worried about him while he was over in the Pacific and you were following his movements?

WORTHINGTON: Not that I can recall, no.

SCHNEIDER: So, you enter high school in 1951, if my math is correct?

WORTHINGTON: That's correct, yes.

SCHNEIDER: And what was the name of your high school?

WORTHINGTON: Washington High School, and it was located in Washington Depot, Connecticut.

SCHNEIDER: So, what was going to high school during the peak sense of nationalism during the Cold War like?

WORTHINGTON: I'm not sure that the aspects of the Cold War were really a part of my high school experience. What was interesting is, I didn't get a driver's license until probably I was a junior in high school, 17 or so. I spent a lot of my time outdoors. I was not that interested in females at that time. And all of my male classmates that would have an interest in hunting or shooting, their parents wouldn't let them have weapons. So they would all come to visit me and I would take them out shooting, and if I needed a ride to go anywhere, then they would give me the ride. So, we exchanged; they gave me rides and I let them shoot. Then, I guess 16 or 17, I became aware that females were different, females were interesting, and then I started dating, got my license, and that was it.

In high school, like I said, in our class there were seven males. Of the seven, there were two of us males that were pretty much aimed for college. Of the others, some were going to go in the military upon graduation, some were going to go straight into the workforce, like one was the son of a farmer and he'd graduate and take over the family farm. Others would go to trade schools, become electricians, plumbers, things like that. I thoroughly enjoyed high school. I had a lot of very good friends. And it was just a fun time. I

was never that interested in studying, academics. Quite often, from grade school on, teachers would contact my parents and say that I would finish the work in class early, and then I would spend the rest of the time bugging my classmates who were still trying to do their work in class.

SCHNEIDER: So, why did your parents let you have weapons, if that did not seem, at least from what you said, to be the norm among other children?

WORTHINGTON: Well, we had a little library in town, and the library was full of books by Zane Grey, and I had an attraction to them, and so I read every book that the library had. And if you know anything about Zane Grey, he was probably one of the first and most famous authors of the cowboy stories, the West. And what I always wanted was a single action Army Colt revolver—that was the cowboy gun—a Winchester lever action carbine, and a log cabin in the mountains out west next to a trout stream. And actually, I did achieve all of that later on in life. But anyway, the weapons I was intrigued with. And several of my parents' friends were big hunters, and so I would spend a lot of time with them and they taught me how to shoot and convinced my parents to get me first a shotgun, and then a rifle, and then I went from there. So, I grew up around weapons with friends of my parents who were hunters and shooters and enjoyed it, and I still have a gun safe full of handguns. I used to be a full-time professional competitive shooter. That was in another time.

SCHNEIDER: Right, I read that on your resume. Regarding a comment you made earlier about your high school class, you said that you and another guy were college bound. How did you distinguish that you were going to go to college? How did you know from an early age? Because it sounds like that definitely wasn't expected from everyone at your high school.

WORTHINGTON: No, [laughter] it was my parents that had that thought, and his parents. He had an older brother and sister, and they went to college, so he was third in line to go to college. I was the oldest in my family, and therefore it was just sort of expected. My father was an amateur historian. Our house was full of books, I mean, thousands of books. My parents bought books and read them all the time, and I picked up on that. So, it was just an expectation that that is where we would head after high school.

SCHNEIDER: So, then, how did you choose Dartmouth?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. I wanted to go in the Army during the Korean War, but I was too young, and when the war ended in ’53, I had just turned 16, and I was not a big 13, 14, 15-year old, so joining the Army, the Marine Corps, was not something I could do. But I still had an interest in the military, followed what went on. And what I had done in the end of the junior year, beginning of the senior year, you start applying to colleges. So, my father had gone to Rutgers University [NJ] for banking courses. He never got an undergraduate degree, but he did graduate from the Harvard Business School, School of Management. The federal government sent him there in World War II to be a defense plant manager, take him out of the bank. So, I applied to Rutgers because he thought that would be nice. I applied to VMI because I thought that would be nice. And I got early acceptance to VMI and to Rutgers.

But, in my junior year in high school, I was going steady with a girl whose father graduated from Dartmouth. And he talked about it quite a bit, and because my father had graduated from the management program, I think it was a yearlong program like their MBA was, he wanted me to apply to Harvard [University]. So, I visited both places. Now remember, I grew up in a rural community, spent all my time outdoors, so my typical dress: blue jeans, T-shirt, sneakers. And when I went to Harvard, everyone was wearing coats and ties, and I thought*, boy, that would be horrible to have to wear that every day*.

Anyway, I did apply to Harvard, and my girlfriend’s father—she and I weren’t going steady when I was a senior because the family had shipped her off to a boarding school outside of Boston, so we just sort of drifted apart. But anyway, the father still wanted me to apply to Dartmouth. So, he set up a weekend for me to go visit Dartmouth, and this was in probably January or February, winter, it was cold, it was miserable. But the guy lived in a fraternity and they had a big weekend at the fraternity, and coats and ties were not required, and I spent the weekend at the party at the fraternity, and I said, “That is my school.” So, I applied and I got accepted. Harvard put me on their first waiting list, and so I told Rutgers, VMI and Harvard that I was going

elsewhere, and 1955 in the fall I entered Dartmouth, matriculated there.

SCHNEIDER: So, you get to Dartmouth, you're on campus for the first time where it's not only majority men, it's all men. What was that transition like from high school to college?

WORTHINGTON: The classes were a little bit difficult. Dartmouth College had their own police force. They had a chief of police. Okay, I took all my guns with me to Dartmouth. That was allowable at that time, and I was able to buy military rifles, 45-70 single-shot Springfields that the Army had in the '60s, '70s, running into the '80s, and I could get them very cheap that were rusted out, not very good shape, and I would get them, and through the barrel I would run a wire; at the top of the barrel I would put a fixture; you'd put a light bulb in; I'd get a stand and I'd set this long rifle on a stand upright, and at the top was a light shade, so it became a standing light. And I can convert those fairly quickly, cheaply, and sell them for a good deal of money. So, that's one thing I did to earn money as a freshman.

SCHNEIDER: That's fantastic.

WORTHINGTON: Say that again?

SCHNEIDER: I was just remarking how fantastic that is.

WORTHINGTON: Well, I was working on them one day. The room to the dorm was open. The campus chief of police came by [laughter] and gave me a long lecture on playing with guns and academics. And I guess he wasn't too happy when I said that I appreciated guns more than academics. But, anyway, my freshman year, the first semester I ended up when that was over I was on probation. I went out for sports. I was on the wrestling team, which was a club sport at that time. What was interesting is when we would compete with other schools, in order to compete for Dartmouth we had matches amongst ourselves, and I think I weighed in the low 180s, and the guy that I competed against was a senior. I couldn't beat him. So, I lost weight and got down into the low 170s. And the guy I had to beat then was a senior, the team captain, and All American competitor in the Ivy League. And, so I was not competitive. I was on the team, but I could never compete, because I would get beat every week that we would try.

I was also Heavyweight Crew, and crewed in the springtime. And then the Dean of Freshmen found out that I was on the crew team because I would go away to a competition, and he said that I was on probation, I could not be on a freshman sport team, and so I got kicked off of that. Another interesting thing is Thaddeus Seymour just had a Ph.D. in English from Princeton, and he was our Heavyweight Crew coach and he was an English instructor. In my second semester, somehow I had a falling out with my English professor and he wanted to flunk me. But you couldn't flunk someone in freshman English. You had to send that person, you had to send him to a special remedial English class. And so, I got sent to that, and my mentor instructor was Thaddeus Seymour, who was my crew coach. And, so he gave me a bunch of diagnostic tests and so forth. He said, "Why are you here?" He said, "You don't need to be here." And I said that I had a run-in with my English professor. He wanted to flunk me, but he couldn't. So, we spent a little bit of time on English, a lot of time discussing crew and a variety of other things, and I passed freshman English at the end of the second semester.

SCHNEIDER: So, did you then proceed to join a fraternity after all that?

WORTHINGTON: No, you couldn't join a fraternity until you were a sophomore. So, during the first semester when I became a freshman, I was in Army ROTC and I enjoyed it. And then, I don't know if you are aware of this, but you know what the name of the engineering school is at Dartmouth?

SCHNEIDER: Thayer [School of Engineering].

WORTHINGTON: Yes, do you know who it was named after?

SCHNEIDER: A Civil War officer.

WORTHINGTON: No. Way before that. Sylvanus Thayer. He set up the school at Dartmouth. Anyway, he was recruited to create a military academy for the US military in the early 1800s. So, he is the father of West Point, the US Military Academy [West Point, NY]. And the hotel's named after him and there are other places named after Sylvanus Thayer there at West Point. At any rate, there was quite a tie-in between West Point and Dartmouth beyond Thayer. There were some administrative people that went to Dartmouth, went to West Point. So I

talked to them about getting into West Point. And what you need to do to get into West Point, you can get a Presidential appointment; if your father has earned one of the top military medals for valor, you can apply. But, most of the people need to get an appointment by either their senator or their congressman.

SCHNEIDER: Right.

WORTHINGTON: So, over Christmas vacation when I was a freshman, I told my father that I wanted to apply to West Point. Now, my father was very, very big in the Democratic Party in Connecticut. And I can't remember now if it was a senator or congressman, but anyway, it was a Democrat; my father took me to see him, and the way he selected the people he would nominate is they would all take a civil service exam, and he had already given the exam in the fall, and he had a list of all the scores. But he said, "Look, when you go back to Dartmouth, go to the post office, take the civil service exam, and if you get the highest score, if you beat all the other high school people that have already taken it from my district in Connecticut, I will nominate you."

So I went to the post office there in Hanover, and a guy at the post office was designated to give me the exam, so we went down in the basement. He sat in the chair and he had a book. He sat me at a table, gave me the book, some pencils. And this is a timed test. So, he started me off and I'm working on it. And then he said, "You got a few minutes left for this part. How are you doing?" And I said, "I got a few more to do." He said, "Go ahead and finish it." So, he didn't time it. [laughter] He let me finish each portion of the test. And, as a result, I got the highest score and I got the appointment.

So, then I had to take the physical exam, and to do that I had to go to Boston. Well, I had broken my right arm in high school, and I broke all the bones in the wrist, the ulna, the radius; everything was smashed up pretty bad. And I made the mistake of telling them during the exam. They x-rayed it and they said, "You won't be able to do the manual of arms with a rifle. You'll need a waiver." So, they set up the appointment for during the final exams in my freshman year the end of the second semester. And so now I was in a dilemma. Dartmouth said they would let me go take the physical in Boston to get the waiver, and if I didn't get in

West Point, then when I returned in the fall, I would take all of my freshman exams again. And I'm thinking, *That means I have to study all summer long*. And that didn't appeal to me. So, I decided *West Point has too much regimentation. I probably wouldn't function there very well at all*. So, I gave up the nomination that I had, did not take the exam, took my freshman exams, passed them, and got off probation.

SCHNEIDER: So, this would have been for a transfer term? Or a transfer to other…

WORTHINGTON: No, you don't transfer into West Point. You start all over again. Even if you have a bachelor's degree, you start out as a plebe. If you happen to have a commission as an officer and you want to go to West Point, then you give up your commission and you become a cadet. So you don't transfer, like you do two years at one school and you transfer into another college, that isn't the way the military academies work. Regardless of who or what you are, you start at the bottom again.

SCHNEIDER: Got it. So then, beginning with your sophomore year, you returned to campus now committed to your Dartmouth experience. Do you then join a fraternity?

WORTHINGTON: Yes. The end of the summer I bought a motorcycle and it was in Connecticut, and I didn't tell my parents about it, but I was riding it, keeping it with a friend. So I got to Dartmouth, and yes, I pledge a fraternity, Phi Kappa Psi, which has a different name now, and I'm not sure how active it is. At any rate, I was accepted. And I think that's the only one that I pledged, the only one I went to. And Phi Kappa Psi was mostly full of, I believe at that time we called them "Chubbers," the Dartmouth Outdoor Club. Most of the Phi Psi people had a lot to do with that. So it was an organization of Dartmouth students who loved the outdoors. So, in a fraternity and we go through the, I don't know, hazing process isn't the word, but whatever it takes to go from a pledge to a full-fledged member, and that I believe takes most of the fall semester.

So I go home early fall, pick up the motorcycle, and I'm taking it back to Hanover. And I'm crossing a bridge that is full of construction, so on my right side where there's normally the railing for a big bridge, there's nothing but 2' by 4's because they're redoing the side of the bridge, and

because it's fall, there's almost no water in the river below. It's full of rocks. And on the far side of the bridge in front of me is a road that T-bones right next to the bridge with a stop sign. So I'm almost up to this intersection when a car runs the stop sign, can't get across, stops, and I smash into the vehicle, and it destroys my leg. And I'm thinking it's the left leg, I don't remember. Anyway, all the bones in the ankle and the foot are broken, and the two lower bones of the leg are broken, and I end up in the hospital. My parents are not happy because they find out about the bike and everything. So I spend a week or so in the hospital, operations put the leg back together again, and I get on a train and go back to Dartmouth.

And I'm on crutches. Because of the damage that was done, external damage, every week I have to go to Dick's House where they have to cut the cast off to make sure that where the leg isn't completely torn up all the sutures are doing okay. So, the hazing process [laughter] at the fraternity I don't go through. For example, all of the pledges had to enter the fraternity at the back fire escape ladders all the way up to the attic, and they had a ritual to go through. Well, on crutches I couldn't do it, so I just went in the front door. So I never went through that process. And the entire fall semester I was on crutches. Academically I was not doing too well because it was difficult to get all across campus to make classes in the wintertime when you're on crutches and one leg from toes to knee is in a big cast.

SCHNEIDER: So, were you—obviously, this would not have been the case since you broke your leg, but you were then before and after also a member of the Dartmouth Outing Club like your fraternity brothers were?

WORTHINGTON: No, I wasn't. In my freshman year I was involved in sports, and I started out on the rugby team at the beginning of my sophomore fall semester, and the accident happened maybe a week or 10 days after the school started for the fall semester. So, I had to give up rugby and there was no opportunity really to become a member of the Outdoor Club.

And again, I did not have a lot of money. I worked at all kinds of jobs as a freshman in college, and I was quite limited what I could do in my sophomore year, and there were a bunch of us that got together. We would pool our resources, we would buy big vats of peanut butter and stale bread, and that

became a mainstay of our diet. And I think probably most of us toward the middle of our sophomore year dropped out and enlisted in one branch of the service or the other.

SCHNEIDER: So, I'm curious about that and we're going to go towards that in a little bit. But first, did you—I just want to kind of shore up the first half of your Dartmouth experience before we get to the Middle East and your time in the Marine Corps. Had you declared a major by your sophomore year or were you interested in anything?

WORTHINGTON: No, you didn't do that back then. You didn't select your major until you were a junior. So, the first two years were pretty much liberal arts, and then you didn't go into your major until you were a junior.

SCHNEIDER: So, by the time you dropped out of Dartmouth after your sophomore year, you had still not declared a major?

WORTHINGTON: No. I left in the middle of my sophomore year. So I hadn't even… [both talk at the same time] Go ahead.

SCHNEIDER: Well, so then I'm curious about that decision making process. What made you decide to drop out and join the Marine Corps?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. Like I said, back in, junior in high school I discovered girls. So, even though I was limited in mobility, I could still have dates, and I had girlfriends from Connecticut, New York State, and I had a girlfriend who was at Colby Junior College. So I had dates all the time. And between dates and trying to hobble all over campus, my academics took the less priority over anything else. Having fun at the fraternity, having dates, having a good time was it. So, then I realized *I'm gonna flunk out of Dartmouth. I've already been on probation. I will most likely be expelled. So, what do I do?* Well, I couldn't enlist in the military because I couldn't even walk.

So, I go home for Christmas vacation and I'm still on crutches. I go back to Dartmouth for the end of the first semester my sophomore year. And friends of mine are dropping out and enlisting in the military. So, a couple of good friends were dropping out and they went to Manchester, which is where the main recruiting station is for New Hampshire, and that's where you go through the

physical and everything. And they explained to me exactly what had to happen. So, I got the cast off and I was pronounced good enough to walk and resume normal activities, but after many, many months in a cast, it was all I could to do stand up and walk straight.

So my friends who had just gone through the physical taught me what to do and how to do it during the physical, so I could pass it. And when I got in the physical, for example, they said they had a, I don't know, 30, 40, 50 of us going through for physicals for different branches of the service, and they said, "Everyone that's broken a bone, step forward." Well, I had learned from my experience with West Point, if you want in, keep your mouth shut. So, other people stepped forward and I didn't. And I went through the physical, I never mentioned my leg or arm or anything else that had been busted up, and passed the physical and was acceptable for the Marine Corps.

So, I got accepted in the Marines. And back then there was a draft, two years. But the Marine Corps had a special deal. Typically you would enlist for three, four, five, six years. Well, they had a deal, and this was in the spring, winter-spring of 1957. I could enlist in the Marine Corps Reserve for two years of active duty and request immediate active duty, which is what I did. So my active duty commitment was only for two years.

SCHNEIDER: Interesting.

