RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM MCCLUNG

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Nick Molnar: This begins an interview with Mr. William McClung in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on August 16, 2011. Thank you, Mr. McClung, for coming into our office and doing an interview. How we usually start off the interview, because this is life-course oral history, is when and where you were born. Could you tell us that for the record?

William McClung: Yes, I was born in 1945. I was born at St. Michael's Medical Center, actually, it was St. Michael's Hospital then, in Newark, New Jersey, and my family was living in East Newark, New Jersey, which is across the Passaic River and actually, has nothing to do with Newark, but, sometimes, people get it mixed up. Newark is Essex County, East Newark is Hudson County, but, as I said, 1945, Newark, New Jersey.

NM: Could you tell us about your father's, his side of the family, his family history? I understand that his parents were from Ireland.

WM: Yes, my grandparents, whom I actually only knew one out of the four grandparents. Only one was living when I was born. My father is of Irish ancestry. His parents were born in Ireland. Very interesting, how they ever stayed together, I don't know, but one was from Dublin, one was from Belfast, and came over to New Jersey and they had about four or five children, obviously, one of which is my father.

NM: Did your father or the living grandparent ever talk about the experience of immigrating to the United States?

WM: No, no, not at all. As I said, the only [one] out of the four of the grandparents, my grandmother on my father's side, was the only one that was living when I was born and she died when I was about ten or twelve years old, so I don't remember a whole lot and there were not a lot of discussions about that.

NM: Did your father, from what you can recall, did he try to maintain any Irish traditions or was he more Americanized? Did any of that get passed down because it's only the previous generation?

WM: Yeah, no, no, none at all, no Irish traditions. I mean I knew about the Irish heritage, but not really. In the area I grew up in East Newark, and then eventually, since East Newark was very small, Kearny and Harrison, there were a lot of Scottish, Irish and English immigrants, so I picked it more from friends than from my father.

NM: So you lived in a community that had a lot of people of Irish descent?

WM: Well, it was very mixed. East Newark itself was very small. Only like twelve hundred people--blue collar community, mostly two family houses, upstairs, downstairs. We lived in a two-family house, second floor apartment--my aunt and uncle owned it--four rooms and very basic, as I said, very blue collar. In East Newark itself there were very diverse, there were Polish, Italian, Irish, kind of the gamut and most were first, second, third generation. When we eventually moved, Kearny was more Scottish, Irish and English.

NM: Now your father actually was involved in many of these events you teach in twentieth-century history class. For example, he was actually very young when what they called then the Great War broke out. Did he ever mention about what his youth when actually World War I was being fought? Did that ever come up?

WM: Not a lot and I really regret that. I regret that I didn't ask him. He wasn't forthcoming in saying anything about it. If you want, I can give you a little bit of his background.

NM: Please.

WM: He grew up during the Great Depression. He was born in 1909. He actually graduated from eighth grade and they pulled him out of school and he went to work in a factory, blue collar, never got an opportunity to further his education. Then, during World War II, he was married, and he was actually drafted in World War II into the Navy and served on an LST, a landing ship tank, ferrying equipment and troops across the English Channel. So that was his kind of background of growing up, but never had the opportunity for education.

NM: Do you know when he was drafted during World War II? Was it early in the war?

WM: No, no exactly… I wish I did, I don't, it was probably 1942-'43, toward the middle. I was actually born when he was overseas and from what I understand it was a difficult birth. They were trying because he was actually older then. He would've been what, thirty-five, in his early mid-30s. They were trying to have children, had problems, I was born, there was problems with the birth and they wouldn't let him come home and that's one thing that he regretted--not being able to be home to assist my mother, but that's what happened there.

NM: You mentioned he served in the Atlantic.

WM: In the Atlantic, yes, mostly. Again, from what I know, he was on these LSTs, Landing Ship Tanks, LSIs, ferrying materials and troops across from England to Europe to the mainland, probably mostly France.

NM: Do you know if he took part in the Normandy operations?

WM: No. I do not think so, but I don't know.

NM: Okay. Could you tell us about your mother's side? I understand they emigrated from Holland.

WM: Yes, they were what she used to call, it's funny, Holland-Dutch, but both her parents were born in Holland. I didn't know either one of them; they were dead when I was born, but I do know a little bit more about her family. My grandfather, my mother's father, was in the Dutch Merchant Marine and that's the connection, that's how they got to the United States. He used to travel back and forth between Holland and the United States on these ships bringing cargo and I believe they had, oh, seven or eight kids and let's say for the sake argument they had eight and five were born in Holland and three were born in the United States, because of his going back

and forth and my mother was one of the three that was born in the United States, and then they eventually all immigrated here, lived here and all the kids grew up there in the US.

NM: Now do you know how your father and mother met, was it in the Newark area?

WM: Yes, again I think they both grew up in Kearny, and she was about four or five years [younger]. She was born in 1914. I think my father was born in 1909. But it was probably at some social event, whatever they did back then, dance or whatever. Might even been work, because my mother was pulled out of school. She didn't even get to graduate the eighth grade, she was pulled out in the seventh grade and had to go to work, worked in a factory. So, I'm not exactly sure whether they met while working, whether they met at a social event, but they were together all their lives, fifty, sixty years married.

NM: You mentioned that it sounds from what you're saying that the Great Depression affected your mother's and father's families somewhat.

WM: Yeah, yeah, because they were, immigrants. They had come over from Europe, didn't have a lot of money, none of them were "educated" and I heard a lot of stories of them living in what they called cold-water flats, which meant the only heat was a furnace, usually in the basement, that they had to put coal in and a lot of times they couldn't even afford the coal so the kids used to have to go to a railroad track not far from where they lived and the coal trains used to go by there and the kids used to go out with buckets and my parents and her brothers and sisters and my father's brothers and sisters and pick coal and bring it home because that's the only way they could keep themselves warm in the winter. So it was a very tough life and not being educated, not having the opportunity to do that, it was difficult for them growing up because of all the other things, the Depression and then World War II, so it was pretty tough.

NM: Do you recall if your mother, did she work in World War II? On the pre-interview survey it said she worked at RCA?

WM: Yeah, that's when we were growing up, that was probably in the '50s and early '60s.

NM: Do you know if she worked during World War II? Your father would be in the Navy.

WM: Right, exactly. That I don't even know. I'm not sure whether she worked or not. She probably had to because I'm sure that they couldn't get along on just his military pay, so I'm sure she had to work during that time. Then, when she got pregnant with me she obviously had to stop for a while because there was no daycare or anything like that. I'm sure the family helped with taking care of the children and that kind of stuff. But I'm sure she did because I'm sure she had to.

NM: This was during the war and Great Depression, your mother and father were still in East Newark.

WM: Yeah, East Newark, Kearny, I'm not exactly sure; probably at that time, Kearny.

NM: Living with relatives or renting from, I don't recall from what you mentioned before. They were renting from relatives?

WM: Well, yes, well that was when we were born, when he got back from the service. Before that I'm not sure. Either they lived with relatives or they rented an apartment or something around there that they could afford, but I'm not exactly sure of that.

NM: Okay, so you're born in September of 1945, you're in East Newark?

WM: Yes, we were living in East Newark when I was born.

NM: I understand you went to elementary school in East Newark?

