

ATTENTION: © Copyright The Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. The following materials can be used for educational and other noncommercial purposes without the written permission of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. These materials are not to be used for resale or commercial purposes without written authorization from the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. All materials cited must be attributed to the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University.

**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Richard Hulslander
Conducted by Jason Stewart
March 26, 2009
Transcribed by Rachel Haney**

NOTE: Any text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

1 Jason Stewart: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University, conducting an oral history interview with Richard Hulslander. Today is
3 March 26, 2009. We are Lubbock, Texas, in the Special Collections Library on the
4 campus of Texas Tech University. All right, why don't we begin, if you don't mind, if
5 you could tell me a little biographical information about yourself. First of all, when and
6 where were you born?

7 Richard Hulslander: I was born on April 16, 1944, in Pryor, Oklahoma. My dad
8 was a chemical engineer with DuPont, because he flunked the eye test to be a ninety-day-
9 wonder for the Navy. He was working as a production chemical engineer at a plant in
10 Pryor, and he met my mother, who was also working there. Then I came around. The war
11 ended, we moved with DuPont to transfer my dad to a coated fabrics plant in the lower
12 Hudson Valley in Newburg, New York, which is about ten, fifteen miles north of the
13 military academy at West Point. And I want to say I was always, even, you know, at that
14 age, intrigued by the military. But the fact that I had a cousin who was a cadet there, it
15 really made me all the more pumped up about it. And, you know, I lived in Newburg, and
16 went through all of school and high school. I was, I won't say I was a good student in
17 terms of being studious and that kind of thing, but I was an effective student because I
18 either learned how to use my time wisely or—I won't say cheat—but I didn't copy or
19 anything like that. But I learned to cut corners and eliminate the BS (bullshit). I forget

1 where it was, but out of a class of about six- or seven-hundred, I was in the top ten. I was
2 awarded, or gained entry into the naval ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps)
3 program, you know, the regular type, where they paid, I guess, just about everything for
4 me to go to what turned out to be the University of Rochester. And I think, I guess we
5 had to pay room and board. At the time, and in fact it still is, one of the half a dozen or a
6 dozen most expensive schools in the country. I probably didn't take a very good
7 opportunity to learn there. But I did learn a lot, I just didn't learn as much as I probably
8 could have. And got a, not a rude awakening, but an abrupt awakening, I guess you'd say
9 in the Marine Corps when I came back from my second summer cruise. I reported into
10 the Marine option instructor. Normally, if you didn't do anything else, you'd go in the
11 Navy and be an ensign, and I just didn't think that was all that exciting. So I got back and
12 went in and told the Marine option instructor, Major Ohanesian, who, unfortunately, was
13 killed about three years later leading his battalion in Vietnam. But he was a lieutenant
14 colonel by then. And anyway, he said to me, he said, "Well, Mr. Hulslander, I appreciate
15 your interest. We may become interested in you, but we're not gonna be interested until
16 you get enough discipline to get the marks you're capable of getting." And I said, "Yes,
17 sir. I think I understand and I will be back here in five months with a report card. It'll
18 probably make you think I might make a good Marine." Needless to say, I buckled down
19 and drank a lot less beer and shot a lot less billiards and chased a lot fewer babes and got
20 my books and got my marks and it stayed that way. Went to, let's see. One summer we
21 had—well, that brought me up to the Marine Corps and there was really no question
22 whether any of us would go to Vietnam, just because all the Marines were going there. If
23 you were a copy grade officer, which is second, first lieutenants and captains—a pretty
24 horrendous casualty rate over there. 'Cause Marines are—and I'm not criticizing anybody
25 else here—but if you think you want to sit in the rear and tell your sergeants to go lead
26 the men 200 yards across the field, you're crazy. You might not be up there like with a
27 color bearer, but you got to be right in the line and moving along with your men and
28 encouraging them and making sure they're keeping the gaps closed and the reserve stays
29 where it's supposed to be and all those kinds of things. So anyway, on the way over—
30 I've skipped some stuff that's of no real consequence—but on the way over, we flew first
31 of all to Okanawa, which was the 3rd Marine Division Headquarters. I got assigned to

1 Whiskey Battery of 1st Battalion, 12th Marines, Whiskey 1/12. And they had done a rather
2 unusual thing. Marine Corps nomenclature at that time had A, B, C in the 1st Battalion, D,
3 E, F in the 2nd, and so on. But each battalion in a regimen had a Whiskey Battery, which
4 was a four-deuce mortar battery. And it turned out that if you really paid attention a
5 plunging fire could do a lot of good where the guys, the NVA (North Vietnamese Army)
6 and so forth, up on the trace, like shooting from Con Thien. If you put a delayed fuse on
7 that it would delay detonation as the shell came down, and then from the looks of the
8 inside, the guys that were out there told us, it looked like they got an air burst inside the
9 bunker. If you imagine this room with the ceiling down about two feet, maybe three feet
10 from where it was and the shell is about that big around (gesture) and about that long,
11 going off about mid-air, you can see it would really wreak havoc. But at any rate, what
12 happened, was Whiskey had been in-country was brought back out of Okinawa because it
13 was scheduled to have just about 100% turnover. The CO (commanding officer) was
14 staying the same, but all the lieutenants were going home. We probably had about a 60 or
15 70% turnover on the guns and maybe a little less than that in transport, communications,
16 and some of that stuff. So we trained very, very, very hard. Captain Huber and I, you
17 know, the troops appreciated us for this. We really worked them. There wasn't a lot of
18 goofing off or anything but we knew, you know, the old adage "The more you sweat in
19 peace the less you bleed in war." And we made a damn good unit out of them. They were
20 good, they were willing, they were well-trained where they'd come from, had good
21 NCOs (non-commissioned officers), except for one. We took a really good battery out
22 of—well, let me tell you two things that are a little bit humorous if you want them.

23 JS: Sure, absolutely.

24 RH: We went out on a, kind of a three-day war sort of thing. And over cycles of
25 about every two to three hours we would do what they call RSOP (reconnaissance,
26 selection, and occupation of position) research—no, excuse me—reconnaissance, search,
27 and occupational position, which is basically moving the battery, moving it forward,
28 hopefully. And we would take the battery to a pre-marked location and set the battery up
29 and do all the alignment and so forth which is not unlike surveying angles and then go
30 around and check them. Maybe fire a few missions with blanks, you know, not using any
31 real live ammunition. And then tear it down and go to another place. We did that for

1 about two and a half straight days. We got around to the end of it and the skipper and I
2 told the troops they had done a real good job, which they had. And that where we were
3 was actually behind a big dune, sand dune, from Buckner Bay, which is between the
4 northern and southern part of the island of Okinawa. And I guess I said, “I don’t know
5 about you guys, but I want to get naked and go jump in the ocean.” We stank to high
6 heaven. So here we are, about maybe 125 Marines, running like hell, screaming like a
7 bunch of banshees, crested over that sand dune, and here was a bunch of American
8 schoolteachers, women. And I don’t think those women had ever moved faster before or
9 faster since. And, you know, we didn’t really pose any danger to them, but they sure as
10 hell didn’t know that. And about the time we got done swimming around in the ocean and
11 grab-assing with one another and trying to drown one another, our first sergeant called us
12 out and he had plenty of iced-down beer and steaks and all that other kind of stuff. So we
13 went back, got all our gear ready and we were assigned to get on an LST (landing ship,
14 tank) down at Naha, which is an ocean port in the southern end of Okinawa. The skipper
15 and I had been down there—skipper, that’s just Marine Corps for the CO—and noticed
16 that there was an Air Force equipment dump, parking lot, whatever you want to call it.
17 And every time we went by it was quite apparent that the person who had the duty to run
18 the gate on that thing was the most junior dude that there was in whatever outfit that was
19 concerned with. And I said to him that—it looked to me like they had some of these great
20 big monster generators on four-wheeled carts. I said to the captain, I said, “You and I
21 need to go back and have a cup of coffee, if I might suggest this, and figure out how I can
22 steal one of those things and get it on the ship and then bring it all in.” So we had it all set
23 up. LST was pulled up on the cement ramp there, the doors were open, and we had
24 moved, you know, Captain Huber went on ahead, and had a couple, three rows of trucks
25 in what was the back of the ship, but really the front as we were going in, or backing in.
26 And then on either side, he had another bunch of them on either side out still in the
27 parking lot. And I went up there and there was some poor kid, I should be ashamed of
28 myself, but I think it’s funny as hell. He’s up there all polished up and everything in his
29 Air Force uniform. I had taken my name tag off but had my bars on, Marine Corps, and I
30 said, “I’m Lieutenant,” whatever name popped in my mind, “and I’m here to pick up my
31 equipment.” And he says, “Well,” and he starts fumbling through the paper. I said,

1 “Goddamn it, airman! We haven’t got all day!” I said, “Unlike some other people, we got
2 a war to fight! Are you gonna give me my stuff or am I just gonna run your ass over and
3 take it?” He says, “Oh, no! No, sir! Go ahead! By all means, just get on out of here!” So
4 we backed up the thing and went on down the deal and they didn’t have the numbers
5 painted on or anything. They were like un-serial-numbered stuff. We went on down that
6 highway and went to Naha and pulled in and got right up on the ship and everything and
7 then pulled the rest of it in and then closed those clam-shell doors. So, you know, I’m
8 sitting up in the ward room up there with Bob Huber—I didn’t call him Bob then, but
9 since then—and I had a cup of coffee and maybe a donut or something and he comes in.
10 To make a long story short, he asked me a couple or three questions that made me feel
11 pretty good about myself. And after all, if you’re going to be a Marine, you’ve got to
12 know how to steal stuff from everybody else. The government ain’t gonna give it to us.
13 And he said, “Well, I’ve only got one criticism.” And I said, “Well, what’s that?” He
14 says, “You didn’t get a generator, you got a greaser.” It was one of those things, like in
15 MT battalion, motor transport battalion, that go (makes repeated spitting noise) out of the
16 grease zerks. I said, “Oh, God. I can’t take that thing back now.” I said, “They’ve
17 probably got every colonel in the world up there ready to shoot me.” And he said, “Ah,
18 don’t worry about it. We get to Vietnam, we’ll trade with the Seabees or something like
19 that.” And anyway, that’s what we did. We pulled out on the high tide the next morning
20 at sometime, headed towards a place called Cua Viet, C-U-A V-I-E-T. That’s a river
21 that—if it doesn’t start in the demilitarized zone, it’s right along the edge of it. Comes
22 out, dumps in, I guess that’s the South China Sea there. And another funny thing that
23 happened on the way over was we’d get the troops up and do calisthenics and have them
24 run around the weather decks up on this LST. One day they were throwing a football
25 around. I thought, “Well, that’s pretty good.” And then I noticed that they were starting to
26 kick it around, punt. I guarantee you they would not have attracted favorable attention
27 from Mike Leach. I went down there, I was running down this ladder from the upper
28 decks, and I guess you’d call it the (unintelligible) and about that time one of my troops
29 got the ball up in the air and the wind or whatever blew it overboard. So before I could
30 run up to the captain of the ship and tell him “Don’t worry about it,” I hear he’s coming
31 out over the overhead. Well, I don’t know if you’ve been on a Navy ship, but they hardly

1 know how to talk on an overhead without blowing about five minutes' worth of
2 boatswain's mate's whistle first. And anyway it said, "This is a drill! This is a drill! Man
3 overboard!" So, you know, I got up there and told the captain, "I really appreciate it but
4 I'm sorry that my men had done that." And he said, "Well, I figured they probably
5 would." He said, "I was just checking the training thing. I'm gonna ask them to do it four
6 more times," or whatever it was, "so we can stay up to snuff," you know, like you've got
7 to do so much every so often. Anyway, we went into a mouth of Cua Viet River. Is that
8 how we did that? Yeah. And on the way in we noticed what they call sea snakes. I was
9 kind of scared of that 'cause people told me that although those things are very docile and
10 you can usually pick them up, if you happen to get between one and its nest as its coming
11 out of the ocean you can have a problem with it. They were like here (gesture), and we
12 were about a mile and a half, maybe, up the stream. Figured, well hell, there's been tens
13 of thousands or hundreds of thousands of guys that went through here before me and
14 there aren't any of them dead that I know of, at least from that. So, we got in the area and
15 set up our first camp in Dong Ha. I remember, I guess we were there about three days and
16 might have fired two or three or four counter-battery missions. Frankly, it was kind of
17 boring and I was already beginning to think, "If this is all there is to this damn war, I'm
18 gonna have to get me a lot of books sent over here 'cause I'm bored as can be." And then
19 one morning I was sitting with the first sergeant having coffee and Captain Huber came
20 over. He had just the nicest personality and was as good a leader as I ever saw. He'd been
21 an enlisted man for about eight or ten years and kind of started to chew my ass. He says,
22 "Dick, where in the world have you been? I've been looking all over for you!" I said,
23 "Gee, sir, I've just been over here with the top talking about a couple of things with
24 equipment and so forth." And he says, "Well, I looked for you in your quarters!" And I
25 said, "Well, sir, I got up about 0530 or something." He said, "Okay," and then he told me
26 that the night before Con Thien had been overrun. That means the bad guys come running
27 through there and they throw satchel charges and everything and generally raise hell, but
28 they don't attempt to occupy the position, just really spread around death and destruction.
29 And he said, "I'm going over for a meeting with the battalion and I'll be back here." He
30 says, "I think we need to be ready to move out, post haste." So I got all my sergeants
31 together. We had everything packed up and ready to go. We left, I want to say, sometime