WORTHINGTON: So, I signed the paperwork, I passed the physical, and then I had to go back to Dartmouth for my final exams. Now, when I went back, I told the administration that I had enlisted in the Marine Corps and I was going on active duty in 10 days or whatever. And Dartmouth back then had a program where you could have a leave of absence to go in the military. Dartmouth back then was very, very pro-military, and therefore they gave me a two-year leave of absence, and that meant that for two years I was gone, and when I finished my military commitment, I could return to Dartmouth. So I take the exams and I go off to Parris Island [SC] boot camp. Halfway through boot camp I got my grades and a letter that I was expelled from Dartmouth for flunking. I think I got something like two A's and three F's. So, the expulsion letter says that I'm expelled for a year. After a year I can reapply the same as someone applying for their freshman year. So I

would have to reapply all over again. So, I was now in boot camp in the Marine Corps.

SCHNEIDER: So, I'm curious as to—I understood why you dropped out with the grades and the interest in girls, but why were the rest of your friends dropping out that you alluded to?

WORTHINGTON: We were all the same. We had no money, academics was not appealing to us, we liked the outdoors, we liked adventure, we liked travel, we liked challenges. We weren't getting that in the academic setting, so we enlisted in the Marine Corps or Army paratroopers or things like that. So, we were all disenchanted with the academics and wanting more in life, and the military would offer that.

SCHNEIDER: And did you know you were going to go in the Middle East then when you enlisted as a Marine?

WORTHINGTON: I didn't even know it when I was there, no.

SCHNEIDER: [laughter] So, what was boot camp initially for you, then, at Parris Island?

WORTHINGTON: My uncle in the Marines told me, "Keep your mouth shut, your eyes and ears open, do what they tell you," and I did it and I got through fine. Then, left Parris Island when I graduated, was shipped to Camp Lejeune [NC] where we went through infantry training, regiment trained as an infantry rifleman. And then, because I had a year-and-a-half of college, I was designated to be a clerk in a regimental headquarters. And, [laughter] so they sent me to typing school. And that wasn't why I enlisted in the Marine Corps. And I never was a good typist. So you go through the two-week typing school, and then in order to graduate you take a typing test where you have to type "x" number of words per minute. And the way it works is they give you the same thing to type. You start at 8:00 in the morning to take the test and you take the test until you pass it. I passed it sometime that afternoon.

So I go back to the regimental headquarters, and I'm a typist that can't type, and the senior NCOs [non-commissioned officers] there recognize that pretty quickly, and they gave me other chores to do. So let me back up. When I was growing up in grade school I loved art work, and I entered some art contests and I won, so I got art lessons. And I

would hitchhike from Roxbury to New Milford where I'd go to art school once a week. And then, when I was in high school I spent time as an apprentice in an art studio. I'm not sure of what your knowledge of some of the history of Dartmouth graduates are, but back in the '30s there was a Dartmouth graduate, and I can't remember his name [Robert L. May ('26)], who ended up being a copywriter in advertising for Montgomery Ward's in Chicago. Okay, he was a copywriter and he worked with a guy by the name of Denver Laredo Gillen, who was an artist. The two of them created Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. I don't know if you are aware of that story.

SCHNEIDER: Oh, sure, okay. Yeah, yeah.

WORTHINGTON: Okay. The guy from Dartmouth created the story. Denver Gillen, the artist, created Rudolph and did the illustrations. So this was supposed to be a Christmas book for promoting Christmas for Montgomery Wards. Well, the people at Montgomery Wards didn't think much of it and they turned it down. At any rate, this guy, Denver Laredo Gillen, became a very famous artist, and after World War II—this is the mid-1950s—most of the ads and stories for magazines were illustrated, not photographs, but artists would do it.

So a group of artists got together living in Roxbury, Bridgewater, New Milford, and they rented the top of a building in New Milford, second floor, and they had their studios there as commercial artists. One guy by the name of, like I said, Denver Gillen, he brought me in as an apprentice in his studio. Another guy did many, many *Saturday Evening Post* illustrations, and another guy by the name of Bob Coon did outdoor paintings for *Field and Stream* and *Outdoor Life*. And so, I worked with them. And they all told me that the camera is taking over, and if I went to art school, by the time I graduated there would be very few jobs for artists like they did. And they said, "Go to college. You can take art if you want, but get a college degree." So, I went to Dartmouth. But, by the late '50s, they all were out as commercial artists. One guy, Ed Monroe, went back to the family printing business in Huntsville, Alabama. Another guy moved out to Montana, became a Western artist. Bob Coon became the most famous animal artist doing primarily big game animals, and he would get three, four hundred thousand for a commissioned painting of a lion, a tiger, something like that.

At any rate, I had this tremendous background in art. They still have the *Jack-O-Lantern*, don't they?

SCHNEIDER: Yes, sir.

WORTHINGTON: Okay, I was one of the staff artists with the *Jack-o-Lantern*.

SCHNEIDER: Oh, awesome.

WORTHINGTON: At any rate, so in the Marine Corps I'm a bust as a typist, but because of my art work I could make maps and overhead projections for presentations and talks and everything, and so that's what I did. And the funny thing is, I would be given classified information to make it and put it on a flimsy for overhead projection, and when I finished making it and then it was put in a frame, it was stamped "Classified," "Top Secret," whatever, and I could never see it again because I had no classification. So, I could make it, and then it got stamped "Classified," and I couldn't look at it again. [laughter] At any rate… Go ahead.

SCHNEIDER: Well, I was just going to ask, is that what you continued to do from your time in Lejeune until you deployed?

WORTHINGTON: No, that was right after I joined the unit when I got dumped as a typist, so they had to have me do something else. Okay, my senior sergeant, master sergeant, was a machine gunner in World War II with a guy who's now a lieutenant colonel and a battalion commander of a brand new unit created in the Marine Corps called Force RECON. It's the Marine Corps version of the Army's Special Forces or the Navy Seals. So, he made arrangements for me to get into the unit, and I had to take a PT test running, everything. I passed that with flying colors, and so I was transferred into this Force RECON unit.

So I'd been there a day. On the second day, the 1st sergeant calls me into his office and he says, "We've got some paperwork for you to sign." And he says, "You've got to go to airborne school at Fort Benning [GA], and you've got to become a Marine paratrooper. I said, "Fine. Where do I sign?" So, I signed all the paperwork. Then he gave me more papers and he said, "For us to send you to jump school, you have to extend for a year." And I said, "Woah, no, I've got a two-year commitment. I'm not going for three years." And the sergeant said, "If you don't extend for

another year, you don't go to jump school." I said, "Well, then, I won't go to jump school." And he said, "If you don't go to jump school, you can't stay here." And I said, "I'm not going to extend." So they kicked me out and sent me back where I came from.

The top sergeant there felt bad for me. He said, "Look, we'll get you into a combat unit. There's a reinforce infantry battalion, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine, 2nd MARDIV [Marine Division], who is going to be part of a reinforced amphibious landing team that the Marines always have in the Mediterranean with I guess the 6th or the 7th Fleet. So, if something goes wrong, then these are the Marines that go in first." So, I joined it as I'm with a mortar unit and I'm a mortarman, and joined the battalion. So we go on the Med cruise, and one day in July I'm assigned guard duty for Marine equipment on board the ship we're on, and…

SCHNEIDER: And what ship was that?

WORTHINGTON: The LSD-29, the *USS Plymouth Rock*. It's a landing ship docked that has been decommissioned and probably scrapped for scrap metal. At any rate, I'm inside doing my guard duty, and I can look out at the portholes and we're going into some place in Italy, I guess, a port for some repairs to the ship. And, so I'm doing my thing as a guard. And then all of a sudden I realized the shadows have totally changed, which means instead of going into port, the ship is now going in the other direction which is outside of port. And then sometime during the day the unit commander gets the whole unit together and explains what's going on. And we ended up being the first unit to land in Lebanon 15 July 1958 for what was called Operation Blue Bat. And essentially, 1956, President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower made a declaration that because of the Suez Canal Crisis, any democratic country that is in danger of losing its democracy due to outside forces coming in, the United States would intervene. So, the President of Lebanon said this was happening, and Eisenhower sent the Marines in.

SCHNEIDER: So, you arrive in Lebanon on Operation Blue Bat, and then what?

WORTHINGTON: Well, what happened was… I'm a PFC [private first class]. That's at almost the very bottom of the food chain. And work parties are needed on board ship to load equipment,

ammunition, weapons into the smaller landing ships that would take our vehicles and equipment on shore. So, I have been picked. The sergeant says, “Worthington, put all of your web gear, your shirt, your helmet, your hat, put all that stuff in your Jeep and come with me.” So, I’ve got my combat boots on, my utility trousers, the T-shirt, and I go as part of a loading party to load stuff on board the smaller landing ships. And next thing I know my unit’s ashore and I am still working on the boat. Finally I got released from the working party and sent on another boat on the shore. So I land in this quasi-combat zone, no weapon, no web gear, no shirt, no helmet, wander around looking for my unit, and where we happened to land was the city dump. So, I found the unit. We spent the night on the city dump. That was our first defensive position. And, then eventually we ended up in the hills with the mission of having our mortars trained on a pass that separated Lebanon from Syria, and if any Syrian tanks came through the pass to attack Lebanon, we were to blow them up, wipe them off the map.

SCHNEIDER: So, did they?

WORTHINGTON: No. What’s interesting is this is a big political—a world political hassle as to what’s going on. And after I got out of the Marine Corps and returned to Dartmouth, which in ’59 was into quarters instead of semesters, when I returned to Dartmouth, there was a visiting professor who was the Lebanese ambassador to the UN during all the fighting. So I went to see him to talk to him, because I was in this war and he was a representative to the UN. And he spent hours telling me what really happened. And he knew the unit I was in because we happened to be bivouacked in his family’s olive orchard outside of the city.

SCHNEIDER: Can you explain that acronym, bivouac?

WORTHINGTON: Yeah, our unit was camped in his family’s olive orchard on the mountainside outside of the city of Beirut.

SCHNEIDER: That’s really funny.

WORTHINGTON: So, anyway, he told me what really happened. Before the Marines went in, the UN sent a bunch of people—you’ve seen photographs of the UN soldiers that go in with blue helmets, peacekeepers?

SCHNEIDER: Yep.

WORTHINGTON: Anyway, they were from like Italy or Norway or Sweden or France or whatever, and their job was to tell if there were Arabs in Lebanon that were not Lebanese. So, this is like sending someone from rural Maine to China and wants to know which of the Chinese you're looking at are from China and which might be from Taiwan or whatever. So, all of these people could not tell one Arab from another, and so the report was "we don't see any foreigners in Lebanon," when in fact, Syria and Egypt—[Gamal Abdel] Nasser [President of Egypt] was the instigator of this—were sending in their soldiers as civilians to incite a riot, a war, to create a civil war in Lebanon. And in this war it eventually ended up that about 5,000 people were killed in the several months of fighting.

So, when Lebanon appealed to Eisenhower for help, the Americans, the French and the British knew what was really going on, so Eisenhower sent the Marines in, and the deal was under the table. Britain, the United States, France, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt got together, and the deal was Egypt and Syria would pull all of their bad people out and Lebanon would hold new elections, and the world would not know what really went on. So, Syria left, Egypt left, elections were held, and a few months later the unit I was in, because we were the first in, we were the first to leave. So we were there July, August, September, and we left in October. So we were there between four and five months.

SCHNEIDER: So, what did you do for the rest of your time in the Marine Corps, then?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. Got back from the cruise. We continued, we joined the Navy again and we stayed there for a while, and then we returned, got back home, and I had maybe three or four months left. Well, one of the things I had done when I was first in the Marine Corps at Camp Lejeune, I had temporary duty. Again, this was after I was kicked off of being a typist. I painted murals in several of the NCO clubs on the walls. So when I got back, my unit that I was with was preparing to go overseas again, this time in the Caribbean to an island called Vieques where the Marines conducted amphibious landings and training. But because I was going to get off of active duty about halfway through their going to Vieques, they decided that they didn't want to take me with them and lose

me. So, while the Marines were trying to decide what to do, the NCO club that I did all the murals for, the guy that ran it, said, “Hey, how would you like to be the sergeant of arms?” That’s, oh, I don’t know, what do you call the muscle you hire to monitor, maintain order in nightclubs?

SCHNEIDER: Yeah, the bouncers.

WORTHINGTON: Yes, yes, that’s what I was hired to do. Actually, I was now a corporal, so I was a junior NCO, and so I had a job for maybe six or eight weeks as the, they called them the sergeant of the arms, to keep order in the NCO club, and the people got drunk, then I would ease them out, whatever. So I did that… Go ahead.

SCHNEIDER: I’m curious. What was the content—what kind of murals did you paint?

WORTHINGTON: What kind of what?

SCHNEIDER: Murals? What was the content of your murals?

WORTHINGTON: Oh, they were different World War II insignias that the Marine Corps had, and some other murals with people fighting Marines, stuff like that. That’s what they were. But, I only did those for a few weeks, and then I became the sergeant of arms. And then another job opened up to be rifle coach on the rifle range, so I did that for the last couple of months that I was in the Marine Corps. I was a rifle coach. And then I found out, because I didn’t know what to do next, I went back to Washington, DC.

And when I was in the Marine Corps I met a 19-year-old girl. She had spent a year at Duke [University], and then came back to Washington, DC, where her family lived, and went to a junior college there in DC. And I had met her on a blind date, and so we had been—by the time I was getting out of the Marine Corps, we were going steady. And so I returned to Washington, DC, and worked as a civil engineering surveyor, because in the Marines I had been trained as a surveyor so we could survey where we had our mortars so we would know how and where to shoot when we got a fire mission. So, I had basic background in surveying, and so I was hired there to give me time to decide what I wanted to do, and by being in DC I was in the same city as my girlfriend.

SCHNEIDER: So, how long were you in DC then, at the end of it?

WORTHINGTON: Not very long because I contacted Dartmouth, and I said, "Hey, look, I've been expelled, but I want to go back to Dartmouth. What do I do?" So, I said, "I've got to apply all over again." And they said, "No, not really, because when you were expelled, you were not a student. When you were expelled, you were in the Marine Corps on two-year leave of absence. So the expulsion started and ended while you were on leave of absence, and the two-year leave of absence said that when you finished the military you could come back." So, it was sort of as if the expulsion never occurred because I wasn't at Dartmouth to be expelled to begin with.

SCHNEIDER: That's hilariously lucky.

WORTHINGTON: So, I returned to Dartmouth for the, I guess you've got a fall, winter, spring quarter, so I returned to Dartmouth for that, and finished off… I had—let me back up. When they converted from semester to quarters, the number of hours you needed to graduate were less. And I had all kinds of flunks, but I got what they call unallocated credit for being in the Marine Corps. Dartmouth figured if you spent two years in the military, you had to have learned something. So, that made up for all of the courses that I flunked.

SCHNEIDER: So, just to backtrack a little, what sparked your interest in returning to Dartmouth in the first place? Was that always the plan?

WORTHINGTON: No. Okay. I enjoyed the military. I liked what went on. I liked the adventure, I liked the excitement, the travel. I liked everything. But, I didn't want to be enlisted and I didn't want to be in the Marine Corps, because if I was in the Marine Corps, three-quarters of my time I would be away from my family, and my girlfriend and I had decided that we would get married in the near future. So, I needed to get a college education. See, I was… Both the Air Force and, let's see, the Air Force and the Marine Corps offered me the opportunity to go to OCS [Officer Candidate School] and be commissioned. But, I'm in the Marine Corps right after the Korean War. And after most wars, the military has what they call a RIF, reduction in force. And it happened after World War II, after Korea, after Vietnam. So, I'm being offered the opportunity to go to OCS, be commissioned as a 2nd

lieutenant with less than a year-and-a-half of college, and at the same time I'm watching officers that are 1st lieutenants in camp and being RIFed because they don't have a college degree.

SCHNEIDER: Interesting.

WORTHINGTON: So, I decide *if I go to OCS and get commissioned, I have no guarantee that I won't be RIFed*, and it wasn't worth it. So I decided *I'll go back to school*. *With my academic record no one else would probably take me*. So, Dartmouth was the only option for me. [both talk at the same time] I had looked into going to the University of Maryland to stay in the DC area where my girlfriend was, but Maryland after looking at my grades at Dartmouth wasn't interested.

SCHNEIDER: So, by the way, is your girlfriend at this point your fiancé yet? Have you proposed?

WORTHINGTON: That isn't the way it worked. We were both going together, and it wasn't me proposing to her or her proposing to me. We started planning what do we want to do with our lives? And we decided we wanted to be together, and back then in the '50s being together for a lifetime, having a family, meant getting married. So, it was just sort of a natural transition or progression. It wasn't me asking her to marry me or her asking me to marry her. It was, "This is what our life will be. You return to college. We get married. And you'll be in ROTC. You'll get commissioned. You'll go back in the military."

SCHNEIDER: And this is your current wife?

WORTHINGTON: Yes. So we have been together, '57, almost 61 years.

SCHNEIDER: Wow. And what's her name?

WORTHINGTON: Anita. A-n-i-t-a.

SCHNEIDER: What was her maiden name?