WM: Yes, East Newark, as I mentioned before, was very small community, no more than about twelve hundred people. It was basically four blocks by four blocks. It was very concentrated and the houses were three feet from each other. I could reach out my bedroom window on the second floor and touch the house next to me. But yeah, they had one school and it was one building and they had nine rooms and that was grades kindergarten through eight. There were no changing classes, so when you're in the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth grade you went in that classroom with that teacher all year and she taught and it was all she used to do. We didn't have a male teacher. She taught all the subjects--spelling, English, history, math, science--so that was it. Then, after that, there was a choice of high schools because East Newark didn't have a high school. You could either go to Harrison High School for free or Kearny High School where you would have to pay part of the tuition. East Newark would subsidize part of it. But I guess they had a deal with Harrison where they would take kids from East Newark for free. Kearny would take kids from East Newark also, but you had to pay; my father had to pay part of the tuition.

NM: So could you describe what it was like growing up in this small community in East Newark?

WM: Yeah, it was fun. I mean, you see we've done pretty well, my wife and I, and my kids and live in a real nice community, very different from where I grew up. We now live in a middle class, upper middle class community. East Newark was very blue collar, factory workers. I don't think any of the people who lived there had a college degree; they worked in factories and gas stations, etc. But I often say I wouldn't trade growing up there for living in one of the most affluent communities in New Jersey or anywhere in the United States, because I think it was a great experience growing up--a lot of different friends, and different ethnic groups. We kind of made our own fun. We didn't have a lot of equipment. We played sports, but if we played hockey we'd get some old wood and get an axe and chop it into a hockey stick. The other thing though that's interesting is when we grew up, because of the ethnicity being mostly Irish, Scottish, English, the sport of choice then was soccer, so I played soccer from the time I was three, four years old, played in grammar school, high school, college, actually coached in college. I developed a lot of good friends. In fact, I'm still in contact with a friend of mine who I grew up with, who I have known since he was three years old in East Newark, so I don't have any regrets. My parents were very strict, especially my father. He was the disciplinarian, so you

had to be in at a certain time and if you didn't toe the line or behave or violated any of the rules, you were punished, for example you couldn't go out for a week or a month or whatever. But I think it was a great upbringing and, obviously, had a lot to do with the rest of my life and where I am now--in regards to values and education. The other thing that I would say is that even though my father wasn't an educated man, and to this day I kind of shake my head because I see other people who grew up that way and they're telling their kids, "School is nonsense," and "When you get out of high school get a job and join the union" and all that kind of stuff. My father used to say to me, "Don't be stupid like me. Get an education. You got to go to school. You got to go to college. You got to get good grades. That's the only way you're going to get out of this and get a good job." The other thing when I was growing up, from the time I was two, three, four years old, he sat me at a desk every weekend, Saturday, Sunday. They had this little what they call the secretary which had some knickknacks in it and the shelf folded down and that was kind of a top. He had a clock and he taught me how to tell time, got little books and taught me how to do the ABCs and how to write and how to read, so when I went to school I was ahead of most of the kids in terms of just the basic skills because he valued education, even though he wasn't educated. I still shake my head and say, "How did he do that?" because a lot of the other people in those times didn't. They didn't know the value of an education and their thing was get out of school, get a blue collar job, join a union and you're going be wonderful. My father said, "You got to get an education. You got to go to college. You got to study. You got to get good grades and that way you'll have a better future, better career." Although he didn't say it, I think what he was intimating was, you get out of this you can rise up. So it was a combination. It was with a strict upbringing. He really encouraged education. But also a lot of good times, a lot of good friends and probably did things that a lot of other kids did, but maybe on a scaled down, kind of blue collar way.

NM: Your friends growing up, were many of their fathers World War II veterans like your father?

WM: Yes, I would imagine that most of them were, because that was the time and that was the age, so if you didn't join--most of the people didn't join--the men, obviously, were drafted as far as I know. We didn't talk about it. We played war. We got sticks, made believe they were guns and stuff, but I don't think a lot of people back then talked about their war experience. But I would imagine most of the kids' fathers were veterans of World War II. I know I had cousins--as I said my aunt and uncle lived downstairs--my cousin, he was an older cousin, he was in the Marine Corps during Korea and he was wounded pretty badly. The other thing is besides the education, besides the diverse ethnicity, there was, and this will come to play I guess when we talk later on, when we get further on, but there was a lot of patriotism, because if you got called, if you got drafted, you went. A lot of people joined both during World War II and afterward when Korea was brewing because it was very patriotic, that's what you did. That was another kind of theme running through my younger years and my childhood. It was you're obligated to serve your country and if you get called you go, you don't question.

NM: Growing up in your community, were you involved in any social organizations, for example, such as the Boy Scouts or was the church a part of the community?

WM: A good question and I kind of, I guess I forgot that, but a huge part of my growing up was church and that's interesting because I don't consider myself, either then, and certainly not now, religious. But back then we belonged to a church and my parents took me from the time I was three or four years old. It had what they called the cradle roll. It was almost like a nursery today. They went to church and there were people who watched the kids. This was over in Newark. It was called Second Presbyterian Church. It was right by Washington Park. It was a huge church. When I look at the benefit, even though we were relatively poor and blue collar family, the diversity of people that I knew both from my own little neighborhood and from church, because when I went to church, that church had well over a thousand, two thousand people and there were people from Nutley, Bloomfield, Kearny, Newark, Irvington, so I got to know people not only from my own little community but these communities as well from the time I was very young. The church was a huge five-story building right on the corner of Washington and James Street in Newark. They had the church itself, which was very big, then they had a building right next to it that was attached--five stories. They had an auditorium, so they brought in programs for children. They had workshops, theater plays, etc. They had a woman who was kind of artistic and we did *Wizard of Oz* and other plays and so I was in that. On the fifth floor of that building they had a gymnasium--full gymnasium, basketball court--and what they did is when we got older, Thursday nights they had a recreation program then all day Saturday. You could go there Saturday at nine o'clock and you'd spend nine to twelve in the gym. You'd bring your lunch. You had lunch. Then on the first floor they had four bowling alleys, three pool tables and two ping pong tables. You have your lunch, then from one to three you'd bowl or play ping pong or pool. A lot of my social activity and learning experiences came from the church. It was everything. It was culture, being involved in plays, sporting activities, etc. They ran a summer camp for two or three weeks where they'd take us to different sites around the state, so it was a great. I think it was a great experience to get out, especially growing up in East Newark since it was so small and kind of limited. It exposed me to people from other communities and other backgrounds and activities that I would never have gotten involved in had I not been involved with that. Through the church there were Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, I was involved in those. Mostly Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts didn't last too long, but you know it was through that church that they did that. I was in the junior choir. They had bell ringers. It was a whole bunch of activities that, I think helped broaden my experience as I grew up.

NM: It sounds like you stayed involved in these activities through the church, through elementary school and through high school as well?

WM: Yeah and also college. College more though strictly social, probably continued to go until I was nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, because there was a young adult group as well and we had some good leaders and we had things like dances. They used to have a retreat up in New York State in a place called Lake Minnewaska and that was a weekend and we'd go up there have fun and games and swim and do kayaks and canoes and stuff like that. Although, I wasn't really going to the church services then, I still stayed involved with the social activities through the church and through the church groups.

NM: Was there any type of connection to Newark? For example, would people from East Newark go shopping in Newark or would they go to social activities in Newark?

