RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

# AN INTERVIEW WITH MARVIN APSEL

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an oral history interview with Marv Apsel, on November 21, 2019, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kate Rizzi. Also present is ...

Gail Apsel: … Gail Apsel.

KR: Thank you very much for doing this fourth oral history session.

Marv Apsel: It's my pleasure to be here. It was a wonderful day, no traffic on the roads, and there was parking. It was wonderful.

KR: Excellent.

MA: All right.

KR: What was your last week like when you were in Vietnam and awaiting your homecoming?

MA: Okay, my recollections of the last week are very vivid. It was common knowledge that in Vietnam, the most dangerous times for soldiers were in that first couple of weeks, when they entered the country and, obviously, in the last several weeks, when they were about to leave the country, the reasons being almost similar. In the beginning, the men were tentative. Even though they had been well trained, they had not actually been engaged in real maneuvers and operations. In the last couple of weeks, before going home, we were also very tentative and overly cautious. Sometimes, that feeling of being overly cautious and very concerned led to accidents or something that would thwart the goal, which was, obviously, to go home. In that last week, we were taken off-line and brought to a rear area. We were given the opportunity to clean ourselves up, so to say, receive new fatigues, go to the place where we had left our duffel bags and personal items when we had entered the country, and peruse through those items to make sure they were all intact, and then gather them up, in preparation for going home.

Also, there was an opportunity for the hierarchy, in the command structure, to meet with the individual soldiers, who were about to depart the country and go home, and go through what was probably a routine and a requirement on their part to try to entice the individual soldier to continue his career or make a career in the service or at least re-up for another tour of duty. To that end, I was brought before, I believe it was, the captain of our unit and sat in his makeshift office and received the request to consider a re-upping for six years. If I would do that, re-up for six years, I would be given something they referred to as a reenlistment bonus. It could've been called a veritable reenlistment bonus, or some words to that effect, but, in my case, they were waving in front of me a check for ten thousand dollars. Now, to a nineteen, twenty-year-old young man, who had just gone through a year in Vietnam, ten thousand dollars was a lot of money. It probably represented, for most people, a year's salary. Just as an aside, I think my first year's salary as a teacher was 9,600 dollars a year, and that wasn't going to happen for a number of years, after leaving the service or Vietnam. So, ten thousand dollars was a considerable sum of money.

I sometimes [laughter] reflect on that, and there were individuals who did take up that offer, but my MOS was 11B-4O, which was infantry, ground forces in the infantry. [Editor's Note: The

U.S. Army categorizes jobs of enlisted personnel by Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), which are designated by specific codes. The MOS of 11B refers to enlisted infantryman.] The likelihood of maintaining my safety and keeping myself intact over another six years in the locales such as this, even to a nineteen or twenty-year-old, seemed very suspicious. [laughter] So, I said, "I'm not as dumb as I look. I think I'd rather go home." I made the decision to reject the offer, as generous as it seemed at that time, to go home and exercise other options that I had obviously been thinking about, for months before, about what I would do when I returned to what the soldiers refer to as the real world. This world that I was living in right now, although real on many different levels, it was not the world that I had known for many, many years and grew up in.

GA: Wasn't this at a time when the war was going to end? Wasn't there some talk that they were going to bring home the soldiers in '69 or whatever, with Johnson or Nixon? [Editor's Note: At the Paris Peace Talks in October 1968, shortly before the U.S. presidential election between Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey, negotiations broke down. The Vietnam War continued for another five years. Nixon has been implicated in interfering in the peace talks to delay the announcement of peace until after the election, so as to not benefit his opponent, Humphrey, who was the sitting vice president in the Lyndon B. Johnson administration.]

MA: For the longest amount of time, there had been talks about ending the war, even when I was in the service. But there seemed to be long, long debates between the negotiating parties over the size of the table, where the locale would be. Would it be in a neutral country? Would it be in France, would it be here or there? It seemed so steeped in difficulties that, to my mind, the war did not seem to be ending any time soon.

KR: And it was not ending any time soon. Nixon was promising to end the war. You went home on December 31, 1969.

MA: Right.

KR: The following spring, the United States invaded Cambodia. So, the war was, in fact, expanded. [Editor's Note: American and South Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia in mid-1970 to target Vietcong and North Vietnamese forces operating in the country. It is commonly known as the Cambodian incursion. President Richard Nixon announced the Cambodian incursion to the American public on April 30, 1970.]

MA: Right, yes.

KR: So, I just wanted to note that.

MA: I don't know if in past times I've spoken about Cambodia, but, as an aside, part of the operations of my unit was to be stationed and conduct operations on the Cambodian border. There were people who were coming over from Cambodia into South Vietnam, doing their activities, and then going back over the border to retreat to what they considered a safe area in Cambodia. It was our job, part of the 25th Infantry Division, the "Wolfhounds," to intercept those individuals who were coming into Vietnam and either prevent their activities or try,

obviously, to stop it. So, it's interesting that the difficulties with Cambodia being used as a staging area seemed to be continuing. But the atmosphere, in the time when I actually came home, did not give me a strong reassurance that the war was coming to an end. Given my MOS, being that of an infantry military person, putting myself in harm's way on a continued basis, was not something I felt comfortable with. [Editor's Note: Marv Apsel served in the First Battalion of the 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. The 27th Infantry Regiment went by the nickname "Wolfhounds."]

KR: When you came home, you almost immediately started at Long Island University.

MA: Yes. Well, you know, when I came home, that was very interesting. I may have alluded to the fact that when we came home, we landed somewhere in, I think, Northern California. I remember the plane ride, obviously. It was very quiet as we realized that we were actually leaving the country, and there was a cheer once we got into the air. But as we landed in the USA, there was a reception for us. It consisted of a few people in what, I guess, was the Army Band, playing a couple of welcoming songs and the promise of a steak dinner. After eating C-rations for a year or two, the prospect of having a steak dinner was magnificent. So, as people deplaned, they heard the band. Several of us, obviously, got down on our knees and kissed the ground, happy to be home, and the group was taken to a mess hall to have this steak dinner. Some of us had other priorities, other than a steak dinner, and that was to call home, to immediately get to a phone and let our parents, loved ones, husbands, wives, whatever it may be, know that they had landed and were safe. I think I was part of that group to try and do that. So, I just wanted to let my parents know that I'm in the United States.

Now, we did not stay on that base for long. I believe, at that time, we were given a physical of sorts, a very light perusal, making sure that we were okay. Obviously, we were fed, and then we were issued new dress uniforms. I remember this distinctly. I was given a new dress uniform, and I had not been in a dress uniform, obviously, for more than a year. So, I was putting on the uniform, and the uniform has certain buttons and epilates and things that adorn the uniform. As I put these buttons on the lapels and around the uniform, I thought I had completed the task of getting dressed, but a sergeant, a master sergeant, came over to me and started chastising me to some extent, because the crossed rifles on the uniform lapel were pointing in the wrong direction. It seems like a minor thing, but, to me, it represented a world that I was entering, a place that emphasized appearance and show, especially on things like the direction of the crossed rifles on the lapel. After having gone through what I had just gone through, it seemed shortsighted to loudly take me to task. Although I respect the reasons why the uniform had to be presented in such a certain manner, I thought his reaction to me was a little over the top. It gave me sort of a little message of the world, the military world, and what to expect in that military world, preciseness, strong discipline, and I do not detract from that. I mean, it's important, but the sensitivity of the moment seemed a little difficult for me to absorb at that time.

After the uniforms were issued, I believe we took either a bus or some mode of transportation down to the Los Angeles area, where I was able to call a relative of mine. In this case, it was Barry Archie, an older cousin, who had also been in, I believe, the Air Force for some period of time but who was no longer, obviously, in active duty. He was married, and he lived down in the

San Fernando Valley. I called Barry, and Barry was very gracious in coming over to the airport, to pick me up, to bring me back to his home.

His home was, like I said, in the San Fernando Valley. If I still recall the address, 12751 Bradley Avenue in Sylmar. As a child, that area was a farm, and his father, Anthony Archie, who we called Artie Archie, I could go into that for other reasons, and my Aunt Marlene, his wife, had moved many, many years before out to California from the Newark area. My uncle, Anthony Archie, Artie Archie, had had a lung problem and was told that the weather would be better for him on the West Coast. So, he had gone out there starting a chicken farm, and as a young child, during the summers, my family would go off to California and we would live on that farm. I was given the jobs of picking up the eggs in the morning and putting them in front of a candle, to make sure that they were safe enough to eat. If I saw a blue spot, it meant I had to discard the egg. In any event, it was on that land where the farm no longer existed, but I think about four or five houses had been placed on that property and my cousin, Barry, lived in one of those houses. So, it was almost surreal for me to go back to an area where I had been to and worked on as a child, but I was now living in or visiting Barry's home.

So, the only people that were there were Barry and his wife. I don't recall if he had his first child there as of yet, I don't believe so, but I was given a room and I remember that was the first time, in a long time, I was sleeping in a bed. It seems like a small thing, but it meant a lot that I was experiencing what I considered safety, comfort and, finally, for a few moments, free of those concerns that I would otherwise be in peril. So, that was my first day and night. Obviously, I had spoken to Barry about my time in Vietnam on the way from the airport to his home. However, he was smart enough to realize that it was not the appropriate time to probe for information, and I actually appreciated that.