1 in the last two or three days, four days, of May of 1967. They told us to be ready to stay
2 for thirty days. So we went up there, and it was hot and dusty and miserable. Even though
3 that was forty-two years ago, I think I paid two dollars for a Coke. It was one of those old
4 six-ounce bottles, you know? I don't even think I got two swallows out of the damn
5 thing. So we got up there, pulled in, set up the guns and everything, and it was pretty
6 peaceful. I mean, we had a lot of work to do with filling sandbags and so forth and we set
7 up our watch schedule and what have you, and then I guess another night or two, about
8 the time the convoy arrived—they'd usually arrive about 11:30, noon, 1300, somewhere
9 around the middle of the day and drop off any ammo or anything like that. We only had
10 C-rations to eat, which are awful. But they'd also bring along some vacuum cool-pack
11 cans, and there was enough in there for two beers for everybody and that was heaven. So
12 anyway, we did do that for a while, and then all of a sudden they started shooting at us
13 when we were having our beers. The first sergeant we had arranged to get, like, two sets
14 of vacuum cans. They'd send the beer up in one set, and we'd put it over in the corner,
15 and then we'd send the empty set back, even though we didn't issue out the beers until
16 after it got dark, because as we'd call them, "Happy Hour Charlie" with all these Marines
17 running around looking for beer, they'd start pouring mortars in on top of us. That didn't
18 make a lot of sense. Times I've thought I would die for a beer, but when it comes right
19 down to it, I didn't. Then, just to kind of set the scene here, things basically just worse
20 and worse and worse as far as the level of activity and in and out and everything else all
21 the way through July, and maybe on into August. Starts to get a little fuzzy here. One
22 thing that was a little off the wall, just to give you how smart and dumb Marines can be—
23 all my guys—you had these flak jackets. I don't know who the genius was, but they'd
24 sew little loops on them, like here (gesture), and all my guys wanted to be John Wayne
25 and carry their three or four or five grenades like that. I told them, I said, "If the pin gets
26 pulled out of one of those, what do you think is gonna happen? It's gonna at least blow
27 your whole damn shoulder off and maybe your head!" So I started giving them grief
28 about that and one night I hear someone holler "Grenade!" Hit the deck and I'm looking
29 around and I crawl over to this hole and looked down there, and I see it. I thought
30 something looked strange. First sergeant comes over to me and he says, "Lieutenant"—
31 he's got this kid with like this claw grip on his shoulder. I said, "What do you got there,

1 Top?" Well, he had the igniter. You can screw that thing, it's like a little .22 shell up at
2 the top. It's got some highly explosive powder and stuff in the middle of it and it blows
3 the whole thing up that way, when you pull the pin it swings over like a hammer on a
4 rifle. So I looked around. I said, "Does somebody got a shovel?" They said, "Yeah." I
5 took that kid and I said, "All I want to hear you say is 'Yes, sir.' Take this shovel and go
6 over there and start digging a six-by," which is a six-foot-by-six-foot-by-six-foot hole. So
7 he was digging, and I said, "Don't you dare even think about going to sleep. You will get
8 a little bit of sleep tonight but you're only gonna sleep as long as I let you." So I let him
9 get about three naps of about twenty minutes each, although I scared him so bad I don't
10 think he really slept. The next morning I went over and told him to start digging. But all
11 of a sudden, he flipped out. It seemed like he got to be a heat casualty. I was going, "Oh,
12 shit. I'm in big trouble now." So I got the doc over there and he says, "He's not showing
13 any heat casualty stuff." And I said, "Well, Doc, I'd like to evacuate him." Doc says,
14 "Yeah, let's do that." So about two or three hours later, after he got taken out by the
15 helicopter I get a call on the super-secret radio where they scramble your words and then
16 it unscrambles over here. This fellow says, "This is Lieutenant,"—which would be like a
17 captain in the Marine Corps—"at the aid station and we have Private," whatever his name
18 was, "down here." I'm thinking, "This guy is just being polite, trying to tell him what the
19 officer is gonna have to tell the JAG (Judge Advocate General) guy that Dick Hulslander
20 was a bad boy and abused one of the Marines." And he said, "I'm sending Private,"
21 whoever it was, "back up to you." He says, "I have a very special prescription for him." I
22 said, "Oh?" He says, "Yeah, I want you to meet the helicopter when it comes in and make
23 sure you've got plenty of shovels for him, and put him back in the hole, make sure he's
24 got plenty of water because he needs that." He says, "And give him a little food once in a
25 while, and work him hard for the next seventy-two hours." I said, "Yes, sir. Thank you
26 very much." That helicopter came in there and I'm standing there just outside the front
27 watch and I go, "Come here, son-of-a-bitch, you're all mine." You know what? All of a
28 sudden all this nonsense with the guys misbehaving with the grenades stopped. It got to
29 where from the occasional rounds coming in, the Happy Hour Charlie, to where it was at
30 any given hour we'd get at least three or four batches of incoming coming in. And at that
31 point, mostly they were from the, what would be the north or the northeast. There was a

1 range of mountains that ran—I might not be real correct—but ran more or less north and
2 south to what would be our rear, in effect. They got around there with rockets and
3 recoilless rifles. A recoilless rifle works just like a deer rifle. The projectile is about just
4 like that (gesture) I think it's 106 or 107 millimeters. It's about like that (gesture). It's
5 really an anti-tank weapon. Of course, they put different kinds of configurations on it and
6 they just really started to tear us up. We lost guys—I guess the worst day I ever had in the
7 Marine Corps was when one of those damn things came in. It was during Operation
8 Buffalo, and I had seen my buddy and classmate from college the night before. We
9 managed to get a couple extra beers and he and I each had a couple of beers. He had
10 some fresh—I always liked Lucky Strikes from Lexington, Kentucky. Of course, I don't
11 smoke anymore. But at any rate, they were out there just really getting slaughtered left
12 and right. I could hear Tom out there, you know, talking to me, and we were trying to get
13 the rounds out there as quick as we could, and I'm thinking, "We've got to support these
14 Marines out there. But we're getting low on rounds on the gun." I mean when we usually
15 had 250-300 rounds, we had less than 50 rounds per gun. So finally I devised a plan and
16 had it all worked out and my communications chief, Sergeant Holcomb, said,
17 "Lieutenant, do you want me to round up the group to do this?" And I said, "Yes,
18 please." We did, and I told him how to do it, kind of like keep the guys dispersed and
19 then all of a sudden come together and grab the rounds out of the ammo bin and run like
20 hell up to one thing and just throw all the rounds out the back and then disperse again.
21 Wait five minutes and do it again and maybe we could confuse Charlie. I guess what
22 Charlie figured out was I guess I went to the well once too often. Everybody told me I did
23 a good job, but the outcome didn't tell me I did a good job. They ran that truck in there
24 and one of these recoilless rifle rounds came and hit I believe it was the left front fender
25 and killed three of my guys outright. Four others of them got chewed up really, really
26 bad. Fortunately, I guess, for what I had left of my sanity, it was just too goddamn busy
27 to grieve. That's what happened. His Tom Teaney and his whole company got wiped out
28 except for two guys, so all of it went for naught anyway. But we did kill off, we
29 essentially got two regiments of the NVA, I was told later, were essentially out of action.
30 I can remember some things—and I don't know this is the kind of stuff you all are
31 looking for—but one night after we'd had a real coordinated attack, they would even

1 order their infantry troops into the charge, into the wire where they were still dropping
2 mortars in. In other words, they were sending their own troops into their own mortar
3 charge so there'd be a constant attack going on. We finally got that thing stopped, and
4 kept dropping in and making rounds here and there, so-called harassment interdiction
5 fires, and in the morning I went up to check our segment of the wire and all of a sudden I
6 heard two Army guys—they had some anti-aircraft-type armaments from World War II.
7 They hollered, "Get down, Lieutenant!" and then I just hit the deck and they started
8 shooting away. There were two or three of the North Vietnamese, and I swear they must
9 have been high on dope or something or other, because they just came charging out of
10 there. They were getting .50-caliber holes shot in them, and they ran quite a ways. They
11 looked like hamburger. They weren't even recognizable as human beings. And what else
12 happened? Oh, anyway, after that I told my people I was going to go in my bunker, which
13 was right next to my executive officer bunker. I guess I should tell you that's what my
14 job was for the most part. Up there, I was the executive officer of Whiskey 1/12. Every
15 now and then I'd get somebody who was senior to me, so I'd switch down to the next
16 thing, fire direction officer. But most of the time I was the XO. And I thought, "Maybe
17 I'll go in and get an hour." I told somebody, whoever it was, "An hour, an hour and a
18 half. Don't let me sleep longer than that." I got in, I think I just dozed off, and this noise
19 started out, kind of like a real loud noise, but kind of like "Zzhhhrrrrr!" Like that, but
20 much, much, much, much louder. And then the whole ground would shake. I don't know
21 what it would have measured under Richter scale, but it would have been well up there. I
22 thought, "Good God almighty. What are they shooting at us now?" So I crawled out of
23 my bunker, and it all seemed to be going off to our northeast, and I had to look up, and
24 here were these B-52 bombers out of Thailand. They came and would turn and would
25 release their bombs that went out there. So I went running back up. Just to show the
26 tenacity of the North Vietnamese soldier—the last of the bombs hadn't even landed and
27 gone off before we were seeing muzzle flashes coming out of the dirt and the dust and
28 everything. These were 500-pound bombs that were burying deep and going off and the
29 dirt and dust must have been 1500-2000 feet up in the air. So, here's one guy—I might
30 not want to sit down and have a beer with one of them, although maybe I would—but I
31 sure got a lot of respect for him. After that we went on pretty much as things were. We

1 had two or three more major ground offensives, and then I got word one day that I had
2 orders to go on R&R, rest and relaxation, meet my wife in Hawaii. I got promoted to first
3 lieutenant, and I was transferred out of Whiskey Battery. Well, I was heartbroken with
4 that. I mean, these were my men—what was left of them. So I went back there to the rear
5 like I was ordered to do. Went up to see—I forget the colonel's name, but it was a full-
6 bird colonel. I told him that—you know, I was polite and everything—but I said, “It
7 really, really hurts to leave that battery up there.” I said, “I wouldn't mind being
8 transferred away from them after they got out, but I really feel like I'm deserting them.”
9 And he says, “Well,” he says, “two or three things.” First of all, he told me that I had to
10 learn that in the Marine Corps we didn't always to get what we wanted to do, no matter
11 how honorable the thoughts. He appreciated me coming in and telling him how I felt, and
12 he wanted me to know that they were only going to be up there another week, and then
13 they'd be transferred back out. So I thanked him for his time and told him I felt much
14 better, which I did. And then I went back down to Dong Ha. I was part of the 1st Field
15 Artillery Group. And if you think about that, that acronym is down to 1st FAG. And if
16 you're gonna be part of 1st FAG, you damn well be ready to fight. And I always did like
17 to fight. I wouldn't make too [big of a thing] about it, but I didn't mind a good little
18 fisticuffs back then. So I went down there. The first thing we did was we set up this
19 supporting arms something-or-other center. It was one of the earlier uses of database
20 computer-type stuff. We had all the batteries that the Marine Corps and the Army and
21 everybody else had up there. We tracked all the missions. We tracked all the airstrikes
22 from a little F-4 dropping a couple napalm canisters—remind me to come back to napalm
23 canisters—all the way up to the big B-52 strikes and they were shooting the *New Jersey*
24 for us with those big 16-inch two-ton rounds. They aren't too accurate as far as the range-
25 probable error. If they're shooting from here (gesture) and it lands here or here (gesture),
26 that's kind of a wide spread. But they're deadly accuracy as far as left and right goes.
27 And they had plenty of rounds, so you know a lot of ammo makes for a good marksman.
28 The quick story about the napalm thing was, when they were really getting at us, we had
29 a sniper that was about 175-200 meters behind us. If anything popped its head up, it got
30 shot at. I thought it was dark enough, and I went outside the bunker to pick up a can of C-
31 rations and it was what they call boned turkey. It was turkey that had been sliced off the