WM: Yes, definitely shopping, because Newark was the big place. Back then they had all the department stores like Bamberger's, Kreske, Hanes, S. Klein On The Square. At Broad and Market Street, they had a bunch of sporting goods stores, like Davega, stores that sold fishing tackle and sporting goods. Then, along Broad Street, there were stores that sold appliances, TV's, etc. My father was an athletic guy and usually after dinner--he got home from work early at four-thirty and that's when he wanted to eat his dinner. If we got done at five he might sit down for a while, but usually right after dinner he'd say come on let's take a walk and we'd walk over to Newark and we'd either walk over the railroad bridge in Harrison into Newark and we'd walk down Broad Street and Market Street and look in the windows at the TVs and, at the sporting goods and the fishing tackle and that kind of stuff. That was almost every night he'd take me over to walk. He'd say, "You wanna take a walk?" and of course, "Yeah, yeah, let's go," because a lot of the stuff, quite frankly, we couldn't have because we couldn't afford, but it was pretty cool looking at it in the window even though you couldn't buy it. I guess, for five or ten minutes I'd kind of dream and visualize and say, "Boy, if I only had that" or "We'd could get that" or whatever. We did have an old black and white TV when I grew it was in the living room, but not too much else.

NM: Did you listen to the radio growing up?

WM: Yes, yup, listen to the radio in the '50s and '60s, especially when my mother was working in RCA. One Christmas--I was about eight, nine, ten years old--I told her I wanted a radio. She could get it a discount. I'd listen to 1010 or 1050. That was when rock n' roll was coming up, so I'd listen to those stations. I remember my parents had this big console thing with a record player and a radio. They'd clean the house. My father would help my mother every Saturday morning. They liked country and western music, so they'd have that on which I didn't like too much, but I listened to that every Saturday morning. Then the other thing is my father thought as part of my education that if I took some kind of music lessons so, I guess, more at the urging of him, which turned out okay, I took accordion lessons and played the accordion, probably eight to ten years. I actually wound up playing in a band in high school and played some dances and stuff, but I found that after a while I wasn't terribly musically inclined so that went by the wayside. I still have my old accordion. In fact, when I was first married my wife's parents used to say, "Oh, Willie, bring out the accordion play us something." I used to do that and the dog would run and hide under the table. But, I still have it, I still have the accordion, but it's been in the closet. I haven't used it in fifteen to twenty years. It's probably all dry rotted now. But yeah, we got involved in those kind of activities. It was kind of low cost, but it was something to do. There was a movie theatre in Harrison called The Warner Movies and on Saturdays, if you could get your parents to give you a quarter, it was a quarter to get in and sometimes either they have an Elvis Presley movie or a war movie and once a month I think they'd have twenty-five cartoons, so we'd go, a group of us would go there and see that. Those are some activities we got involved in.

NM: Now you mentioned your mother worked for RCA, was this during all you're growing up that she worked for RCA?

WM: No, just mostly because my mother was sickly most of her life and that might have been a problem with having children and with the difficult pregnancy when I was born. But she

worked, I remember, through the '50s and early '60s, but she had congenital heart disease, had a number of minor heart attacks, so she probably worked for six, eight, ten years that I remember at RCA and that was it, she had to stop. My father would help clean the house; he did most of it, especially when they got older and retired. He did all the shopping. He did all the cooking. He wasn't an inactive guy, he was a tough guy, and he knew that she wasn't capable or able to do it and so he did it, he pitched in, good for him.

NM: Yes, yes.

WM: Better man than I am. My wife would like a lot more help and support for me these days.

NM: Growing up, where was your father employed. You mentioned that he came…

WM: He probably had jobs before, but he had two jobs, major jobs that I remember. He worked for seventeen years for a company called Schickhaus, which was a meat packer. They had a slaughterhouse in Harrison and he worked in the slaughterhouse for seventeen years. Then he eventually wound up for twenty plus years working for Passaic Valley Sewage which was a quasi-governmental agency. They take the raw sewage, pump it, treat it, and then, at that time, dump it out in the ocean. I don't know what they do with it now. That was around Port Newark. He worked there and that's where he retired from eventually, Passaic Valley Sewage. I think he was a worker when he worked at Schickhaus in the slaughterhouse. When he was with Passaic Valley Sewage he was first an oiler, because they had these machines that would pump the sludge and the sewage and I guess they needed guys to go around every hour to oil the machines and check them, and then, eventually, he became what they called an electrician's helper. So that's what he did for the two major jobs that I can remember when I was growing up, and then he retired eventually, and they bought a house down in Toms River and lived down there after they retired.

NM: Did your father ever talk about work at home?

WM: No, not a lot. I mean, there might be one or two things here and there, but not really. I mean, because it was kind of a nothing job and he always said, "Don't be stupid like me." I think he was a very smart man, because I didn't think he wanted to talk about that to get me thinking about that because his message to me was go to school, get good grades, go to college, be smart, get a good job. What he did do though is back then--I don't even know now anymore, but you can get a driver's permit when you're sixteen and you could get your license when you're seventeen. When I was fourteen, fifteen, he'd take me down, because when you went down there, it was down around Port Newark. You'd go through what they call "Down Neck" Newark and you'd go down and basically, it was all meadowlands. They had their plant right in the middle of the meadowlands and they had some dirt roads that went all around it and he'd take me down when I was fourteen, fifteen years old and teach me to drive. He let me drive, and then, eventually, which was thrilling to me, even before my permit, like fifteen, fifteen and a half, I guess he was comfortable enough he'd go in, talk to the guys, and he'd say, "Alright, you can take it around yourself, but be careful." He said, "Watch for these nuts around here, because the guy driving the truck is crazy and if you hear them, you just pull over." So we went down there

every once in a while and he'd show me the process and the machinery, but not a lot of talk about it at home.

NM: Now through elementary school, which was actually what would now be elementary and middle school, were you there from the first [grade]?

WM: Kindergarten through eighth, one building.

NM: Could you describe the building? Was it a new building? Did there have to be expansion because of new students?

WM: No, there were no expansion, it was one building. It was an old building. It probably was there for who knows how long before I got there, and I believe it's still there. I don't know what they do now because I'm away from that area for forty, fifty years. But it was an old building--wooden floors, these big windows, no air conditioning. If it gets over eighty-five degrees today, there's no school because the air conditioning broke or something--no air conditioning. It was probably about twenty, twenty-five kids per class, because this is a relatively small community. The schoolyard in the back was smaller than what my backyard is now. If they let all the kids or most of the kids out, you were shoulder to shoulder, you couldn't do a lot of playing or exercising. It was a relatively small community. The school was on 3rd Street and Central Avenue and I lived on John Street so it was three, three and a half blocks away--but it was good experience. Most of the teachers, I thought, were very good. I think they were caring. One of the things that my father was extremely proud of was when we graduated; I graduated third in the class. Not only did I graduate third in the class, but I also played at the graduation ceremonies. I played the accordion. I played a song or two at graduation, so he was just ecstatic about that. Because of the size of the school and it didn't have an auditorium, the graduation exercises were at Harrison High School so parents and friends could come, but he was beaming. He was just very happy that I did so well in school and that I was playing my accordion at the graduation ceremonies, so he was a proud parent.

NM: You mentioned before that once you graduated from the elementary and middle school there was actually a choice between two schools. How did you go towards one? You went to Kearny and you said that you had to pay partial tuition. Was it a better high school or why was that chosen over Harrison?