So, I guess it was in the days just after Christmas, before New Year's Eve, that I was there. The family, the Archie Family, had a small cabin up in the mountains around Los Angeles, and the family had congregated there for the holiday celebration. So, the next morning, I joined Barry and Pam, and we drove up to this cabin. He said, "Why don't you knock on the door and tell them you're the mailman?" or something like that, "See if you can fool them." I didn't really want to go through that charade, but I did something akin to that and anyway, my disguise was seen through almost instantaneously. It was actually a very warm reunion with my aunt and uncle, her children, who were there, Stan and Dennis and Wayne, and other people from the family. It was celebratory, and it was a happy time of year. I was very thankful to be there. It was beautiful, beautiful country, and the air was clean and fresh. It was so unlike the muck and mire and the dust and the hot humidity of Vietnam. The contrast was dramatic.

During that day, one of my first things I wanted to do was to call Gail. So, I left that house and got to a phone, a public phone, because they didn't have a phone in that cabin. That was the first time I had the opportunity to speak to the person I love and the person who stood by me all those many, many months, and even though we had written so many letters to each other, still it was a special, special moment to be talking. I told her that I plan on coming home soon, within the next day or so. So, that is actually what happened after the Archie Family celebration--which included me; I was thankful for that--was ending, and everybody was coming home. So, then, I stayed at my Aunt Marlene's home for, I think, another day or two in a house that was somewhat

adjacent or in close proximity to Barry's home. That was the main home that, obviously, I had stayed in as a young child. It was very familiar to me, and it also felt like being home.

Now, one of the requirements of the Army was that when using their voucher and ticket, you must remain in your uniform for the trip. So, I had made reservations to use that voucher that the Army had given me to go back home to the port--not port, the entry place--where I had entered the Army, which was, obviously, in New York. So, now, for the first time, I was dressed in that dress uniform and it was bedecked with all the citations and medals and everything. It was, obviously, of interest to my younger cousins, who were taken by the uniform, but it was taken more so by my Uncle Archie, Anthony Archie, he had two names, because he was somewhat of a patriot. He had been in the service and so saw the citations and was very taken by a relative of his not only having survived but had distinguished himself in that arena.

So, the flight that I had was what they call the red eye. I guess it was leaving the L.A. area maybe at about one or two o'clock in the morning, one o'clock in the morning, and was to arrive at Kennedy Airport at about nine or ten o'clock in the morning. So, I got on that plane after saying goodbye to my relatives, said I was very thankful for all of their welcoming gestures and efforts and emotions, and got into my seat.

I think I've alluded in past talks about the incident on the plane, where I had been sitting next to an individual who saw the uniform and requested a change of seating. I'm not going to sort of delve into that anymore, but it was a little disconcerting, just a little bit of an inkling to what I should prepare myself for when I actually got home. In any event, the five or six-hour flight was interesting. I found it very sort of difficult to sleep and I did try to, I think, listen to some music, but most people, at that hour, were trying to sleep themselves. The cabin was darkened, and I remember just wrestling with my thoughts at that time. But a few hours go by, and I land in Kennedy Airport. I am now about to get off the plane, and I was a little nervous, excited and anxious, anticipating seeing my family. I remember that I stepped off the plane. In the waiting area, which was closer to the plane than today--today, it seems you have to engage in long walks to get to the areas to follow through on the process of departing the airport--but at that time, the family was there. Obviously, I saw my mother, my father, my sister, my brother and Gail.

GA: I think so. I don't know if I was there when you left or when you came home.

MA: Yes, it was a momentous, very cathartic experience. I jumped into the arms of my mother. She was crying. She was obviously elated, and my father, who was a more reserved person, also was happy. You could tell by that distinctive smile that would break out on his face. My sister Debbie and my brother Gary were there. So, it was everything you've probably seen on television or movies. It was joyous. It was physical, emotional, and it was just nice. I remember it was a morning, probably midweek, probably on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, something like that. Anyway, we drove back home from Kennedy Airport in, I believe, the Chevy Impala, a car that I had driven the first time I had gotten my license and my father finally had bought a new car. He bought it in 1965, and here I was, in that car, on the way home and it was wonderful.

When I came home to Borough Park, Brooklyn, the streets, even early in the morning, were somewhat empty. There was not a lot of hustle and bustle on the streets, but there was a quietness and sort of very comforting feeling that I remember returning to the neighborhood. I guess it's almost saying you're returning to the womb. But this was where I lived; this is the place that I had dreamed about all those many days in Vietnam, the safety point.

Anyway, when I get home, my father parks the car. The house was a two-family house at 1546 41st Street. The house was adorned with this large sign that said, "Welcome Home." It was colorful. It was beautiful. That neighborhood was a very sort of conservative mixed neighborhood but distinctly had a feel of religiosity attached to it. There were many little basement *shuls* and things like that around the neighborhood, and to see a big banner like that may have been out of the norm and a departure from the normal course of events in that area.

In any event, here I am, I walk up the steps. I'm into that house. I can't relate the smells of the house, whatever food that was in the house, the aromas of the food hit me and it was truly nice. I walked into a room that I shared with my brother Gary, and I said that I was very surprised, because when I lived with Gary in those past years in that room, it was always in a state of chaos. It was disheveled and clothes strewn around, a typical room for two teenage boys growing up. Yet this one was very neat, so, obviously, somebody had gone into that room and cleaned it ...

GA: Maybe. [laughter]

MA: … And made it acceptable. Anyway, so I do remember throwing down my duffel bag and laying down on that bed, my bed, and unlike the bed that was in Barry's house or my Aunt Marlene's home in California, this was my bed. This had the crevices, the smell, the comfort level, and I knew I was home. I probably slept for a little while, and then I got up. I had brought home a duffel bag of gifts for members of my family and for Gail, and I handed those things out. It was stereo equipment and clothing and things of that nature, which I had gotten at maybe at a PX, post exchange, or wherever in Vietnam, or on the base in Vietnam, or in Bangkok when I was there for a while. In any event, here I am, I hand out the gifts. I believe I had a kimono, a robe for Gail.

GA: A robe, yes.

MA: A robe or a kimono.

GA: We still have it.

MA: Yes, we do. It was beautiful.

GA: I should get it out.

MA: It was a blue silk ...

GA: Yes, I can remember, I think.

MA: … Silk robe that was somewhat sensual, and I looked forward to the opportunity of you wearing it. Anyway, it was a special moment. I may have tried to sleep for a little while, but within the ensuing hours, friends had gotten the word that I was home. So, before you know it, my friends were in the living room, and we were cajoling and basically embracing, my friends, my closest friends at the time, Fred, Henry, Paul, Alan, guys that did not go into the service, had a different path that they were going down. I'll make mention maybe of them a little later, but it was wonderful. It was really a joyous day to be home, and then the day went along like that. Obviously, more relatives came over, and there was a lot of food and this and that. It was just a special day.

Now, a couple days went by. I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to make preparations to go back to school and to go to Long Island University. So, I went to get paperwork and to register and get accepted and to also file paperwork for the GI Bill, which would have given me monies to use toward the tuition for college. It was interesting, because LIU was on Flatbush Avenue, Flatbush and DeKalb Avenue, in Brooklyn, a small distance away from where I lived. I believe I was using the family car, or maybe I took buses, a couple buses, to get there. I'm not quite sure about that. [Editor's Note: The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, or GI Bill, provided financial aid for higher education and home loans to veterans.]

So, when I came home, lo and behold, nobody had been home during the day. My parents both worked. My sister and brother were in school, and here I was. I come home, and what do I notice? I notice, upon entry of the house, that the house has been burglarized, and a lot of the things that I had brought home for my parents and my sister and brother were taken. So, I was somewhat irate. I felt, at the time, that I had been, what's the proper word, assaulted in some manner of word, and I called the police. Two police officers came back and basically took the report, and they were sitting in my mother's living room with me and they said, "You know, this happens quite often." I said, "Really?" They said, "Yes, that big banner that you have in front of the house is like a red flag to people that someone returning from the service is there, and they know that you're bringing home stereo equipment and jewelry and things of value, and so they key in on that."

Then, a very odd thing happened. Obviously, the police officer could see that I was still angry. He said, "You know, sometimes they come back and you never can tell, but do you know if you …" how should I put this, "If you confront a person while they're in the house and they should meet their demise, that's considered self-defense. But if you were to follow them out to the street, that would be not regarded as self-defense. That would be regarded as volitional killing of somebody." At that moment, it hit me like a lightning bolt that, first, somebody is giving me direction on how to deal with people that are invading my space, to the extent that you're telling me that if I take action, violent action, I will be regarded within my rights under the law, if it's done on the premises, but outside, I would not. I found that very strange.

Then, the other thing, the other feeling that was very significant, I had this after they had left, I think the police officer had left and I was by myself. I thought to myself, "The place that I regarded as the safest place on Earth, the place that when I laid awake at night in Vietnam, in this jungle, in the most difficult situations, the place which I wanted to be at was, in fact, not the safest place. Can you truly be assured of the fact that any place that you are in is ultimately

safe?" Here I was involved in hostilities overseas, and now it seems like similar type of hostilities were with me. I sort of got over that--well, not really got over it, but I packed that away as a feeling that I still remember having.

In the next few days, I was accepted to Long Island University, and I decided to go back to college. I had received college credits. Upon graduating high school, I went to Brooklyn College's School of General Studies, and I was in what they called their twilight session. So, I had taken credits there, and I was also trying to work during the day in those early years. Those credits were, basically, carried over to Long Island University, and I committed to another, I think, two years, maybe two-and-a-half years of study. I entered into the school for a B.A. or B.S. degree in education. So, I started that course of study, and I found it interesting.

When I first got back on the campus of Long Island University, now it's only about two weeks or so since I've been in Vietnam, the term was either starting the third week of January or thereabouts, and here I am a deeply-tanned individual. I've got a military-type haircut, no hair on my head. It was obvious that I am a returning vet, and being on a college campus and being identified as a veteran, or a soldier, from Vietnam was, for some, very difficult to accept. I don't believe, socially, I was embraced by the people in the student union building or in the normal activities of campus, but I wasn't really interested in social activities.