1 bone, obviously, and mixed with some gravy and whatever else might go in it. Well, that
2 damn marksman went and shot at me. Fortunately, he didn't hit me, but unfortunately, he
3 hit the can of turkey and gravy. I had turkey and gravy all over me and I was furious. And
4 I had the frequencies and I ran back in there and said, "Give me that damn radio!" And I
5 called up there. I had a frequency I could call any of the guys that were still hot with
6 ammo flying around, and I said, "I'm looking for somebody that's got nape, and I gotta
7 call back." I gave very exact marks where he can see it and everything, and he went out
8 there and rolled that napalm in there and that whole freaking hedgerow was on fire. We
9 didn't get any more sniper fire for a while. So anyway, one of the things that was kind of
10 interesting was that while I was at Dong Ha the second time, for several weeks, maybe a
11 couple of months, we had a briefing for Nguyen Cao Ky and General Westmoreland and
12 there was a US—John Connally, or Connors. He who was the US Senator who was riding
13 in the car with the JFK. Connally, the Texas senator. And Cao Ky was mostly about
14 show, coming in there he was all dressed up. He came in a helicopter and the senator was
15 there, I think, really to try to learn stuff and see what was going on. And Westmoreland—
16 boy, he was sharp. I did the artillery part, had a big map of the whole northern part of I
17 Corps that showed how we had our artillery arranged and all that kind of thing. He says,
18 "Okay, Lieutenant, good job." He says, "Now let me just ask a couple of questions and
19 see if I've got that straight." And just as an example, he'd say, "Okay, you've got three
20 05 batteries there, there, and there. And then you've got 55 batteries on either side," as
21 an example. He says, "Is that correct?" And I said, "Well, no, sir. It isn't really quite
22 correct. We got the 05 batteries over here, because that's where we have all the infantry
23 when we bring 'em. We've got the 55 batteries over here because they'll shoot a little bit
24 farther," and so forth. He wasn't asking me that for his own edification. He wanted to see
25 if I knew what the hell I was talking about. Well, I just respected him more and more for
26 it. Then at that point, I don't know that they did with that combat data center, but I got-
27 still under 1st FAG, relocated down to Phu Bai, which was, I don't know. You're
28 probably familiar with it, but it's just a little bit south of Hue where they had that huge
29 battle of Hue City. Let me make sure I've got this right here. Got down there, and sat
30 around doing nothing for a couple or three days. And I was one of these guys that—and
31 I'm not saying this to look like, whatever—but I got so juiced up over there with the

1 excitement and whatever you want to call it, of war that I got horribly bored in the rear. I
2 mean, almost psychopathically bored. So I volunteered for everything that came along.
3 The first one that came along was, they wanted a couple of watch officers for base
4 defense. So I just raised my hand and said, "If you'll let me go, sir, I'll be happy to go!"
5 So he said, "Yeah," and I went over there. We were in charge of coordinating all the stuff
6 around the outside, you know, the perimeter and all that sort of thing. A couple of
7 interesting things happened. One night, I don't know, 2200-2300, I got a call in from one
8 of the bunkers, and he says, the one Marine in the bunker said, "My buddy is wounded
9 over here!" I said, "What do you mean he's wounded?" He said, "Well, he's shot in the
10 foot!" I said, "Well, what the hell was he doing outside the bunker?" Well, he wasn't
11 outside the bunker. Then it was, "Listen, goddamn it. Stop screwing around. Did this
12 dumb bastard shoot himself in the foot?" And he said, "Well, yes. I don't want to be a
13 rat." I said, "Well, you're not being a rat. You're getting an incompetent Marine out of
14 there." I said, "Never mind telling him what my reaction was, but I'll be right over there."
15 So I took a staff NCO with me and got him and we helped him walk and everything and
16 got him in the jeep. Then we started to turn around. The staff sergeant was driving. He
17 says, "Where are you going? The base hospital is over there." And I said, "Son, they'll
18 come get you at the base hospital when the time's ready." I said, "But the first thing
19 we're gonna do is we're gonna go over to the base MPs and I'm gonna fill out the form
20 alleging that you most probably had a self-inflicted wound and that you ought to be
21 court-martialed for it." I thought the poor bastard was gonna die. But I'm thinking, "You
22 know, there's people out there getting killed all the time, and this cowardly little SOB
23 was so, whatever, couldn't get himself collected together, he had to shoot himself in the
24 foot." And I don't know whatever happened to him. Somebody came along and took a
25 deposition, that's the word, took a deposition from me. I think they probably plea-
26 bargained him, but they got him out of there. Then there was another thing. I'm totally
27 scared of snakes.

28 JS: I don't blame you.

29 RH: At the time that Hue City, that battle of Hue started to come around, we had
30 some intelligence—I don't know if it was correct or not—but that there was armored
31 vehicles moving down towards Hue and Phu Bai from the northwest, which would mean

1 they'd skirt or whatever either side of Khe Sanh and come on in from that direction. And
2 we didn't have a defense perimeter set up. If you want to defend against tanks, you want
3 them to go over things like that that will either cause them to get stuck, which is possible,
4 or at least show the underbelly when they crawl up like that and you can put some armor
5 piercing recoilless rifle rounds in there. So the, colonel, lieutenant colonel, who was my
6 boss, told me the sorts of things we needed to do, and then he told me, "Go on over to
7 Commander so-and-so of the Seabees and get yourself a Seabee and a bulldozer." So we
8 went over there, we're running around, doing all this stuff. I couldn't resist it. I said to the
9 Seabee, "I've never run one of those bulldozers. Could I run it for a while?" 'Cause we
10 were just smoothing something off to clear fields. He said, "Yes, sir. Every time I get an
11 officer, especially a Marine officer to do my work, I'm more than happy about that." So I
12 smoothed it all off and everything. There's a snake over there call the habu. As far as
13 biting and stuff like that it's pretty much like a cobra, but it doesn't have the hood, it just
14 kind of stays like that. So I ride back up with the dozer, stop it and shut it down and so
15 forth, and I said to the Seabee, I said, "Well, sailor, how'd this old Marine do with your
16 bulldozer?" And he said, "Oh, sir, you did wonderful!" He says, "You even killed that
17 habu down there." I'd run over it with the treads and it looked like little pieces of sausage
18 about that long (gesture). It scared me half to death. I reached in my flak jacket for my
19 ever-present pack of cigarettes and I must have shaken fifteen cigarettes out on the deck
20 before I got one in my mouth and lit it. I mean, geez! So anyway, we did that. They never
21 hit us. I never heard any confirmed observation saying that they were coming down there,
22 but they did. Also about this time Highway 1, I think it is. I don't know if they've
23 renumbered them now or not.

24 JS: It's still Highway 1.

25 RH: Okay. Ran right up and down the east side of Vietnam, maybe not right on
26 the beach but just inland just a little bit. Well, that went through our combat base at Phu
27 Bai and we would close down the gates each night. This was when I was in base defense.
28 I got a call from the south gate and they said something was going on because the people
29 are really crowded and they're making a lot of noise. There was a village and a line of
30 trees and stuff like that, maybe 300, 500 meters outside the line. So I said, "All right, I'll
31 be right down there." And then I called back to the base commander and told him what I

1 had heard and that I was going down there and he said, "Well, all right. I'm gonna give it
2 to your discretion." He says, "If you can shoot warning rounds if you need to go right
3 ahead and do it. And if you have to put a couple of bursts out there and pop a few of them
4 off, that's your discretion. I'd rather you call me first, but if you have to just start
5 sweeping machineguns back and forth go ahead and do it. Just make sure what you do
6 will look justifiable to anybody that might ask." I thought, "Boy, I'd better do this right."
7 I went down there, and I think they did have some of the enemy in there pushing these
8 citizens ahead. I had two machineguns down there. I told them, "Well, shoot one of you
9 on either side of the road about ten meters away," and they started to slow down. And we
10 did that two or three times and then the people that were in the front, they just turned
11 around and start going backward and stopped it. I was a little nervous about that one. I
12 didn't think we'd have any problems stopping them, but you know, it could have looked
13 pretty bad. Now, the one other thing that I wanted to cover was, I think I told you, I
14 would tend to get real bored in the rear. And one day somebody—I don't know who it
15 was—I was in headquarters in the 1st FAG. It was a bird colonel that ran the thing, and he
16 says, "Oh, Mr. Hulslander, I think I got something that might interest you." And I said,
17 "Oh? What's that, sir?" And he said, "We'll cover for you at base defense, but there's a
18 South Vietnamese convoy." What they were doing was they started down in Saigon and
19 they got, I don't know, half a dozen, eight, ten government officials that would equate to
20 our senators, or Supreme Court justices, our cabinet members, that kind of thing. That
21 level of person. And they and their wives were all in the back of, I don't know if they
22 were deuce-and-a-halves or five-tons, but six-by trucks. And they were going to—I don't
23 know if they went from Saigon over to the Cambodian border and back, but as far as I
24 was concerned, I was to go with a, I guess it was a company of armored infantry. Are you
25 familiar with what a Mike 113 is?

26 JS: Yes, sir, but for the purpose could you go ahead and—

27 RH: Yes. It's a personnel carrier on tracks. It looks like a third or a half of a
28 boxcar, only instead of riding on big rails like that, it runs on tracks. It's got a diesel
29 engine. It's not real effective armor, but it will stop most small-arms fire. So that's what
30 these guys were in. And I volunteered for this. I went and grabbed my maps and
31 everything and got the frequencies for the radios and so forth. Then I ran over to the unit

1 commander over there and told him I was his American FO. He was very nice, and they
2 had one or two Australian warrant officers. They're the craziest SOBs that fought
3 anywhere in the war. They're nuts. But at any rate, we took off and went south out of Phu
4 Bai. If memory serves me correctly, we were going to meet this crazy convoy at
5 something called the Lang Ko Bridge. I think it was two words, L-A-N-G, space K-O, or
6 something like that. We picked them up there and started on north. We were on the
7 coastal plain, and somehow or another the enemy must have figured out something was
8 going on because every now and then we'd get mortared. Then the company commander,
9 whatever it was, of the armored infantry group, would say, "All right, with all lights out,
10 and nobody making any noise, turn around and go back south." I needed to—then he
11 said, "FOs, get some fire over there and give those guys something to keep them
12 occupied with." Well, when you're adjusting artillery—that is, moving the round left,
13 right, front, back—you have to tell them where your location is. Then they shoot an
14 azimuth, and when you say "left" it might be "right" for them, if the battery is shooting
15 from over here, or whatever. And then we were moving. Well, my first thought was that
16 I'd tell them where we're at. "Well, I don't know, those people are listening in there." So
17 I'd say, "Okay, we're going from Red Sox stadium to, you know, the New York
18 Yankees. Or, we're going from here to there." And I did it all in sports talk and it seemed
19 to work pretty well. We had a couple of secondary explosions. But at any rate, we went
20 on up to Hue. And this was, I think, two days before—no, on the way down, one thing I
21 wanted to tell you was we were going along and it was where there were some mountains
22 right up next to the ocean and it was one of these roads that's here's the topography of the
23 road, cut into it like that. And we're in jeeps and our black-out lights were worthless. And
24 my guy was doing a real good job, as best he could. We ended up starting to go over the
25 side. So, he jammed the brakes on, and I told him—meanwhile, see, we're just over the
26 side, and the guys are going back behind us. I kept thinking, "Man, if that whole column
27 goes by, they're liable to go five miles before they notice we're missing." So I put my
28 foot on the brake and I said, "Try to get out of here." Well, he tried to get out but the jeep
29 wanted to roll over. So he says, "Lieutenant, you try to get out of here." So I got out and
30 went up there and got it to stop. This Australian warrant officer comes along and those
31 M-113s have a real heavy cable. It must be, I remembered it three quarters of an inch to

1 an inch in diameter and a winch I think on the front of them. They came down and
2 hooked it up on the towing pintle on the back with it stabilized. I got my driver out. I'm
3 sitting there watching them, and they had their lights on at this point. I'm standing there
4 in the lights. I don't know why I was that dumb, but I watched them pull my jeep back up
5 off the cliff. I hear, "Hey, Mike, it's their fucking war! Get up here where it's dark so you
6 don't get shot!" And that must have been the warrant officer. So, anyway, that's when we
7 went on down, we picked up the convoy, we came back up north to Hue. We spent the
8 night in the MACV compound, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. It was an
9 old French administrative building or something, but it was really, really nice. The Aussie
10 was there. I guess his nerves must've been somewhat shot. I know mine were. We just
11 got royally drunk. He started out by apologizing, that he didn't think he could hold up his
12 countrymen's reputation for ability to drink. Well, believe you me, he could hold up ten
13 of his countrymen. Gosh! So, after that we rode around the next morning because we
14 didn't have to wait for the convoy to come back. I rode around in my jeep and put my
15 steel pot in the back and took off my belt and put the pistol back there and I had
16 somewhere gotten a hold of a Winchester Model 12 riot gun with those special shells for
17 them and that kind of thing. My driver did the same thing. So we're just riding around in
18 cotton utilities and soft covers. We were sight-seers. We rode around all around the
19 ancient imperial capital. I'm snapping pictures left and right. "Hey, turn here! I wonder
20 what's down this street!" As far as we knew—I guess there's people that are going to say
21 different—but the timing of when that thing broke lose was a complete failure in current
22 intelligence. But current, I mean seventy-two hours. We knew that something was
23 happening up to the northwest, but there was no indication that the whole place had been
24 completely infiltrated, that they were just waiting for the right guy to blow the whistle. So
25 anyway, I got done with all that and went back down to Phu Bai and took the film out of
26 the cameras or whatever it was. I don't remember exactly what the configuration was. I
27 sent them off to my wife. I guess a day or two later was when it all blew up, and she had,
28 a couple of days later, the pictures. And she was all upset, because she'd thought I had
29 been up there when the place blew up. I did go up a couple of times later to do some stuff
30 as far as being an FO. Did that. Let me just make sure. I think that was about it, because
31 not too long after that—I will tell you one more thing about the Air Force. I went back