WORTHINGTON: Elliott. The same as my first name.

SCHNEIDER: So, Bob, then how was your return to Dartmouth? Did it feel like an entirely different experience than your first rendition, I guess?

WORTHINGTON: Yes and no. I was returning to an academic setting. I was a little older, a little more mature. But now I had a goal. So, I had to get in Army ROTC. Well, that became part of a problem, because I was in the Marine Corps Reserve. So, you can't be in the Marine Corps Reserve and Army ROTC at the same time, so I was transferred from the Marine Corps Reserve to an Army Reserve unit, which I joined… Pardon?

SCHNEIDER: How did they let that happen? How could you transition from the Marine Corps to the Army?

WORTHINGTON: Well, in order for me to be in Army ROTC, I had to leave the Marine Corps. So the Marines discharged me, and I enlisted in the Army Reserves and became a member of the unit. What's interesting is at the end of '58 the military added two more enlisted grades. When I was in the Marine Corps, the highest enlisted was an E7 sergeant major or master sergeant. Starting 1 January, 1959, the enlisted ranks added two more grades, so you had an E8 and an E9. E9 was a sergeant major and E8 was a master sergeant 1st sergeant. So, every grade moved up. Now, in the military all of the ranks have a number. So, a person who just joins the military as a civilian is a private E1, and then it goes up to sergeant major E-9. For the warrant officers it's WO1, WO2, 3, 4 and 5. For the officers, a brand new 2nd lieutenant is O1, a colonel is an O-6, and so forth.

So, I kept—when the military changed this, was 1 January 1959, so what they did was everyone kept the title they had. So, I was a corporal, the junior NCO, and they did not take that rank away from me. They gave me like a couple of years to get promoted from E3 to E4, which is now what the corporal was. But, they did not take my stripes away from me, except when I left active duty, I could not leave as a corporal. I left as a lance corporal, still an E3. When I left the Marines and went into the Army, the title then was a private first class, a PFC. So I went from an NCO corporal on active duty to a lesser grade of lance corporal in the Marine Reserves, to a lesser grade as a PFC in the Army. So, I got demoted twice, without losing the pay grade I had.

So, I'm now in the Army Reserves and I'm in the Army ROTC at Dartmouth and I get paid a monthly stipend. Now, I finish my sophomore year, so I need to pick… Entering as a junior, we got married on my wife's birthday was is

3 September, we honeymooned at Dartmouth Outing Club log cabin that had nothing, no running water, no bathroom, no electricity, nothing. We camped in there for our honeymoon. We didn't have any money. And I have to pick a major. So…

SCHNEIDER: One quick interjection if you don't mind, Bob?

WORTHINGTON: Go ahead.

SCHNEIDER: So, I'm just curious about having a—first of all, you got married September 3rd, 1959?

WORTHINGTON: Yes.

SCHNEIDER: And where did then Anita live on campus?

WORTHINGTON: Oh, we got married in Washington, DC, where she lived, and we had rented a little apartment that used to be a stable, 14 West Wheelock.

SCHNEIDER: [laughter] Yeah, okay, I know 14 West Wheelock well.

WORTHINGTON: And so, what had happened, when I returned to Dartmouth right out of the Marine Corps, she came up for Green Key weekend, stayed there about a week. She was still in her last year of junior college. And, so the first thing we did was to, she went to the administration and interviewed and hired to begin in the fall as a secretary for the administration office. And we got the contract for the apartment. We set everything up so that when we got married I returned to school, she would have a job, we would have a place to live. I had the Army ROTC pay, and I've never had a problem getting a job, so I worked as a handyman and I worked as a commercial artist. And so, I started my junior year, but I needed to get a major that I knew would be easy and that the Army would accept as a major for an officer, so that was art.

SCHNEIDER: Got it. So then you go and you're selecting a major, you were saying, before I cut you off.

WORTHINGTON: Yes, that was the major. And Dartmouth set it up just for me because typically the art major was really pretty much art history with very little studio work, and I wanted to do commercial work, so they set up a variety of different ways

for me to get credit and spend a lot of time on different aspects of painting and drawing.

SCHNEIDER: Interesting. So, Bob, then the next two years of Dartmouth go by and you graduate in 1961, and you are commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in the Army?

WORTHINGTON: Well, not quite exactly. When I finished my junior year, my wife was pregnant, so I needed a full-time job. And the Hanover Police Department decided they would try something totally different. For their officers to take summer vacation, they thought they would try to get a Dartmouth student who was older, married, and had served in combat in the military. So the police chief, Andrew Ferguson, called the administration office admissions, because that's where people would look—contact the college to hire students. So the secretary that took all the information wrote it down, turned around, looked at my wife and said, "Here's a summer job for your husband." So, I got the information and I went down to the police station and I was hired on the spot.

So, I have a couple of weeks of OJT [on the job training]. And the very first thing we did, I joined another senior police officer and the police department got a call from a woman who said her husband was a professor at Dartmouth and he was missing. So, I go along and participate in the interview and find out the guy is my French professor. Now, back then most of the houses, the older houses were heated by coal furnaces, and then late '40s, early '50s, a lot of them were converted to oil, fuel oil. And so, a lot of these old houses had coal rooms that were blocked off because they were so dirty. We had one under our apartment, and it was just filthy. At any rate, the senior cop and I, the guy asked for permission to check out the basement, and the professor had hung himself, committed suicide in the coal room.

SCHNEIDER: Oh. Do you remember his name?

WORTHINGTON: No.

SCHNEIDER: Interesting. I wonder if that's…

WORTHINGTON: I told the police officer, I said, "He probably had too many students like me." But I did manage to get through French. He was my last French teacher. And, so I did my training. I became a full-time police officer, and I did so well that I

stayed there until I graduated. So I worked for probably about 13 months.

SCHNEIDER: And how did that work with your student schedule your senior year?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. During—see, our daughter was born about 11 months after we got married. So she was born in August during the summer that I was a cop. So, now I'm a cop, it's summertime so I'm not going to school, my wife is still working as a secretary. And she got promoted a couple of times, and I think she ended up sort of like administrative assistant to the head of admissions for Dartmouth. But, what we did was when school started, as a cop I would take the last shift of the night, so it was something like 4:00 or 5:00, maybe 5:00 to 1:00 in the morning, something like that. So, what would happen is we found a grandmother type who would care for our daughter during the daytime. So, I would get through my shift normally 1:30, 2:00 in the morning, and I would go to sleep. My wife would get up, take the baby to the babysitter's, the grandmother type, and my wife would go to work. And most of the classes were morning, early afternoon, so I would spend morning, early afternoon in class, then I'd spend the afternoon doing homework. Then I would go pick up our daughter, my wife would come home, and I would go to work.

SCHNEIDER: Got it.

WORTHINGTON: And it worked out fine. Now, when I returned from the Marine Corps, I went back to the fraternity, and I don't think they had any—when I returned in the fall, I don't think they had any other married brothers. So, we had what, 30, 40 babysitters who would babysit for nothing. So, what we would do on a weekend if I wasn't working, we would take the baby to the fraternity, and there would be brothers who had no dates and they would be studying or doing something in their room. So we would take a bunch of blankets, a sleeping bag, and then surround them with pillows, and put the baby on top of the sleeping bag surrounded by pillows so she couldn't wiggle away, and whoever was in the room would babysit. Or we would keep her in our apartment and they would come and stay in the apartment and babysit. So, we had tons of babysitters.

SCHNEIDER: That is pretty convenient actually.

WORTHINGTON: Yes, yes. And we didn't have a washer and dryer, but the fraternity did, so we did our washing and drying there. And they loved my wife, who would help the brothers in writing papers. Her AA [Associate of Arts] degree was in English and she was an expert typist, so she would do their papers and go over things. And one guy was flunking out and he had a major paper to do as a senior and he couldn't do it, so she worked with him and he passed the course and he graduated, and he became an archeologist looking for sunken treasures in the Key West.

SCHNEIDER: [laughter] What's his name, just for the record?

WORTHINGTON: I don't recall. Duncan.

SCHNEIDER: First or last?

WORTHINGTON: I don't recall. I don't recall the name. [R. Duncan Matthewson III ('60)]

SCHNEIDER: Do you remember what year he was? Was he a '61?

WORTHINGTON: Probably class of, yeah, probably class of '61, I think. I ran into him in Key West once.

SCHNEIDER: That is really funny and interesting. So, you then graduated on time in 1961, in May or June?

WORTHINGTON: Yes. Graduated, but because I had worked as a cop, I was not able to go to ROTC summer camp. So I went to…

SCHNEIDER: Why was that?

WORTHINGTON: Because I was working and I had a baby.

SCHNEIDER: Oh, okay.

WORTHINGTON: So I postponed it until after I graduated. So, I was what they called a Distinguished Military Graduate, DMG, and I was scheduled to get a regular Army commission in the infantry, and I was to be commissioned at the end of summer camp. So I'd go off to summer camp at Fort Devens in eastern Massachusetts, and go through the whole summer camp, and on Saturday morning of the last week there, they have a big parade and they commission those cadets like me. And

I'm getting my uniform all ready, and a full colonel comes up to me and he says, "Cadet Worthington, you can't be commissioned." And I said, "Why?" He said, "Something's wrong with your physical," but he didn't know what. Any rate, I finished summer camp, but I'm not commissioned, so we returned to Hanover.

SCHNEIDER: Not DC?

WORTHINGTON: What's that?

SCHNEIDER: Why did you choose to return to Hanover instead of DC now that you had graduated?

WORTHINGTON: Well, we still—there were several reasons. One, I could get a job there. Two, we still had the apartment, because my wife lived there with the baby while I was in summer camp. So that's why I went back to… And Army ROTC had to figure out what went wrong. So, they said okay, they got a hold of the physical signed by an Army full colonel physician, and he said that—let me explain the way this worked. For the summer camp, before you started you'd have your physical exam, and you'd strip naked, they'd give you an old World War II rubberized raincoat and you'd go to different stations. One would be dental, another would be eyes, another would be extremities, another would be psychiatric, all of this.

Psychiatric was interesting because a psychiatrist had a stock question that I guess he asked everyone, thinking that most if not all of the ROTC cadets are 20, 21-year-old college juniors. So he'd asked the question about how I would feel if I went in the Army as an officer about killing other people, and I said it wouldn't be a problem. So he looks at me and he wants to know why fighting in combat and killing other people is not going to be a problem, how could I answer that? And I said, "I've already been in combat and it didn't bother me." So, he said okay and I went on.

At any rate, you're in your raincoat and you're carrying your paperwork, and if you've ever seen a military physical, it's got sections for the dentist and the eyes and ears, and you just go to the different stations, and the physician there, dentist, whatever, checks off how he found you. And then at the very end, a senior physician, in my case a colonel, takes a look at what happened at all the places, and then he

assigns you a numerical rating. If you're perfect you get a what they called a "picket fence", all 1's. And it's like PUHLES [PULHES]: pulmonary, urinary, it's just… There are initials for the different stations. And the physician looks at all the stations, and so he'll look at eyes and if you don't wear glasses, you get a "1". If you've got all of your teeth and they're not rotted out, for dental you get a "1", and so forth. So, he's looking at all of the stations you've been to, and then he's got to turn the form over and assign a rating to it. 1's, 2's, 3's or whatever.

Well, this guy's at the end of the line, so he's got three or four cadets in front of him, and each one puts their paperwork in front of him, and apparently when I went through them, he probably had two or three, maybe four, the guy in front of me, the guy behind me. So, what he does is he's looking at someone else's stations, and either the guy in front of me or behind me is physically unfit for military service, except the physician puts the guy's numbers on my form. So, the bottom line, I'm physically unfit, and the problem is no one knows why because I passed everything at every station. But a full colonel MD signed off that I was physically unfit. So, he saw something that no one else saw.

So I go back to Hanover, I get a job as a brick mason, and ROTC is trying to figure out what's going on. So, the decision is "we'll send Worthington to the VA [Veterans Affairs] Hospital," which I think is in White River Junction, [VT] "and he'll take the physical all over again." So I do that, and I get the picket fence profile. Nothing's wrong. So now the Army's got a problem. A colonel signed me off as being physically unfit, but the VA says I'm okay. So what are they going to do? So as a compromise, instead of getting a regular Army commission in the infantry, they said, "We'll give you a Reserve commission in the Chemical Corps, and you go on active duty right now." So, rather than fight it, I said, "Okay, give it to me." So, I'm there in the ROTC office wearing a cutoff T-shirt, cutoff blue jeans, I'm covered in concrete, cement, dirt, and I get sworn in as a 2nd lieutenant.

SCHNEIDER: Say that again, the chemical what?

WORTHINGTON: Chemical Corps.

SCHNEIDER: And what is that?

WORTHINGTON: It's a branch of the Army that deals in nuclear, biological, chemical warfare.

SCHNEIDER: Interesting.

WORTHINGTON: So, when you are commissioned, you go to what is called the basic officer course, which is several months. It teaches you how to be an officer in the branch. So, instead of going to infantry at Fort Benning, I go to the Chemical Corps course at Fort McClellan, Alabama. The problem is all of my classmates have master's or Ph.D.'s in chemistry, biology, some kind of science. So our program, our course of training is divided sort of in half. Half is Chemical Corps, which the people with advanced degrees excel in and I don't. And the other half is military subjects, physical training, which I excel at. And I did so well in that that the lesser grades I got were overshadowed by what I got at the top of the school in military subjects and physical training. So, I graduate and I'm assigned to a smoke generator unit there at Fort McClellan.

SCHNEIDER: So, then, what are the next steps? Because obviously I see on your resume at one point you went to the JFK Special Warfare Center. So, what happened in between…

WORTHINGTON: Okay. What I did was I applied for a transfer into the infantry. And, so I take leave, I'm in Washington, DC, I'm working out this transfer to infantry. And then I get a call to report back to base immediately. Our unit is being activated for combat.

SCHNEIDER: This is McClellan? [both talk at the same time]

WORTHINGTON: Now, the smoke generator unit has generators that take oil and then the generator turns it into a non-toxic smoke, and this is used to smoke an area so the enemy can't see what you're doing. What's happening is the missile crisis in Cuba and the United States Army, the 18th Airborne Corps is notified that they are going to attack Cuba. They're going to make amphibious assaults. In order to do that, the beaches in Cuba where they're going to land have to be obscured by smoke. So our unit would go in first, smoke the area, and then the combat troops would come in. So, while I'm hustling from Washington, DC, back to Fort McClellan, my unit has already deployed to Florida where they're practicing to invade Cuba. So, I get back to the unit, what's left of it at Fort McClellan, and President [John F.] Kennedy has negotiated a deal where the US Army does not invade Cuba.

SCHNEIDER: So this is October of 1962, then?

WORTHINGTON: Yes, the fall of, I guess, ’62.

SCHNEIDER: Right after the Cuban Missile Crisis?

WORTHINGTON: Yes. Actually, during it when it occurs. Okay. So, because of that, my transfer to the infantry is set aside. So I go back to Washington, work out a deal, and I get transferred to the infantry, and finally I get transferred to the 2nd Infantry Division of Fort Benning, Georgia, and I go to jump school. I break my hip on the third jump, so I have a profile for one year. That means one year no running, jumping, physical activity. So I’m assigned as an assistant personnel officer to an infantry battalion, office work. One of the additional duties that I was given was to be the coaching captain of the battalion pistol and rifle team.

Let me back up a minute. When I was at Fort McClellan and I got transferred to the infantry, I was taken out of the smoke generator company and became the coaching captain of the Fort McClellan post pistol and rifle team, and for several months that’s what I did, just training competitive shooters. So now I’m back at Fort Benning and I’m training shooters, rifle, pistol shooters for the battalion. And then the post matches are up and one of my pistol shooters, something happened to him, so I had to shoot in his place, and I won the post matches in pistol shooting and was transferred to be the executive officer and competitive shooter with the division marksmanship unit. So…

SCHNEIDER: This was still at Fort Benning?

WORTHINGTON: Yes. So I spent the rest of my profile year as a full-time competitive shooting. Back then, we were the training ground for the US Olympics, and back then professional athletes… You had the amateurs that competed in the Olympics, the professional like baseball, football players that got paid. If you were headed in the Olympics stream, which is what the military shooters were, then we could not be paid for winning matches, and in the competition instead of getting money like civilians would get, coaches would take the money and buy trophies and give us trophies. But, anyway, in the year I was there, I attained the highest

competitive marksmanship rating of master, and then when the year was up I went back to the infantry.

SCHNEIDER: Got it. So, this is what year now?

WORTHINGTON: ’64.

SCHNEIDER: And then, is that when you got—or you went to the, I guess … the JFK Special Warfare Center’s at Fort Benning?