WM: Well, I hope people reading this are not from Harrison and don't get offended, but basically, the reason that I went was my father. It wasn't really a choice. He basically said, "You're going to Kearny." I would not have minded going to Harrison High School, because most of my friends were going to Harrison High School from East Newark, as well as some of my other friends who went to Catholic grammar schools in Harrison. There was Holy Cross and Our Lady of Czestochowa, a lot of Polish kids went there, but I knew those kids from the community. We played sports and ball and played games together. I'd say I think there were only two or three people from my grammar school class that went to Kearny, everybody else went to Harrison. Harrison was a smaller school--it was a group one school. Kearny was a big school--group four school, bigger school--and in my father's mind, Kearny had a better academic reputation. Harrison almost had a reputation of "It was okay, not great," so he said, "You're

going to Kearny High School" and we didn't debate it long, because you didn't debate anything with my father. He was going decide. I said, "Yeah, but dad you're going to pay all this money." He said, "Don't worry about it. I'll pay it." I think at that time--which when you think of it I graduated eighth grade in 1959 and I went to high school in '59, graduated in '63--for the four years it was twenty-five dollars a month that he had to pay. So, it was 250 bucks a year and back then in 1959-1960 that was a lot of money, especially for a blue collar guy, but he said he didn't mind it. What happened is eventually, after my first year, he started looking for an apartment in Kearney and we eventually moved to Kearny. The first year I went to Kearny High School I was in East Newark and he paid the tuition. Then the last three years we lived in Kearny, and being a resident, he didn't have to pay. He paid more for the apartment in Kearny, because I think he was only paying forty bucks a month in East Newark, but then of course you had to pay for the coal, because it was a cold water flat and that was interesting. It was during the winter. I know I'm digressing, but I can patch this up.

NM: No, no please.

WM: That's why I'm sometimes intolerant of kids today who have so much and do not understand why they can't have the thousand dollar baseball glove as opposed to 850 dollar baseball glove. I remember, in the winter especially, we used to get coal delivered. Now we could afford the coal. We didn't have to go on the railroad track and pick it, so he'd get a ton or two tons delivered and they put it in the chute and put it down in the basement and the last thing that he did before he went to bed--my father went to bed early, maybe eight-thirty, nine o'clock--he'd go down and stoke up the fire, get it all ready. Now this is in the dead of winter and there were no storm windows or anything, and the fire, think about it, that's going to go out in about three or four hours, so you woke up in the morning, about six, six-thirty, seven, whenever you woke up to get ready to school, the place was freezing. So you'd have to get out of the bedroom, go into the kitchen, close all the doors, he'd run down, stoke up the fire again, but that took maybe half an hour to get it up and going, and then, finally when the heat got up to the second floor, so he'd turn on the oven and all the burners in the kitchen and so that's how we got a little warm. We had to leave the door to the bathroom open, because the bathroom was off the kitchen, so you could take a bath. There wasn't a shower. There was a bathtub and a toilet and a sink. I hate to sound like "and I walked five miles to school in the snow." I didn't have to do that--only three and a half blocks. Then at least when we moved to Kearny we had a regular furnace that you just turn the dial and the heat would come up or go down. How wonderful that was!

NM: You appreciated it.

WM: Oh, yes, absolutely, absolutely. I remember some mornings, waking up in December, January, February where you don't want to get up because you'd have three or four, five blankets and quilt on you that you were under and you were little. Your ears were a little cold because they were outside, but when you got out, man, it was pretty cold. In Kearny the landlord owned an appliance store. He had two apartments on top and we had one of those. It was right next to a firehouse.

NM: It's okay to back up, because I'm actually going to back track.

WM: Okay.

NM: During your time at elementary school, did you and your classmates have to do things such as duck and cover drills?

WM: Yes, the air raid drills. You do two things. First, the desks were the old desks. They weren't like the movable desks. I guess that they were kind of bolted to the floor, and then the back seat would flap down and the lid would go up. What I remember, sometimes you'd have to go under the desk. Other times you'd have to run down to the basement. There was a basement and that's where the boy's room and the girl's rooms were. You'd have to go down to the basement, because that was the civil defense drills, the Cold War, the Atomic Age, so yes, we'd have to do all those drills. I don't remember how frequently, but we loved it because it disrupted class and we didn't have to listen to the teacher. That was almost fun. At that time, you never really grasped the seriousness of it or what the potential downside was, but we used to like it because it was fun, we thought.

NM: Now the first year you're going to Kearny High School, how were you getting to school? You're in East Newark. Are you taking a bus?

WM: Two things, three things maybe. First of all a friend of mine who lived on the same block as me four, five houses down. He was one of the two or three others that went to Kearny High School. His mother worked and she worked up around that area, so she'd drive he and I to school. The other options were if they were on vacation or she didn't go to work that day, we could either walk four or five blocks to Kearny Avenue and get a bus up, or you could walk. It was maybe half an hour or forty, forty-five minute walk, which you didn't think a lot of back then because that was the normal mode of transportation-- we used to walk to Newark most of the time. So I was used to walking. When my buddy's mother drove she'd take the two of us and her daughter, his sister, then they'd go up into Kearny and pick up her sister, my friend's aunt, because I guess they worked together, and then they'd drive us all to school, drop us off. So it was either get a ride, walk or take a bus.

NM: Then when you moved to Kearny, were you able to walk to school?

WM: Yes. Kearny is a heck of a lot bigger. It's a pretty big town, but I was maybe ten, twelve blocks from school, maybe fifteen minute walk, so it wasn't terrible. Yes, I'd walk to school back and forth. Then when you get to be a junior or senior some of your friends might have a license and might borrow their father's car or might be lucky enough to have a car. Every once in a while you might get a ride from one of them or a ride back home from one of them, but mostly walk.

NM: Actually, when you moved to Kearny were you still able to stay involved in these church activities in Newark?

WM: Yes, absolutely. I was about a block-and-a-half in from Kearny Avenue in our Kearny apartment and that was one of the main routes for the busses. There were three busses that

would go from Kearny into Newark. I'd just take the bus and when I got older, seventeen, eighteen, either I had a car or somebody else had a car, so you could drive over. But, yes, I kept up the church activities through high school.

NM: In high school, what were some of your favorite subjects?

WM: My favorite subject, not favorite subjects--unfortunately, I wasn't a great student, but I was getting pounded by my father. My favorite subject was history. I loved history and I guess one of the reasons is that, especially in my junior and senior year, I had two teachers that were absolutely outstanding. I'd go back to their classrooms after school and hang out and talk with them because I like stories. I just fell in love with history. It was interesting because in the other subjects I'd get maybe "Bs" and "Cs," maybe an occasional "A", history, straight "As" and I think one of the reasons is that since you're good at something you like it or because you like something you're good at it, I don't know whether it was the chicken or the egg , but history was always my favorite and science was a challenge, math was always a challenge, but history I just loved, I really did. English was okay, but I fell in love with history.

NM: You said you had two teachers that really stood out in your mind and what drew you to these teachers?

WM: I think because of the way they taught, because they were basically story tellers, so they wouldn't just read or they wouldn't give you tests or talk at you, they'd talk about the subject passionately. One of the guys was really, really funny and interjected a lot of humor. He was talking about the Barberry pirates and he talked about the US Navy in the Mediterranean, they'd come up they'd crawl up the sides of the boats and he said they got to the hold and said all of a sudden down below they heard, "Let's do the twist." I laughed and everybody else is saying, "What is this guy, nuts?" But he didn't take himself seriously. I thought he was an excellent teacher. He was willing to spend time with me afterward. He was the one that I asked, he and the other history teacher, to write the recommendations for me for college, the teacher recommendations that you needed. He made it interesting and fun. He didn't take himself too seriously, he was humorous. I think the other thing is he showed an interest in me which I think is important and the other guy was the same. I can remember their names to this day. The junior year was Mr. Rothman, Marvin Rothman and the other guy's name was Mr. Webb, Franklin Webb. So they were outstanding and had a big influence on my life, at least in terms of going to college and college major.