1 down to Da Nang. I had orders to go home. I got down there and I went into the bachelor
2 officers' quarters. You didn't have to be a bachelor, you just had to not have your wife
3 with you, which you didn't have in Vietnam at all. I might mention that my cousin who
4 was at West Point, and probably was my hero and what have you, he had been in
5 Vietnam his first tour. It was so early in the war that it was an accompanied tour for him.
6 He and his wife got an apartment in a beautiful old French village in Saigon and every
7 day he'd fly these wing-over, twin-engine Otters out to Green Beret camps and that kind
8 of thing. Anyway, I got down to Da Nang to catch a plane out the next morning and so I
9 asked the sergeant at the BOQ where was a good place to eat. He told me the Air Force
10 base Officers' Club. I said, "Jesus, I don't know if they want a bunch of stinky-ass old
11 Marines over there." I mean, I was filthy. Even at that point. He said, "Well, we've got
12 plenty of hot water, Lieutenant. All the guys that have come down here, they've had a
13 good time. You catch the bus right out front there. Everything will be fine, you'll enjoy
14 it." So I took two or three showers, consecutively, got myself fairly well squared away,
15 neat utilities on and so forth, and got the bus over there. And I see these pilots walking in
16 with their fancy blue flight suits with all these patches all over them and silk ascots and
17 they've got all these gorgeous looking women that I presume were nurses or whatever.
18 They were American-looking women. I thought, "Oh, this is not the place for me," and I
19 turned around to get on the bus to go back, and the dadgum bus had left. So I thought,
20 "Well, I'm gonna go in and get a drink anyway. So I walk in, walking toward the bar, and
21 there's this very large, physically large Air Force colonel there, he goes, "Well, well,
22 well. The F-ing Marines have landed." And I said, "Colonel, most Marines like to fight,
23 and like to fight more than most Marines do. But frankly, whether you're an airman first
24 class or a bird colonel, I'm just too wore out to fight." He says, "Come over here and sit
25 down. Where've you been?" So I told him that I had been up to Con Thien and so forth.
26 He says, "Oh! Don't you dare leave! You can't buy anything. What are you drinking?"
27 Well, he picked up my whole bar tab and believe you me, he and I consumed a lot of
28 bourbon. Then what he did, he said, "Are you comfortable here?" I said, "Yes, sir. Every
29 time I have another drink I get all the more comfortable." Then he turns around. There
30 was a major and a couple of other guys at the table. He said, "Major, go over and get two
31 plates of steak, one for me, medium rare, and one for the Marine here. Son, how do you

1 like your steaks?” And I said, “I like mine medium rare, too.” Well, here was this
2 major—you could see the smoke coming out of his ears. Not only was he waiting on a
3 first lieutenant, but it was a Marine first lieutenant. Then coming back, the only thing I
4 really remember—the re-entry to civilization was kind of difficult. We got on a—I don’t
5 remember if it was Delta. I don’t think it was Delta. But whatever “Proud Bird with the
6 Golden Tail,” they called themselves—and flew out of De Nang the next morning. I was
7 kind of just—I don’t know. I was just kind of mentally dumb. They went out and they
8 said, “Okay, we’re now out of Vietnamese airspace.” About a third of us didn’t say
9 anything, and all the other guys were hooting and hollering and cheering like it’s a high
10 school football game. One of the stewardesses told me later, “You can always tell which
11 of you all were all out on the front lines fighting. You guys don’t make any noise. You’re
12 just pretty well” whatever. So I went to Okinawa again on the way back, then chose to
13 stay over an extra three or four days to try to get civilized. Then I came on back and met
14 my wife. The duty I had when I came back was an assistant inspector instructor. The
15 inspector instructor staff are active-duty Marines who inspect and instruct reservists. But
16 at that time, probably half or more of our time was occupied doing by casualty and death
17 notifications and doing funerals and so forth. With all that was going on in the 1970
18 period with my four-year obligation was I probably stayed an extra couple of months, but
19 I resigned my commission and got out and went into banking. I kind of wish I hadn’t
20 done it, but I don’t know. Hard to say. Can’t second-guess yourself. Now, did I leave any
21 questions out or anything?

22 JS: I do have some, if you don’t mind.

23 RH: Go ahead.

24 JS: Yeah. That was a very good overview, definitely. But, yeah, there are some
25 other things I would still like to cover.

26 RH: Let’s cover them.

27 JS: All right. To begin with, I guess I’ll start with my colleagues’ questions, what
28 he wanted me to ask you, which was prior to becoming a Marine, what was your
29 impression of the Marines? What did you think of the Marines as a kid growing up?

30 RH: Well, I always thought, I just thought the Marines were the best of the best.
31 There was no doubt about it that when you were watching them, whether it’s at the

1 various memorials around Washington, they're always sharper, always snappier. I think
2 their uniforms look better anyway, just by the virtue of the design of them. But the state
3 of maintenance and polish and perfection of gig lines and all those different kinds of
4 things that go in the military appearance, I always thought they were better. And I always
5 admired that high level of discipline and how it seemed to transform into performance.
6 That was my deal. I kind of looked at that and I thought, "I want to be part of that." Not
7 just to be cool and chase all the chicks with a good-looking uniform—although it wasn't
8 a bad part—but just to see something that was a highly successful organization and see if
9 I can measure up, so to speak.

10 JS: Right. Yes, sir. All right. How did, or did, your experiences, once you joined
11 the Marines, became a Marine and went to Vietnam—did your view of the Marines
12 change?

13 RH: Oh, no. I always loved the Marine Corps. Still do. I would have to say if you
14 ask me about the handful of things that I've done—and I've had quite a few different
15 experiences—I'd have to say, first of all, marrying my wife, second of all being a father
16 of two sons of whom I'm very proud, and third—a real close third—is being a Marine
17 officer who commanded the Marines in combat. Ronald Reagan said—I don't know if
18 you know this quote or not—"Some people spend their entire life wondering if they make
19 a difference, or made a difference, and Marines don't have that problem." But that's also
20 a burden, too. It's a burden that when you're going through boot camp or whatever it may
21 be they transfer into a plus. By the time I got through OCS, which is what you would
22 expect it to be, it's a selection, a weeding out process, and then what they call the Basic
23 School, which teaches you everything you need to know to be up to and including a
24 company commander in the infantry, and then they'll send you out to tanks or artillery if
25 you have another specialty. They're constantly letting you know that there is this long,
26 200-plus-year history of success and honor and distinction and service to country. And
27 now it's your job to carry it on. My reaction at first was, "Holy shit. I didn't think of it
28 that way." You feel that is, the first time it comes into your mind I felt is as, "Boy, it's a
29 big burden to carry," and it went on from there to, "This is a big honor. I can do this, and
30 I'm going to do it, and I'm going to do it well."

1 JS: Okay. So then would you say, then, that being a Marine lived up to your
2 expectations of what you thought it would be?

3 RH: It exceeded it. I know when I got out of the Marine Corps I wanted to go into
4 banking, because it's what had interested me in college. I'd go around and go to different
5 interviews, and different other kinds of things. You know, I don't come running into the
6 room saying, "Hey, ya'll, I was a Marine officer!" But when it comes up, they go, "He
7 must have a lot of abilities to be able to do that." I never really thought I was all that
8 much more able than anybody else. I think if a decent person gives a shit and he finds
9 himself in that situation, he'll respond to the situation. I was just lucky enough to get the
10 chance to respond.

11 JS: Yes, sir. Okay. All right. You mentioned the training and the OCS. Can you
12 talk a minute about that? Could you tell me about the instructors in training? Were these,
13 at this time, would they have been Korean War veterans, or—?

14 RH: No, they were mostly—well, let me talk about OCS and TBS separately. In
15 OCS we had a sergeant E-5, which is a three-striper, and a sergeant E-6 which is a staff
16 sergeant or a four-striper, three up and one rocker. Most of these fellows had been
17 probably about five or more years in the Marine Corps and at least one tour of Vietnam.
18 It was all about—oh, I don't know if you've seen the old movie with Jack Webb and *The*
19 *D.I.*, or any of those kinds of things. But it's all pure, hard, mental pressure. It's weeding
20 out, it's seeing if you can take a highly intense environment and perform exactly what the
21 hell you're told to do. You do learn a few things in OCS, but it's mostly a weeding out
22 process. Now, when you go to the Basic School—and I go like that (gesture) because
23 OCS is on the main-side area of the Quantico Base, and Basic School, although now it's
24 very nice, is out in the Southern Pines area. That is almost like a college environment.
25 Large lecture halls. You learn everywhere from all the nomenclature and the mechanical
26 workings and everything like that of the up to and including a .30-caliber machinegun.
27 You learn tactics, you learn military history, you learn administrative processes, from if
28 you were a private that just got caught apparently trying to steal something, well, we had
29 to know military law and to know what form and what all they'd do with you, or do I just
30 say, "Well, just sit on the couch and we'll get with you in a week or two." Some of these
31 things seem like, "Oh, of course, I know what to do." Well, not really. You look at what

1 can you do. And so it gets you through all that kind of stuff. It's pretty much a by-the-
2 book sort of thing, but it's also extremely informative. It gives you something that you
3 can go do your job with. Among the things they do, as long as (unintelligible) they said,
4 "The first thing you need to do when you report into your FMF unit, Fleet Marine Force
5 unit, is go find out, talk to the CO, find out if you've good staff NCOs that are in there.
6 Go up to that staff NCO and be honest with him. Introduce yourself, shake hands, and
7 say, 'Listen, I need your help. I'm brand new here. You're an experienced guy, and if I
8 get to be too much of a nuisance, tell me to back off. But otherwise I'm gonna probably
9 bird-dog you for a while just to see what it is you're doing, and how you do these
10 things.'" There's a lot of courses in civilian leadership, too. If you go up to somebody
11 and say, "Hey, I need your help," very, very, very few people are going to tell you to
12 blow off. You learn all those kinds of things in the Basic School.

13 JS: Okay. All right. Was any aspect of the OCS or the Basic School geared
14 specifically for Vietnam?

15 RH: Oh, yeah. They went through an educational module of lecture application
16 demonstration. For instance, if you were learning assault on a hill. Like, let's say we're
17 over here and we want to assault on that hill. They'd have slides, maps and all that kind
18 of stuff that—in fact, now they have sand tables. My class from that got the money and
19 bought them the sand tables. It's kind of funny, it's a kindergarten or first grade kind of a
20 tool, but they'll get in there and they'll take the sand and they'll move it all around and
21 "Okay, we're over here and we're attacking this hill that's over there," and all that kind
22 of thing. So that is the lecture, and then they'll go out. They have a company or a
23 battalion of Marines at Quantico that are called the school's demonstrations troops.
24 You'll see them go through that, but they do it, make a move, then stop, and the lecturer
25 says, "Okay, the lieutenant in command of that platoon has now moved up the 3rd
26 Squad," and explain to you what's going on. And then they'll go through and they'll take
27 the student lieutenants and say, "Okay, Hulslander, you're the platoon commander today.
28 Vart, you're the platoon sergeant," and give you all the billets so you'll organize just a
29 rifle platoon. And then we go out and do it. And, boy, I tell you what, the pressure's on
30 you there 'cause they figure, "We told you how to do it, we showed you how to do it.
31 Now, unless your IQ is lower than the number of fingers and toes, damn it, you'd better

1 be able to do it.” But was also fun. You’d get done with that, and—quick story on that.
2 We were in a deal one night, my very, very best buddy, Andy Vart—my older son is
3 named after him, he’s also a Marine—we were supposed to guard the top of this hill and
4 then we knew the school’s demonstration troops would attack us with blank fire adapters
5 and then we’d go to sleep and march back to main side the next morning. So, Andy and I
6 went out and dug our foxhole together and everything. I told him, “I’ve got to go to the
7 bathroom.” He says, “Well.” I said, “I think what I’ll do is I’ll sneak out there when
8 they’re not looking, maybe forty or fifty yards, and go.” So I did. The wind was blowing
9 this way, so my buddies smelled me. I come back, Andy says, “What’s it like out there?”
10 And I said, “They’ve been running this problem for a long time because there are trails
11 out there and I took my dump right in the middle of where two of them intersect.” So he
12 says, “Well, that’s good. I got to go. I think I’ll do the same thing. Where should I go?” I
13 said, “I was out that way. Go about fifteen meters, or fifteen degrees to the right and go
14 out there about forty or fifty meters. I’m sure you’ll find two trails.” So he did. We sat in
15 there, and pretty soon after a while we can hear them moving out there. Then all of a
16 sudden they started shooting, and then all of a sudden you hear, “Oh, shit! Ah! Stop!”
17 The colonel ran around and secured the problem and the next morning when we had
18 formation he said, “We apparently had one or two lieutenants who practiced biological
19 warfare last night. I’ll give you an A for knowing what you’re doing and an E for
20 judgment if I ever catch it, but I’m not going to look very hard.” (Laughs) I’m sorry. I
21 keep diverging. Old Vart and I, we had more damn fun together.

22 JS: Right. Yes, sir. (Laughs) It’s stories like that that add a certain color to it.
23 That’s a—yes, sir.

24 RH: Marines are colorful, if nothing else.

25 JS: Yes, sir. All right, well, how did you end up in the artillery branch? Was that
26 what you wanted or were you assigned that?