WORTHINGTON: No, no. I transferred back to an infantry unit there at Fort Benning, and I have all different kinds of training and I go to a classified school so if I ever become captured I have means to communicate for the outside. It’s a classified course, a training course, and trained by, the unit is trained by Special Forces. So I go through all of this, but several times I had applied to go to Vietnam as a combat advisor. And one time I’m turned down. Another time I had a son that died in my arms of a viral infection, and so I withdrew my request because of our son that died. And then later on I reapplied. And then in the middle of 1965, the US Army…

Let me back up. In the early ‘60s the Army created a test division. They called it the 11th Air Assault Test Division to test air mobile tactics in combat. And so, they had at Fort Benning this test division and they had the 2nd Infantry Division, which is what I’m in. And then in ’65 the Army decides they are going to create a real air mobile unit. So they take the colors, the title of the 2nd Cavalry. This is the division that Custer fought in and died in in 1876. The unit is in Korea. So, what they do is they transfer the colors, the history administratively from Korea to Fort Benning, and the 2nd Infantry Division is now designated the 2nd Cavalry Division Air Mobile, and the 2nd Infantry Division colors go to Korea. So the unit that was the 2nd Cav in Korea now becomes the 2nd Infantry. 2nd Infantry at Fort Benning becomes the 1st Cav. And they blend together the 11th Air Assault units with the now brand new 2nd Cav, and they create this air mobile division, and at the end of the summer they send it to Vietnam by boat.

And I am designated to be a company commander in the Charlie Company 2nd Battalion, 7th Cav—that is the unit that George Armstrong Custer commanded—and go to Vietnam as the company commander. So, all the paperwork, everything’s being set up to send this division to Vietnam,

and the infantry branch notifies me, “You are not going to Vietnam as a company commander. You have tried for several years to go as an advisor, so you are going to go to Vietnam as the company advisor.” So, 2nd Cav went to Vietnam. I went to Fort Bragg [NC] to attend the military advisor training assistant course to train me to be a combat advisor. I went to language school at Fort Bragg, and then I went to the Defense Language Institute [Foreign Language Center] at Monterrey– Presidio of Monterrey in California for the equivalency of two years of Vietnamese language training. But it wasn’t two years. It was several months. But the University of California did give me a transcript with two years’ worth of credit if I ever wanted to go to a California college, university.

SCHNEIDER: Oh, does that apply to all Defense Language Institute graduates?

WORTHINGTON: Yeah, with the course that we took. See, we would go to school in the morning, the afternoon, and we’d spend the night studying, and we would do this five days a week for several months. And it was the equivalency of two years of university language training.

SCHNEIDER: Got it. So then, when did the orders come around? Are you at the Defense Language Institute when the orders come around to go to Vietnam finally as a military advisor?

WORTHINGTON: No. The orders to go to Vietnam I got while at Fort Benning, and before I actually arrived in Vietnam, I had to go to these schools to train me in how to be an effective advisor and train me so I would be fluent in the Vietnamese language. Now remember, I was already fluent in French. In fact, I was a unit interpreter in Lebanon because I spoke French. I had already had a year at Dartmouth and I had two years in high school, so when I was fighting in Lebanon, I had already had three years of French, and French was one of the two languages spoken in Lebanon because it used to be a French protectorate.

SCHNEIDER: So then, in January of 1966 you ship out to Vietnam?

WORTHINGTON: Not quite. No. I report to Travis Air Force Base in California to fly to Vietnam. Okay, I don’t know, what, 200, 250 men can fit on the plane, I forgot what. It was a big civilian transport—or no, Air Force aircraft, big transport. Okay, we

arrive in the afternoon. They collect all of us. Most of us are officers that went to the MATA [Military Advisor Training Academy] course at Fort Bragg, and then the language school at Monterrey. So, we're all gathered together. We're told to report the next morning, so they'd fly us to Vietnam via Air Force transport aircraft. Well, we get there and the airplane broke down, so they didn't have an airplane. So they said they'd have another one that afternoon. That one broke down. So they said, "Go back to your BOQ [Bachelor Officer Quarters], report in the morning, and we'll get you on a plane."

Now, twice a day a new group of a few hundred officers and NCOs are arriving at Travis as individual replacements for jobs in Vietnam. So, we arrived on afternoon, and we wait until the next day and two more groups have arrived. So now we have three planeloads of people waiting to go to Vietnam, and they tell us they'll get us on a plane the next day. So we report back to the passenger service place at Travis, and there are now three groups of us waiting, so the Air Force now needs three planes. But, during the night, day before or whatever, the Air Force is notified that a Marine Corps unit from Camp Pendleton was being flown to Vietnam. If you recall, the Marines landed in Vietnam in the summer/fall of '65, spring of '65, whatever. And, so this Marine unit needs to go to Vietnam, and units have priority over individuals. So the Air Force gets some planes together, but not for us individuals, but for the Marines.

So for the next day, day-and-a-half, more individuals like me arrive at Travis and we've got maybe six, seven planeloads of people waiting, and all of the available planes are being used to take the Marines to Vietnam. So now the Air Force is scrambling for transport planes from the East Coast, McGuire Air Force Base [NJ], and from Germany. And we now have, I don't know, seven, eight planeloads and they can't get the planes. So, then what some Air Force officer decides, we are going to send the new arrivals to Vietnam first and we'll work our way to the people that have been here the longest. So they start getting planes for people that are arriving, they ship them right to Vietnam, and we have to wait.

Well, there's a group of five of us captains that were friends in Fort Bragg, and then friends at the language school, and one guy just finished a two or three year tour in Hawaii. So

he makes arrangements for the five of us to get on a civilian government contract airplane—no, I take it back. He made arrangements for us to get on a supply airplane from Travis to Hickam [Air Force Base] in Hawaii. So we fly to Hawaii, we report in, and the Air Force passenger service said, "Okay, you go to the BOQ and you report in here 6:00 in the morning and we'll get you on a plane." Well, the captain that arranged all of this said, "No, sergeant, here's what we're going to do. We're not going to go to your BOQ. We're not going to report in here in person at 6:00 a.m. We're going to go to Fort DeRussy [HI], which is the Army rest and recreation center on Waikiki." He said, "We're gonna go there. We're gonna check in there. We will call you at 6:00 in the morning, and if you have a plane for us, we'll come out and get on it. If you don't have a plane, we're not going to leave Waikiki." So, in a week they could not get a plane, and we became beach bums on Waikiki. I had called my wife, and I said, "I need more money. I'm out of money." And she said, "Where are you?" And I said, "Well, we're stranded in Hawaii." And she said, "You're supposed to be off fighting a war. What are you doing in Hawaii?" And I explained. And she said, "I don't have any money to send you."

So, we're stuck in—myself and the other four guys, we've run out of money. So the captain that got us to Hawaii said he could get three of us on a plane to Thailand. From Thailand we can hop over to Vietnam. So, myself and him and one other guy, we got on this civilian transport airliner that was chartered by the federal government. There were three seats going to Thailand and we took them. So, we're on our way to Thailand, we're talking to the stewardesses and we're explaining what we're doing, hitchhiking across the Pacific to go to war, and when we landed in Thailand, we'd bum a ride to Vietnam. She said, "You're gonna have a problem." She said, "Do you have passports?" And we said, "No, we're traveling on orders." And she said, "Where are the orders? What do they say?" "Travis Air Force Base, Tan Son Nhat in Saigon." And she said, "If you land in Thailand without passports, you'll be arrested." So, she went to the pilots, explained what happened, and they landed at the Philippines, the Air Force base there, and let us off.

And, so then the three of us were on our own to get to Vietnam. I made arrangements to fly in the back seat of a jet the next day to Saigon, and I reported in the next morning, and I was kicked off the back seat by a full colonel. What I

found was military people outside of Vietnam, if they had an official reason on orders to visit Vietnam, and if they were there for over 36 hours, they got combat pay for a month. So a lot of senior officers, colonels, Navy captains, whatever, found reasons to go to Vietnam for a couple of days and draw combat pay, and that's why I got kicked off of the jet. But, I was able later on to sit in the back on top of several bags of mail in an Air Force cargo plane, a DC-3 C-47. So I got finally to Vietnam a couple of weeks after I was supposed to be there.

SCHNEIDER: Jeez. Well, Bob, looking at the time right now, I'm actually thinking that maybe we should pause our session and pick it up at a separate time, because the library closes in about an hour, and I don't want to cut you off or hasten your story at all. So, why don't we schedule another interview for next week at some point?

WORTHINGTON: Give me a day and a time.

SCHNEIDER: Sure, I will have to email that to you later tonight, if that's okay?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. I am available right now Monday and Tuesday next week.

SCHNEIDER: Perfect. All right, I'll be in touch then.

WORTHINGTON: You getting what you want?

SCHNEIDER: Oh, this is fantastic. [laughter] I am loving this. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

WORTHINGTON: No problem. I have been through this a few times before, one for a TV show, they did about a two-and-a-half hour interview, and then the Purple Heart. I might have mentioned to you, the Purple Heart Foundation and museum in New York videotaped it for about three-and-a-half hours. So I'm glad to do it.

SCHNEIDER: Well, it's our pleasure. So, Bob Worthington, thank you so much. We're going to pause here, and to be recontinued at a later date.

WORTHINGTON: Okay, just email me when and we'll go from there, and thank you for doing this.

SCHNEIDER: Thank you for contributing. We really appreciate your narrative. I'll talk to you soon.

WORTHINGTON: Okay. Bye.

SCHNEIDER: Have a good one. Bye.

[End of Part 1 of Interview]

SCHNEIDER: Hello. This is Walker Schneider of the Dartmouth Vietnam Project, interviewing Mr. Bob Worthington. The date is March 5th, 2018. I am in the Ticknor Family Room in Rauner [Special Collections] Library in Hanover, New Hampshire. And Mr. Worthington is in Las Cruces, New Mexico. We last talked about in our previous session, we left off about Mr. Worthington's arduous journey to get to Vietnam. So now we are going to pick up where we left off and begin discussing his Vietnam experience. All right, Mr. Worthington, so you arrive in Vietnam in January, 1966.

WORTHINGTON: Yes.

SCHNEIDER: Where did you arrive and what was your first assignment?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. Being an advisor, we were handled differently than the military that would be going to our regular military units. So, the place that we went to was called Copular Compound, and named after a, I believe a sergeant that was killed in Vietnam earlier. We went through briefings. We went through training sessions. We found out where we were going generally. We drew our combat equipment, our web equipment, uniforms, boots, things like that, and then we departed by aircraft for whatever part of Vietnam we would be going to.

For me, I was assigned to the advisory effort in I Corps, which was the northernmost portion of Vietnam. Vietnam was divided into four tactical corps: 1st Corps, 2nd Corps, 3rd Corps, 4th Corps. And then, Vietnam was further divided into provinces, which might be seen similar to a state, and then within each province there were several districts, which would probably be close to a county in the US. So, I ended up being assigned initially to the I Corps, which is 1st Corps Advisory Detachment. I ended up there, and then I got further assignments, and finally ended up as the senior

tactical advisor to the security forces for protecting the city of Da Nang.

SCHNEIDER: So, when you were assigned to these Vietnamese forces, you get to Da Nang, what was your relationship like with the Vietnamese soldiers that you were advising? Did you see, either from yourself or others, any overtly racial tendencies to discriminate against the Vietnamese, or were there any other difficulties in interacting with these men?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. As an advisor, I was somewhat unique in that on the advisory team we had a major who was the senior American advisor to what we called the Da Nang garrison—that is the headquarters responsible for the security of the city of Da Nang—and then I was a captain and my job was responsible for working with the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] infantry that did the actual security protection. And then we had two NCOs, a sergeant and a specialist 5th class, Spec 5. Out of these, I was the only one that went through formal training at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center, trained as a military advisor in Vietnam. And then I went to the Defense language school, West Coast, at the Presidio of Monterrey, California.

So, I was trained in culture, geography, politics, religion, economics, all aspects of South Vietnam, and I was fluent in French, having had it in high school and in Dartmouth, and of course I was now fluent in Vietnamese. So my interaction with the Vietnamese, I could converse with them in English or French or in their own language, Vietnamese. So I got along with the officers that I worked with really well, because I could communicate in their native language. And as time moved on, in I Corps– that was the area that the US Marines were fighting in, and they set up cooperative agreements, like a Marine combat squad would be assigned to a local Vietnamese popular force or regional force, sort of like the National Guard, and as more Marines worked with more Vietnamese units, the Marines became more responsible for the tactical areas of responsibility, and therefore combat operations worked more with the Marines and they did not need an American advisor.

So, the areas that we operated in when I first got there were slowly decreasing as the Marines took over a larger share or burden of combat operations in the areas around Da Nang. So, in order for me to keep myself real busy, I started

teaching English. So, I would get textbooks teaching English to Vietnamese from the US AID, US Agency for International Development, and I would use these textbooks, give them to the students. So, as I was teaching them English, then they were teaching me more Vietnamese. So it worked out well for both of us. And all of these students were soldiers: officers, NCOs. And I had I think three or four women in the class. These were female NCOs in the Vietnamese Army and they were social workers. So, I interacted with them quite a bit. And in any country you're in, like when I was fighting in the Middle East, I spoke French, and the country we were in, French was one of the two languages that the country spoke because it used to be a protectorate of France.

SCHNEIDER: In Lebanon, correct?

WORTHINGTON: Yes, that is correct. And I have found that when Americans go into a country and you can speak the language of the people, they respect the American much more because he or she has taken the time to learn their language and to learn about their country. So, we would meet several nights a week and I think the class lasted an hour or so, and we got talking about politics, what was going on, and I learned a lot about the country from the people, not filtered by the media, not filtered by books, magazines. Talking directly with the people. And because of this relationship, we all worked for the same Vietnamese headquarters, and I was teaching English, they were teaching me more Vietnamese, and we shared quite a bit about what was going on.

And several of the officers would invite me into their homes for eating a meal. I would play with the kids. One thing was my degree in Dartmouth was in art. I worked as a commercial artist. In fact, for a year I was a staff cartoonist on *Jack-O-Lantern*. But, I would draw pictures for the kids, and they were really amazed at this and enjoyed it. So I spent a lot of time with the Vietnamese people, and I think I got to know them, their dreams, their aspirations, their fears, their thoughts for the future as a country, fairly well.

SCHNEIDER: So, I have two follow-up questions, because that's really interesting. First, did you feel that your training at Monterrey adequately prepared you for Vietnam? Obviously, you were much more prepared than your counterparts, it seems. But

do you feel like your training at Monterrey accurately represented what you met in Vietnam?

WORTHINGTON: Yes. The language training started at Fort Bragg. And all of our instructors, language instructors, at Fort Bragg and at the Presidio of Monterrey, they were all native speaking Vietnamese. So, they would train us not only in the language, but they would talk about the country, the culture, the people. And so when I went to Vietnam, I had quite a background of experience in what to expect. And I pick up languages fairly easily, and with my ability to communicate in Vietnamese or French, I don't think that I ran into any difficulties.

SCHNEIDER: So, now I'm interested in, as the second question, picking up when you said you really got to understand the Vietnamese people, know their hopes and dreams and aspirations for the country, what was their opinion on American intervention in this war?

WORTHINGTON: It was mixed. And I got into more of that when I got with the infantry combat units. In the fighting, the chain of supply, resources, combat resources, within the Vietnamese Army was very limited. And a lot of what they did was relatively primitive. For example, when I first went over there, I'm in I Corps where the Marines are, and the Marines have the M-14 30 '06 caliber semi-automatic rifle. As an advisor, my assigned firearm was a 30-caliber carbine, which is a World War II weapon. Eventually the Marines got the M-16, the Army went to Vietnam with the M-16, but it was a few years later before the Vietnamese went from World War II cast off US Army weapons to the modern weapons. So, what you've got is an army that is equipped like the '40s, the early '50s, and the American troops that are there have current modern equipment.

So, there's resentment in that the Americans come in, and they're bigger, stronger and better equipped than the Vietnamese. And again, most Americans in the American units know nothing about the country, the people. They can't communicate with them. Since most of the fighting is not urban, it's in the rural areas, they're dealing primarily with rural people, peasants. They don't have a lot in their lives in the way of possessions, clothing, and they lived a relatively easy, simple, primitive existence in which most of what they got was what they could raise off the land. So, you've got

almost like two separate classes of people. And the Vietnamese are living in their country. The Americans are coming in, and the Americans quite often want to dictate what will be done and how. So we came in with bigger, stronger, physically fit people with all kinds of our luxuries like watches and radios and equipment that would play musical tapes, and it just goes on and on and on. And so, the Vietnamese needed us to help them fight, and at the same time resented us because we went in there with the opinion that our way of life is really the only way that is good or acceptable.

SCHNEIDER: And where did you fall on that particular issue? Did you feel like that was the way the Americans should have intervened or would you have amended that?

WORTHINGTON: It's like saying, "Gee, I don't want to get up until 10:00 in the morning, so how do I change the sun so the sun won't come up at 7:00, it'll come up at 10:00?" What—it was what it was at the time, and there was no way to change it. For example, the anti-war people will constantly insist we never should have been there. And they have no knowledge of what was going on, what it was like, why we were there, what we were trying to do. It's like "the President is sending a bunch of Americans to fight someone else's war, and we should never be there." On the other hand, you could look at it as, "Here's a country that is in danger of losing its independence, its democracy, and it doesn't have the resources to protect itself. It needs help, like an older brother will help a younger brother that's being bullied in school." So, with my background, I think I was more attuned or aligned with the problems that the Vietnamese faced. And as I spent more time in Vietnam, this became at least clearer to me, the position that the Vietnamese were in, and the role of the Americans, and what I could do personally to help the Vietnamese.