NM: While you were in school, did you work any part-time jobs?

WM: Yes, I worked a lot. I think you had to get working papers back then and I think you had to be fifteen or sixteen, so you did little stuff when you're fourteen, fifteen to pick up a couple of bucks here and there. But I think starting at sixteen, right up at the corner from where I lived was a drugstore/liquor store called Midtown Drugs. So a friend of mine had been working there and he asked about me, so I worked part-time there and did a little of everything, stocked shelves and waited on customers. When I became seventeen and got a driver's license, I also made deliveries. There was a big discount store that actually originated, you may or may not know of it, in Harrison. It was called Two Guys from Harrison and they were the precursors of Target,

K-Mart, Walmart and they had a big store in Kearny and I worked there part-time in the sporting goods section. They actually changed now. They don't do anything retail. They're called Vornado and they're in real estate. They're big real estate people. I worked part-time there. In my senior year in high school--my father never asked anybody for anything and my father wasn't particularly political. In fact, my father was a registered Republican, but he used to go down to this bar in Kearny called Doyle's. The guy who owned it was a guy by the name of Norman Doyle and he happened to be a Councilman in town and he was a Democrat. My father knew him for a long time, never asked any favors, never asked for anything. Each councilman back then had at least one of the departments that they were responsible for, so Norman Doyle was responsible for Public Works, DPW. My father asked him, and it must have took a lot because my father, like I said, was a very proud man and never asked anybody for anything, even though he never had anything, but he asked him when I was starting my senior year in high school if there was any chance of me getting a summer job. It was actually when I ended my junior year; summer coming up and he said to my father, "Send him down to the garage Monday morning. Go see Weary Kenney, tell him Norman sent you." So I went down and I worked from the end of my junior year in high school all through college in the summer there at DPW, sweeping streets, collecting garbage, sucking out sewers. I also worked part-time at the drugstore and Two Guys. So I worked, sometimes, two, three jobs, because I knew my father couldn't afford to pay for college. By that time I had managed to get a little car, when I turned seventeen and I knew that it was going to be my responsibility for the upkeep of it, insurance, gas, any repairs that would be needed, so I knew I was going to have to work to get money for that and to save for college, because although my father pounded into me through the years to go to college, he also said, "And by the way I'm not going to be able to pay for it so you're going to need to… I'll help you however I can, but it's not going to be a lot." So yes, I worked like I said, sometimes three at a time and they were interesting and they were fun and I enjoyed them.

NM: So during high school you're being instilled with the concept you're going to college and you're also aware that you need to save up money to go to college as well.

WM: Yes.

NM: So that was really an impetus to work all these jobs. So you took on a lot of responsibility in high school.

WM: Yes. Listen, I'm not going to tell you that I was wonderful and a perfect student. I mean, yes, I did it, but I had some fun. I played sports. I played soccer in high school, college and afterward. But yes, I also knew that if I wanted to do some of the things that I thought was important and that my father thought was important, I better well try to provide something for it. I was very fortunate. I graduated high school in 1963 and started at Jersey City State College, now New Jersey City University, in September of 1963. There were six state colleges then, and the tuition was 125 bucks a semester plus books and fees. I would have loved, I absolutely would have loved to have gone to a school far away--that I could stay in a dorm--but it just was out of the question because I couldn't afford it. My parents couldn't help me, so that's why I went to a commuter school and I fortunately had the car that I could drive over and back, but it all turned out well.

NM: So just one final question before I move on from high school. You mentioned that you were on the soccer team?

WM: Yes.

NM: What sports did you play throughout high school?

WM: Well, I played a lot of sports, but officially in high school, soccer. I played a lot of basketball on an intramural basis because I always loved sports. Kearny always won state championships in soccer and we had usually at least three, four, five all-state players from Kearny High School. We typically won the group four state championships. It was either two or three years we won the state championships in high school. Now that was interesting too, because most of those guys didn't go on to college. Most of them were from blue collar families and they were first generation. They had just came over to the U.S. when they were ten, twelve, thirteen, fourteen years old. Came over from Scotland or Ireland and they graduated high school and went off to the factory to work.

NM: Well you bring up a question in my mind about, because you mentioned that Kearny is a much bigger community and the high school, there's many more students. Was the composition of the student body, was it different in terms of socio-economic or race or ethnicity?

WM: Yes. Ethnicity, it was diverse, so it's much larger scale than East Newark. Lot of Scottish, Irish, but you had Poles and Italian and Lithuanian and many others. Racial no, I think Kearny High School, when I went, there had about, 1,800 students. There might have been three, four, five black students. There was a section where there are old army barracks on Brighton Avenue where there were some black families that lived there and there was an orphanage called Boy's Town on Belgrove Drive and there were one or two black kids from there; so as far as racial, no, not at all. Socio-economic, absolutely; there is a section in Kearney as you go toward North Arlington called The Manor and that's where some business executives, people who owned businesses lived. In East Newark, I don't remember any Jewish kids. There was fair-sized Jewish community in Kearny. There was a synagogue there and there were a fair amount of Jewish kids, so that was more diverse, but socio-economically absolutely. There were some kids that had money and came from money and that was something that was different for me. I kind of looked at them at least initially with envy, but that was a lot different than East Newark, because in East Newark socio-economic was basically one and that would be between lower-middle or upper-lower class, however you want to define it, but Kearny was very different.. There were some people who were middle class and some people were certainly upper-middle class and that was a change because looking at some of the kids with clothes they wore, the things they did, the things they had, some of them had these brand new cars when they turned seventeen and that was totally alien to me, that was something that I just did not experience in East Newark. You probably knew it existed, because you saw it out there, but now you're in among it and see some of your friends and some of the people you know actually have this and have these things and you never did.

NM: When did you start exploring options for possible colleges that you may, you were interested in attending?

WM: Even though I knew I always wanted to go to college and dreamed about big schools, I always said, "Boy, if I could only go to Ohio State, or Michigan or University of Delaware," or someplace where I could get away, and live on campus, I knew that was not going to happen. As I looked at options I figured that there's really only one, because of proximity and proximity was driven by affordability and they were the six state colleges in New Jersey. They're still around but a lot of them had different names then. There was Montclair State, Paterson State, Jersey City State, Newark State which is now Kean, Glassboro State and Trenton State which is now College of New Jersey and that was it, and back then they were basically teacher training institutions. You could get degrees in KP, (kindergarten primary) which would license you to teach kindergarten through I think third or fourth grade, general elementary, which would allow you to teach through the eighth and ninth grade or you could get secondary education in four majors: Social Science, English, Science or Math. Quite frankly, I just knew I wanted to go to college. I knew my father wanted me to go to college. What do I want to be when I grow up I was still trying to figure out. A couple of my friends were going to go into teaching, they said: "Be a teacher, you only work 180 days a year. You get every holiday off. You're off all summer so you can get down the shore. You might not make much, but you don't have many obligations now. You're not married. You probably still might live with your parents for a while, so probably a good way to go." So I said, "Fine, I'll do that." So I applied to Jersey City State, now New Jersey City University Newark State (now Kean College) and Montclair State now Montclair State University and applied for Social Science because of the history. I loved history. I got accepted at Jersey City State College. A lot of friends were going there. In fact, this one guy that I told you about that I grew up with from the age of three in East Newark, he went to Harrison High School, he was going to Jersey City State. We kept in touch and so I said, "That's great. Jack is going there, what the heck." Fortunately, I got accepted and it was doable in terms of the commute. It was only a half-hour ride at the most and I could afford it. It was $125 bucks a semester plus fees and books. I said, "A lot of kids from Kearny, Harrison, East Newark go there, so it wouldn't be a big adjustment for knowing people."