27 RH: No. Well, when you get toward the end of Basic School, you fill out a form
28 and you put down your three specialties that you want. What I really wanted to do was to
29 be a pilot. I used to joke around and say, “Why would you want to stand up and walk to
30 fight when you can sit down and fight?” Anyway, I went through and we had another
31 physical at that point, and the guy who did the acuity test and depth perception test and

1 all that kind of stuff was a full medical, I think optometrist or ophthalmologist—
2 whatever. He was an MD specializing in eyeballs. He told me, “You passed all the
3 requirements to be a pilot, but your depth perception is right on the bottom edge of
4 acceptability. They just lowered that because they weren’t getting enough pilots in to fill
5 in for all the ones we’re losing. In my opinion, if you go in to be a naval aviator with the
6 Marine Corps, you’ll have a better chance of being killed by running your jet into the
7 fantail of the carrier that you will be of being shot down by Vietnamese.” So, as any good
8 Marine does when you’re faced with a great disappointment, I went out that night and got
9 roaring ass drunk. We still hadn’t filled out our forms. I thought, “Well, the infantry
10 doesn’t really intrigue me that much.” It’s a hell of an opportunity to lead men. But I’ve
11 always been pretty good with math and quick with numbers and that kind of thing and I
12 like mechanical-type stuff, even though I basically flunked out of being a mechanical
13 engineer. I looked at the artillery and I thought, “Man, this is pretty intriguing.” So I got
14 to go to the Army artillery school up the road at Lawton, at Ft. Sill. Excellent school, just
15 absolutely excellent. The Army had so much equipment, when it came time to—well, for
16 instance, when we were learning maintenance, you would do all the unit-level
17 maintenance like pulling wheels and repacking the wheel-bearings or setting the brakes
18 or any kind of thing that you would do at the battery level. We all had our own deuce-
19 and-a-half to do it on. And they had Army mechanics and, well, the Marines comprised
20 about a sixth of the instructors because of them putting them through there. Just a
21 fantastic school. Again, screwing around real quick—there’s another Marine about the
22 same height as me at the time, same build. Of course, we all had shaved haircuts. Most of
23 us still do. His name was Hodery, which is another name that starts with an H that’s just
24 about as uncommon as Hulslander. So we had assigned seats but sometimes Hodery and I
25 would switch nametags. Sometimes we’d keep our same nametags and switch seats, and
26 whatever the hell the third iteration of that is, we’d do that. So, finally, one day—I forget
27 what the Marine captain was teaching us, an artillery guy—but he says, “I want
28 Lieutenants Hodery and Hulslander up here.” So we went up there. “Yes, sir.” He said,
29 “Are you guys properly identified or are you fucking around again?” We said, “No, sir.
30 We were sitting in the correct seats,” and we did have the same nametags on. We said,
31 “We haven’t screwed around with you because you’re a Marine.” He says, “Well, you’re

1 driving these doggies crazy. I'm going to first of all ask you to stop it. And if you don't
2 stop it, I'm going to make you stop it." And I said, "Yes, sir," and so did Rich Hodery.
3 And then he says, "You're dismissed, except for one last word." "What's that, sir?" "I
4 think it was funny as hell." (Laughs)

5 JS: (Laughs) Right. Got to love messing with the Army guys.

6 RH: Doggies are just made to be messed with.

7 JS: Right. All right. We only get about an hour and a half with these cards, and
8 this one is getting close to running out. When we left off a minute ago we were talking
9 about the artillery school training. I was just wondering if you could talk a little bit about
10 if you found the training, you were talking about good training, but did you find that it
11 was adequate as far as preparing you for Vietnam and what your duties would be there?

12 RH: Oh, more than adequate. When I got there I not only knew—for instance,
13 laying the guns. You want all the guns absolutely parallel. You measure your angles of
14 deflection in mils, and there's 6400 mils in a circle, so that's approximately 15-20 times
15 as accurate as 360 degrees would be. Is that right? Yeah, yeah. What you learned was
16 how to take a look at the battery and see "Does that look right?" It's easy enough to know
17 what you're doing and paying attention. You set your guns up and look around and that
18 kind of thing. But then you run into things, you look into the gun site, if your survey-type
19 instrument called an aiming circle is headed this way, then you want the gun to be
20 pointing the same way and you're reading 6400 mils. What you do, you've got two lines
21 that you want to be parallel. If you remember your high school geometry, your alternate
22 interior angles are equal, and so forth. Then there's a couple of other things you can do
23 that we learned how to do, was to be, "Okay, gun one check with gun two, two check
24 with gun three, three check with four, four with five, five with six, and six back to one,
25 and then two or three in between there." Because the worst thing you can possibly do
26 would be to drop high explosive rounds on your own troops. The maintenance. I learned
27 a deal one time—I knew exactly how these fuses worked—and we had a deal where I
28 understood what had happened down inside the mortar tube. But the round was stuck
29 about that far from the bottom (gesture). So I knew the process to go, cool it off so you
30 wouldn't get a so-called cook-off and everything. Then I got a volunteer. We took the
31 thing, him and me took it apart, he had the tube here, and I put a couple of ammo boxes

1 and we (makes slow thumping noise) like that, like you would maybe a pipe, trying to
2 shake a rat out of it or something. I caught the round when it came out, and all my guys
3 are sitting there going, “Lieutenant, you’re crazy!” It’s almost impossible for that damn
4 thing to explode right now. I said, “You know, I’m safer there from that round, than I was
5 from Vietnamese, might be picking me off from the sniper pit over there.” Because they
6 told us—and I won’t go into all the details—but there’s a thing that won’t let the shell
7 explode until it’s gone maybe twenty meters out passed the gun and the spinning has
8 caused the mechanical reaction inside the fuse. We learned all those kinds of things.
9 That’s why I say, it was not only good, but they had excellent instructors, they all had
10 field experience in Vietnam, they all had honest-to-god war stories, and not just bullshit
11 things like taking a dump in the training trenches or whatever. It was just very, very
12 good. I hate to say that much good about the Army, but I think the reason that they’re that
13 good it they had a lot of Marines there to show them how to do it.

14 JS: Yes, sir. As far as when you got your assignment, you knew, didn’t you, that
15 when you were completing this training that Vietnam was next, was up on the horizon?

16 RH: Wasn’t any question whatsoever.

17 JS: How did you feel about it? About going?

18 RH: Well, at the time, I thought we were doing the right thing. I still think—a
19 number of people who have participated from the North Vietnamese side that by 1968 or
20 so, we, the Americans, had won the war, and they were pretty much, I think, fixing to
21 pull back. Now, given the Oriental line versus the Western line, I think they would have
22 pulled back, regrouped, got their armament together, and probably reopened combat in
23 1975 or 1980. I was very, very bitter for a while that the American people deserted us, as
24 far as I was concerned. Some big heroes, Walter Cronkite, not to say the least—I have no
25 use for him. But as far as going over there and helping people out and so forth, I think
26 that was a pretty good idea. But now, looking back on it and kind of taking that and
27 projecting forward from what they did in Iran, or Iraq rather, and Afghanistan—I don’t
28 know what’s going on in Iraq and Afghanistan, but thinking back on it, and riding around
29 in Da Nang or wherever, and seeing a bunch of eighteen-, nineteen-, twenty-year-old
30 young males riding around on Vespa motor scooters, and generally doing a lot of grab-
31 assing and girl-chasing, it’s their goddamn country. We’re out there, they for sure should

1 have been out there. I'm a little bit bitter about that. In fact, I'm probably more bitter at
2 that crew than I am toward the North Vietnamese. I have respect for the North
3 Vietnamese. I didn't agree with them politically, but I can shake his hand and say hello
4 and what have you. He was fighting for what he believed in, I was fighting for what I
5 believed in. But to not fight for what you're supposed to believe in, I think, is a terrible
6 thing.

7 JS: Okay. All right. What about those South Vietnamese that did fight? What was
8 impression of them? Did you have much contact with them?

9 RH: Yeah, yeah. They ran the gamut. (Coughs) Excuse me. That armored infantry
10 guys running around on the Mike 113, they were crack troops. Talking to their advisory
11 officer, one of the reasons they were crack troops is if you take for mechanics in one of
12 those outfits, you take a bunch Americans, and these are going to be ol' guys who have
13 their V-8 Ford or what have you trying to soup it up. The first thing they're going to do
14 with the engines in them is try to get more horsepower and revs and everything else out
15 of them. The South Vietnamese, even if they did know a little bit about motor mechanics,
16 they'd read the manual, and if it said the compression should be eight-and-a-half to one,
17 they made it to where it was eight-and-a-half to one. They followed those directions right
18 down the line. I saw them in the field, some of them in the field and they were excellent. I
19 saw others that we'd have been better off if they had never come out in the field in the
20 first place. "Cowardly" is the only word I can think of that bunch. But like I said, they ran
21 the gamut.

22 JS: I know up there up around where you were, in Con Thien and I Corps—I
23 know that, I guess, the 1st ARVN Division was the main one up there, and I know that the
24 reputation at least is they were the best of the ARVN.

25 RH: I think maybe so, yeah.

26 JS: Okay, okay. But again, even with them, they ran the gamut, though, as far as
27 being good or absolutely horrible?

28 RH: Well, I saw where they looked good and they had good results and that kind
29 of thing. There was a small ARVN unit at Con Thien. I don't know which group they
30 were with, but it was kind of interesting that they would all of a sudden disappear for five
31 or six days. And during that five or six days we'd get a major land attack. So I often

1 wondered whether they were spending more time looking for Vietnamese enemy, or
2 spying for the enemy on us. Very, very strange environment over there. You really didn't
3 know who was who. And whoever he was today, he might be somebody else tomorrow.

4 JS: Right, right. How about, did you ever see the differences between the ARVN
5 as far as the South Vietnamese army and the Vietnamese Marines? Did you every work
6 with any Vietnamese Marines?

7 RH: The only Vietnamese Marines I ran into were at Basic School. There was just
8 a couple of guys. About the only thing I can tell you is they sure as hell couldn't play
9 chess. Past that, I never really knew any. They were nice guys.

10 JS: Sure. Yes, sir. All right. As far as the country itself, of Vietnam, when you
11 first arrived, what was your initial impression of the country itself?

12 RH: You mean like what it looked like and that kind of thing?

13 JS: Yeah, I guess, and just being somewhat different than America. But, I guess,
14 yeah. What it looked like and—

15 RH: A couple of things to note. (Clears throat) Excuse me. When I was a
16 midshipman in the Navy, I had gone around my summer training after my freshman year,
17 was onboard an aircraft carrier that toured, made different stops in the Caribbean,
18 Jamaica, not Costa Rica, doesn't make any difference—another one of those places down
19 there. So I was used to the Third World where things stink a lot, open *benjo* ditches and
20 stuff like that. South Vietnam, get off the airplane and that heat and humidity and it's like
21 somebody slapped you in the face, like maybe a barber, to give you a barbershop shave or
22 something like that. But by and large, where it wasn't Agent Orange'd, if that's a word,
23 or that kind of thing, it's a beautiful country. You've been there. Lush, green, steep
24 mountains. I've never been to New Zealand. I doubt if it would be much prettier. I meant
25 to tell you one thing before I forgot. One of the deals when I was in Dong Ha and getting
26 bored, we had an Army captain in our tent, had six company level officers to a tent, and
27 he was a civilian affairs officer. It turned out that there were a lot of Vietnamese along
28 Route 1 had these little stands and they were selling alleged booze to troops. (Clears
29 throat) Excuse me. And it was a distilled rice wine of some sort and they would use food
30 coloring or whatever and put it in there and the stuff was deadly. So, he came into the tent
31 one day and he said, "All right, all of you action-loving Marines! I've got an opportunity

1 for you!” And what we did was, we got about—well, we each got a buddy or two and I
2 guess we had eight or ten of those three-quarter ton trucks. They were kind of the military
3 version of the old Dodge Power Wagon. We went down Route 1 and looked like—we
4 were on a prior plan. We spread out and lengthened it, and then we all did kind of a
5 column left with the trucks and ran into the front of these places. We went in there and a
6 couple of enlisted guys and officer in each one and seized all of that stuff and smashed it
7 and broke it up and pretty well stopped the thing. There was one kid I saw running out
8 the back carrying a couple of bottles and he went and hid it in the ditch out back. I
9 hollered at him and he didn’t do anything. His mother was there and I just took the pistol
10 and went like this (gesture) and I said, “You better tell him to bring those damn bottles
11 back.” She started yammering away in English, and I says, “You better learn English in a
12 hurry or you’re gonna have one dead kid out there.” And she did, and he brought them
13 back and just to let her know we’re not going to fool around. I wouldn’t have shot his ass,
14 but that was just kind of an odd, odd duty. I got a picture of me looking like Joe Bad Ass,
15 you know, the pistol’s here, the cigarette’s out here, helmet’s pushed back, you know.
16 (Laughs) Oh, yeah. There’s all these busted-up whiskey bottles in front of me. My father-
17 in-law told me he was ashamed of me. He said, “You shouldn’t drink all that stuff.” He
18 says, “Your daughter will be a widow.”

19 JS: (Laughs) Right. All right. As far as your specific duties go as the executive
20 officer of Whiskey Battery, could you just talk about what would be the specific duties of
21 an XO for a mortar battery like that.