SCHNEIDER: Interesting. So, you were doing this role as a senior tactical advisor, teaching English, really immersing yourself even further in Vietnamese culture and the people. But, you also mentioned in your resume that you have been in numerous firefights. So I'm curious as to when was your first combat action in Vietnam?

WORTHINGTON: It's interesting. I just finished this weekend the first book on Vietnam, my first tour. If you were—back then if you were an

infantry officer, then one of the things that you wanted was to get the Combat Infantryman Badge [CIB]. That is a rectangular blue, blued piece of silver with a revolutionary war musket, and if you have served in combat as an infantryman, you get that badge with a wreath around it. This indicates that you fought in combat as an infantryman. Because of the war in Vietnam and the fact that we had advisors from all branches of the service, you could end up with an armor artillery officer serving with a Vietnamese infantry unit.

And typically, the regulations for the award of this badge were number one, you had to be assigned to a Vietnamese infantry unit that was in combat, and after 30 days of being with the unit, you could be awarded the badge. Or, if you're not an infantry person, if you're any other branch, and you're assigned like me to Da Nang garrison, you can go out on combat operations with the staff coordinating running the operation. And this was a major problem that I had, because the regulations stated that if you went out on six of these operations in which the forward infantry units had combat with the enemy, then you could be awarded the Combat Infantry Badge.

So theoretically, you could get the CIB without ever being shot at, simply because you are a part of the headquarters running this operation, but you're not with the units that are forward doing the fighting. And the officer that was my boss, the two NCOs, both got their CIB this way. And I said I would never wear the badge if this is the way I got it by not fighting, just by being in the headquarters so far back that often you couldn't even hear the shots fired. So, I went out on combat operations, I went out on police operations, but I never—when I was with the Da Nang garrison, I never kept the data, the information, so I would be awarded the CIB because I thought it was phony that way. So, I didn't get into up close face to face shooting until I left Da Nang garrison and I joined a Vietnamese infantry battalion.

SCHNEIDER: And was that when you moved to 3rd Corps?

WORTHINGTON: It's when I left Da Nang garrison, became the senior advisor to the 3rd battalion of the ARVN 51st infantry regiment.

SCHNEIDER: And when was that?

WORTHINGTON: Probably late May, early June, 1956.

SCHNEIDER: Oh, 1966, you mean?

WORTHINGTON: ’66, yes.

SCHNEIDER: So, and that was still operating in and around Da Nang?

WORTHINGTON: No, that was, actually it included I Corps and II Corps. Wait. The unit I was with was called a mobile reaction force. The total battalion was a little over 400 men. The combat unit when we went out to fight, we were about 325 men, because a lot of the battalion would remain behind in our headquarters to take care of the administrative work logistics, things like that. So, if there was a combat problem in which troops were needed to fight, then more often than not we would be the ones sent to fight.

SCHNEIDER: So, when then did you move to 3rd Corps on that first tour?

WORTHINGTON: I’m not sure what you’re asking. There was no 3rd Corps. If you’re talking about III Corps, that was my second tour, not the first one.

SCHNEIDER: I’m so sorry, I got that confused, then. So you were in I Corps for the entirety of your first tour?

WORTHINGTON: I Corps, and we spent some time in II Corps. Back in the summertime, late summer I guess, the Vietnamese battalion was scheduled to go to Lang Son National Training Center, which was a Ranger infantry training school, and we went there for squad platoon company battalion tactical training. And while we were there, we were about a third of the way through the training, and we were about halfway between the South China Sea and the middle of the Central Highlands, and an American engineer unit got attacked, ambushed, and we were the closest combat troop, so our unit was alerted as an ambush reaction force, and we went out looking for the attackers, and they had long gone so we couldn’t find them.

But, I spent many days with the Montagnards. Some interesting things happened. As an example, we had combat patrols out looking for the ambushers, and the battalion headquarters was set up in a Montagnard Rhade village. They had huge long huts that are built up on stilts, maybe

four, six feet off the ground. And the battalion Vietnamese sergeant major comes to me and he said, “Grab your web gear, your weapon and your camera and come with me.” So we go traipsing through the jungle and we come to another Rhade village, and he goes up and talks to them, talking in Montagnard Rhade which I don’t understand, so I don’t know what he’s saying. But, there’s pointing and gesturing and so forth, and then he says, “Follow me.”

So I follow him and we’re taking a little path through the jungle, and I could see that the path runs into a clearing. I couldn’t see into the clearing; I could just see it was there, lighter and lack of trees. So the sergeant major tells me to stop, and he goes into the clearing, he comes back and he said that he wants me to step into the clearing with my camera up to the eyes, immediately ready to take a picture. So I do that. I’ve got the camera up, I step into the clearing, and right in the middle of the clearing is an elephant with an iron band around one leg with a chain which is around a huge mahogany log. So I step into the clearing, the camera’s up to my face, and the animal, the elephant, goes into a pose; one front leg comes up, one rear leg on the opposite side comes up, and the animal poses for me and I take the photograph. The elephant used to be a circus elephant and it was trained when people at the circus came up to the elephant to take a picture; when the camera came up, the elephant would pose, dancing pose. Because of the war, the circus was terminated and this elephant was sold to become a beast of burden working in the logging industry in the Central Highlands. So, that was one of my stories of being with the Montagnards.

Now, another is because I was the advisor to the battalion commander when we’re in combat operations, we would set up our headquarters in a little village or whatever, and the village chief would then interact with the battalion commander, and they would include me because I was the senior advisor. So one night we went into the center of one of these log huts, and even though it’s off the ground, in the center there’s a fire pit, and there was a little fire, and next to it is an earthen jar holding maybe 10, 15 gallons of liquid. So, what they do is they put all kinds of stuff, fish, vegetables, whatever, in this earthen huge jug and fill it with water. And if you leave it long enough, it ferments and it becomes like a rice beer, very alcoholic, very potent. And

they drink out of this at ceremonies with little pieces of bamboo that have been hollowed out like a straw.

Now the thing is, if you've got a ceremony like visiting dignitaries, the battalion commander, senior staff officers and the American advisor, along with the Rhade officials, well, what happened is at the ceremony whoever is closest to this jug of rice wine would take a sip through the straw, and then pass it to the next person on their right or left, but they had to sip more than the person that gave it to them. So, if you're at the end of the circle, you'd have to sip an awful lot of this beer simply because you had to sip more than everyone else. The problem was, all of the garbage was at the bottom of the jug. And like I said, it'll hold 10, 15 gallons. And the top was full of maggots eating all the scum. So you had to very carefully make sure that your straw was in the middle of the jug. If it's at the top, you're sucking maggots. If it's at the bottom, you're sucking garbage. So, this was another event. And this was a common ceremony amongst the Rhade with a visiting chief. And I made sure that I sat next to one of the very first people in the drinking line so I wouldn't end up at the end.

SCHNEIDER: That's fascinating. What a ceremony. I'd never heard of that. How are you spelling the name of these people, the mountain people? Rhade?

WORTHINGTON: Okay, Rhade. R-h-a-d-e.

SCHNEIDER: Thank you. That's really interesting. So, aside from these little interesting anecdotes, can you then illustrate for me what an average combat operation in this area was like?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. We had different kinds: search and destroy, regular infantry tactics where we would go out to attack a sizable enemy. But one of the most common ones was what we called the "county fair operation." Little villages, and these are rural villages, sometimes they might have some richer people, political officials, might have a semblance of concrete houses, but most would be grass huts. Villages would be identified by the Vietnamese. It could be a district chief, it could be the police, it could be the military. Villages are identified as having a lot of Viet Cong in the village. So, and we did a lot of these with the US Marines, a joint operation.

First thing you do with the combat troops is you surround the village, and quite often this involved fighting. That is, as you're moving around a security zone, the Viet Cong start shooting at you, so you start shooting back and forth, and hopefully you've got more power than they do and you overcome them or chase them away. So, when all that's over, you've got a village that is surrounded by Vietnamese troops. We get the village secured.

Then, Vietnamese government people come in. We have MEDCAP, Medical Civic Action Programs (M-E-D-C-A-P). This is where a combination of American medical people, and where we were up in I Corps, most of the American medical people were Marines, Navy. And so, corpsmen would come in with vaccination shots, and they'd be able to take care of scabies, injuries, wounds, whatever civilians have. They'd hold sick call. Vietnamese government entertainers, singers, actors would set up an impromptu stage. We had generators with lights, loudspeakers, musicians, and they would give speeches, they would sing, they would act. All of this would go on. Clothing would be given out. Food would be given out. People couldn't read, so the government had comic books without words that would be given out. The whole idea is to convince the people that "the government of Vietnam is your friend," and also to identify people who were Viet Cong and arrest them.

Now, we went to one village, 23 December, 1966, we had to fight to surround it, a lot of fighting, a lot of combat. We got it surrounded. The government officials come in, the Navy corpsmen come in, we do our county fair things. And then, as the sun went down, then the Viet Cong started attacking us from different sides. And I'm with the battalion commander, we're in the hut, and an old man comes in and talks to the battalion commander. But with me being fluent in Vietnamese I can understand what he's saying, and I'm not sure if what I hear is correct, but the gist of what he's telling the Vietnamese battalion commander is that in all this fighting back and forth, a small Vietnamese baby had her feet shot up and she needs surgery, which is obviously not available. So, could the American advisor, i.e., me, get a military medical evacuation helicopter in to take the baby to a hospital where her feet could be saved?

Now, while this is going on, we're fighting. And, so the battalion commander asks if I understood what's going on,

and I said “yeah, but oh, it doesn’t make sense to me. How are we going to do this in the middle of a battle?” And the old man says, “The Viet Cong said that they would stop the fighting.” So, I told the old man, “Go back and bring the mother and the baby to us. Our medical people, our corpsmen with the Marines, will check out the baby and see what can be done.” And I said, “All I can do is ask. I don’t control the military medevac helicopters.” So the old man disappeared.

The next thing we know, a young mother—I’m talking late teens or early 20s, appears with what looks like a picnic basket with maybe a one-year-old baby girl whose feet are shot up. So the corpsmen work on her and they say that if she’s not operated on immediately, then she’d never walk. So we got a Marine Corps medevac unit that agreed to fly in. The Viet Cong said that when they heard the helicopter, they would stop the war, and the medical evacuation people wanted to know what guarantee, and I said, “I have none, but I will be out in the field to guide the helicopter in and I will be in the middle of both sides fighting.” So, the helicopter comes in. It’s a rainy night out, so the ceilings are low. You could hear the helicopter. You couldn’t really see it. When everyone hears the helicopter, the fighting stops. I guide the helicopter to the ground. We get the mother and the baby on board. The helicopter takes off maybe 30 minutes, an hour later. We start fighting again. [pause] You still there?

SCHNEIDER: Yeah. So, it’s a phenomenal story, and I’m really intrigued. Were informal agreements for temporary truces, or ceasefires I guess is a better term, like those that you described, were those common to your knowledge?

WORTHINGTON: I’ve never heard of that before or since. By the way, at that time I had an 8mm camera and I was able to film it. So the documentary movie I made, I have that in the movie, and I also wrote an article for a magazine with images from the movie and some photographs, and it’s a chapter in the book that will be published hopefully the end of this year.

SCHNEIDER: What is the name of your documentary? I did not see that on your resume.

WORTHINGTON: “Combat Advisor in Vietnam.” It’s a 55-minute film that I made the last three months of my first tour, showing everything that a combat advisor did in Vietnam.

SCHNEIDER: So, you were making this—the last three months in December was the three months out of you returning and ending your tour, so this was as you were making it?

WORTHINGTON: I made it in November, December, January, the end of ’66 and January of ’67.

SCHNEIDER: So, then you ship out. Your first tour ends in February, 1967. And then you don’t return to Vietnam until August, 1968. What were you doing for the year-and-a-half in between tours?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. When I returned to the States I had 30 days’ leave, and then I was a student in the armor branch officers’ career course. Now, I’m infantry, so my expectation is that I will go to the infantry officers’ career course. There are two theories. One is the infantry branch will select the best officers to send them to be cross-trained, so they would go to armor or artillery officers’ career course. The other theory is, you’re such a loser as an officer that the infantry branch doesn’t want to send you to your branch school, so they ship you off somewhere else. At any rate, the infantry branch said that I had been selected to go to the armor career course, which I did, and one of the segments of this career course was—and it was six months’ long—was what they call nuclear weapons employment. It’s a classified course on being trained to use nuclear weapons in infantry combat. If you ended up with a score in the course, a grade of 90 or better, then you were selected to attend the regular nuclear weapons employment officer course, and you were trained to be an expert in the employment of nuclear weapons in combat, and you got a special designation as such. So, if you’re a battalion staff officer in the division, you’re in combat, the division needs to employ nuclear weapons, then you’ll become a consultant to the battalion or the regiment brigade or division headquarters on how to go about selecting targets and protecting yourself from the fallout of the use of nuclear weapons. So, my grade was high enough that I went to that course also. So then I finish all my schools. Fort Knox is in Kentucky where the Fort Knox gold is kept, and…

SCHNEIDER: In Texas, you mean?

WORTHINGTON: Pardon?

SCHNEIDER: Fort Knox, Texas or Kentucky?

WORTHINGTON: Kentucky.

SCHNEIDER: Oh, you're so right. I thought it was in Texas.

WORTHINGTON: Outside of Louisville. Okay, so we leave Fort Knox, go to Fort Benning, and I am scheduled to be the assistant editor for Infantry Magazine Publishing. And I'm guessing that most likely I was selected for that because of where I went to college. I'm only guessing on this, because I had never written anything. But I'm guessing that my Ivy League degree was the key factor, plus I was a combat experienced infantry officer. But I didn't want that. I wanted to be a company commander. So I fought it. I got to Benning and I got a job as the company commander in the combat basic training unit. So, I go there and, being a company commander for an infantry officer is supposed to be the best job you could ever have. For me it was so bad, I hated it so much, I made plans to get out of the Army. I'll give you an example.

SCHNEIDER: Okay, yeah, please.

WORTHINGTON: I take my company and we go to an auditorium for a class. And with the basic trainees, we don't have weapons or anything, but they carry their web belt with a canteen full of water and a poncho folded over that in case it rains. Okay, when they go into class, everyone places their web gear, everyone does it the same way on the ground. And in a company you've got three or four platoons of soldiers, so you've got three or four separate areas with all the gear lined up. So, I'm in the auditorium where they're going through a class, and we've got a guard outside that just keeps watch over all the equipment, and he comes in and reports to me and telling me that the regimental commander, a full colonel, is driving up in a staff car. So, I go out, I report to the full colonel, and he's got with him his driver and the regimental sergeant major, senior NCO. And the colonel and the NCO look at the packs. The colonel nods to the sergeant major, who nods to the driver, who runs back to the staff car, opens the trunk, grabs a ball of twine, and hightails it back to the sergeant major, gives him one end of the ball of twine, and he takes the ball and runs out. And so the driver and the sergeant major set the string down against the line of web

belts laid on the ground. And then the colonel, this full colonel, sort of eyeballs the line compared to the equipment, and the equipment relative to the straight line of the taut string sort of wanders a little bit, maybe four or five inches, plus or minus either side of the string.

So then I get a 10 or 20 minute dissertation on how I should carry string so I could do this every time we stop and line up everything so they look nice, and I'm thinking in my mind, *This makes no sense at all to me, and if I stay in the Army for 20 more years and instead of being a 29-, 30-year-old captain, I'm now a 40-something year old lieutenant colonel, full colonel, whatever, is this going to be my life in 20 years, running around with a ball of string measuring equipment lying on the ground?* And my answer was "no." So, I had a battalion commander that was just like that. He came from a staff job in Washington, DC, and he wanted to be a battalion commander in the States where he would not be in charge of combat troops in fighting, and so he figured that in order to get a good officer's efficiency report as a battalion commander, it would be prudent for him to work six-and-a-half days a week.

I had just come back from a combat tour in Vietnam where we worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and I was hoping to have a little respite with my family, but no, I had to be at the job six-and-a-half days a week. I would go home at night at 10:00 and I would be so tired because I started work at 5:00 that I would lie down on the floor with my uniform on, fatigues, combat boots, and just lie down and fall asleep. And no matter how well you did on the rifle range or whatever competition you had, however well you did, you had to do better the next time. And we won numerous awards, but it just wasn't good enough. And I hated the job, I hated the two colonels, and I made plans to leave the Army.

The FBI at that time, and remember, I had been a police officer in Hanover for over a year, so the FBI typically will recruit special agents who are either accountants or attorneys, but they had a new recruiting definition that if you were a combat arms officer in the military, you could apply for the FBI if you had a college degree, and it didn't make any difference what it was in. So, I set up an appointment. I went back home to Roxbury, Connecticut, on leave, and made an appointment to talk to the FBI in New Haven, Connecticut. Now, J. Edgar Hoover's in charge of the FBI,

and I don't know if you ever studied anything about the guy. He was sort of short with a Napoleonic complex, and part of his being was collecting dirt on every politician possible to use for threats, blackmail, whatever.