NM: Your father must have been ecstatic that you're going to college.

WM: He was proud, very, very proud because, in fact, through that time, if you count my parents and all their relatives--cousins, nephews, nieces, sisters, brothers, everybody--I was the only one that went to college, the only one that graduated from college, so it was a great sense of pride for him. I have a younger brother and my father tried pounding into him to go to college but he just said college is not my deal and he didn't go. I was the first, I went, graduated, he was just ecstatic that I got accepted, that I went and that I graduated, so he was just really happy.

NM: So the career path you're going upon is in the social sciences.

WM: I'll be a history teacher.

NM: Or a history teacher. What was the campus like when you first started going there?

WM: It's interesting because the campus was a relatively small, probably no bigger than my high school, not in physical plan. It was a little bit bigger, but not much. But in terms of the

amount of students, there was only seventeen, eighteen hundred students. It was just undergraduate at that time, no graduate, and basically three buildings. While I was there they built a fourth building. They now have about twenty, twenty-five, thirty buildings. I'm still fairly active at the university. We have a soccer alumni [group] and I played varsity soccer in college and I've gone over there a fair amount of times. I'm just amazed at what it has evolved to. I guess it wasn't that much of a culture shock in terms of Rutgers where you've got campuses all over the place, four thousand buildings, busses running around ferrying students, but it was still intimidating because now that I got in and now that my father's all happy and quite frankly I was happy, I'm saying, "Jezz will I be able to do this? Can I really survive here and will I make it academically?", so those kinds of thoughts were going through my head. Interesting story of how I got to play soccer at Jersey City State, because like I said, I played through high school. I love soccer, I love sports, but I decided I wasn't going to go out for the soccer team and I wasn't going to play soccer because I wanted to concentrate on academics. I wanted to make sure I got the grades to stay in school. What an embarrassment, right after everybody said how wonderful I was going to college if I had to drop out because of poor grades. I start school, they had gym class back then in college. The guy who was the gym teacher was the head varsity soccer coach. So right behind the building, where the gym was, there was a dirt field. This was in first or second week in September, so he takes the gym class out, of which I'm in, and he brings the soccer ball. We're going to play soccer. Okay, "You eleven guys here. You eleven guys here. There's the goal," play. This buddy of mine, who I knew since I was three, was a good soccer player, played for Harrison High School. He was an all-state player at Harrison. He's standing with the coach, because he's on the soccer team now so he didn't have to get involved and do the gym class. So the ball comes to me a couple of times and I make a couple of nice passes and I kicked it like I knew what I was doing. The other kids are running around, tripping over the ball, kicking with their toe and everything. So I kicked a couple of boomers with my instep and made a couple of passes. So as my buddy tells me, the coach says to him, "Who's that?" and my buddy Jack says, "That's Will McClung, he's from Kearney." He said, "Looks like he knows how to play soccer." Jack said, "He played at Kearny. They won two or three state championships while he was there." The guy said, "Why isn't he on the soccer team?" and my buddy says, "Ah, I don't know. He said something about wants to concentrate on his academics or something." He says to Jack, "Alright, I want you to work on him. I want you to keep on talking to him and sell him on joining the team." As I was walking off the field he blew the whistle and said, "Alright, we're done. Take a shower. Go to your classes." I'm walking off and he says, "Willie, come here." I said, "Yes." He said, "I understand you played at Kearny." I said, "Yes." He said, "Why don't you come out for the team," and I said, "Well, you know, academics and stuff." He said, "I'll tell you what." He said, "We got time. We'll allow you to study. We'll do this." He said, "We really need you. I'd really love you to come out for the team. We're playing Trenton State later on this week." He said, "In fact, I think you might even be able to start if you come out," so I did. I couldn't resist that. Went out for the team and I played four years on the varsity team through college. Then when I graduated came back as assistant coach for a year. But I was a little bit concerned about the academics and I wanted to make sure that I got the grades that would keep me in school and get me to graduate.

NM: It sounds like you played midfielder?

WM: Exactly, yes. Then they called it halfback. I was a midfielder and I was more of a defensive midfielder and a ball distributor and it was fun, I enjoyed it. Out of the team, we didn't have a lot of guys because, believe it or not, at that time Jersey City State--because a lot of the kids were from Jersey City, Bayonne, Union City, Hoboken, etcetera, and they didn't play a lot of soccer, believe it or not, and so on our team we only had about fourteen, fifteen guys and eleven starters, four or five backups. We eventually talked some other guys into joining the team, but out of those eleven starters, nine of them were from Kearny, East Newark and Harrison, and two were Portuguese kids from Newark; they played at Newark Eastside and we had a great team. In fact, we still have the best record in school history. They just honored our 1966 team last year. Before one of their games they brought us over. They had a nice brunch for us. They introduced us on the field before the game and that was a nice honor. That was a great experience and I'm glad I did it. I'm glad that things worked out that way. That was fun.

NM: Your fear that you wouldn't be able to balance athletics and academics, was that unfounded?

WM: Oh, yes, yes, yes. I had plenty of time. Again, it was the same thing in college. I mean, the history courses, I probably had an A average, close to a 4.0--3.8, 3.7--in my social science courses, all the history, geography and all the social science courses, because I like them. I liked the professors. I talked to them after class. The others I got like Bs and Cs, enough to get by so my overall GPA, it was good, but it wasn't great. But if you looked at my social science courses, they were 3.8, 3.9, 3.7, because I really enjoyed it. But I was able to balance it and soccer was only in the fall, it was fun. It really rounded out the experience too. It wasn't just all academics and social life; it was some athletics too, so that was fun.

NM: Now did your college from what I understand at least, another one of the state colleges I understood that there were, the person I had spoken to had mentioned that it was almost a majority was women, of the student population, was that similar at Jersey City State?

WM: Yes, it's interesting; mostly the kindergarten/primary and the general elementary majors were mostly women. When you got to the secondary majors there was more of a balance of males and females, but it seemed like the kindergarten/primary, it was the stereotype back then that most were women. When I went to grammar school--I went through kindergarten through eighth grade, that's nine grades--the teachers were all women. Some of the guys that played on our college soccer team, these big rough tough guys from Harrison and Kearny were general elementary majors and some of them were the only men in their class. Back then there were a lot of women. Overall, probably a balance, certainly a balance toward female, but especially in kindergarten/primary and general elementary there were a lot more women, I mean overwhelming. The secondary subjects were more balanced.

NM: You mentioned that there were only a few African American students in your high school. Was it kind of a similar situation or there were more?

WM: No, there were more African Americans at Jersey City State College, probably not to the extent that there is today, but there were certainly more than high school. In fact, now at Jersey City State, which is now New Jersey City University they see their mission basically as what

they call urban education, trying to get the kids from the inner city, minorities, foreign students and providing college education for them and I think that's a great mission and I support them quite a bit. But back then there were a lot more than in Kearny High School, but not to the extent now.

[Tape Paused]

NM: So we'll just continue with your time at Jersey State College. It would have been during your freshman year President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Do you recall?