22 RH: Well, the normal duties of an XO of anything is to be the second in
23 command. If the CO gets incapacitated, or if he’s out of the area, you do all the
24 functioning of the commanding officer. In an artillery battery—whether it’s mortars or
25 anything else—specifically the executive officer is also the commanding officer of the
26 gun platoon. So, the guns will all report to him, and the—(coughs) excuse me—motor
27 transport—I honestly don’t remember right now whether communication reports in or
28 not. But you’ve got a lot of direct responsibility as being the direct commander, a platoon
29 commander-type of the six guns when they’re fully up to staff. I think there were six guys
30 on each gun. And the motor transport you’ve got a couple of trucks, a couple of wagons
31 for each gun, and of course other stuff like with the communications and that sort of deal.

1 The fire direction officer is really what you'd call the 3, the operations officer, but since
2 most of the training and the military involves both the gun and the fire direction center,
3 really, that was a triumvirate of the FDO, the XO, and the CO. One other thing I
4 absolutely loved over there, our call sign of the battalion was Old River, and we were
5 Whiskey Battery, so we were Ol' River Whiskey. I loved it.

6 JS: (Laughs) All right. As far as the battery itself, was it made up completely of
7 fore-deuce mortar, the 4.2 mortars, is that what it was?

8 RH: Yeah, they were the primary weapons. Of course, we all had individual
9 weapons. Most of my Marines carried M-14s at the time. Most of everybody else carried
10 .45s. We had a few of the thumpers, the M-78 grenade launchers. They looked like a
11 short shotgun. Great weapon, great weapon. And then some of us would scrounge up
12 extra stuff. I always carried a Winchester model 12. I don't remember when and where I
13 got that. It was five in the magazine and one in the tube, I think. I never really had to use
14 that, thank God.

15 JS: Yes, sir. How many men would have been in the battery?

16 RH: I think by the time we had them all up, it was going on 200. We took 100 up
17 to Con Thien, quite a few rotated home. An unfortunate number died, about ten or
18 twelve. I'm sad to say I can't remember, embarrassed to say exactly what it was, and
19 probably half again that many got seriously enough wounded to where they had to be
20 evacuated. When I left, two of my sergeants and I left, and that brought battery strength
21 down to twenty-eight or twenty-nine. Pretty damn tough to man six guns and have three
22 or four guys in the fire direction center and, you know, a lot of stuff slipped by.

23 JS: All right. What would be the range of the mortars, the maximum range of the
24 mortars? Do you know?

25 RH: Yeah. It's around 5200 or 5400 meters, which is about—well, let's see. Hold
26 on a minute. Just think here, 1760 is one mile, so three times that would be about three
27 and a quarter, three and a half miles.

28 JS: Okay. All right. All right. Could you talk a little bit about the different types
29 of fire missions? Would there be counter battery fire, H-and-I fire, infantry support, that
30 type of different—

1 RH: We had all of that in one war. We would do H-and-Is. We'd get a list up
2 from battalion. They'd read it over the scrambler radio and they'd give you the location
3 and the number of rounds they wanted you to put in there. Usually, you'd spread them
4 out all night. If you went and took all your H-and-I fires, maybe you had 250 rounds to
5 shoot, and if you went and shot them all in 15 or 20 minutes, your ass would be pretty
6 raw by the time they got done chewing on it. I would never do that anyway. But I used to
7 play games, mental games, like I'd sit out there and pop one out and then I'd wait enough
8 time to where if there was anybody at that road intersection, they probably think we
9 won't shoot for another two hours. So I'd wait two or three minutes and then pop another
10 one out right on top of it. *Playboy* used to have a comic spy and counter spy and that's
11 what I did on that. We did support of troops, walked them in pretty close. Very proud to
12 say that even though the four-deuce mortar was usually kind of looked down on a little
13 bit, we trained our battery so well, and we were fortunate enough to have such really
14 good men and we were really, really accurate and a lot of the times when they'd call in a
15 fire mission in contact with the—this would be the grunts—in contact with the enemy
16 they'd request Whiskey Battery when they'd call into battalion. That makes you feel real
17 good. One thing we did in addition to the other two or three kinds of things you've
18 mentioned was precision destruct missions. They would find a spot where it looked like
19 there was an underground bunker or something. It sounds crazy, but you can get those
20 damn mortars if you really work at it, just very, very precise. You can get those things to
21 where you got a pretty good probability of putting them inside a one-meter square. Say in
22 the 2500- to 3500-meter range, and certainly within four square meters, two meters a
23 side, and if you did that like that delay fuse thing I was talking about before, it sure did
24 ruin their day, that's for sure.

25 JS: All right. Let's see. Outside of maintaining the duties with Whiskey Battery,
26 the normal duties of maintaining the battery and those types of, were there other duties
27 that you had, as well? Because I remember you mentioned in the questionnaire you talked
28 about convoys. Was this the convoy you were talking about earlier, or were there other
29 types of convoys?

30 RH: No, I only convoyed back and forth to Dong Ha just two or three times. One
31 of them was to get up there. Then after we got to where I was the person who had been

1 up there the longest continuously, I was told to go back to the rear and relax for a couple
2 of days, what some of the fighting men today are calling “three hots and a cot.” But I also
3 went back there and the first sergeant and I went in and pulled kind of a con-artist job on
4 the supply officer, who was not getting uniforms out to the troops in the field but was
5 highly suspected of selling them to the Vietnamese on the black market. I knew that son
6 of a bitch in the Basic School and I very much believed that’s what he was doing. But at
7 any rate, I returned back up to Con Thien a couple of days later in a convoy, delivering
8 all these uniforms and everything. It was about the time it was starting to get a little
9 cooler. Everybody was happy about that. But as far as like the war they’ve got going over
10 in Iraq right now, where, I guess, everybody can expect to have convoy duty one or two
11 times a week. We didn’t have that. We had a lot of motor transport over there, and we
12 had a lot of engineers. Marine engineers don’t build much stuff, but they really are good
13 at munitions destruction and that kind of thing. So they’d sweep the roads and that kind
14 of a deal.

15 JS: Okay. All right. If we would switch topics for a minute and talk a little bit
16 about the enemy, about the North Vietnamese. You have discussed this a little bit. Was it
17 all NVA, or were the Viet Cong as well in the area? Or do you know?

18 RH: I can’t say for sure, but knowing what I know about the Viet Cong and
19 knowing what a high—what would we put it?—prevalence or emphasis the North
20 Vietnamese placed on that area, I would say they were all NVAs. Can I use the men’s
21 room again?

22 JS: Absolutely. Yes, sir. Let me stop this real quick. Okay. Go right ahead. You
23 know where to go?

24 RH: No, I’m lost.

25 JS: That’s all right. Not a problem

26 RH: Go this way.

27 JS: I’ll show you. Okay. Go back here. (Door closes. Pause)

28 JS: Okay, what did we leave off with?

29 RH: We were talking about convoys.

30 JS: Yep, and we talked a little bit about the North Vietnamese.

1 RH: Oh, yeah. The last question was, did I think we were fighting NVA or VC?
2 The guys we were fighting were, I would have to say, very well trained, fairly well
3 equipped, although their clothing, the maintenance of the soldier was clearly a low
4 priority relative to arming him with a good Kalashnikov and whatever. Most of them
5 looked even hungrier than we did, the few that I saw. They didn't treat their soldiers very
6 good.

7 JS: Mm-hmm. Yes, sir. All right. You mentioned, uuuhhhh, was it at one point
8 during your tour of duty or was it pretty much the whole time you were at Con Thien that
9 they were, uuhhh, shelling and mortaring, uuhhh, the area.

10 RH: Pretty much the whole time. After the first week or so we were up there, we
11 were, I don't know, they'd give the count a day. Certainly as many as a hundred rounds.
12 There might have been a few days less, and there were several days or times when they'd
13 be trying to get a ground assault going. You know how an incoming round, when it hits
14 and explodes, will sound like a deep roaring boom. Well, they were coming in so heavily
15 that it was a continuous deep roaring boom sound. It wasn't: boom, boom, boom. I can't
16 make that noise, but it was like: boo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oom for hours on end.

17 JS: Okay. All right. How often would they have the sapper attacks? You
18 mentioned when you first got there, you heard about them overrunning Con Thien. I
19 guess that would have been the sappers at that point. How often did that type of thing
20 happen?

21 RH: They never got through the wire again. I would always make sure, especially
22 if I was the fire direction officer at the time, that I'd talk to the FO who was up on the hill
23 where the battalion headquarters were. You can adjust your guns so that they go and lay
24 in their rounds in the same pattern, but the guns are usually on the ground, or no, usually
25 a circle of five guns and one in the middle. Once you get them in the area, then you can
26 adjust them individually and get them in a line so that the guns are dropping the wire
27 right in the line. We did that a number of times and it really, really slowed them down.
28 One thing about that was that for—and I might not have all my timeframes straight—but
29 I want to say for the first two or three weeks when we'd have night probes, they weren't
30 serious attacks. The next morning when we'd check things out—the Marines, of course,
31 are very cautious—but they would go out and with a long a rope or something like that,

1 and pull the Vietnamese bodies back in. You use a long rope because a lot of the times
2 they'd booby-trap them. But they pulled them back in and we'd put them in mass graves,
3 maybe not the most respectful thing, but some degree of respectivity, respectfulness.
4 Then they started sniping at the Marines that were out there. Of course, the order went
5 out to completely hold back, and the battalion sergeant who got the corpsmen together—
6 because of course as soon as you started leaving bodies out there you got rats. This was
7 really pretty disgusting, but this is the way we lived. Those damn rats, of course, had
8 fleas, and that was plague. So once a week we got a plague shot stink! I don't know if
9 you ever listened to the song by Lynard Skynard that's got the lyric "Ooh, ooh, the sound
10 of death surrounds you," which is really about a guy using too much drugs and dying
11 from it. I can't hear that without I don't smell those dead Vietnamese in the wires up
12 there. I won't go any further, but that's probably the most horrible thing. Well, other than
13 my men being killed—probably the most horrible thing going about it.

14 JS: Yes, sir. All right. At what point was the enemy pressured the worst, when
15 they were in this build-up and making the actual infantry assaults on Con Thien, what
16 point was that, do you think?

17 RH: Uh, that probably ran from a little after the 4th of July, call it the 10th for a
18 lack of a more accurate date, and then it—I'm trying to remember. I think it went pretty
19 heavy for several weeks, and then it went medium heavy and then it built back up, and
20 then just like they slowly lost interest in us, and went on out to Khe Sanh, which was
21 west of us.

22 JS: Right. Okay. So they shifted their focus, then, from Con Thien.

23 RH: And I'm not too sure. I'd like to say it's because we kicked the ever-loving
24 crap out of them and they figured they weren't going to take that hill from us. However,
25 if you think of it more from a strategic perspective, or at least grand tactics instead of a
26 tactical thing. (Clears throat) Excuse me. I don't know if I got my dates right or not, but
27 they may well have moved out towards that area around Khe Sanh to kind of open up a
28 corridor down toward Hue, 'cause that's where you'd have a lot of troops and materiel
29 and so forth.

30 JS: Okay. All right. Let's see. As far as the Vietnamese peasant, just the average
31 Vietnamese in the area, you mentioned the issue of them selling the bad rice wine and

1 stuff, but were there other contacts with the average Vietnamese? Did you ever see much
2 of them, or were they pretty much out of the way?

3 RH: I didn't see a lot of them. I saw two of them the whole time—well, other than
4 when I went back for that day and a half in-place R&R, I saw two of them walking up to
5 the main entrance of Con Thien and they had the, whatever that robe is. Is that called the
6 Bao Dai, or whatever, with the silk skirt? I didn't know what they were and was kind of
7 like the south gate at Phu Bai several months later. Hell, they could have been men for all
8 we knew. So before they got within a hundred yards we just popped a couple of
9 machinegun bursts up either side. They turned around and got the hell out of there in a
10 hurry. But as far as seeing the average peasant around and so forth, there's a lot of
11 romance to it. They look like, if they didn't have all these French, first of all, trying to
12 screw around with them, and then North and South Vietnamese, and our own
13 participation until we got to the point to where we are, was, "Well, gentlemen, are you
14 going to pick heads or tails? Whose side you gonna fight on?" We kind of told Ho Chi
15 Minh to go to hell. He came to us first of all back in the '30s or whatever it was. But the
16 villages and so forth looked really cool. They kept them pretty clean, as best they could.
17 However, with that said, it was pretty obvious from looking at the people that they had a
18 real problem with dental issues. I think a lot of them were pretty well parasitized by the
19 variety of bugs and so forth. So I don't know what their average life span is, but I doubt
20 that it would begin to approach even ours. And ours isn't all that great for the Western
21 world. In that sense, and my mind would go back and forth. I'd look at these people, you
22 know, "Aren't they quaint? Aren't they blah-blah-blah, this and that and the other thing?"
23 Then I'd go, "I feel sorry for those bastards. They've got to be in pain most of the day."

24 JS: Did you get the impression that they leaned towards one side or the other, or
25 were they neutral, trying to stay out of it? What was your impression of that?