At any rate, two books had just been published, the truth of the FBI. And one mentioned that when the current FBI class graduated from Quantico, they would get their diploma from J. Edgar Hoover in his office. And he had sort of a platform behind his desk he would stand on so when you went around to get your diploma, he was taller than anyone else because he was standing up on a platform. Now, you had to shake his hand to get your diploma. If your hands were sweaty, you didn't graduate. That's the way it operated according to the book.

Another part of the book was, different FBI agents had different specialties. So you've got a field office, let's say in Miami, and there is one FBI special agent who is an expert in bank robbers. Now, if a bank is robbed, it's a national offense and the FBI are the ones that will pursue it. So, if there's a bank robbery in Miami and the bank expert happens to be 30 miles away doing something else, not a single FBI agent can go to that bank until the expert arrives there first, because the first FBI agent is the one that's in charge of the case. So a guy that might be an expert in, let's say kidnapping can get to the bank in 10 minutes, and the so-called bank expert can't get there for 20 minutes, then the closest FBI agent has to do something else not to arrive until the expert gets there first.

SCHNEIDER: Interesting.

WORTHINGTON: So, I read the two books. I show up at New Haven. I meet a couple of agents. I talk about the books I've read. And they're talking about the discipline and what's going on in the Army and why I'm sick and tired of it and I want out. And they say, "With that attitude, the last thing you want to do is join the FBI because it's worse." So they convinced me. No FBI. So now I'm thinking, *What do I do?* And with my background and I'm good at blowing up bridges and shooting people and running combat operations, but I don't have a lot in the way of skills for doing a lot in civilian life. So I asked the Army to send me to graduate school, and they say, "We'll send you for six months. You're too valuable with the training, your background in Vietnam, and we can only

let you go for six months. I said I can't get a degree. And they say, "Well, that's the best we can do." So I tell them, "I'm leaving. I'm getting out of the Army."

And I needed money to go to graduate school. If I went back to Vietnam as a combat advisor, then I wouldn't be spending a lot of money and I could save money to go to graduate school. I was promoted to major. I could no longer be a company commander. So I returned to Vietnam for my second tour about in August of 1968.

SCHNEIDER: So, right before you returned, both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy are assassinated. Did that have any impact on your thinking of American society right as you were about to return to Vietnam?

WORTHINGTON: No.

SCHNEIDER: Just a noteworthy political event, but nothing impactful?

WORTHINGTON: No, it didn't affect me one way or the other.

SCHNEIDER: Okay. So then you go to Vietnam for your second tour in August of 1968, and where are you assigned this time?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. I am assigned as an assistant district advisor to a district known as Trang Bang, which is almost on the Cambodian border. And it's an area in which the US Army 25th Infantry Division operates in. Now, the makeup of the advisory efforts has changed, because most of the Americans in Vietnam are with American units. We've got several divisions there. And the advisory effort becomes a part of what they call CORD, Civil Operation Rural Development [CORDS, Civil Operations and Rural Development Support].

I don't know if you've done much studying of Vietnam, but there is a—was an American lieutenant colonel who retired from the Army and spent the rest of his life in Vietnam, and he was John Paul Vann. And a major book was written about him. Bright and Shining Star I believe is the name of it, or actually it's *A Bright Shining Lie [:John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*], written by Neal Sheehan. It took him 10 years to write it, about John Paul Vann, who became an embassy official, a civilian advisor, and in charge of a major

area of Vietnam, and he was the head of CORDS for III Corps, which is where I was.

And CORDs had two sides, a civilian side of embassy people, the military side of advisors. So, the district that I was assigned to as the assistant to a guy who had been an airborne sergeant in Vietnam, he was promoted in Vietnam, and he was a foreign service reserve officer, and so I was to be his assistant. And he would be primarily in charge of the civilian side of what's going on in the district, and I would be the military advisor for all of the troops fighting the Viet Cong, the North Vietnamese Army troops in the Army. He got hepatitis, and I had been there a very, very few weeks, two weeks maybe, and he ended up in the hospital and I took over as the senior district advisor. The fighting we had was very fierce. I had calculated the casualty rate in a year was 500%. A lot of fighting.

SCHNEIDER: Is that 500% for ARVN troops?

WORTHINGTON: Yes. And the Vietnamese government wanted pacification, and that is, to pacify the villages where the VC were, protect the villagers, and develop the villages. Have you ever heard of the Rome plow?

SCHNEIDER: No.

WORTHINGTON: Okay. In Rome, Georgia, there's a factory that makes plows for tanks. The plows could be 8 or 10 feet high, like a snowplow, not V-shaped but straight across, and they might be 15, 20 feet wide. They're hooked up to a tank, and when they move forward through a jungle area they clear everything. So, the 25th Infantry Division was a Rome plow strategy. The main route between Saigon going into Cambodia went right through Trang Bang, the district I was in, and this was the main supply route for the 25th Infantry Division, and so their Rome plow strategy was to take Rome plows, clear everything and anything on both sides of this main route for 50 to 100 yards.

SCHNEIDER: And I'm sorry, just to interject quickly, what ARVN unit were you assigned to during this?

WORTHINGTON: I was with the Trang Bang district.

SCHNEIDER: Okay, right, so you were district advisor, not a tactical. Okay, got it.

WORTHINGTON: Of which I advised the civilian side of the district and all of the Vietnamese military assets within the district.

SCHNEIDER: So, you were actively out in the rural, I guess in the jungle, helping this Rome plow strategy for the 25th Infantry Division?

WORTHINGTON: No, no. That was the 25th Infantry Division's strategy, US. The Vietnamese were trying to pacify these villages which are up against this main route. 25th Division strategy is to destroy them.

SCHNEIDER: Oh, okay.

WORTHINGTON: So, that creates the conflict.

SCHNEIDER: Yes, I'm sure.

WORTHINGTON: So, the 25th Infantry Division saw me as an American infantry major; therefore, I should work with the 25th Infantry Division to achieve their objectives, which were in opposition to the Vietnamese objectives of pacifying the village and making life better for the Vietnamese in their villages within 50 to 100 yards of this road. Okay, I report there right after a major battle and there are dead bodies all over. And I go out on combat operations pretty constantly. I'm a major.

And let me back up a bit. I've got a grandson who will graduate from the Air Force Academy [Colorado Springs, CO] this coming May, a couple of months.

SCHNEIDER: Congratulations.

WORTHINGTON: Thank you. His sister is a senior lieutenant in the Army, and four years ago she graduated from West Point. But, let me get back to the grandson. He finished his sophomore year at the Air Force Academy. He was assigned to an Air Force base, and he saw these Air Force officers doing, in his mind, nothing. He wanted to fight. And the reason he didn't go to West Point was because that's where his sister went. He wanted to go elsewhere. So, he's wanting to become a Special Ops Air Force officer. But when he sees these officers in the Air Force base where he spends part of the

summer, he comes up with the conclusion that if you're an officer in the military, you don't do anything worthwhile. So, he lets it be known that he is going to drop out of the Air Force Academy, enlist in the Army, and go in the Special Forces, because if he is an enlisted man he can fight, because officers don't fight.

So I had a long talk with him about Special Operations, and I pointed out that I fought as a private in the Marine Corps, yes; I fought as a captain in the Army; and I fought and got shot up as a major in the Army. So when he says that officers never get in combat, that's not true. At any rate, I explained enough to him that, like I said, he's going to graduate in May, I will commission him a second lieutenant, and I think in the resume you saw that I was a civilian pilot for about 40-odd years. At any rate, he's going to flight school to be an Air Force pilot.

SCHNEIDER: Well, that's fantastic.

WORTHINGTON: I mention that because of his comment, "If you're an officer, you'll never be in combat." Okay, as a major I went out on small patrols, I got involved in a lot of small special operations, me and a few Vietnamese with a lot of shooting.

SCHNEIDER: Right. So, some questions about those. Were the patrols LRRPs and were you involved then with SOG [Studies and Observations Group]?

WORTHINGTON: I don't understand the question. Say that again differently.

SCHNEIDER: So, the patrols you were doing, were those part of the long-range reconnaissance patrols that have since become famous?

WORTHINGTON: No, no, these were local patrols. We'd go out at night, set up an ambush, and spend the night hoping that a Viet Cong unit would come by and we could wipe them out, things like that. Or a day patrol where we would be looking for contact. That's what they were.

But, I was going to give you a couple of examples of a special operations. The 25th Division caught a couple of good looking young girls, teenagers. And the Viet Cong would use these young girls as messengers, because the American troops would see the young girls, they're pretty,

the girls would smile and flirt and flash their eyes and smile, and they could get away with almost anything. Anyway, two of these girls were captured, and the Americans couldn't get much out of them, so they turned them over to the district. And we were talking to them and they were from a Viet Cong village. And we knew where the village was and what it was, and so we talked to them about a mortar being employed within the village against the Americans and Vietnamese troops. And they knew about it and they knew where it was buried, and they could show us, because it would be dug up at night, it would be fired at American or Vietnamese troops, and then very quickly buried again so no one would be able to find it.

So, I rounded up two helicopters, a US Ranger squad, and we got Vietnamese policemen, some intelligence NCOs from the division, and I took this whole unit and the two girls and we flew over the village, and they were going to point out where the mortars were. But, the girls in the helicopter had never been up in the air, and they were totally disoriented and they didn't know anything, looking down on top of the village. So, I said "okay." We landed the helicopters in the field just outside the village, and this is a Viet Cong village, and myself, the eight US Army Rangers, and the Vietnamese intelligence NCOs and the policemen, and the two girls, we go in the village, the girls show us where to dig.

Now, there's a hedgerow that sort of divided the village in half. I don't know why, but it's there. And we start digging, and we let the girls go, so they take off. We dig in the hole and we can see, yes, it was recently dug up and everything, but the mortar had been moved. We found out that as soon as the girls were picked up, the mortar was moved somewhere else. So we're digging, looking for the mortar, and we can hear talking on the other side of the hedgerow, and they're Viet Cong, and so they're going to get their weapons, and they don't know how many of us are on the other side, so they're cautious about attacking us. And we discover that the mortar's gone, so we decide because the Viet Cong are getting ready to attack us, we'd better get out of there. So I call the helicopters and tell them that we need them to land again to pick us up because we're leaving, and they said, "Oh, we've got another mission. We can't pick you up."

So, there are probably a dozen of us with no helicopters in the VC village in no man's land. So, we hear that the Viet Cong are ready to attack, so we hightail it out of the village with the Viet Cong on our tail, and we're running towards the American unit, the 25th Division, and I'm hustling to make contact with them to let them know that we're being chased by Viet Cong and we're going to approach their lines and we don't want them to shoot us. But I've got problems communicating. Finally I get through and we're met at the lines and we get through safely and the Viet Cong quit chasing us. So, that's one incident.

When I first went there on the second tour, I got hookworm. I lost 40 pounds in 30 days and I ended up in the morgue dead.

SCHNEIDER: Wait, what? [laughter]

WORTHINGTON: Yeah.

SCHNEIDER: Okay. Can you unpack that a little for me? [laughter]

WORTHINGTON: Yes. I kept on losing weight, and the American doctor said, "You're just arrived in Vietnam and you're not used to eating Vietnamese food, and you're going on a lot of combat operations and you're losing weight." I said, "No, this is my second tour. There's something else going on." And the American doctor said, "No, it's your diet and your being here, just arriving." So, I saw a Philippine doctor, and he checked me out and he said, "You've got something wrong with your heart, but your heart's good." He didn't understand what was wrong. The hookworm does have an effect on how your heart responds.

At any rate, I kept on losing weight. So I go out on a combat operation one morning, and we finish the middle of the day, so I'm back at our compound, advisor compound. And all of a sudden I sort of become paralyzed, I can't talk, and I can't eat, I can't do anything. My medic checks my vitals, and really no pulse, the blood pressure's down, I'm dying. So he calls in the medevac helicopter and they put me on it, and take me to Cu Chi, the 25th Infantry Division to the division hospital. And, so the helicopter lands right outside the emergency room, and the emergency room staff comes out, takes a look at me and said, "We can't do anything for this guy. Take him down. And another eighth or a quarter of a

mile away was the US Army Evacuation Hospital. They take me there. I end up in the emergency room. They take blood samples, urine samples, feces samples, all of that. They check me out, and they put me on a stretcher.

And everything's in tents. There are no buildings. These are all tents. So I end up on a stretcher on two sawhorses in a tent that I have no idea what it is. And, so I can move my head a little bit, but I can't talk, I can't cry, I can't do anything. I'm pretty paralyzed. I move my head a little bit and I see other men on similar stretchers scattered around this tent. And, then two people bring in another stretcher and put it right next to me, and there's a body on it, and a doctor and a couple of nurses, some other people come with the body. They're looking at it, and someone picks up one of the guy's arms, and all of his fingers are cut off at the hand. So the guy's got no fingers. And they turned his head, and they turned the head toward me, and he's got a grapefruit sized dent in the top of his forehead.

So I could understand them talking. He was an Army pilot flying an L-19, which is a two-seat Cessna, looking like a Viper Cub, but it's not. It's a Cessna reconnaissance aircraft. And he was coming in to land at Cu Chi, and on short final he's flying over the wire, the barbed wire surrounding the 25th Division compound, and the Viet Cong shoot up the plane and he crashes. So the guards that are out on security on the perimeter run to the airplane, and the airplane is starting to burn and it's so banged up, in order to get him out, his hands are caught in the crushed airplane, and so they have to cut his hands out, so they cut off all the fingers to get him out, but he hit his head on something that killed him. So they put the sheet back over and leave him there. And I'm trying to figure out what's going on.

About a minute later, another stretcher comes in, and they set it on the floor next to me, and everything is grey. The uniform, the jungle fatigues the guy has on are grey, his skin is grey, his hair is grey, everything's grey. And some more people come in and look down at him. He's on the floor. There's no more room on sawhorses. And a few minutes before, maybe 20, 30 at the most, he had been in a big firefight, he had been machine gunned down, and he fell in a river. And they dragged him out of the river, put him on a helicopter, medevaced him to the evac hospital, and his uniform looked grey because it was wet. His skin looked

grey because he was dead and lost most of his blood. And he was dead. And then I realized I'm in the morgue and I passed out.

SCHNEIDER: From surprise and shock?

WORTHINGTON: No.

SCHNEIDER: Oh, you just, from the hookworm?

WORTHINGTON: Yes.

SCHNEIDER: So, how did you survive, then?

WORTHINGTON: Well, I woke up the next morning in the ward. And I asked the nurse what happened. And she said that while I was dying, they put me in the morgue because there was nothing they could do, with the rest of the bodies. And my urine, blood, feces had been sent to the lab, and they discovered hookworm, and there was an immediate antidote, so they went back to the morgue, they gave it to me, and I didn't die. So, I asked the nurse, "Why not?" And she said, "I guess it wasn't your time, soldier." So, I remained in the hospital a few more days, and the antidote are pills that are about as big as your middle finger, and probably close to an inch long. I mean, they're big horse pills. Anyway, I had to take the pills, and then they sent me back to the unit, to the compound we were in, in the advisory hut in the ARVN compound, and I have to sleep…

SCHNEIDER: This is back to Trang Bang District?

WORTHINGTON: Yeah, back there. Anyway, I recover from that.

SCHNEIDER: And when was that?

WORTHINGTON: That was in September, October of '68.

SCHNEIDER: Okay, you also mentioned on the little summary you provided us that you had a bullet wound during your second tour. When was that?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. Like I said, mostly special operations. I was told about a combat operation called Firefly missions. This involves three US Army helicopters configured for this special operation. Okay. One helicopter has a big iron circle

mounted on a pedestal, and in this steel circle are Xenon landing lights from a C-130 or Xenon search lights from an Army tank. And the circle and pedestal is set in the doorway of a helicopter, so a helicopter can fly and an operator can turn this circle of lights down focusing on the ground. You can see anything that's on the ground. Okay. The other two helicopters, one is a command and control helicopter, and the other is a gunship: machine guns, rockets, so forth.

So, the helicopter with the searchlight is called the firefly, and it flies in combat at 500 feet. The gunships fly below that, below 500 feet. The command and control helicopter—this is the helicopter with whoever is controlling the whole operation—that flies above 500 feet. We've got agents, "we" being the Vietnamese have secret agents in Cambodia that are collecting intelligence information about rockets that are being moved by the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong from Cambodia into Vietnam to go to Saigon to attack a city. So we get a message indicating when and where a whole bunch of rockets are going to cross from Cambodia into South Vietnam. So, when I get the information, I contact the firefly unit and they're ready to go.

What happened about a month before, I called to see if we could use them. I'd just discovered them. And they said yes, so I took them out and I talked to Vietnamese units who were fighting out around the Cambodian border, and the firefly unit by itself had more kills that night than the entire unit did for the previous 30 days. So, any time I called them, they would send a unit out. So I told them what we had.

So we flew to the Cambodian border, and we picked up the trail, a big swath through the jungle, and we followed it to a clearing. And, so in the clearing, one corner there were a bunch of water buffalos that had been hauling the rockets. So I told the gunship to kill them, which the gunship did, but we don't know where the rockets are. So the gunship's down close to the ground and he said, "Hey, this clearing is full of bunkers, underground bunkers." And he could see the sort of circular humps where the top of the bunkers were. But, he said he couldn't get down to do a shooting run because the clearing was so small he'd fly into his own shrapnel.