WM: Yes, absolutely, November 22nd, 1963. I know exactly where I was. That one day I didn't have a class until afternoon, so I was driving from my house to the gas station to get gas before I went over to Jersey City and I heard it on the radio. I guess it didn't sink in because I continued. I got the gas. We were talking to the guy at the gas station who I knew--a friend of my father's--and we go there for my gas, repairs and we're talking about it for a little bit. But I guess it still didn't sink in and I drove over to Jersey City, being dumb and not realizing. I probably knew they would have cancelled class, shut everything down, but I went over and there anyway and there were still some students over there and we sat around talking about it and I then drove home. I remember that entire weekend while I was glued to the TV set and that's all I did was watch on TV all the events and commentary. On Sunday, when Ruby shot Oswald I saw that live because I was watching TV and, yes, those were some interesting times. That's exactly correct, my freshman year in November 22nd, 1963. I remember it vividly.

NM: Do you recall any of these? One of the questions I didn't ask was did you and your family, follow kind of worldwide events at the time?

WM: No, not really. I might have. Again, my mother and father were pretty basic and not very political. TV wasn't to the state it is today. There weren't cable channels and there wasn't that preponderance of news and commentary. My father would read the paper back then, whether it was the *Newark Evening News* which was still around then. That was his preference, and then the *Star Ledger* and I even know that he watched a lot of TV news. As I grew up, going to school and in high school, some of the assignments were to watch TV news, watch this or do this, so I grew up with it, they didn't. So we didn't discuss these things at the dinner table, not really. I discussed them more with friends and classmates as opposed to at home.

NM: I also just want to ask you about your time at Jersey City State College. You were involved in the soccer team there. You were on varsity all four years. Your major is social sciences. Were you involved in any other social activities such as clubs? Did the college have get-togethers, dances, things of that sort?

WM: Yes. I didn't join the student government. I didn't do any of that, but yes, there were a lot of other activities, dances, shows, plays, concerts. Actually, another interesting situation was the blackout. Remember the big blackout? You wouldn't remember, but there was a big blackout in New York City and I can't remember think whether it was '65 or '66 and that came across the river from New York City and affected Jersey City as well. It was at night. I think it was a Friday or Saturday night and Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons were playing at Jersey City

State College and I was right outside waiting to go in to the auditorium for the show and all of a sudden the lights go out. They say, "Blackout, no electricity, we'll reschedule." [Editor's Note: The Great Northeast Black out of 1965 affected parts of several states, including New York. The blackout lasted for up to thirteen hours in some places.] But, yes, I went to a lot of dances. I went to a lot of socials, a lot of get-togethers, a lot of concerts. The other thing is a number of my buddies, both from the soccer team and guys that were social science majors were involved in fraternities and so kind of just by knowing them I was involved in a lot of the fraternity activities even though I never had to join or pledge or do anything. So we did get involved in a lot of those social activities without all the pain some of these other guys had to go through to get involved in it. But it was a pretty full social life.

NM: Now during your time when you first enrolled in college, very early on, no one was aware of what is developing in Southeast Asia. At what point during your college career does it become something that is of interest to the population or do you become aware of, at what time?

WM: I don't remember. There wasn't a lot of interest or a lot of things going on that I remember on campus, around whether it be protest or support or talking about what was going on. But, I think we knew some of what was going on because of being a social science major with a preponderance of history, world history, US history, geography, a lot of the other specialties. I had a course in Southeast Asian history with a professor named Dr. Khan, who was a senior aide to Chiang Kai-shek when he got booted off mainland China and went to Taiwan. So I was aware of it, but I don't think at a real deep level. Thinking, "This is not going to affect me." The other thing I remember about it, interestingly enough, is when you're in a teacher training institution, in your junior year you have what was called Junior Practicum that entailed going to a school and observing a teacher. They might let you teach a little bit, and then your senior year you did student teaching and you're graded on that. But I remember in my junior year and I believe I was assigned to a school in West Orange and for some reason I got interested in Vietnam. Got a bunch of *New York Times* articles on the war in Vietnam and actually I remember he let me do a little teaching and I used that and I used some of the articles that I had researched for some of the materials that I used for teaching in that situation. So, yes, aware of it, talked about it, but not to the extent where I thought it would have any effect on me or quite frankly even didn't understand or realize the impact or the effect at that time that it would have on our country, on the culture and on the future.

NM: I'm glad you brought up your history courses and kind of this broad education you're getting in world history and US history. What were some of your favorite courses and who were some of your favorite professors?

WM: Most of the professors I had were very good, some outstanding. You think about Jersey City, New Jersey, Jersey City State College and you say not a great education, not a great academic institution. I'm in contact and I know five, six, eight, ten college classmates and most of them went on to become teachers, taught for thirty plus years. Most of them were history teachers. When I look back at that faculty and you look at the credentials they had and I think about the classes that I had with them, I would have put that faculty against any faculty anywhere. I don't care if it's USC, UCLA, Rutgers, whatever. The reason being, Jersey City is so close to New York City, a lot of these guys were adjuncts at NYU, at Columbia. We had this

guy, Dr. Khan, who walked in, no textbook, no notes; he'd talk about his experience with Chiang Kai-shek in the 1930s and 1940s when the communist were starting to take over mainland China. I mean, where can you get a better education like that? Another professor by the name of Stanley Wharton, who wrote twenty, thirty, forty books. Bill Maxwell was another outstanding educator. He designed and taught a first ever class called "The History of the Negro in America," one of the first black studies classes. That was 1964. Nobody had done this. Nobody was teaching this academically and this professor, William Maxwell, who later on became president of the college and now is president emeritus of the university now. A professor by the name of Dr. Kamel was Egyptian; he was the head of the social science department. All these guys are PhDs. A guy by the name of Dr. Pedersen taught world history, he was Swedish. I mean. It was an outstanding education. Had a woman by the name of Lapinskis, Donna Lapinskis, taught Indians of the Southwest. Now at a small college like that you probably wouldn't have those specialized courses back then at a large universities. Hopefully, it's not self-serving because I went there, but I thought it was an outstanding, world-class faculty. Most of them were very good, very interested in the students, willing to spend time with you if you wanted it and I just enjoyed it, thoroughly. Don't tell anybody, but I cut a class here and there and played pinochle in the lounge, but I never would cut a social science class because I found it so interesting, just maybe science, maybe math. I'll tell you one other thing, Dr. George Hansler was my freshman music appreciation professor. When I grew up, my parents weren't "cultured," they came from working class families and you've heard that history. They had very little formal education. You asked about music. I listened to rock and roll; they listened to country western for their music. I had a class in music appreciation, freshman year, Dr. George Hansler taught it. That's where I first became introduced to Beethoven, Bach, the classical stuff. I love music. I'm into music. I probably have over twenty thousand songs on my iPod. I probably have about eight, ten thousand CDs, probably a thousand or two thousand of those CDs are classical and that's solely because of this class that I had freshman year. Classical music from where I came from was something you joked about. Only the rich people listened to it and it was garbage. Who would listen to that stuff? When this guy played Rimsky-Korsakov and Dvořák from the *New World Symphony No. 9* and Beethoven, it opened up a whole new world for me. It was an excellent education. I think there were some excellent, excellent professors and I'd put that education up, especially in social science area, against any faculty anywhere, anytime. As far as Forrest Gump would say, that's all I'm going to say about that, unless you want me to say more.

NM: Now your senior year would be 1966, '67, right?

WM: Started in September '66, graduated in June of '67.

NM: Were you beginning to look at the job market for teachers?