26 RH: I think they just wished that somebody would make up their mind and take
27 over the country and they'd learn to live with it whether they liked it or not. A lot of
28 people said that once you got to the edge of the jungle from the village and the cultivated
29 fields, at that point the average peasant's true interest in the situation ended. I think that
30 was it, you know, let me grow my rice, let me love my family, do my job, and leave me
31 alone. I don't care about somebody, however many hundred miles to the north, and

1 certainly ten thousand miles or whatever the hell it was to the east. Just, you know, let me
2 be. That's my guess, but I think it's probably pretty close.

3 JS: Yes, sir. All right. Okay. Umm. Let's see. Before we, uuhhh, wrap up here, I
4 want to move on to, uh, to post-Vietnam. Umm, I'm going to ask you some, uuhhh,
5 general questions about your tour of duty. Umm, first of all, looking at the, uuhhh,
6 American military, the leadership in the war, what was your impression of the leadership,
7 of the generals and, um, all that? What did you think, uuhhh, of that?

8 RH: Well, I thought we had some pretty sharp people over there. General Krulak,
9 who was in charge of I Corps for the Marine Corps, was a brilliant man. He would have
10 been Commandant of the Marine Corps, but unfortunately he got tangled up with, I think,
11 General Westmoreland. What the Army wanted to do was build these great big huge
12 combat bases. They were real strong and very defensible, but the Marine Corps' attitude
13 was this is a war for the people. And sitting inside your big fortress and sending out
14 whatever you want to call them, search-and-destroy missions, battalion-size or larger, and
15 maybe, maybe, kill some bad guys, you're also going to disrupt and cause some real
16 problems for the people who are sitting on the fence. I see that the same thing is going
17 again in Iraq, but now several of the other parties are beginning to think, "Well, maybe
18 the Marine Corps' ideas aren't such a bad one. We get out there and mix with these
19 people and teach them how to defend themselves, maybe we can get out of here sooner."
20 I don't personally think that way; a lot of things have gotta happen. I think whether we
21 pull out of there next year or fifteen years from now, as soon as we walk across the beach
22 and get on the LST they're going to be at one another's throat again. But that's not the
23 purpose of us here. Creighton Abrams, I think he had his stuff together. General
24 Westmoreland was very smart but I don't think he had a great depth of understanding. He
25 got caught up in saying, "Give me another 30,000 troops and we'll have them done in six
26 months," or whatever the particular numbers might have been. He must have said that
27 three or four different times and obviously it turned out it wasn't correct any of them. I
28 don't think he was deliberately trying to mislead anybody or anything like that. I think
29 he's a very honorable man. But he was just wrong. Did you ask me about the North
30 Vietnamese generals?

1 JS: No, I was asking about the Americans, but if you'd like to talk about the North
2 Vietnamese, as well, you're welcome to.

3 RH: I don't know a lot about them, however, it's very apparent that they're well-
4 educated and well read on the great military leaders of the world. I love boxing. They
5 kind of remind me of the skinny little guy who has nothing going for him. His hands
6 aren't heavy, he hasn't got the reach of the other guy, but he can keep his distance and
7 box, as it were, keep the other guy off him. Sneak in. Bam! Bam! Bam on the chin and
8 get out again. And they kept doing that until after a while you do bam, bam, bam on the
9 stomach, and that begins to take the stuffing out of them, so to speak. And that's what the
10 North Vietnamese did to us, only instead of a boxing ring, it was up and down the
11 country. That was just brilliant, brilliant tactics, I think. I have to give them credit. Of
12 course, a lot of them learned those tactics here in the United States.

13 JS: All right. Let's, see. After, well, before we get to that, when you returned
14 home—you talked a little bit about this—how—what were your impressions of—did you
15 notice a change in the country, what was going on? Could you talk a little bit about that?

16 RH: Yeah, there were all kinds of things that went on. I was very disappointed to
17 see that—who knows if the silent majority was silent or not. I think they might have been
18 fence-sitters. Clearly, there weren't a hell of a lot of people that were on our side, so to
19 speak. I don't think the military did a very good job explaining itself, but given all the
20 bad experiences with anybody in combat has had with the press people, you know. They
21 don't have a lot of scruples. They're trying to get a story, and they'll do anything to get
22 one, and sometimes when they don't get one they'll make one up. And that might be a
23 little harsh, but I don't think it's too far off the mark. Coming back—this is kind of
24 stupid, but it just shows how society changes. When I went over there, people's dress was
25 pretty conservative. You know, hot pants, which came considerably down toward the
26 knee, were kind of the new, most revealing thing when I went over there. When I come
27 back, first thing I did was go over it with one of my gunnery sergeants, went over to
28 western Alabama, to do a casualty notification. And I'll come back to that, race relations.
29 Remind me if I don't. But we're going down the main drag of the University of Alabama
30 in Tuscaloosa, and all of a sudden here are these well-developed women walking along
31 without the benefit of upper torso lingerie. And I said to the gunnery sergeant, "Holy shit.

1 When did that start?" He said, "Well, I can't tell, but I think it started shortly after we
2 left." And I said, "Well, God bless progress." (Laughs)

3 JS: (Laughs) Right!

4 RH: And then we went over there, had a meeting with Bear Bryant, their famed
5 football coach. I met him several times and he met with us in the athletic dorm over there,
6 and I mean good God almighty, you want to talk about Southern belles, the place was full
7 of them. I met another person down there that was an old Marine Corps general down in
8 the Banana Wars, General Wilbur Scott "Bigfoot" Brown. He was dying of emphysema
9 in the hospital and he wanted an officer to come talk to him, not just as an officer, but just
10 as somebody he could talk to professionally. He and I got to be really good friends. His
11 widow, who was the sister of, I think it was the head of the Senate Armed Services
12 Committee. I can't think of the name—doesn't make any difference for these purposes.
13 She was kind enough to name me as a pall bearer, as an honorary pall bearer, because he
14 was incinerated, or whatever you call that. There was two or three leather-bound versions
15 of a book he had written about the amphibious campaigns in the gulf of the War of 1812
16 and she autographed those and then there were six others that were the regular hard-
17 bound cloth things and I got one of them and I'll always treasure that. She was a real
18 sweet lady. I got so goddamn mad at—I don't know who he was. He might have been an
19 intern or something like that, but I was sitting with Mrs. Brown and the general was
20 dying and she went in there and I said, "Mrs. Brown, just give me a call if there's
21 anything I can do." So she came out and she said to me, "Well, the general has passed
22 on." So I gave her a hug and everything and we sat down and I said, "Do you want to
23 leave in a bit? I'll drive you home." Something like that. Well, then this very officious
24 young dude came out. I think he might have been like an intern or a resident or something
25 like that. Now that I'm getting some PTSD medication from the VA I don't have such a
26 temper anymore, but I used to have a very bad temper. This guy came up and kept
27 bugging her about what she wanted to do with the general's body. She had already told
28 him that he was going to be cremated. And he's out there trying to make her pick out an
29 urn and this, and that, and the other thing. And I finally got up there and put my hand on
30 his shoulder and I said, "I don't think you're listening to the lady. Her husband passed away
31 less than five minutes ago, and you're really being very unprofessional." He says, "Don't

1 put your hand on my shoulder.” Well, I grabbed him like that and said, “I’ll put it around
2 your goddamn neck, then. Get the hell out of there!” I’m lucky I didn’t end up getting
3 carted off by the cops, but I left word with somebody there that Mrs. Brown would call in
4 the morning. She did, and everything worked out fine, but I just thought that was so
5 utterly tasteless, and I wasn’t going to tolerate that.

6 JS: Sure. All right. You mentioned meeting Bear Bryant. I probably shouldn’t do
7 this on the recorder, but I’m from Alabama.

8 RH: Oh, are you? Okay.

9 JS: I’m grew up a huge Alabama fan, and so—

10 RH: Oh, I can imagine.

11 JS: My parents, my dad went to see the games and all that. I just wanted to see,
12 you mentioned getting—what was his impression of the military? How did he react with
13 you guys?

14 RH: Oh, he loved us. We had quite a few connections with the Alabama sports
15 department and what he would basically do would be if he had kids that were in there that
16 were playing football and let’s say they were starters, but they weren’t going to make it in
17 the NFL, he would tell them, “Hey, when the Officer Selection Officer comes over here,
18 hustle your butt over there. You’ve got an education, probably not as far as you could
19 have been because you spent so much time playing football, but he said, ‘Join the Marine
20 Corps and play the real game and get some experience that you can put on a resume.’”
21 And I don’t know, we’d get two or three starter football players every year. I might be
22 wrong about that. Something on that order. He was very, very supportive. That was great.
23 And Joe Namath came there and played professional ball with the demonstration game
24 with the Jets one time. Preseason. I didn’t get to meet him, but what I did see that was
25 kind of fun, did you ever attend a game at Memorial Stadium, or whatever that great big
26 stadium is in Birmingham?

27 JS: Oh, at Legion Field?

28 RH: Legion Field.

29 JS: Yes, sir. Yeah, I’ve been there.

30 RH: Well, they had a deal at the time—I guess it’d be the south end zone, wasn’t
31 closed. It came all the way around. It might have been fifteen, twenty yards of it were

1 open. So we had a color guard. The Marines provided it. Then they gave us some tickets
2 that were pretty damn good. Very good. Well, they weren't letting people keep the
3 football in the end zones and they didn't have those curtains like they do now that go up.
4 So somebody kicked the extra point and I remember this little kid, only looked like he
5 might have been ten or twelve years old at the most. He caught that football. The usher or
6 whatever was over this way, and told him to give him to football, and he shook his head
7 no and he looked over here and there was somebody. He jumped over three or four seats,
8 dives this way and dives that way and then he took off and the kid was fast as can be.
9 He's running down the field and the New York Jets—I don't know who they were
10 playing. For some reason, I want to say the Detroit Lions. They're cheering him on, and
11 by the time he got to the thirty or forty yard line, so was the whole audience. He got
12 down to that end where it's almost closed—it is closed now—but he ran right straight
13 towards that guard who was standing in the middle and gave him a little hit, and ducked
14 around to the right, and out he was and he was gone! And he had that football! Damn,
15 that was good. It was as good as the whole football game.

16 JS: (Laughs) All right. Right.

17 RH: Good old Legion Field. I worked only three or four blocks away from there,
18 where the Vietnam Marine Corps training center was.

19 JS: Okay. All right. Well, let's see. Before we wrap up, I guess a few more of
20 these general questions. Say as much or as little as you'd like. You've touched on some
21 of these, but looking back on your experience in Vietnam and your service and America's
22 participation in Vietnam, how do you feel about it now? You've kind of talked about this
23 a little bit.

24 RH: Well, I think I did the right thing. I think the whole deal about America's
25 participation goes to a whole long string of errors prior to the Vietnam War. You can go
26 back and say it was JFK, if you want to go back. You can easily go back and say it was
27 Dwight Eisenhower. But really, we had this, to a large degree, unfounded fear of the
28 spread of communism. Communism was gonna spread unless we gave the people a viable
29 alternative. The viable alternatives weren't too viable for the people. They were either to
30 continue colonialism or they were corrupt dictatorships. I suppose there's a thing here or
31 there or what have you, and Vietnam was one of the most compelling. Then, of course, I

1 don't know if you've read that release that came out a couple of years ago, the
2 intelligence briefings. It's a big, thick, soft-cover book about yea thick and about that big
3 (gesture). It has all of what were top-secret intelligence briefings. It's astounding that we
4 didn't realize how out of touch we were with the people and the governments or even the
5 people who were in a very good position to topple the governments before we started to
6 have a problem there. We were, as I might have said before, stuck between—well, we felt
7 like we had to back either the colonial power, primarily the French, or some kind of
8 dictator who'd just completely abused the people. The Philippines is a good example of
9 that. We ended up in this mess because of thirty years' worth of mistakes and
10 misjudgments and that kind of thing. Had I known all that in 1960 or whatever, I don't
11 know if I would have changed my approach or not. Maybe I would have gone to law
12 school and run for office. I don't know. See, that's the thing I had a problem with then
13 and I still have a problem was you get people who are—and no offense, because I think
14 you have a pretty good perception of what you know and what you don't know—but you
15 get somebody who's maybe a sophomore, junior in college, and all of a sudden they feel
16 like they know as much or more than the government does. Well, I don't think we've got
17 to lay down and roll over for the government. We need very active participation in the
18 government. But we need intelligent and knowledgeable participation, not just old
19 bullshit. That's how I feel. Kind of wordy.

20 JS: Not at all. All right. You kind of touched on this somewhat, but I was
21 wondering if you could say a little bit more about the media's coverage of the war and, in
22 your opinion, how fair were they and how did they influence the war, in your opinion?