I was interested now in getting my life started and attending to school and successfully completing that, but I do have some pictures that were taken, unbeknownst to me, of myself on the LIU campus. One in particular, I'll have to try to find it in an album that I have, it's me sitting on a bench with my books and, at that time, I think I had sprained an ankle. So, I had a cane and I was sitting on the bench by myself, and it was an overcast day and there's nobody around. It was just me on the campus, and it sort of symbolically delivered a message. These messages I had for myself were that I was by myself, I had to make my way through life, and I could not depend on a lot of different people, not on the college campus.

As an addendum to that, I did notice that in certain sectors of the school--I was going to become a physical education teacher, and in that grouping of people, I found, among those people, more acceptance. They were less, how should I put it, political. They were less indulged in the everyday activities of protesting and of demonstrating. So, I gained a little more acceptance. I felt a little more comfortable in that group of people. I was in very good shape, excellent shape, and so I, basically, melded well into that group. My school career at LIU progressed. I had been a marginal student when I had gotten out of high school, at best, but now I was, obviously, a more focused person. I went through that course of study, and if it wasn't straight "A's" or perfect, it was close to it at that time. So, I graduated Long Island University.

KR: I just want to ask you something. That first semester that you were at Long Island University, what was the anti-war movement like on campus?

MA: So, LIU, let me see, there were some demonstrations that were conducted. Let me see, what was going on?

GA: But it was inner city.

MA: You know, Kent State was going on at the time, and there was a lot of reaction to that. The military as an entity was almost regarded as being as in opposition to what their values and positions were. So, there was, obviously, a lot going on. Look, that was a very turbulent decade, the '60s and the beginning of the '70s. The civil rights legislation that was being passed, the demonstrations for that were also going on at the same time. There were a lot of groups that if you chose to join and support on college campus, you could. [Editor's Note: On May 4, 1970, Ohio National Guardsmen fired upon students at Kent State University, killing four and wounding nine others. Some of the students had been protesting the United States' entry into Cambodia, while others had been passing nearby or observing the demonstration. On May 14 and 15, 1970, students at Jackson State College protesting against racial harassment were fired upon by state and city police, resulting in two deaths and a dozen injuries.]

My mindset was a little bit different at that time. I became very skeptical about political offerings and sayings. I almost felt that I had sacrificed already, to a large extent, in an unbalanced comparison to a lot of my friends. So, while they were pursuing their careers and aspirations, I wanted to get back on track. So, I was not as politically motivated as I am today, but I was becoming more of a critical thinker and not taking things for face value, because I could see the ramifications of what the leadership was giving us as bona fide information, having gone through the experience of Vietnam. I could see firsthand that in many instances, that was not the case. When you tell me about the ARVN, Army of South Vietnam, being fully motivated and committed, it stood in contradistinction to what I had experienced with these individuals in volatile situations. So, that atmosphere on LIU was what it was, maybe not as vociferous as it was in other locales and other campuses, because LIU was, essentially, a commuter school. People went to school and they went home to their homes at night, unlike a lot of the other college campuses where people were in their domiciles and they interacted with people for longer periods of time. [Editor's Note: The Army of the Republic of Vietnam, or ARVN, refers to the regular army of South Vietnam that were allied with American forces during the Vietnam War.]

KR: You lived at home.

MA: I lived at home. First of all, I didn't have the money to live separately, nor did I want to. I craved being with my family. I wanted to be with people who could, in a way, be caring to me and support me. It was important for me. I had saved a little money. Obviously, I had no place to spend the money that they had given me during my military service, and the GI Bill was very helpful in defraying some of the cost for tuition. I believe I did take that, some of that money, and I bought my first car, a used Volkswagen Beetle. So, I had that little Volkswagen Beetle. Gail and I would tool around and that's how I got to school, a very small car. [laughter]

We took some marvelous trips. We would go all over. I remember we would go to Boston to visit Gail's brother, who was living in Needham, Massachusetts, but we would go all over in that little Volkswagen. Those were the days where our bodies were a little bit smaller, and we found we were a little bit more comfortable in a car like that. I could not travel for that extent of time that we did today, not in a car like that. Anyway, that was LIU.

I remember graduating LIU and taking pictures with my parents and with Gail. My father was, as you know, an attorney. He went to St. John's University and Fordham Law School. Education meant a lot to him and to his own family, because he was the oldest, they pooled their resources to make sure that the oldest went to school first. So, he had the more formalized education than his siblings, and seeing his first born son graduate college, after having gone through what I had gone through, was very meaningful to my father. To my mother, who was a high school graduate, never went to college, it was also meaningful because there had not been anyone else in her family, siblings or relatives, that had graduated college. So, I represented, to her, the first college graduate from her side of the family. So, that was the LIU years.

KR: After LIU, you were a teacher at P.S. 164.

MA: Yes. So, interesting enough, here I am, I graduated LIU as a teacher, as a physical education teacher, and now I am going to hurl myself onto the job market. You know there's an old adage, it's important to know people. In fact, Gail had a very close friend. Gail's friend's mother was the secretary at P.S. 164, the secretary to the principal at P.S. 164. She knew, I guess through her daughter's friendship with Gail, that I was looking for employment as a teacher. So, she set up an appointment with myself and the principal, who was Principal White. His name is--I forget his first name. I went for the interview and was very successful. I told him about my past and that I had, in fact, gone to P.S. 164 as a child. I lived down the block, and it was just happenstance.

GA: *Beshert*. [Editor's Note: *Bershert* is the Yiddish word for destiny and means "meant to be."]

MA: Yes, it was meant to be, that I would return to the school that I had been in as a child. So, he offered me the position, and I was very happy to accept that position. We would have to be a little innovative, because they didn't have a long history of physical education in that school, but I was happy to have that position. Strangely enough, here it's been, obviously, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years since I had been in that school. I guess I was in that school at the age of five through maybe nine or ten, something like that; schools went from kindergarten through sixth grade at the time. A couple of the teachers that had had me in their class, as a young little kid, were now, obviously, at the end of their careers. They had put their twenty years in and now little Marvin Apsel was now one of them, a person that was probably surprising to them. I believe there was a Ms. Pinto, a Ms. Aronson, Ms. Bateman. It was an interesting dynamic that went on.

I was now in charge of physical education, the only physical education teacher. I was given a space which was the equivalent to two classrooms that had been modified for physical education activities. Look, what kid does not like physical education? There's an almost immediate acceptance, and they are just so filled with joy to get a break during the day and to engage in physical activities. For me, it was different. Besides being the phys ed teacher, I was given the responsibility of the spring dance coordinator.

GA: The Maypole.

MA: The Maypole Dance. "Mr. Apsel, would you please teach these two hundred cherubs of varying ages how to do the Maypole dance?" I don't know if you're aware of it, but it's when each kid holds a different colored strand that's attached to this big central pole. They have to weave under and over as they're moving in clockwise and counter-clockwise directions to form this beautiful pole that is entwined with multi-colored ribbons. In any event, I was faced with some special problems, like the fourth-grade boy would say, "I'm not touching that girl's hand. She's a girl. I'm not touching her hand. I don't want to." I said, "Oh, my God, this is going to be difficult." I had not quite been prepared in my past history for obstacles like that, but in any event, it went off well and it was successful. I was accepted by the other teachers. I think I have a personality that lends itself to being affable and social, and so it was good. Gail was also a teacher at that same school.

GA: Did you tell the story already?

MA: We were dating at the time, but we decided to not let people know that we were dating. I think I've told you the story about the music teacher who had designs on Gail and I sort of fanned the coals by saying, "Yes, you want to ask her out, go ahead, ask her out. See what she might say." [laughter] When he realized after he was rejected, thank goodness, he was a little upset with me, but he got over that.

In any event, I had a good time at P.S. 164. It was a job. It was normalcy. I was holding my own. It was in stark contrast to the life I had known a couple years before. Back then, when I had been going for this phys ed teacher's certification, I had been requested to do affiliations or to see other aspects of education, which included rehabilitation, and so I was given an assignment to go to one of the rehabilitation hospitals in the region.

GA: You told this story.

KR: Yes, you talked about this in part one.

MA: The VA hospital, and so I've talked about that. You probably have the notes about my experience at the Bronx VA hospital and meeting Joe W., a person that had been wounded, severely wounded, and who I thought had met his demise. I've gone into that in the past.

The experience of being in a rehabilitative setting was meaningful to me, and I made a somewhat difficult decision to leave teaching and go to physical therapy school. Yes, I did that. I applied to physical therapy school, and I was accepted by two schools, New York University and Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons. I selected NYU's program solely because the program started in July of the year. I was finishing my term as a teacher in June. I had given them my papers to voluntarily resign and start this new program. The program at Columbia started in September, and I was just so ready to get started that I selected NYU. So, I entered NYU's program of Physical Therapy. It was a year-and-a-half program for individuals who already had a Bachelor of Science degree. So, that was a very enriching experience. I took to that field like a duck to water. It was a good decision on my part.

After graduating NYU, two individuals per class were offered jobs at the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine--it's part of NYU. It's a world-renowned hospital for rehabilitation, and I was very happy to be one of the two people selected for that position. So, I then started my career at the Rusk Institute. [Editor's Note: Founded in 1948, the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine is part of NYU Langone Medical Center and the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine of the New York University School of Medicine.]