Now, I'm up above, controlling the whole operation, so I ask the pilot—and I'm carrying an M-79. That's like a single shot shotgun that fires a 40mm grenade. Looks like a great big fat

bullet, about two or three inches across. So I have a vest full of these, and I'm carrying the M-79. So I ask the pilot, "Can you fly down and I'll put a grenade into the bunker?" So, he says yes, so he goes down to the ground and he's hovering in front of the bunker and I fire a grenade in. I get a secondary explosion where I'm blowing everything up. We do this for the next two or three grenades, and then in one of the middle bunkers are all the people that were involved in bringing the rockets into these underground bunkers. So we get into a firefight, and I've got a helmet on so I can talk to the pilots, and I ask the pilot, "Are you flying in your own shrapnel?" He says, "No, why?" And I said, "Well, I've just been shot." And he said, "Is it bad?" And I said, "No, I don't think so." But I'm fighting, putting rounds in the bunker and the people in the bunker shooting me. So I blow everything up and we blow up the rest of the bunkers, and he takes me back to the compound where I've got my medic.

And the medic sees the hole in the top of my thigh of the right leg and he cuts it open, cleans it up, and I've got the shrapnel, the bullet. I pulled it out of the leg and stuck it in my pocket. So he cleans me up, patches me up. And a few days later the whole leg gets infected because the bullet was infected, so I end up going to the hospital where they operate and clean it out. And I end up with a big plug of scar tissue. And I never told my wife that I got shot or I had hookworm or anything. I didn't want her to worry. So, when we meet in Hawaii, she wants to know why I'm sitting sort of sideways in the chair and I tell her I got shot, and when I sit down that plug of scar tissue pushes up into the sensory nerve and puts the leg to sleep, so I sort of sit sideways. And I still sort of sit sideways at times. At any rate, shortly after that…

SCHNEIDER: And when was that?

WORTHINGTON: Go ahead.

SCHNEIDER: When was that, that you got shot?

WORTHINGTON: Early November of '68.

SCHNEIDER: So, after hookworm?

WORTHINGTON: Two or three days before Veterans Day.

SCHNEIDER: But, after you got hookworm?

WORTHINGTON: Yes, after I'd recovered from hookworm. So I went from hookworm…

SCHNEIDER: That's a tough couple of months for you, yeah. [laughter]

WORTHINGTON: But anyway, that made another good article for aviation *Flying Magazine*. So, the Rome plow strategy is going on and I'm fighting it, and the 25th Infantry Division doesn't like me. And then I get notified that I am going to be promoted to another job in Saigon. Because of my hookworm, because of my being shot up, I needed to have a rest, so they're going to send me to Saigon where I can get better. So I'm thinking, *This is pretty good*. And, so I am relieved of the job, and I go to John Paul Vann's villa, where I wait for a week until arrangements can be made for me to go to Saigon. And I never met the guy. He's always off running somewhere, but anyway I can say that I stayed at his place for a week.

So I end up in Saigon, and because of my background, combat vet and fluent in Vietnamese and French, the next job I was given, the senior tactical advisor to all of the Vietnamese troops that provide security on all of the bridges around Saigon. Now, I'm relieving a major who knows no Vietnamese or anything. So, he's taking me around, and the Vietnamese are going to give a briefing, and they've got everything set up, and they're talking to me in English and the major. I'm going to take over his job. He's talking in English, and they're set up to give me the briefing about what they do and how they do it. And, so we're sitting down and this guy's ready to give the briefing in English, and I tell them in Vietnamese that I would prefer to have the briefing in Vietnamese, and they're shocked because this is the first American who they've seen in this area that spoke their language. Anyway, they gave the briefing in Vietnamese and we hit it off real good.

So, I was in Saigon. And the guy I worked for was an American Army colonel who was designated to be a brigadier general, but he wasn't working as a colonel or a general. He had a temporary assignment as a civilian foreign service officer. So, he mostly wore civilian clothes, but if he had a purely military matter, he would wear his uniform as a full colonel, and then a brigadier general. So, I worked for this guy.

SCHNEIDER: What was his name?

WORTHINGTON: That was 50 years ago.

SCHNEIDER: I figured I would try. [laughter]

WORTHINGTON: I'd have to think about it. I don't recall it. I started with an "H". And if you hadn't asked me, I'd probably tell you. Maybe I'll think about it. At any rate, he had some other special assignments for me that I did working with other Vietnamese units around Saigon. And then he said that there was a problem, in that the Vung Tau shipping canal connecting the Saigon ports with the South China Sea and the Pacific went through a whole swampland called the Rung Sat Special Zone (R-u-n-g S-a-t) Special Zone. And the Viet Cong controlled the land, and it was—the Vietnamese navy was in charge of it. Therefore, the Vietnamese navy advisors worked with the Vietnamese, and they worked for Admiral [Elmo] Zumwalt, three-, four-star admiral, whatever. He became the—right after that tour, he became the chief naval officer, the CNO [Chief of Naval Operations] for the US Navy, the top job in the Navy.

SCHNEIDER: Do you remember what President? Johnson?

WORTHINGTON: I don't know if it was Johnson or Nixon. I don't recall. At any rate, the Vietnamese navy with the American Navy advisors had not been able to stop the Viet Cong from firing rockets at the ships going into Saigon, and 90% of everything used in Vietnam came by ship. So this was a serious matter. So from the Vietnamese point of view, they were court-martialing every Vietnamese leader that was not doing their job in the Rung Sat Special Zone. So they were going to court-martial every single one of them. The American advisors were all relieved and sent somewhere else.

So, the American Navy advisors, Zumwalt, a commander by the name of Wages, the decision is we need to create some commando units and have them go after the Viet Cong in the Rung Sat Special Zone. So they needed a combat officer who could do this who was fluent in Vietnamese. So the general asked me if I was interested. He said, "If you take this job, I'll get you anyone for your team who's in Vietnam, anywhere in Vietnam." So, I thought it'd be interesting. I said yes. We put together a team. We trained two Vietnamese

light infantry companies as commandos, and then we started our attacks, we started gathering intelligence, and we went after the Viet Cong. And actually, this was relatively easy fighting, because…

SCHNEIDER: Why was that?

WORTHINGTON: The Viet Cong had not been challenged, and I had just come from the Cambodian border where we were really fighting. I told you 500% casualty rate in a year. I mean, that was heavy fighting. So, we have these trained units, we go out after the Viet Cong, we collect the intelligence, and it's relatively easy. And the Vietnamese are happy, the US Navy's happy, and I guess I was with them six or eight months, and I got four decorations for valor in that time. Every time we had a big operation, I got a bronze star or something.

Anyway, we had a lot of interesting special ops. One, we had connected with a Viet Cong lieutenant who was ready to chu hoi, that is, to give up. So we collected the information and we planned this mission. We got a sympathizer from the village as a guide, who was going to guide this small unit that I was going with. We were going to raid the village, find the Viet Cong lieutenant, beat him up and take him with us. So in order to do this, we got two US Navy Swift Boats. They're like torpedo boats of World War II. And, so we've got this guide with us. We've got a unit of maybe eight men. I'm the American with them.

We get this guide from the village. And, so we use the Swift Boats to come in through the river to the back side of the village. Now, our guide is used to going into the village from the front side. So he knows that he goes in the village and to go to the lieutenant's house, you enter the village, you turn to the right and he's at the end of the little street. Well, we approached from the back, but this guide has it in his mind you enter the village, you turn to the right. So we go in and we go in the wrong direction. And he can't find the house and he thinks it might be this house, so we go in and start tearing up a house, and it's the wrong one. He realizes his mistake. He said, "We need to go to the other end of the village." So we go to the other end, we find the house, we find the lieutenant, his family.

And this is all acting, pretend, make-believe. We pretend that we beat the lieutenant up, he tells us where the weapons are, we tear the house apart, we find the hidden weapons underground, and we take this beaten up lieutenant with all the weapons, and we take him back to the Swift Boat, and we throw him on the boat. And I'm the biggest guy there, so I'm the one that's holding him and pushing him and shoving him and I throw him on the boat. And now these American soldiers have no idea what's going on, but they recognize the lieutenant because of what I told them as a Viet Cong, the bad guy. So, then they start to beat him up. So I have to intervene, because they're really going to beat on him, and that's now what we've been doing. We've been play acting and punching like in the movies, making noises and screaming, everyone yelling, and fake blood all over and all of this. And the Navy guys want to really kill him. [laughter] So I have to step in and stop it without letting the villagers know that it's all a sham. So, I managed to do that.

Anyway, we get the guy out, and a few days later because the house is destroyed and the husband's gone, the wife and the kids ostensibly tell the villagers that she's going to live with her parents, and she's reunited with her husband. So, that's another little episode.

SCHNEIDER: That's a nice story. I have a quick question for you, by the way, just to intervene. Were you conducting these operations in the RSSZ under MACV [US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam]'s Studies and Observations Group?

WORTHINGTON: No. SOG. No.

SCHNEIDER: Yeah, SOG.

WORTHINGTON: No, SOG was up on the North Vietnamese border, and I was not a part of SOG, no.

SCHNEIDER: So, what was your unit called, the one you were commanding in the RSSZ [Rung Sat Special Zone]? What was the name of that unit?

WORTHINGTON: I was not with a unit. I was with a district in the Rung Sat Special Zone. Remember I said that in the mid-'60s, '66, '67, I was an advisor to a Vietnamese combat unit as a combat advisor. When I returned, things were different. And I mentioned CORDS, Civil Operation Rural Development,

where we had so many American units that pacification and fighting was set up differently. So my second tour, I was assigned to districts, except when I worked in Saigon, and I fought with the troops, the Vietnamese troops that were assigned to the district. Different, they all had different names because they were small units.

SCHNEIDER: So, this time you were the senior advisor to the Rung Sat Special Zone district?

WORTHINGTON: Actually, within the Rung Sat Special Zone there were several districts, and I was the senior advisor to one that was responsible for the security of the river.

SCHNEIDER: And what was that district's name?

WORTHINGTON: I don't recall.

SCHNEIDER: Okay, no worries.

WORTHINGTON: I'd have to look it up.

SCHNEIDER: No, no, no. No worries. If you remember it in the coming days or weeks, feel free to email me. Same with that brigadier general's name.

WORTHINGTON: Okay. Some interesting things happened. We went out on a lot of small special ops missions. One, we got information that there was a cache, a hidden cache of weapons for the Viet Cong. And what they would do is they would build concrete bunkers, maybe five or six feet long and maybe two feet wide and maybe four feet deep, and these were underwater, and what they would do is they would put signs on them in Vietnamese telling the Vietnamese to stay away from them. And they would have the weapons all wrapped up, waterproof and in the water inside these bunkers. Okay. We got information where there was one, so this small patrol and I went out and we found the bunker, and we got the weapons.

And we've got a Navy helicopter above us. And we're using a sling to put the weapons in the sling, and they're hauled up into the helicopter. So the pilot's asking me what he's got. So I'd say, "We've got a packet with five AK-47s" or "we've got a packet with this," "we've got a packet with that." And I said, "Uh, we've got an iguana." And the pilot says, "What kind of

a weapon is that?" And I say, "It's about four feet long, it's got a tail at one end, it's got very, very sharp teeth and a big mouth at the other end." What the Viet Cong would do is they would put these animals inside the bunker, so anyone sticking their hand in there would get bitten. And this was their way of securing the bunker. So…

SCHNEIDER: Interesting. So, you're conducting all of these operations throughout the Rung Sat Special Zone until August of 1969, correct?

WORTHINGTON: That is correct. Now, when I leave—this is interesting—when I leave, the Navy's got to write my officer's efficiency report [Officer Efficiency Report], which is an Army document, because I've been assigned to the Navy. And they don't know how to do it. So they go to the Army headquarters at MACV and they get the regulation. Okay. Well, in Vietnam, your officer's efficiency report has two elements to it. One is purely narrative and another one is numbers, where out of 10 officers that you supervise, where does this officer fit? Bottom 20%, the top 20% or whatever. Okay, in Vietnam, the Army OER [Officer Efficiency Report] was inflated tremendously numerically. So, the Navy took the regulations and numerically they filled it out like it should have been. It was not inflated. Okay, when they do the narrative, the narrative portion does not match up with the numerical portion, because it wasn't overinflated. So, now I've got a report that number-wise relative to inflation is probably sort of like average. The narrative portion is quite a bit different because like I said in a short time, I was decorated four times for valor, and the narrative was superb. So now the general has to write a special letter explaining why the numerical portion does not match the narrative. So, he writes all of this, and it certainly didn't hurt me.

SCHNEIDER: Good. I'm sure not. So then, you return home in August of 1969. What was that like upon returning to the United States kind of at the height of anti-war sentiment?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. I got hookworm, I got shot up, and then I got yellow jaundice towards the end of my tour. So, when I'm out-processing in Vietnam, I'm being out-processed to leave the Army, because when my tour is up, I was going to leave active duty. I'd be active in the Army Reserves, but I would be going to graduate school. So, I get out-processed, I go to Fort Benning, get everything packed up, and everything is to

be shipped to Flagstaff, Arizona, where I will be a graduate student at Northern Arizona University in counseling. I was going to be a high school counselor. I never ran into any anti-war demonstrations anywhere at any time. No one spit at me, no one called me a baby killer. I was treated with respect and dignity everywhere I went. So, this never happened to me.

SCHNEIDER: So then, how did you feel immediately after, and now 40, 50 years after your role in Vietnam, how did you feel about your time and your impact in Vietnam?

WORTHINGTON: I made a lot of friends. I fought, lived with the Vietnamese. It was a war that was settled politically, and it didn't turn out very well for the South Vietnamese. I've got an acquaintance I know here in Las Cruces who is a lieutenant. When the war ended, he was a—he's Vietnamese—he was a Vietnamese ARVN lieutenant, and when the North took over, he ended up for a few years in a reeducation camp, which is like a prison. What happened, happened. I participated in it. I was career Army, infantry. Therefore, if there was a war somewhere, I wanted to be in it, and this was the big war at the time, so I got to participate.

And I have a 220% disability rating from the VA, all from combat wounds and injuries. Agent Orange destroyed my aortic valve, and I was going through a routine physical. Chest x-ray showed the heart enlarged and tortuous. Subsequent exams showed that the heart was functioning at about 20%. The aortic valve was diseased, 90% blocked. The cardiologist said, "If you don't get this fixed immediately, in a week or two you're going to have a massive coronary heart attack that you will never recover from." So, my wife, daughter and I hightailed it from Las Cruces to Houston, Texas, Texas Heart Institute, and they performed open heart surgery, replaced the valve. The heart is now functioning in the normal range. So…

SCHNEIDER: I'm happy to hear that.

WORTHINGTON: Thank you. I've got a severe hearing loss from so much shooting, three combat tours– you shoot without any hearing protection. I've got a hip that was all busted up parachuting. So, I've got the disability all combat related. But I am intact. I'll tell you a funny story about that. I had applied for a reevaluation of my wounds, shooting. And so, the VA I guess

got my request, application, whatever you call it. I never heard from them. So I had a new guy that moved in next door to me, and he had just retired from the Navy, and he was applying for a disability evaluation, and he was from Las Cruces, and he told me that one of his high school buddies worked for the VA here in Las Cruces. And I said I didn't know what was going on with my request. So, he gave me the guy's name and his phone number and I had no idea what he did, and I called him. And he said yeah. I told him I had problems with the evaluation and I needed some help, so he gave me an appointment. And he told me to bring in my DD-214. Do you know what that is?

SCHNEIDER: I believe so, but can you say it for the sake of the interview?

WORTHINGTON: Sure. It is a document, front and back page. There's a summary of everything you've done on your active duty military career, be it two years, six months, or in my case almost 25 years. Okay, I had three of them. When I left active duty, I got one from the Marine Corps which indicated that I was in combat in the Middle East. When I left the Army for the first time after Vietnam, I got one, and then when I retired I got a second one. So, I go to this guy's office and I've got my DD-214s, and so I go into his office and there are two guys sitting behind a desk, and they're both mental health counselors. So I give them my DD-214s and they can see when I was in combat in the Marines, when I was in Vietnam, all of it, decorations I had. I have the Marine Corps Combat Action Ribbon, which is counterpart to the Army Combat Infantryman Badge, seven decorations for valor, Air Medal, Purple Heart.

And, so then they started asking me questions about PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome]: loud noises, it goes on and on. I said, "I don't have it. I don't have it." And they said, "With your combat record and everything that went on, you have to have it." And I said no. Behind them is a bookcase. So I point to a red book, and I said, "Have you ever read that book?" And they pulled it out. And the title is *Stress Disorders Among Vietnam Veterans: Theory, Research and Treatment*. And they tell me that's the bible that they use for treating Vietnam veterans with PTSD. So I said, "I'm one of the co-authors of that book. I think I know what PTSD is." And I showed them the section in the book that I had written. And they look at it and then they said, "Okay, [laughter] you

probably know what PTSD is, and we'll see what we can find out about your evaluation."