23 RH: Well, I think David Douglas Duncan—I don't know if you know him or not.
24 He did a photo essay on Con Thien and it was in the first or second issue of *Life* in
25 October 1967. The old saw that "A picture is worth a thousand words," the man's ability
26 to capture the war as it impacts the individual warrior is unbelievable. I think he wasn't
27 the only one. I happen to like him because he took quite a few of those pictures were
28 taken of my battery. He was a Marine in Korea and I met him briefly over there. Anyway,
29 there were a fair number of those guys. I think most of the rest of them had an agenda and
30 they were going to find a story that supported that agenda, or twist the story to support it.
31 You know, that business of running around and killing babies and all that was all bullshit,

1 but the people I referred to before as all mouth and no experience and no real knowledge
2 were all too ready to believe the other stuff. The picture in *Life* magazine of that little girl
3 running down the highway with the flesh coming off her back, as it's finally been brought
4 out, was not done by American napalm, it was done by Viet Cong fire and so forth. And
5 on and on and on and on. They just, every night, would stir it up. The deal with, they
6 were interviewing a battalion commander, lieutenant colonel in the Marines, in Hue. And
7 he was sitting there, taking his time, and they had this reporter who was damn scared that
8 he could hardly do the interview because every time something would go bang he'd be
9 ducking down on the ground. Well, you know, you kind of get used to it a little bit, but
10 he'd been there a while. These guys were—and I don't know—they'd come along. I saw
11 one of them, he was a one-star, I don't remember his name, but he was a division forward
12 commander for the Marines up at Dong Ha. And he bodily threw a reporter out of the
13 officers' mess and the guy was in there and it wasn't like he had just come in out of field
14 or anything. He had been hanging around in the rear there digging up stories or trying to
15 get to tag with along the groups or something like that. He came in, hadn't shaved in two
16 or three days and, frankly, he stank. The general went up to him and said, "Did you just
17 now come in from out of field?" And he said, "Oh, no sir. I've been here for three or four
18 days." He said, "Then I'd appreciate it if you'd leave the mess hall." It got to be a little
19 bit of this and that and the other thing and then he was bodily thrown out. The general
20 walked back and we didn't say anything but we all smiled.

21 JS: (Laughs) Yes, sir. All right. What's your opinion of US policy towards
22 Vietnam today and this developing relationship that we have with the Vietnamese now?

23 RH: Well, I guess, I've got at least two thoughts. One of them is I would rather
24 have a talking, working relationship with anybody than I would a hot war, especially if
25 there's no chance of winning the hot war. I mean, let's face it, if you win a hot war all
26 you get is the opportunity to spend billions and trillions to rebuild the damn place. So I
27 think this stuff is you get more and more people coming back and forth. Natalie made
28 that presentation and in a couple of words which she basically had to say and a lot of
29 pictures—and I'm not belittling her presentation. I thought it was excellent because she
30 said, "They always get their points in there but they're very nice people and very willing
31 to talk to you." If we can have that attitude towards every other nationality, ethnic group,

1 whatever, in the world, I don't think any of the other somewhat other belligerent
2 countries would have much of a choice but to fall in. But the other part of is that I look at
3 that, and I used to look at it and think, "Geez, Billy West and so on, my other casualties,"
4 KIAs, you know, hell, those guys died and now we're worried about whether we can ship
5 a carton of Cokes to them. And now I'm not angry about that. Now my attitude is: why
6 couldn't we have made this happen sooner? You know, we had the stuff about how many
7 people sit at the table and what's the shape of the table and all this and that and the other
8 thing. Well, we've been through that a thousand times. You know, the Russians did that
9 crap at Yalta or wherever. We had the same thing in Korea, probably a lot of lesser sorts
10 of deals. If our people in the State Department had been doing their job, they would have
11 gone through and said, "Listen, we have to be prepared to just kind of sit there and stare
12 at them with that you're-making-an-ass-out-of-yourself-but-go-on-as-long-as-you-like
13 look, and not let that get us upset." But it did, and so that, in my opinion, is one of the
14 reasons we didn't get this thing solved peacefully in, say, in 1955 or 1960.

15 JS: Okay. All right. After you returned to the States, how closely did you follow
16 the developments in Vietnam? Did you keep up with it pretty closely, what was going
17 on?

18 RH: Yeah. Of course, I was attached as a full-time active duty and regular
19 instructor for the reserves. Had I stayed in the Marine Corps I would have gone back over
20 there. I just felt like that was part of my job. If you're going to go over there, you need to
21 know where the hot spots are. When you do the usual reporting to division or regimental
22 personnel, and hand them your orders, and they say, "Yes, sir, you're here and you're
23 going to go out and be the commanding officer of XYZ battery for the next three to six
24 months." Then you go, "Okay, I understand they're at such-and-such a place and this is
25 the tactical situation there." They say yes or no and then if you feel like you need it you
26 say, "Well can I stop by the operations area and get a briefing on where we are and where
27 the contact is and that kind of thing?" So you don't go out there starting a boxing match
28 again, and you've never watched a film of the people or anything like that. You know
29 what the hell is going on. So, yeah, I followed it a lot.

1 JS: Okay. All right. At what point did you know that the war was not going to
2 turn out the way we'd hoped it would? That eventually we would leave and it would be
3 lost? At what point did you have that feeling?

4 RH: I talked to a couple of people. The South Vietnamese were supposed to be
5 taking over the major concentration, fire bases, as we called them, along the southern
6 edge of the demilitarized zone. And in essence, about as quickly as Americans got away,
7 here were the South Vietnamese in their own trucks, damn near running over the
8 Americans heading south towards Da Nang or Saigon. They never really occupied the
9 position in the sense that I think they got in there, sat down, ate a box of C-rations, and
10 then got the hell out of there. When you begin to hear that, you knew that it wasn't going
11 to work, when you knew how corrupt the South Vietnamese government was. I was
12 working for a bank in Reading, Pennsylvania, and we set up a temporary branch bank
13 at—I forget where it was—one of the Army bases out in central Pennsylvania that was
14 one of the detainee reception centers and talked to some people that worked there. All
15 these folks wanted to do was to get as much gold as they possibly could and get the hell
16 out of there. And you might say, "Well, what else would they do?" You know, there's
17 still people from Cuba that want to go back in there, certainly more so than the Bay of
18 Pigs. But as people used to say about Field Marshal Montgomery, the folks in Vietnam,
19 South Vietnam, I think were perfectly willing to fight the war to the last American. But I
20 don't want to pick up a rifle. It was kind of funny, one quick story—the South
21 Vietnamese, like I said, because they're not, well, any part of Vietnam, they're not
22 particularly healthy. There was a rare metals dealer named Deak-Perera. And he would
23 buy gold, but on a much higher scale. So they were like in this part of the building, and
24 we were over here. South Vietnamese with gold would come up to Deak-Perera and give
25 him the gold, and Deak-Perera would give them a check. They'd come over here. I
26 worked with a bank in Reading, Pennsylvania, and then they would open an account with
27 that money, pretty substantial sums. Well, this one ol' boy comes in there, my God, he
28 looked like he had rickets. All bent over, looked like an old lady with calcium
29 deficiencies and a deformed back and all that kind of stuff. He got up there and he had
30 this vest on of some sort. Well, he opened up the vest and laid it on the table. He was still
31 bent over like this, and took out a little razor blade and started cutting the seams. And

1 sewn into that vest was a whole bunch of real thin pieces of gold, about three inches long
2 and two inches wide. And you know how dense gold is. I don't know how many pounds
3 of gold the man was carrying, but it was a lot, because the guys that were out there told
4 me, "After he got done, he stood up and looked twenty years younger!" Give me the
5 gold. I'll look twenty years younger!

6 JS: (Laughs) Right. Yes, sir. All right. Talking about following the war and after
7 the war. How did you react to, or how did you feel with the fall of Saigon on April 30,
8 '75, of course. What was your reaction to that?

9 RH: I thought it was kind of anti-climactic. I thought that the South Vietnamese,
10 as I've shortly said here before, on many occasions kind of showed their ass and that—I
11 don't know if they ever did give a damn about the country or not, but they sure weren't
12 caring really much at all when I there. Maybe from 1965 or '64 on, it was all, "How can I
13 get out of here with the most of my wealth that I've got?" You know, that kind of a thing.
14 So when you see these pictures of people pushing one another off the top of the American
15 embassy and trying to hang on the skins of the helicopters and dang near causing the
16 things to crash and all that kind of thing, I'm sure those pilots had enough understanding,
17 whether it was given to them officially or not to expect that. I thought it was disgusting,
18 frankly.

19 JS: Okay. All right. Let's see. Just a few more questions. How would you say that
20 the war has impacted or affected your life the most?

21 RH: Well, I mentioned a couple or three times, I got PTSD. PTSD didn't really
22 bother me very much until about five years ago. I wasn't one of these guys who would
23 have gotten a \$165,000 bonus at AIG, but I worked for Chemical Bank for four years in
24 order to be a banker and worked for a bank in Pennsylvania and made good money. Most
25 years when we made the business plan—I don't want to get too—I was pretty successful.
26 I made \$100,000 or more and was able to get some stock options and some IRA stuff and
27 that kind of thing. When my boys graduated college with their baccalaureate degree, all
28 the bills had been paid. I told them, "Pop will get you through a BA. If you want to go to
29 graduate school, be charming and learn how to teach school as a graduate assistant and
30 they'll pay you to go to school." So things were going good and then, at some point—I
31 don't know just exactly what it was—I started to get the attitude that this all is a crock of

1 shit. What is so important about this? There isn't anybody dying, there isn't even
2 anybody being shot at. People having hissy fits over this. It's just stupid. Of course, it
3 wasn't stupid. But when you've been in a war, you can get the attitude that everything
4 else is so less tense that it doesn't count. And my performance started to go down. All of
5 sudden I was getting little lesser bonuses, and 'course as we would have other banks
6 trying to buy us, and we'd go through downsizings. I tended to get put up near the top of
7 the list of down-sizable people. There are a variety of reasons in there, but my own
8 problem of not being able to shut up. When somebody was being stupid I felt like I
9 needed to tell them they're being stupid. And that really kind of shot my career in the ass.
10 I think that's how it is. I'm not destitute. I have a family. I own a home out at Ransom
11 Canyon. I own a piece of property over in Dickens, so I can go hunting. I probably got
12 ten times as many rifles as I need. I live very comfortably. But a lot of that is, I have to
13 say, due to some fortunate stuff that I had in my good years, and the VA and government
14 support and that kind of thing. So that's what it did. It let my career run along long
15 enough, but had I been able to work until I was sixty-five, and I mean work effectively,
16 not flipping burgers or something. You know, I would have put together a lot more
17 money. And who the hell knows what I would have done with it? Who knows? I might
18 have become a crackhead, I don't know.

19 JS: Speaking of the VA, do you think that government has taken care of its
20 veterans? After the war they did and do so now, or not? How would you evaluate that?

21 RH: Well, a couple or three thoughts. First of all, way back, let's say in the early
22 '70s, and now, the VA has as many different faces as it has major locations. The guys in
23 Amarillo—we fall under that—are treated differently from the guys in Oregon, from the
24 guys here, from there, and the other thing. And I've stayed very close to my men in
25 Whiskey 1-12, and I've written a number of letters for them as far as their PTSD claims
26 go. I think it's a lot better overall than it was, but there are really some people—and our
27 last president was one of the worst enemies as far I'm concerned, a veteran ever had
28 because he'd sit up there, just like this clown down in Austin. "We're all in favor of the
29 veterans!" And then not allocate any money. We got the same thing in Austin when it
30 comes to education. I don't want to get into all those politics, but I think the VA, by and
31 large, is trying to good job. It's got some really good people coming in there. It's laying

1 in the research. You look at Audie Murphey back in World War II, he was the most
2 decorated soldier in the whole damn war, basically ended up dying in a gutter. He had
3 PTSD but they didn't know what it was. My treatment has been magnificent. You might
4 have noticed I limped coming in here, Well, I'm 100% with PTSD, so if I wanted the VA
5 to fix this hip, I would have had it fixed about six weeks ago. I've chosen to have it done
6 just because of convenience and my wife and a really good doctor. I'd say they're doing
7 well, but, boy, I'll tell you what, there's a lot of dark holes in it. Let me just add to that. I
8 think the American people are very much on our side. I think if somebody came in there
9 and said, "These veterans are a bunch of crybabies and we need to cut back on all this
10 stuff," The people would say, "Yeah, we're with you, a couple of them are a bunch of
11 crybabies." But by and large you wouldn't be where you are and you wouldn't be
12 speaking English right now if it weren't for those guys.

13 JS: Yes, sir, absolutely. Absolutely

14 RH: And gals.

15 JS: All right. Well, is there anything you'd like to say, anything else we should
16 cover before we wrap it up?

17 RH: No. I'm not kissing your ass, but I want to say this and it's going to sound
18 like I am. I think this institution here, or whatever you want to call it, the Vietnam Center,
19 is a wonderful thing. I think it's wonderful for two broad areas. One is, not academic
20 curiosity, but serious academic pursuit. What was going on in the minds of all the
21 participants in the war, from three- and four-star generals down through junior officers
22 and PFCs and privates and so forth? I think it's beginning to show that probably both
23 countries were fighting for peaceful and patriotic reasons. It's a good lesson in showing
24 that a whole hell of a lot of death and destruction need not have happened. And each side
25 giving the other one a little opportunity for the other to come around and talk. The other
26 side that I think it's done, is it that it's put the war out in front of the American public.
27 People are realizing what the individual American fighting man was doing and why he's
28 doing it and that, you know, we're not the bad guys anymore. And I don't think that'd be
29 the case if you all weren't here doing the job you're doing.

30 JS: Thank you.

1 RH: My hat's off to you, and Dr. Reckner, and Natalie, and whoever all else is
2 over here now.

3 JS: Thank you, sir. All right. Thank you for your participation. Let me go ahead
4 and stop this.