The format was that you would spend a year or two on each of their services. As it turned out, I think I spent two years on the spinal cord service, two years on the pediatric service, two years on the cardio pulmonary service, and maybe one year or so on the outpatient orthopedic service. In any event, it was a marvelous education because NYU had a different format of learning for its staff. There were lectures--people did not eat lunch all the time--that were given during lunch hours. There were sessions in which, at the end of the day, you would meet with a psychologist in a group, and you would discuss your interactions with the patients, what feelings you were experiencing. In a group-type setting, we would work out our feelings related to the work we were doing.

They were doing cutting-edge work at NYU, at the time. They were doing courses given within the context of your work day, sexual attitudinal reassessment, which was how to preserve and help assist the sex life of individuals who were compromised by spinal cord injuries. Young people still have thoughts, they have desires, but being a quadriplegic or a paraplegic, obviously, requires a different pathway to achieve gratification on a personal level and for one's significant other. So, there were professors who would give us lectures, and, at that time, you had to do things--you've got to get over your hang-ups--and so they would expose you to what you'd consider pornography, bestiality, this and that, but they would inundate you with so much of this stuff that it became desensitizing to you, not that you were comfortable with it, but that you were not offended to any great extent. The mechanics of teaching individuals with spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, neurological difficulties was so innovative and different from the normal pathways that doctors would previously direct their patients who had these compromises to follow. Essentially, they might say, in the past, your sexual life is over, now it is different here, people could learn to have a more fuller life. So, I was proud to be a part of a movement and be in a place that looked at the total person and was able to come up with strategies and mechanics to facilitate the needs of patients and their significant other. So, it was that that gave me a wonderful foundation for my future career as a physical therapist.

Like I said, I spent about six years there at NYU. I had gone from an entry-level physical therapist to a senior physical therapist, held other responsibilities, and at some point, I felt myself very qualified to go out on my own. I might say, by the way, it's important that in that period of time, Rusk Institute's facility, in NYU, was so highly regarded that during the year, you would see dignitaries come to visit the rehabilitation area.

In the early '70s, you're probably aware of the Yom Kippur War between Israel and Egypt. In the aftermath of that conflagration, they had many, many people on both sides who were wounded, amputees, neurological problems, the normal results of a war. I was working as a physical therapist, and lo and behold, one day, we are told that we are going to have a visit by no less an personage than Golda Meir, the Prime Minister of Israel. She came to Rusk Institute

seeking physical therapists who would go to Israel to help in the rehabilitation effort for these Israeli soldiers that were wounded there. That's how highly regarded the program was. [Editor's Note: The Yom Kippur War took place from October 6 to October 25, 1973. Attempting to regain territory lost in the Six-Day War in 1967, Egypt invaded the Sinai Peninsula and Syria attacked the Golan Heights. Taken by surprise during Yom Kippur, Israeli forces counterattacked and retook the Golan Heights. On October 25, 1973, the war was ended after a cease-fire was secured by the United Nations. Golda Meir served as the Prime Minister of Israel from 1969 to 1974.]

By the way, three weeks later, we also received another visit from another dignitary, and it was the wife of Anwar Sadat from Egypt. She was there on the same mission, to bring therapists to Egypt. While they had reached a peace agreement for the war, a cessation of hostilities, there were all these people that needed assistance. So, Rusk Institute was a place where things were happening. You were basically making an imprint on the world, so to say, and as a young person, it was important. So, that was NYU. [Editor's Note: Anwar Sadat served as the President of Egypt from 1970 until his assassination in 1981. In 1972, as First Lady of Egypt, Dr. Jehan Sadat established the Wafa' Wal Amal (Faith and Hope) Society in Egypt, a rehabilitation center for handicapped war veterans and civilians.]

KR: Were there American veterans at the Rusk Institute receiving rehabilitation?

MA: American veterans, basically, went to the VA Hospital system, and there were physical therapists there. I would say, occasionally, there was a veteran who had problems, usually as an amputee, because we had a wonderful, innovative prosthetics and orthotics service in operation there at NYU. So, people would come seeking cutting-edge technology, but most of the people that I would see, over the years that I was there, were car accidents and athletic accidents. One fellow, a gymnast, comes off the apparatus and breaks his neck. You take a nineteen or twenty-year-old kid who breaks his neck, is now quadriplegic, notices that his girlfriend has been coming every day and has been attentive, but as time goes on, the visits are less frequent. Over a period of time, while their love and their relationship may have been fervent in the beginning, it has now cooled. That's why those sessions with the psychiatrist, for the staff and for the individuals, were so important. I'm glad you highlighted that, really struck that memory. It just goes to say, it was a special place to be for me and for, obviously, the patients. It's still a very highly-regarded place.

Mr. Howard Rusk, who is the founder of that organization, did not really want people to stay at Rusk Institute for a lifetime. He wanted you to go through all the rotations and then to leave and to go out to other venues, where you could go bring his philosophy to other locales. In fact, when I left NYU, Rusk Institute, and I became the director of Bayonne Hospital's rehabilitation operation, I brought some of the same formats that I had learned at NYU or had been exposed to at NYU to Bayonne. Rounds with the doctors, educational sessions during the week, things of that nature, to fulfill his desire, requirement, dream, to bring rehabilitation out to level the playing field. [Editor's Note: As a physician, Dr. Howard Rusk (1901-1989) pioneered rehabilitation medicine. He helped found the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine, which was named in his honor in 1984. Marv Apsel worked at Bayonne Medical Center for twenty-

nine years, as the director of physical therapy, senior vice president of Allied Health Services, and then as chief operating officer.]

KR: When did you and Gail get married?

MA: When did Gail and I get married? We got married on July 21, 1973, right?

GA: When you ended school.

MA: Let the records show that I got that date right. [laughter] All right, so I was still in school.

GA: No, you started school.

MA: I had just started NYU's School of Physical Therapy, and I remember we had to put off our honeymoon, because I was going to school. Remember, I went to NYU because it started two months earlier, not in September, but it started in July. So, we got married on July 21st, which was a Saturday. On Monday, the 23rd, I was having my first anatomy test, for work and studies that I had been exposed to in the weeks before, and so it was very important to do well. So, we got married on Saturday, Saturday night, and on Sunday, I studied. I remember, we did go out and visit some friends, but I spent the afternoon going over origins and insertions of muscles, nerve roots and lymphatics in preparation for the test that I was going to have the next day. There were no excuses, and I obviously did well. We put off our honeymoon for a few months, until December, in which we, during the end of year Christmas-New Year's period of time, when the school was closed and you had time to basically do what you wanted, we went to San Francisco and we stayed at the LaReine Bradley Hotel.

GA: No, we didn't.

MA: No, you're right, we stayed at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel, I'm sorry, Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco, and it was marvelous. San Francisco was wonderful. We did all the sightseeing of Lombard Street and visited the restaurants and I think we then flew to …

GA: California.

MA: California to Las Vegas.

GA: To Las Vegas too.

MA: We spent a few days in Las Vegas and then to California to see some relatives, and then really get back on track, come back home, and continued living our lives. By the way, many, many years later, on our maybe thirtieth wedding anniversary, or thereabouts, we went back to San Francisco. We went to the Sir Francis Drake Hotel, and I wanted the same room that we had on our honeymoon. They said, "Sir, it's a long time ago, there've been many renovations." I said, "But I want it to be just like it was. I want it to be so much like it was that Gail, I really want you to blush when we get into the room." In any event, it was wonderful. I mean, San Francisco is a beautiful place. I remember having beautiful dinners at places like Alioto's

overlooking the bay with the ships and the sun setting, absolutely beautiful. I was with Gail, and it was just beautiful. Where am I? So, we had put off our honeymoon for a while.

GA: I was the only person making money.

MA: That's right, Gail was the only person, at the time, making money when I was going to school. So, things were rough. I had a little bit of a stipend from the military.

GA: To buy the house.

MA: Oh, yes, that was eventually used to buy a home, but in those first few months, when Gail was working and I was going to school, we would have dinner over my mother's house once or twice a week, dinner over Gail's mother's house, which was maybe three or four times a week. That was marvelous. My mother, I love her so, was not a cook, but Gail's mother, in comparison, would lay out these six-course meals. It was wonderful, "Wow." I mean, you have different implements for different foods, and it was a whole different experience. Her mother was a great cook, and, thank goodness, Gail retains a lot of the recipes that she learned. There's a flanken soup that is wonderful. I believe soup should have a certain consistency. Gail's soups, she learned from her mother as to how to make them. You put the spoon in the soup, and the spoon would stay up. I mean, they were thick pea soups and what have you, delicious. Anyway, I'm regressing. I guess that's what I'm supposed to do.

GA: Digressing.

MA: Digressing.

KR: Where was that first house that you bought using the GI Bill mortgage?

MA: Okay, we had lived, obviously after we got married, in a couple apartments in the Sheepshead Bay area, one on East 27th, and one on East 22nd Street.

GA: Rented.

MA: Rented, yes, we rented apartments, and we had wonderful relationships with the landlords of those places. In fact, our first little apartment was on East 27th Street, between Avenues X and Y, and we lived there for a year or so. Then, we had to leave because the owner wanted that apartment for his daughter, but we had made friends with other people across the street. In fact, Donna and Steve, who were our neighbors and who we socialized with but who left and moved out to other parts out in the west, just reconnected with us a few weeks ago, after so many years, and it was wonderful. It was as if we had just seen each other the day before. It was really wonderful. Then we moved from that apartment to another apartment on …

GA: East 22nd Street.

MA: East 22nd Street, owned by a family called the Rothsteins, who rented to us the apartment upstairs. It had a beautiful porch, a veranda, and we enjoyed our time in that place. In fact, I remember Gail was pregnant by then.

GA: Yes, Lisa. Lisa was born.

MA: Yes, you were pregnant at the time, and I went off to work at NYU from Brooklyn, and somewhere in the midmorning, after I left, basically, Gail started feeling …

GA: That was Brian.