So, a couple of weeks later I was notified by the VA to go to El Paso, Texas, to get my evaluation, and I ended up with 70% with the gunshot wound, the broken hip, the hearing loss, and then I was reevaluated with the Agent Orange destruction of the heart. I ended up with a total of 220% disabled.

SCHNEIDER: So, backing up a little bit, what was the title of that book again on PTSD?

WORTHINGTON: *Stress Disorders Among Vietnam Veterans*, and the editor is Charles R. Figley (F-i-g-l-e-y). And there are several of us that have written chapters in the book, and I became one of the pioneer researchers on the adjustment of Vietnam veterans.

SCHNEIDER: So, if you don't mind, can we back up and trace your career path as a psychologist, then, after Vietnam?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. I went to Northern Arizona University to become a high school counselor. And in my first class I found out that high school counselors don't counsel. They monitor test taking, they provide the results after they've been scored by whoever publishes the test, they tell the scores to the parents and so forth. But, in actual counseling they don't. So I changed my major to counseling and psychology, and I applied to graduate schools all over the west. And I got all kinds of responses, such as "you've been in the Army too long; you can't think;" "your C+ grade at Dartmouth is not consistent with you entering a Ph.D. program." It just went on and on and on. "You have no undergraduate degree in psychology; you want a Ph.D. in psychology." "You've never done any research or published anything." "You've never had a job as a psychologist." And so forth. So, every single graduate school turned me down. I got certified as an assistant school psychologist in the state of Arizona. I got certified as a school psychometrist. And I got a job as a counselor in a special place called the Institute for Human Development at Northern Arizona University, worked as a counselor. They then became the place to offer vocational counseling for the VA for Northern Arizona, and I became the director of that. And then, I applied for graduate school

again. And most of the schools required the Miller's Analogy Test [Miller Analogies Test]. Are you familiar with that?

SCHNEIDER: No.

WORTHINGTON: It's "A is to B as C is to D". It'll give you an analogy, and then it'll give you four other choices, and you have to pick which is which. And they're in all kinds of area: math, English, history, politics or whatever. So I bought a book to help me study for it, and at the end of the book you take a practice test, and it's math oriented or English or history or whatever. And I'm constantly in the 60th or 70th percentile. Okay. I'm supposed to take the test in the afternoon at NAU. So, during the lunch hour I'm taking the last test in the book, eating my lunch, and it's a general test. It's not math, English, history oriented, whatever. It's a general one. And I ended up taking the test at about the 95th percentile. And I thought *that's pretty good*. So, then I go to the counseling center and I get the exact same test I just took.

SCHNEIDER: No way.

WORTHINGTON: So I end up in about the 96th or 97th percentile, and every graduate school I applied to, I was accepted because I graduated with honors, I was employed as a psychologist, I was certified as a psychologist, and I got the 97th percentile in the Miller's Analogy Test. And every graduate school I applied to again accepted me, and I had the great joy of turning all of them down except one, because their program wasn't good enough for me.

SCHNEIDER: And that was the University of Utah [Salt Lake City, UT] you then went to, correct?

WORTHINGTON: That is correct. I visited most schools, but at the University of Utah as soon as you're accepted into the program, you are assigned—even if you don't go, you are at least assigned an advisor. So I went to Utah. I met with the advisor. He was a former psychology professor that was now dean of freshmen, very practical oriented. Utah was an outdoor state: fishing, shooting, camping, hiking, everything I loved, and so that's where I accepted to go.

You had to have five people on your committee, and because of Sputnik there were so many people in the behavioral sciences that they said, "You can have your

committee of three people." So I had three practicing psychologists: the dean of freshmen, the head of the psychology service at the VA Hospital, and the assistant director of the University of Utah counseling center. So I had three practicing psychologists, and getting through the Ph.D. program was a piece of cake. Most students were taking six to nine hours, but I was able to take 22, 23, 24, 25 hours, several of them PE [physical education] courses: judo, karate, things like that. And I was able to set up my—I did my psychology internship at the VA Hospital. And normally you apply. It's a paid internship. But I joined the staff of volunteer helpers, like the Candy Stripers. You know what I'm talking about?

SCHNEIDER: No, what are the Candy Stripers?

WORTHINGTON: Okay, they are young ladies that volunteer to serve in the VA helping with patients, and at that time they wore red-and-white striped dresses. They called them the Candy Stripers. So I became a volunteer and that's how I did my required American Psychological Association psychology internship. And because of that, I could set up whatever I wanted with the head of the psychology service at the VA Hospital, because I was under no obligatory requirements that they were paying me for. So we set up all of my rotations in line with the courses I was taking. So, if I had a quarter that was heavy for testing, then I would do my internship in the psychological testing unit of the psychology service. So, I was way ahead of all of my classmates.

For the dissertation, typically the thing is the Ph.D. student would do the dissertation, turn it in to the committee who would tear it apart and you start again. With my committee, we met at the officers' club at the Reserve Army post right next to the University of Utah, so every Friday afternoon we'd meet in the officers' club, relax, easygoing. And I would work with them on the first chapter of the dissertation. When it was all approved, I went to the second chapter. So, doing the dissertation was a piece of cake. I ended up getting a few chapters in books and two journal articles out of it. When it came time for the comprehensive exam that Ph.D. students have to go through before they're accepted as final candidates for the degree, so, my mine was set up for Friday afternoon. And when the head of the committee set it up, he said, "By the way, we're having a party for you Friday night for passing the exam." And I said, "How do you know I'm

gonna pass it? I haven't even taken it." And he said, "We wouldn't let you take it unless we knew you'd pass it." So, the Ph.D. program was, for me, pretty easy, and it was a pleasant experience.

So, when I got accepted in the University of Utah and I said yes, I'd go, the Army was looking forward—this is in '71—in '73, the Army would go to the all volunteer concept. And the Army realized that they were going to have to take senior NCOs, senior officers, who were used to the conscript Army, and work with them so they'd be nice to the young enlisted people; otherwise, they wouldn't go in the Army. So they figured the best way to do that is to take combat arms officers like me, give them a Ph.D., doctor's degree in the behavioral sciences: social work, psychology, whatever. And they brought me out on active duty, so when I was a Ph.D. student at the University of Utah, I was a US Army active duty infantry major. Actually, they changed me to Medical Service Corps on active duty assignment at the University of Utah.

So, typically the students that they accepted would go through the academic portion, get their dissertation done, unlike medical school. Medical school, you get your MD, then you do your internship. In psychology, you don't get your Ph.D. until you've completed your internship. So, typically in the Army program you'd do all your course work, you'd finish your dissertation, and then you'd do your internship at a military medical center, and then get your Ph.D. after a year. So, I was programmed for that, but I had done my internship with the VA, so I had my Ph.D. And, so now the Army had me, and I'd already done the internship, so they offered me, they said, "Well, we've got you slated to go to William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso, Texas, for your internship, but you've already finished it." So the Army offered me a one-year post-doctoral fellowship. I didn't know what it was, and so I talked to my professors, and they said, "You'd be dumb to turn it down." So I did a one-year fellowship in community psychology.

SCHNEIDER: So, then… Oh, continue.

WORTHINGTON: Go ahead.

SCHNEIDER: Well, what I'm really curious, then, when you're talking about the Army is this Operation Homecoming you talked about in your resume. Can you elaborate on what that was?

WORTHINGTON: Okay. I'll get to that in just a second. Finished the internship, and in the internship I was starting to do research. I had a lot of data that did not go into my dissertation, and so I got Army computer experts to analyze all the data, so I wrote more articles. And I like to travel, so I found out in the Army, the Army's got money for research, and so you write up a research project and then you submit it to the Army hospital or medical center research committee for funding. Well, I decided that I didn't need any money to do the research. I could use the resources in the psychology service. So I asked only for money to present the findings at a conference. Now, the Army loves, just like universities and colleges love their researchers to present in public conventions, because it promotes whoever you work for. Dartmouth College, New Mexico State University, the US Army. So I only asked for funds to present the findings. This is a win-win situation, such that I do the research, it doesn't cost the Army anything. If I submit it for a presentation at a conference, if they reject it, I don't get any money. If it's accepted to be presented, then the Army will pay for me to go from San Antonio, Texas, to Denver, to Chicago, to New York City, to Montreal, San Francisco, wherever. And I very quickly learned what it takes to submit a research project to get it accepted. So, the Army paid me to go to many, many, many conferences every year.

SCHNEIDER: Oh, that's awesome.

WORTHINGTON: So I finished my fellowship. And the Army has me slated to become the USAREUR, United States Army Europe Command psychology consultant dealing with drug and alcohol problems which are rampant in the early '70s and '70s in Europe. For me to go there, I'd have to give up two vehicles, a travel trailer, get rid of my cats, and move my family to Europe in a drug-addled environment. So I told the psychology consultant at the Surgeon General's Office in the Pentagon I didn't want to go. I said, "Pick on someone else, send someone else over there." I said, "In the last decade"—let's see, five years, six years, whatever—"I've had two unaccompanied combat tours, and you don't have any other psychologists that have been sent overseas? Pick someone else."

So, they agreed to do it, but at the same time, since I defied them and everything, they sent me to Fort Polk, Louisiana, which is a place that the medical service just doesn't like because it's in the middle of nowhere. So I went there, the only psychologist. I get along very well with the enlisted counselors, because I used to be in the real Army. Because of where we were, I could moonlight as a psychologist if I get the local psychology group organization to say that I had services that were not available. So I ran a school learning disability program for the parish, sideline; got involved in all kinds of major research projects, even an Army-wide research project as the psychology consultant for it. Nine months I was there.

A new position opened up: psychology consultant to Health Services Command, which is responsible for all of military medicine personnel facilities in the US, Alaska, Hawaii, and the Canal Zone. And so, I was the first person to serve in that. And one of the jobs we did was Operation Homecoming was a five-year project, '73 to '78, '79, to evaluate all of the military POWs [prisoners of war] from Vietnam, and my job was to be in charge of the psychological evaluation of all 77 Army POWs. So, that was one job. As such, I was a member of the Center for POW Studies, which was headquartered in Balboa, San Diego, Balboa Naval Hospital. But we held conferences every year, and the center published several books, and so I've got chapters in many books.

SCHNEIDER: That's fascinating. So…

WORTHINGTON: Other things I did. One was to work with the psychologist that was assigned to the formation of the US Army Delta Force. Do you know what that is?

SCHNEIDER: I don't.

WORTHINGTON: Okay. Are you familiar with special operations?

SCHNEIDER: Yes, sir.

WORTHINGTON: Okay. Each branch of the service has a special ops unit. Marine Corps has Force RECON. The Navy has the SEALS. The Army has the Rangers Special Forces and a special unit called Delta Force. The Air Force has the Air Commandos. These are all military units, different branches, that are

trained in special operations within their branch of service. So the Army, back in the '70s I guess, created Delta Force, and I worked with the psychologist assigned to that unit, to develop a protocol for psychological evaluation, what kind of people would make the best Delta Force operators. We want people who can follow orders, and at the same time are individual thinkers that can think on their feet.

SCHNEIDER: Interesting.

WORTHINGTON: There was an Army arsenal depot in Colorado that had a problem, and I can't remember if it was toxic agents that were leaking from containers stored or explosives or whatever. At any rate, there were a whole bunch of civilian employees, Department of Army civilians, that were seeking damages for brain damage. And so, one of the things that I had to come up with is "how can we evaluate the extent of brain damage done because of exposure to these toxic agents?" And so I set up a protocol in which we took a look at all of their grade school, high school records, IQ tests and everything, and we replicated all the tests to take a look at any decrease in scores. So, someone had a bunch of IQ tests where they tested out 120 in grade school, high school, college, whatever, and now currently they're testing at 90. Now, that's 30 points decrease, two standard deviations; therefore, that's a significant drop. At any rate, I worked that up.

And there were several other protocols that I worked on. But I traveled all over the US to visit hospitals, medical centers that had psychologists. And in San Antonio, so if I'm going to go from San Antonio to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, about 400 miles away, I have to fly commercially San Antonio to Dallas, wait around, get a connecting flight from Dallas to Oklahoma City, wait around, get another connecting flight to Lawton, Oklahoma, which is where Fort Sill is. All day. So, friends of mine that were pilots in the Army said, "You ought to learn to fly yourself." So, I contacted the Army flying club, I said, "What's it take to be a pilot?" 90 days later, I was one.

SCHNEIDER: [laughter] That's awesome.

WORTHINGTON: So, then I flew myself. The Army paid me to fly myself. But the problem is I belonged to a flying club, I had an airplane scheduled for me to take out for four days, fly somewhere and work, and the radios went out or the battery was down

or it was in for maintenance. And that got to be a problem, so I bought my own plane. And then, when the weather wasn't too good, I had to cancel flying, so I got my instrument rating, and I ended up after 40-odd years of flying… I didn't start flying until I was, I think, 38 or 39, almost 40. So in 40 years I ended up with 7,000 hours, which is about three times as much flying as a military pilot would get in a 20-year career, and owned nine airplanes. And currently, I am a columnist for an aviation magazine, so I write a monthly column in the magazine. Anyway, that's what I did as a military psychologist.

I was notified that I was on the promotion list to be promoted to full colonel. And in the military you have two criteria. You have to have "x" number of years time in grades. So I had to have been a lieutenant colonel, let's say, for four years. Then another criteria is time in service. So, to be promoted to full colonel, you have to have something like 20, 21 years of commissioned service, okay. About six years of my military career was enlisted active duty or reserves, five or six years. I had been promoted to major early, so I got promoted to lieutenant colonel early, and when I was notified that I was in the zone to be promoted to full colonel, I wrote the board a note and I told them that I didn't have the time in service, and I got the letter back from the board. I was absolutely correct. I was not eligible for promotion to full colonel, and I was not eligible [laughter] when I was promoted to lieutenant colonel, so they took two years date of rank away, but no money. And another interesting aside sort of in this light. When I was a freshman at Dartmouth, after my first semester, I was on probation.

SCHNEIDER: Right, I remember that.

WORTHINGTON: When you're on probation, you can't be on the sports team. So, I wrestled and I was on the freshman heavyweight crew, and they'd gone to races, they'd gone to spring practice. Finally, I guess the freshman dean who signs off on all this stuff realized, "Hey, we got a guy that we're sending out to compete in freshman sports. He's on probation. He's not eligible." So, they kicked me off the team.

Also, in my second semester freshman year, I had a problem with my English professor. He didn't like me and he wanted to flunk me. But he couldn't without sending me to the English remedial lab, in which you're assigned to an English

instructor. So, he couldn't flunk me without sending me to this lab, which he did, and my mentor happened to be a guy by the name of Thaddeus Seymour, Ph.D. in English from Princeton, who happened to be the freshman heavyweight crew coach, my coach. So, I'm in this remedial English and he gives me some tests and had me write essays and everything. And he said, "Why are you here?" And I explained that the English teacher didn't like me and wanted to flunk me, and I can't remember why. So, Thaddeus Seymour said, "Okay, as long as you're here," and Thaddeus doesn't flunk me, I can't be flunked out of English. So I stayed with him throughout that semester, and so I passed freshman English and so forth.

Years later, they got rid of the lab, I don't know, 30, 40 years later, and someone is doing a research project on remedial labs for college. And one of the labs that they're doing research on is the one with Dartmouth. And so, in the alumni magazine they put out a cry for anyone that had gone to the remedial class to respond, so I responded, filled out a questionnaire, and then I was interviewed on phone like you're doing. And I said, "You know, this is sort of ironic. Here I was sent to a remedial lab because I was so poor in English according to the instructor, and right now I have about 2,400 publications, mostly articles: journal, magazine, newspaper; co-authored maybe a dozen books. And yet, the guy in English didn't think I could write anything.

SCHNEIDER: Right. Well, Mr. Worthington, on that note, I'm just looking that I'm going to get kicked out of this library soon. So I think that's an excellent little vignette to end our interview on. I just wanted to thank you so much for participating in this project.

WORTHINGTON: You are quite welcome. You keep on calling me– Dr. Worthington. I said "use Bob," but if you need a title, it's Dr. Worthington.

SCHNEIDER: Dr. Worthington. I'm so sorry, you're right.

WORTHINGTON: No. No problem. I said call me Bob.

SCHNEIDER: All right, well, Bob, thank you so much for everything. I will stay in touch with you to let you know when you can expect to receive a transcript. Currently we're backed up, so it's a pretty long wait time, so I'll be in touch with you. And I look forward to your seeing that and sharing this with your family.

WORTHINGTON: Okay. And keep your eye out for the book, *Combat Advisors in Vietnam*. Like I said, I just finished the manuscript, and as soon as I get a hard copy made and put it on a flash drive, it'll go to the editor, and it'll be published in about nine months, so…

SCHNEIDER: Well, I'll keep an eye out for that. I'm looking forward to catching a copy and reading it.

WORTHINGTON: Okay, thank you very much. I enjoyed working with you, and good luck in your career there at Dartmouth.

SCHNEIDER: Thank you, Bob, I appreciate it. Have a good rest of your day.

WORTHINGTON: Okay. Bye.

SCHNEIDER: Bye.

[End of Interview.]