MA: That was Brian? Okay.

GA: We already had Lisa because she took Lisa with her to the house.

MA: Right.

GA: Mrs. Rothstein drove me to the hospital at NYU, I had already had Lisa, and she watched Lisa and we had Brian.

MA: Okay, so when Brian was born, I remember, basically, having been in a lecture in the morning, one of those NYU lectures, and somebody comes in and says, "Marv, your wife's on her way into the hospital." So, I felt elated, but I felt, "Oh, my goodness, I should've been there." She comes to the hospital at around twelve o'clock or so. Dr. Porgis was the doctor. Brian is delivered. You talk about the moments of your life, watching the birth of your child, both Lisa and Brian, was so very special. I'm very musical and I like to sing, and I used to sing songs to Lisa and Brian. I now sing them to my grandchildren. People look at me as I'm singing these liturgical hymns, as I'm pushing a wheel carriage, but why not. So, I remember for Lisa, it was …

GA: "I Want to Sing You a Love Song." [Editor's Note: "A Love Song" is a song written by Kenny Loggins and Dona Lyn George and performed by Loggins and Messina, a folk duo. Anne Murray then covered the song in 1973, and it topped the charts.]

MA: "I Want to Sing You a Love Song." Yes, so that was one. For Brian, it was, "Sunshine on My Shoulders." So, I would sing to them a lot, and it was such a happy time. That's the way life should be. It should be happy. [Editor's Note: "Sunshine on My Shoulders" is a 1971 by song written and performed by John Denver.]

GA: Lisa was born in the first apartment.

MA: Lisa was born in the first apartment.

GA: Brian was a month old when we moved to Staten Island, when we bought our house in Staten Island.

MA: Yes, we bought our house at 26 Futurity Place, and it was a beautiful little house. It, basically, was off of Arthur Kill Road.

GA: Why did we move to Staten Island? [laughter]

MA: What?

GA: Why did we move to Staten Island? [laughter]

MA: Why did we move to Staten Island?

KR: Yes, why did you?

MA: Yes, most of our friends were moving out to Long Island or to New Jersey, and we lived in Brooklyn.

GA: I guess because I worked in Brooklyn and Marv worked in the city or eventually in Bayonne.

MA: Yes, it was closer. Right, Bayonne, I was working at Bayonne at the time. So, it was easier to travel to Bayonne from there, but it was nice. Once again, I had wonderful neighbors and annual block parties and things like that were common and it was just a very special time in our lives. Our family was growing.

GA: We lived there seven years.

MA: Seven years, wonderful time.

KR: What came after Staten Island?

MA: So, then, we decided to move to New Jersey. Basically, my philosophy was I keep on moving. You move from Brooklyn to Staten Island to New Jersey and, at that time, the sequence was then to move to God's little waiting room, Florida. But we moved to Edison, New Jersey and bought a home.

GA: Because we had a neighbor in Staten Island who moved to Edison and she would be our babysitter. I still worked in Brooklyn, so Edison was close enough in New Jersey. You were in Bayonne.

MA: So, living in Edison, my sister, who lived in Staten Island, also decided to move to Edison, New Jersey and lives less than a mile away from my house.

GA: Maybe that's why we moved to Staten Island, maybe because Debbie, your sister, had moved to Staten Island.

MA: Yes, so family's important. My brother had decided to live on the West Coast, and he lived in California for a long time and then eventually moved to where he still lives today in Oregon. But family's family. We still believe in those nuclear families, and that's the way it used to be. Today, obviously, you have people drawn in different directions, and with transportation, you can get anywhere relatively quickly. To the extent possible, I find it very comfortable that our relatives live within close proximity to one another, so it forms a very nice support system for us. It still exists today.

KR: Take me through your career at Bayonne Medical Center.

MA: Okay.

GA: Do you want to take a break?

KR: Yes, do you want to? Let's pause.

MA: Yes, let's take a break.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: We are back on the record. Trace your career at Bayonne Medical Center please.

MA: Okay, Bayonne Medical Center. So, I had been working at the Rusk Institute, NYU, for about six years, and at some point, I felt I was ready to move out into other locales. So, a previous teacher of mine, who's a physical therapist, Don Hubbard, was the Director of Rehabilitation Physical Therapy at Bayonne Hospital, and he was going to move on. He was going into private practice in Brooklyn, and so he knew that I had, or was considering, moving out. He told me about this position and asked if I'd be interested in carrying on after him. So, I decided after having looked at other places--a nursing home, I didn't feel was the right vehicle for me to do what I wanted to do in physical therapy and rehabilitation, and another locale at Peninsula General Hospital--in any event, I went for the interview at Bayonne.

I was interviewed by the CEO, a man by the name of Fred W. The medical director, assigned to oversee the activities of the physical therapy department, was a man by the name of Dr. Herman Frank. The two of these people interviewed me, and they had my full resume in front of them. They knew my experience, they knew about my education, and they knew about my military history. Of note was that Mr. W., upon the interview, came to me and said the hardest thing I have ever heard during an interview. He said it with sort of a straight face, and it was this. He said, "Mr. Apsel, I see that you're a Vietnam vet and you've got all these citations, you've been in combat, but I know a lot about the people coming back. There seem to be difficulties with them making the transition from military to civilian life." He said, "Tell me, if I offer you this job, will I regret it one day if while you are running down my hallway, sometime in the future, discharging a weapon, a live weapon, throughout the hallways?" Obviously, it took me back by hearing something like that, maybe for a second, saying, "Do I really want to be in this facility?" But having had the benefit of Don Hubbard, who was my teacher, telling me about the

community and the hospital, I said, "I can get over this," and I assured him that I had made the transition and there have been no incidents, and that I was fine. He didn't have to worry.

The more important relationship that ensued was between me and the medical director of the rehab operation at Bayonne Hospital, and that was Dr. Herman Frank. He stands as one of the most learned individuals I have ever met. To give you a little indication, he used to sit in the doctor's lounge doing *The New York Times* crossword puzzle in ink and very rarely made a mistake. He was just a brilliant man. Remember, I said previously, that it was my desire to bring some of the educational format away from NYU and bring it to other locales. This would be one of the locales, and in that instance, Dr. Herman Frank was a willing partner and participant. He was not going to be a medical director in name only; he was in concert with what I also wanted to do. This meant that we're going to have rounds on Tuesdays and Thursdays of every week, we're going to have teaching sessions, we're going to open it up to other health professionals, we are going to go out into the community and educate, and we're going to build this physical therapy rehabilitative operation from a somewhat fledgling operation to a more significant operation.

So, I took the job, after I was offered the position. I was, obviously, very happy to be there, and I started at Bayonne Hospital as the director of physical therapy. I had a wonderful staff of people who lived in the area and were professional. I had a wonderful assistant director, Anita, who has since passed. Also, there was a desire to learn because while they had all gone to different PT schools and they all were licensed and had passed their exams, they were not practicing the same level of physical therapy as in other organizations, like NYU. So, the upgrade was very well received. One of the individuals, after a number of years, Fred B., who was a therapist, went on to go to podiatry school and became a doctor. Others, like him and other individuals, basically moved out into the world, so to say. We were paying it forward. We were actually doing what Howard Rusk wanted for his therapists. I was now doing that for them. So, eventually, people moved out into different locales and new people would come in to take their place.

Along that line, I was given more responsibility. Initially, I was the PT director but soon became the PT, OT, [Occupational Therapy], and Speech Therapy Director, to reflect more of a complete rehabilitative operation. We were successful. We did a lot of things in the community. We started new programs. We were one of the first hospitals, community hospitals, to start a program for children diagnosed with autism as early as a year, year-and-a-half of age. It was a program that I was very proud of. It was performed in concert with the Board of Education, Bayonne Hospital, and the City of Bayonne. That triumvirate basically committed to resources, space and to have a program, which at the time, was pretty innovative. I basically tried to honor Howard Rusk by calling that program the Howard Rusk Pediatric Program for Autism, and it was very successful. Usually, autism is not diagnosed for years.

GA: Eighteen months.

MA: Yes, but the resources are not made available in such a manner where you had different entities committing in a concerted effort to benefit the child and the family, so this was one of those programs. Somewhere along the line, after a few years, the hierarchy of the hospital did a

survey of its workforce, and they wanted to know a number of different questions about the environment, about the ability to fulfill themselves professionally. In the design of this survey, they asked questions that pertained to the leadership of the people that were over them and giving them direction. So, one day, I was called into the office of the CEO, at that time, a man by the name of Mike D., and, basically, he said, "I have this survey here, Mr. Apsel, and you are the individual in this organization that scored the highest among the people in the organization for a number of reasons." He says, "Because of this, I'm asking you to become an administrator, to step out of the director's position and become an administrator who will now oversee, obviously, the rehabilitation operation but take on more responsibilities." In this case, it was, I believe, cardiology and respiratory therapy and some other departments. So, I took the position but also wanted to make sure that I could still participate in activities in the department, because, after all, I am a Physical Therapist. We reached an agreement, and so I became Assistant Vice President of Rehabilitation.

I moved on to something else later on. I gained more and more responsibilities and became the Vice President of Ambulatory Care Services, and then I became the Senior Vice President of Hospital Services, but I had taken on more and more departments. I would take on places like food and nutrition, operations, plant operations. At one point in time, I had all of the departments except nursing and finance. So, I moved through the organization, and it was a very interesting career.
I had been at Bayonne Hospital for about twenty-nine or thirty years. So, for the first twelve years, I was in that Physical Therapy Department and over the other departments of cardiology, respiratory therapy, OT, and speech services. Then, I gradually moved on to take on more responsibilities.

There were special projects that I was very proud of. The hospital got reformatted and enlarged. So, the small rooms that were once for Physical Therapy became a very large area that was more conducive to rehabilitation. Space was one consideration, but the people that went through there were also very special. I went on to, eventually, become the Chief Operating Officer of the hospital, and those were very difficult times. We're talking about the 9/11 experience and going through that as the hospital administrator. It was quite difficult. [Editor's Note: On September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked commercial airliners and carried out coordinated terrorist attacks by flying the planes into each of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. A fourth plane crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. On 9/11, 2,977 people were killed.]

We were only a couple miles away from New York, and on that one morning--I don't know if I've spoken about this in the past--we were supposed to have a hospital picnic on our front lawn. Their tents had been laid up and constructed, but at eight-thirty or so in the morning, on that morning, I was on my way back from having attended a Rotary Club breakfast. So, at about twenty to nine, as I entered the hospital, you could see the televisions in the lobby showing this terrible accident involving a plane. At the time, we thought it was an accident caused by the plane going into the World Trade Center building, and there was all this talk about that, watching it. Then, when we saw the second building struck, we realized that this was more of a concerted effort, and it was very difficult to watch.

That day was very hectic, as you can imagine. The normal activities of a hospital were put off. Things like surgeries, unless they were emergent, were cancelled, because so many of the resources were drawn to the area of the World Trade Center. We didn't have availability of things like ambulances. I had a renal dialysis program there. I had twenty or thirty patients who received renal dialysis, with no way of getting to the facility or getting home, but I also had a school of radiology and a nursing school and those students there had cars. So, I got those students to either pick up or take home the patients who were in our building to make sure that they would get home safely. Things like that needed to be done. When we received notifications to be ready for a couple thousand people who were coming our way, who were injured or dead, I was thinking our morgue held six patients, I think, six bodies. You tell me you're coming over with hundreds, maybe a thousand people who are injured, it's beyond our capacity to meet that need. We called the supermarkets in the area for their refrigerated trucks to come to the hospital, to park near the hospital, because where were we going to put these bodies? We would have to put these bodies in the refrigeration trucks. Things like that were going on.

I remember most distinctly, in the midst of everything, Mr. Evans, who was the CEO at the hospital--at that time, I think I was the COO of the hospital--and he said, "Marv, we should lower the flags to half-staff." I don't know what it was inside of me, I said to him, "No, there will be time enough for mourning in the future days. At this point in time, let the flag stand. Let everyone see that the flag is standing, that we are still together, and we are one," and he agreed to that. Many, many weeks later at the commemoration of ceremonies to the people who were Bayonne residents who died that day, Mr. Evans made mention of that very conversation that we had had about the flag, one of the prouder moments that I had. You talk about things that you do, programs, but sometimes the actions that you commit to are as important, if not more.

In the days following 9/11, we would have people coming in looking for loved ones. They thought loved ones may be in our facility. They thought maybe they had amnesia and they don't know who they are. For those days, we would have to assist those people, comfort them but assist them, because in almost all of the situations, it was a futile effort to think that there were people there, although we had people coming from the New York City, covered with gray ash, seeking medical assistance, and we extended that to them. So, it was a very difficult time for our country, for the people of Bayonne, for the patients, and for us, but I was very proud of the people that we had and the infrastructure we had.

I was asked to become the director of the Medical Reserve Corps in Bayonne, within Hudson County. That was, basically, an effort to bring the hospitals together to form procedures and strategies to deal with the masses in case of situations like that, or aerial discharge of gases, and all of that stuff that you've heard about that is meant to kill and maim and cause disruption in the normal activities of life.

As my career went on, we did a lot of things that I would be very proud of. We were one of the eleven hospitals in the State of New Jersey to be able to perform stenting, cardiac stenting, for people who had obstructions in their coronary arteries. Normally, those surgeries, those operations, were performed in tertiary centers, large centers, because they had a backup if something went wrong, to crack the person's chest and to do a coronary artery bypass surgery. But we were able to show, through a study conducted by a guy by the name of Dr. [Thomas]

Aversano, that community hospitals were capable of doing these same procedures, and if we had a safety backup, an ambulance backup, within a certain close proximity to a tertiary center, the patient outcomes were very good. In fact, the incidents of problems were much less than one percent. So, that model has now moved on, shown to be effective, and I'm proud that Bayonne Medical Center was one of the initial hospitals selected at moving forward to prove that that was an efficacious way to deal with those coronary insults.

When I look back on my career, so many things happened at Bayonne. I've known a lot of people and now it's sort of bittersweet because those people that I've known, that I've worked with for many years, are leaving the stage for various reasons. It's difficult to accept. There's a lot of effort, a lot of good work done by a lot of different people for the benefit of Bayonne.

I don't know if you've been reading the papers recently, but today hospitals are newly constituted in such a way that they have joined en masse to form conglomerates. So, the State of New Jersey, instead of having a hundred small hospitals, now have systems within the state made up of three or four major conglomerates. There are very few independent hospitals left. So, I left Bayonne Hospital in 2007, and in the years that followed, people started joining different groups. Recently, in the papers, I'm seeing that the three hospitals in that area of Hudson County, Jersey Medical Center, Christ Hospital, Bayonne, and another hospital are being taken over by bigger entities. Bayonne Hospital is actually--I just read it in the paper--being sold to an individual by the name of Avery Eisenreich, from Omni Systems, who will probably make the Bayonne Hospital into a nursing home. [Editor's Note: In October 2019, CarePoint Health and RWJBarnabas Health signed a Letter of Intent in which Hoboken University Medical Center and Christ Hospital in Jersey City and its affiliates agreed to become a part of RWJBarnabas Health. Bayonne Medical Center is currently operated by CarePoint Health. Avery Eisenreich, the owner of Alaris Health, formerly Omni, purchased the properties of Bayonne Medical Center and Hoboken University Medical Center in November 2019. Alaris Health owns more than twenty nursing homes in New Jersey.]

It's so sad, but the people in Bayonne right now are trying to fight that. They want a hospital, but there are other entities from these big conglomerates, like I said, Saint Barnabas is coming in and has already put a satellite emergency room in the area, to compete with Bayonne Hospital and to take patients to their facilities. [Editor's Note: RWJBarnabas Health operates a satellite emergency center in Bayonne through Jersey City Medical Center.] So, it is inevitable. Apparently, the work that we'd done was good over the hundred years or so that Bayonne stood in existence, but now it's moving into a different level. It will probably become a nursing home of sorts and it's also something that's needed in Bayonne, but the hard work and dedication of the people over the hundred years was not done in vain. It maintained the health and cohesiveness of a community for a long time, and the people that worked there could take pride in that. So, that is the nature of Bayonne today.

I still stay in contact with people who are on the Board of Directors. Every three months or so, we get together for a little dinner. Some of those people may still be working in the area, and quite frankly, in five minutes, after sitting with them, I said, "Gee, whiz, I'm glad I made the right decision to retire when I did," because the pressures and the stressors of trying to maintain something viable in this economic milieu is very, very difficult. If you're not positioned in a big

entity, who benefits from the economic advantages of that big entity, and you're just a little stand-alone, you really can't compete. You can't draw the talented people that you need. There's a cost of your operation, which is very difficult to deal with, and it's just reflective of the fact that we're in different times now and this is the new reality.

GA: Brian.

MA: What?

GA: Brian.

MA: Oh, yes, now, at Bayonne Medical Center, one of the things that I'm proud of is that we had two schools. We had a School of Radiology and a School of Nursing. My son, Brian, Brian Apsel, graduated with a degree in exercise physiology from West Chester University. We were talking about what path that was going to put him on, and it was on my behest, my strong suggestion, that he consider nursing as a profession and that I would do my best to get him into our nursing school. For one of the times in his life, he actually listened to his father and took the advice. So, he, basically, was accepted to the Bayonne School of Nursing, and he graduated.

I was glad that he went through that school, because there are a lot of nursing schools, but the thing about the Bayonne School of Nursing was that the teachers were what I refer to as old salty dogs. They are no-nonsense, disciplined individuals, and for people of the younger generation, who may not have been so disciplined, and so for people who did not adapt and change, it did not bode well for them, especially in a profession that required discipline and attentiveness and an acceptance of responsibility. So, I was glad that those professors, those teachers, basically said, "Class starts at nine o'clock. If you're here at 9:01, you're not coming in. You're out. Be here early," that type of approach. So, he was schooled from a very dedicated group of individuals, and I was very proud of it.

Upon graduation, the board chairman, Mr. Herman Brockman, when he was addressing the fifteen or twenty graduates of the school that year, made note [of Brian], and I'll tell you, I swelled up with some pride. He mentioned Brian Apsel, and he, basically, made the comparison and said, "If your career can mimic the dedication of your father's career and what impact he has had, then you'll be well suited for your profession and your career will be a long and a rewarding one." I took a lot away from that statement. I felt very proud that my son graduated from the school. Not a lot of community hospitals had schools of nursing and schools of radiology. Like I said, Bayonne was very innovative in many, many ways.

GA: Brian became involved in cardiology.

MA: Oh, yes. When I talk about Bayonne and the programs, I was the administrator starting this new innovative program of doing cardiac stenting in a community hospital. I was of such a nature that anytime there was a procedure, I wanted to be called, even if it was two o'clock in the morning four o'clock in the morning, I wanted to be there to make sure everything was going well, because there were a lot of operational things that had to be attended to. You've got to have an ambulance backing up the procedure, and people had to be where they needed to be in very

quickly. In any event, many times Gail and I were at restaurants, and I'd get a call. I would leave, and I would go to the hospital. But I would also do other things. I told my son Brian about this program, and there are several times that I woke him up at night and I put him in the car, he went volitionally, and I wanted him to see what this operation was like. So, I would take him to the hospital, and on clearance that I received from the medical people, he was allowed to sit quietly in the control room to watch through a window the physician and the team of nurses who were performing this procedure and the people in the control room, also nurses who were directing the pressure gradients and things of that nature and giving feedback to the physician. We did that many times, and he became enamored with this whole area of cardiology.

He went on, like I said, to graduate as a nurse, and he started off as a med-surg, medical-surgical, nurse but then decided to specialize in the area of cardiology. He went on, with experience, to head up a program at Christ Hospital, in Jersey City, for interventional procedures in the cardiology department and then eventually left and is now at JFK Hospital, in Edison, performing the same function. I'm very proud of the fact that he was taken by the health care industry, finding his specialty, finding his niche, and listening to his dad and taking some advice. So, that has happened for my son. I also have had friends of ours, who have had children, who I've tried to direct into health care professions because they were just unaware of the many, many professions that exist out there that make a hospital work. We did that for the son of friends in radiology.

So, the career that I've had at Bayonne was multifaceted. There were just so many programs that we were involved in for community outreach. Bayonne Hospital was one of the first hospitals to put a storefront out in the community to act as an educational conduit to the public, but to also be a screening area for things like mammographies and other medical issues for different groups of people. When you look back on your career, as I do, I think I can truly say it had an impact, and it was very rewarding. It meant something to a lot of people.

Today, I am not practicing as a Physical Therapist, but I maintain my license. I take my continuing education credits, and when I go to these educational lectures, occasionally, I meet a person who once worked for me and about how we're all much older now and about how they've gone off in different directions. Then, they tell me about what they've done, about their professional careers and their family. I take a lot of pride in that, in doing that, and having done that. So, you never know what little things you do in the course of your life that will influence another person.

Even with respect for my wife, I remember we were once in Coney Island, and I know you used to do reading assistance to a whole cadre of people who had difficulties. I don't know if you remember, but I certainly remember walking through the streets of Coney Island and seeing a father with his son, a son that you tutored in reading, they stopped and basically gave thanks to you, praised you, and thanked you for the efforts that you did in getting his son to be able to read. He was an immigrant child who had this difficulty, but you succeeded in changing the lives of that family.

When we talk about passing it on, I've got to give credit to my wife who inspired our daughter, who basically became a reading specialist, as her mother did, and is doing the same thing and has

received much acclaim and a certain number of accolades for her efforts, being named Teacher of the Year a couple of years ago and receiving a similar type of recognition last year. It's those things that you do in life that pay it forward, that have an impact. You may not know what the impact is right now, but sometimes you do learn what it is and you could take solace in the fact that your efforts have been worthwhile.

I left Bayonne Medical Center on August 31, 2007. I retired at age fifty-nine-and-a-half. I am now about to, in a month or two, celebrate my seventy-second birthday. I have been retired, for what, twelve or thirteen years, and I thought to myself, "What am I going to do with all that time?" [laughter] I have found outlets since retiring. I sing in a choir. With my wife, we go to this thing called "Lunch and Learn," where you take courses and we go to several different lectures. We work within the community through our temple. We revel in the fact that we have grandchildren and are thankful for their good health and basically being able to seeing them grow. They're sort of reflective of their own parents but also of the influences that we have had with them. So, there are many things to be thankful for, and we are a much wiser people than we were years ago. Like I said, we are more critical in our assessment of things that are happening out there, and we are ready to speak out and do something, either say something or do something, when we see something that goes awry. So, we hope that we're blessed with good health going forward. Even efforts like this, Rutgers and the oral history department, we found value in that whole process. In a way, we are giving back with information and histories that we've experienced, and we're hopeful that somebody may be able to glean something that they feel is important or reflective of those years, and if that happens, then the effort has been good and valuable.

GA: Also, the statement that you made the other night, that people would see you going to Vietnam as a …

MA: Oh, yes. Now, we're very reflective, since so much time has passed. Just a few days ago, at our temple honoring Veterans Day, myself and three other veterans made an address to the congregation.

KR: Oh, sure, I will pause.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: Okay, we are back on.

MA: So, we did this talk for the congregation honoring the veterans, and it's interesting how life unfolds. Many people, at the time I was drafted into the Army, said to me, "What a rotten break you got, Apsel. My God, I can't believe you've got to go to Vietnam and be involved in that morass and that mess." Everybody else is going to be following different pathways of their lives. Life is very ironic and you never know what is actually going to happen. It turns out, yes, I went to Vietnam. It was difficult. Well, I'll use the word difficult in many, many ways, seeing things and doing things that many people would say are counter to the way things should be. But I look at my friends who stayed home and I look at their lives. They were lamenting my having to go to Vietnam. Yet my closest friend, Fred W., got involved in drugs, which led, eventually, to his

demise. Other friends fell victim to street violence and similar types of activities that curtailed their lives. So, while they were lamenting my fate as being something terrible, in fact, they stayed back in the neighborhood, so to say, but had to deal with all the problems that communities had at that time and, in many instances, it led to their demise. Life is strange. You just never know what is in store for you, and it's been said so many times, "Live every moment for what it is. Live in the present, and be thankful for what you have." It is a lesson to be learned, you really should.

GA: I might think it might change your life for the positive. It set you on a path, as you said earlier today. If you didn't go, who knows what your life would've been.

MA: Right, exactly. Who knows what course would have been laid out for me? Look, in those younger days, I was a street kid, and maybe some of those instincts that I got as a street kid were helpful to me in the Army and in Vietnam, being suspicious, being sort of somewhat analytical and trying to understand the fuller meaning of what was occurring. Maybe those things were very helpful, which you just don't know.

KR: I am struck by an interesting dichotomy. After Vietnam, you very much spent your career helping people, as you've discussed today, in paying it forward. Then, on the other hand, because you were a veteran, you have talked about facing instances in which you were ostracized or vilified or facing basically job discrimination in an interview because you're a Vietnam veteran, whereas, now, veterans coming back from more recent wars are accepted. They're thanked. How do you reconcile that? How do you feel now about how you were treated as a Vietnam veteran?

MA: Yes, well, you're right. When I came back home, I was not well received, even among my own family, not my own nuclear family but extended family, people who are college professors or very sort of, I'll use the word, erudite, and well-schooled in the politics of the day. I don't think they honored the service because of what they saw coming out of Vietnam. Instances like My Lai tarnished the reputations and the activities of many, many of the soldiers. In a way, I could understand what their attitude was towards the soldiers, but incidents like that, as horrific as they are, should not be reflective of everyone. [Editor's Note: The My Lai Massacre occurred on March 16, 1968, when members of Charlie Company of the Americal Division's 11th Infantry Brigade, led by Lieutenant William Calley, murdered over five hundred Vietnamese civilians, including women and children.]

What I saw, what I experienced among the people that I worked with, by in large, was laudatory, in that people had your back. There was loyalty to one another. If you were thirsty, they would share their last bit of water with you. If they were hungry, they would share their C-rations. There was interest in your physical being. These are the people that we were together with. So, to cast a shadow over all the Vietnam veterans, I thought was wrong.

I think there's been a maturing of people's attitudes towards the sacrifices that veterans make today. Today we have a volunteer Army. So, they do go in and they're placed in very, very difficult scenarios that test to the limit their resolve, more so than what many people do in normal life. In normal civilian life, you have many outlets that you can move to, and you have

large support systems available to you, but for the veteran who sometimes lives in a state of constant fear and anxiety over what could be, I think in many, many instances, it far exceeds what exists back in civilian life. I will note, there are instances in civilian life and in certain areas and neighborhoods that almost mimics being in a war zone, but be that as it may; we're talking about broad generalities. So, I think there has been a maturing of the attitude among people towards the veterans, and it's gratifying to see the occasional noble and sacrificial efforts being acknowledged. Nobody talks about, "Marv Apsel, besides fighting, what else did you do in Vietnam?" "Oh, you did medical surveys? You went out into these little hamlets and gave healthcare assistance to the people." You don't hear about that, many similar types of actions. Look, maybe it's the media. Maybe it's the conduits of how things are reported. People like to pay more attention to the sensationalized things and they're important, but there are many other mundane, routine things that occurred that made me proud to be with many of those people.

Today, like I said, even amongst my family, while there was not overt confrontation, on occasion I was able to glean a sort of an attitude, at times, through conversations they were having, where they would inadvertently speak negatively about a soldier that was overtly detrimental. I'll tell you something; it was just several years ago. I sing in a choir, and the choir leader was looking for a replacement of an organist that we had. We had had a male organist, and she said to me, "We're trying to get another organist. This guy, he's one of these Vietnam veterans. He's way out there." You know something, I was welt up with a certain amount of anger and I wanted to lash out to her because those sentiments are well disguised by people who wear a mask hiding their intolerance of others. They say the right things in groups, but what are they thinking in a private moment? Sometimes you get a window into what a person is really thinking, and in that instance a person who is a learned, skilled, professional, like this choir director was harboring feelings that the Vietnam veteran was something less than an honorable person or even a capable person. So, when we talk and we talk about these things, it's one thing, but you sometimes really never know what's in the heart of hearts of people. Sometimes you get a little glimpse of what their real feelings are; sometimes you don't. I am always, because of that, sort of on guard. Maybe there's another word to more aptly describe my feelings.

GA: Sensitive?

MA: I'm a little sensitive. I'll listen to what you have to say, but, you know, today, I put more of an emphasis on deeds rather than speech, because people seem to qualify their verbal offerings or assessments. Show me what you've done in deed, and that is more important to me.

GA: I think that nowadays, and it's become more obvious to me, any time we go to a concert ...

MA: Right.

GA: … Woodbridge High School or PNC Center or at some public event, they ask the veterans to stand up. There are loads of people who stand up and they're getting recognition for what they did.

MA: So, that does happen and I'm very grateful to see that happen, but it's now happening with such regularity in the entertainment arena and so often that I am a little skeptical. Is it being

done to deliver a message to the audience that I'm a star and really a good guy, and I'm really a patriot, and I'm really somebody that cares for the veteran? So, I'm asking them to stand up for recognition. In many instances, I'm sure that that is the case, that they genuinely are feeling for the veteran. But sometimes it appears to be somewhat theatrical and overdone as part of the presentation, and so I'm a little skeptical. But that's probably something I'm going to have to live with going forward. Show me the deeds. Show me what you've done for the homeless veterans that are out there. Show me what deeds you have done to make sure that they have apartments and warm places to sleep in, that they get access to medical care. Show me what deeds you have done rather than giving verbal support, in a context of an entertainment event.

GA: Well, you walk into ShopRite ...

MA: Yes, when I walk into ShopRite, the music is, "I'm glad to be an American, where at least I know I'm free. And I won't forget the men who died who gave that right to me. And I'll gladly stand up, next to you and defend her yet today, because I love that flag, I love this land. I love the USA." Every minute of the day, that is playing, and I'm wondering what ulterior motive is there. [Editor's Note: Mr. Apsel sings the lyrics of the song, "God Bless the USA," which was originally recorded by Lee Greenwood in 1984.]

GA: Oh, my goodness.

MA: I'm glad that they're doing it, but it's unchanged. It's unchanged, and I hate to be skeptical. Maybe there's a certain cynicism that I have, when I see things like this, but maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I should modify my reaction, because it is a nice thing, but the music, it's unchanged. It sounds so chauvinistic. You know the word chauvinistic? You're so enamored with the country that sometimes it could potentially cloud your vision as to other peoples' realities, other countries, other entities. So, you have to be somewhat cautious.

GA: Cynical.

MA: I'm not …

GA: Anthony's on Veterans Day, they give out free pizzas to veterans.

MA: Free pizza for veterans.

GA: The other night, when Mike got one, you got one.

MA: Yes, that's right, they have come a long way. I am very grateful for the maturing of the attitude. I truly believe that there is some movement in that direction, but it stands in contradistinction to what the plight is of the veterans, of any war. Like I said, the homelessness, the access to health care. A little less pizza, free pizza, and maybe a little bit more support for the homeless would be a demonstration of deed. Most of us don't care about the pizza. "Thank you, thank you for the service." "Very nice, I appreciate that. Do something."

KR: Well, I have reached the end of my questions.

MA: You're kidding, and I've reached the end of my voice. I can't talk anymore.

KR: Okay, yes.

MA: All right.

KR: Well, I want to thank you so much for sharing your stories, and thank you both so much for being so generous with your time.

MA: Okay.

GA: Thank you for doing this.

MA: Thank you. It's a noble effort, and I'm glad to be part of it.

GA: Maybe you should tell one more story ...

MA: Oh, my goodness.

GA: … About Jacob, about passing it onto future generations.

MA: So, I believe in one of the past sessions, I talked about this Chai that I wore around my neck and having lost it on an infiltration course and being picked up by somebody, given to an officer, and then they said, "Oh, that belongs to Apsel." I'm called before them on this burrow, during this exercise, and they say, "Apsel, what is this?" I said, "Sir, thank you, it's my Chai." They said, "Chai, what the heck is that," or words to that effect, and I said, "Sir, it's a religious medal, Sir." They said, "Religious medal, I've never seen anything like this. Do you belong to a cult?" I said, "No, sir. It's a religious medal. It means life." I said, "Sir." He says, "Apsel, are you a communist?" I said, "No, Sir, it's a religious medal." At the time, I was taken aback. In retrospect, I looked at it--I don't think it was an event of outright anti-Semitism--it may have just been ignorance and maybe they're having a little fun with the soldier going through an infiltration course. I wore that medal since I received it from my parents as a Bar Mitzvah gift. I always thought it made my connection to the family. It made me feel like it was an amulet of good luck. I wore it throughout Vietnam. I think I told you the incidents where I thought I saw the image of my grandmother and the ensuing event where the people were killed around me, but I always felt that gave me some protection.

GA: Protect you.

MA: So, I still have that. My grandson, four or five weeks ago, my first grandson, had his Bar Mitzvah, and I asked him to wear it during the ceremony when he was going to be bar mitzvahed. He honored me and the family by wearing it during that ceremony, and I felt as if it was emblematic of all the family being there, even deceased members. The spirits of everyone being there, at that moment in time, when he became a Bar Mitzvah, and it's my hope that in future years other children who, if they go on to become bar mitzvahed or bat mitzvahed, will

also wear that Chai. What to do with it in the future? I don't know, but it has been a sort of a symbol. It's very symbolic and it was very important to me, but I was very happy that he acquiesced and, basically, wore it.

GA: I don't think he just acquiesced. I think he understood the story.

MA: I told him the story and I thought that that was probably more meaningful than just to wear a piece, a medal, that he understood that it's not a perfect world and you're now accountable to being a mature-thinking individual, that you're going to see difficulties, people that challenge you or harbor ill feelings and hatred, and you need to persevere. You need to deal with it and persevere, and I think he got the message. I'm very proud of those grandchildren. I think they're growing into responsible people who will have an impact in whatever they choose to do going forward.

KR: Marv, I do not think you told the story about seeing your grandmother's image protecting you.

MA: Well, in Vietnam, I was on a mission with a number of people. We were moving through this triple canopy, jungle-like foliage, and we're moving forward and we were in an ambush. But in the seconds before that, I had this image that I thought I saw my grandmother, who lived in the same building that we did, who was our caretaker when my mother worked. She was very motherly, obviously, and I thought I saw her image going like this to go down. So, instinctively, I did go down. It was an ambush, and this ambush ensued. The people in front, the one person in front, and behind perished. It was a very difficult time. I don't know, you try to analyze something like that, and you say, "Yes, I've been out in the sun all day. Maybe I was dehydrated." You could come up with a number of different things to rationalize something like that, but, to my mind, it was real, and at the time that I was experiencing it, it appeared to be real, and it comes under the heading of, who knows? That was it. So, that's why those things that I wear, they link me to my family. My ancestors are important to me, and who knows? Maybe there's something to it and maybe not. Most people, critical thinkers, would say, "Ah, you were just out in the sun too long. That was it. You weren't eating enough." But, like I said, to me, it was real.

GA: I think you told that story.

MA: I know I may have, but it bears repeating.

KR: Thank you so much.

MA: Okay.

KR: All right, I am going to stop.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

GA: I don't think he ever told this.

KR: Okay.

MA: Yes, it's Marv Apsel again. I was just about to leave, but they just reminded me of a story that I had told at a recent Veterans Day ceremony. [laughter] I couched it in this way. I said, "You know, not everything in my military experience was negative or difficult. There were some good times. There were some very fun times that we had." Now that I look back at those occurrences, I sometimes chuckle and I smile.

One such occurrence was when I had entered the Army, and I was being processed, I believe, at Fort Gordon, Georgia. We arrived at Fort Gordon from New Jersey, and we got there about nine o'clock or ten o'clock in the evening. The twenty of us, in a group, were about to be processed. So, we were waiting out at night, and there were a couple of non-commissioned officers trying to get the person to perform his functions inside the shed to receive and process us. So, I think, this comes under the heading of--I think they were trying to have a little fun with us.

They look at the group, and they said, "All right guys, you're in the Army now. It's going to be much different." They said, "Tell me something, we have a little work detail that we need over here. We're going to build a little trench around the shed here, because we noted that it's going to rain, and so we need to divert the water. How many of you guys, over here in this group, graduated college or went to college?" A few guys raised their hand. They said, "Okay, you guys stand over there, and how many of you guys over here graduated high school or went to high school?" A few other guys raised their hand. So, they said, "All right, you go stand with those guys who went to college, and how many of you guys over here did not get through high school, maybe did not even go to high school?" There were one or two guys over here, they raised their hand. He said, "All right, you two guys, you stand over here. Now, this group of college and high school graduates, grab those shovels and start digging, and you two guys that didn't go to high school, didn't graduate, I want you to watch them. Maybe you'll learn something." So, at the time, I said, "These people are crazy, what are they, nuts?" But they were having their little fun with us, I guess. But these little things deliver a message, basically, you know, I'm in the Army now. I don't have command over what I'm going to do. I've got to listen to the hierarchy. At the time, I didn't think it was so cute, but, in retrospect, I do. So, if I remember stories like this, I'll be sure to convey them to you. "Watch them, maybe you'll learn something." [laughter] All right, that was good.

KR: Great.

MA: All right. My story is not as yet complete. I hope to have a long and meaningful journey ahead. I would like to dedicate these narratives to those individuals who bring joy and comfort into my life. They are, my wife Gail, our children Lisa and Brian, their spouses Kevin and Corrie, and my grandchildren Jacob, Ethan, Matthew, and Annabella. May they all strive to be people who use their acumen to discern the truth, and their hearts to act with compassion, kindness, and love.

KR: Thank you so much.

[Editor's Note: Marv Apsel added the following dedication: My story is not as yet complete. I hope to have a long and meaningful journey ahead. I would like to dedicate these narratives to those individuals who bring joy and comfort into my life. They are my wife Gail, our children Lisa and Brian, their spouses Kevin and Corrie, and my grandchildren Jacob, Ethan, Matthew and Annabella. May they all strive to be people who use their acumen to discern the truth and their hearts to act with compassion, kindness and love.]

----------END OF TRANSCRIPT----------

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