WM: Yes, you had to. I was brought up to be patriotic--my father, my uncles in the service during World War II, my cousin in Korea badly wounded. But I tell you what, there was no way in the world that willfully I wanted to go into the service. So as I went through school there was a draft. Almost everybody was getting drafted. If you were eighteen and you weren't going to college and you didn't have a deferment of some kind, you were going to get drafted and during that period mid-60, late '60s, when you got drafted you were going to basic training, you were going to infantry training and you're going to Vietnam as a grunt. All during college I had a 2-S,

a student deferment so you wouldn't get drafted. Afterward there was such a thing as occupational deferments, but very few occupations would qualify for such a deferment, but teaching was one of them. If your superintendent wrote the draft board and said, "I need this teacher, please don't draft them." The draft board usually would grant you an occupational deferment, a 2-A. At that time, I said, "Well, I don't really know if I want to teach, but having gone through college to prepare to be a teacher," I said, "sounds good to me," so I teach. I work 180 days, get all holidays off, be down the shore all summer and so, yes, I started looking for teaching jobs probably middle of senior year. I should have probably done it earlier, but started then.

NM: So you brought up that you're aware that this draft is going on and definitely by 1967.

WM: Oh, yes.

NM: Were some of the friends you're growing up with, who didn't attend college, were they getting drafted? Was it apparent in your community that people were being drafted? Were people joining other services? Was the war becoming like real for the community?

WM: Yes, the answer is yes, all of the above, yes. Quite frankly, I didn't have too many friends who were drafted because I started associating with my college buddies, soccer team guys and all the guys from the fraternity and other guys, social science majors, and they were all college graduates. They all had 2-Ss, so it wasn't really an issue, but I did know a few who were being drafted or who tried to join either the reserves, the National Guard, the Navy, the Air Force, anything but the Army or the Marines because they knew where they were going and the other services were probably a little bit in most folks minds, better.

NM: So actually, what's interesting, because growing up you're so connected with Newark and the entire area. Almost around when you're graduating, there's actually riots occurring in Newark.

WM: Yes.

NM: Was that something that affected your community?

WM: It made us a little nervous because it's just across the river and we heard people were being attacked and killed. I think thirty some people were killed in Newark. National Guard was out on the streets in Newark. People were shooting at each other and there was some concern that it might spill across the river. What if people come over here with guns and knives and whatever? It never materialized, never happened, but yes, there was a little concern. As I said, fortunately, it never materialized or happened in our little community, but yes, there was certainly an awareness and certainly some concern.

NM: So before we move on from your college years, until after your undergraduate degree, is there anything that you want to add or that we should cover before we move on to when you were drafted?

WM: I don't think so. I think I kind of intermittently, going back and forth, I mentioned all of it. Like I said, I feel very fortunate to have had that push, especially from my father. My mother certainly, but my father was the dominant one and the disciplinarian and he pounded it into me from early age and I'm glad he did. Just the whole world had opened up to me, not only academically, but culturally and socially, even though I was pretty socially involved before college. I mean, I wasn't a social butterfly in high school quite frankly, because when I moved from East Newark up to Kearny it was so big it was almost overwhelming and I was a new kid. The rest of the kids had gone to school throughout their grammar school career, most of them in Kearny, and so I had a very small circle of friends. In college, with the major at least, there were only about thirty-five, forty Social Science majors. But we were mostly in the same classes, got to know each other. Guys on the soccer team hung out together. So my kind of social circle expanded, which was good. Then the other thing is, as I said just culturally, some of the cultural things that opened up to me in college was a whole new world that I had never known about before, probably never would have. Some examples are classical music, theater, concerts, shows and things like that. It was something that I thoroughly enjoyed and I think it helped "lift me up."

NM: Now you also mentioned that by the time you graduated, although you had been trained to be a teacher, you weren't sure if you wanted to be a teacher. What were some of the other career options that you were considering if you didn't become a teacher?

WM: Very good question, interesting question. One of the things that another friend of mine and I thought about is for some reason I don't quite remember, maybe I saw a brochure whatever, but I believe it was University of Michigan had a graduate school of Labor and Industrial Relations and I said man that's what I want to do. I want to go get the Master's Degree in Labor and Industrial Relations and get involved in that. The only problem was money. I would have had to go out to Michigan, pay for room and board and tuition. I sent away for the catalog and I read through it and that was fantasy and I enjoyed it--one of my buddies actually did that because he came from a family that could help support him financially a little bit--but other than that, nothing. I kind of said, "Well, listen; you're trained to be a teacher and at least give it a shot and try it, see what you can do."

NM: So you graduate in…

WM: '67.

NM: May '67, June '67.

WM: Yes, May, June '67, yes.

NM: Could you talk about the process of now you don't have a deferment and so what was like kind of the first step in being drafted?

WM: Well, I was looking for a job as a teacher and I applied to a few school systems and didn't get it. They said, "We don't have any openings," or "We just hired somebody." I didn't know how to find out about openings, because now when you're going for a job you look at industries.

You get copies of the annual reports and you'll write a resume or you'll write a letter and so forth and so on. I guess back then you look at school districts and I said, "Well, which ones would I like?" I picked out six, eight, or ten and sent resumes and applications. It seems to me at the last minute I got something back from this one school district that said, "We do have an opening and would like to talk to you," and I went and talked to them and they offered me the position and it was eighth grade social studies. I don't know whether I should mention the school district because I had a very interesting situation there. I took the job because I figured, "Well, first all it's a job. It's money and it will get me the 2-A," the occupational deferment. So I did that and I went through the first couple of months and the marking period ended and I did my grades and I handed them in. I'll tell you this story because I tell everybody the story. It's a very interesting story. A day or two later, the principal came to my classroom and said, "Mr. McClung, do you have a class after this one?" He said, "I'd like to talk to you before you leave today." I said, "Sure." So I went into his office. He had the gradebook and he said, "I see some of your grades here." I was a new teacher and I'm sure I made some mistakes, but I thought I did a pretty good job. When I started the class, I told the kids, "Write this down." I even had a mimeograph back then. I said, "Alright," twenty percent on class grades, twenty percent of class participation, five percent on quizzes, twenty percent on project work or whatever and that adds up to a hundred percent. That's what your grade would be based on and so they knew that. I did my grades and I didn't try to force them into a bell curve or anything, but after I did all the grades for the four, five, six classes I had, about a one hundred, hundred twenty kids total, and I'll be darned, everything kind of worked out pretty nicely. So he calls me in and he says, "I see your grades here." He said, "Looks like you did a pretty good job." I said, "Oh, thank you very much." "But," he said, "Joey Smith here, you know, that's Dr. Smith's son and you gave Joey a 'B+'." I said, "Yes," and, "He worked hard for it, good student. He deserved it." He said, "Yes, but Joey is in eighth grade now. He's always gotten 'As'. He hasn't gotten anything less than an 'A' and if you give him this 'B+' that will be the first time he would have gotten other than an 'A'." I said, "Okay." He said, "Little, Sally here. Sally Jones, you gave her a 'C+'." I said, "Yes. You know what? I think she could do better, but here's the grades. Here's what I based it on." He said, "Yes, but if you gave her a 'C+'," he said, "and she didn't get the 'B'--all her other grades are 'As' and 'Bs'--that would keep her off the honor roll and that's lawyer Jones' daughter and she's been on the honor roll all her school career and you know and this is the eighth grade." So he goes a couple more and I know exactly where this is going. So he said, "Could you do me a favor?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Could you take your grade book home tonight. Just review it and see what you come up with." I said, "I'll do that." Came back the next morning, he's standing on the steps as I pulled into the parking lot. He said, "Mr. McClung." I said, "Mr. Wagner." He said, "Did you have an opportunity to look at your grades?" I said, "Absolutely." He said, "Did any change?" I said, "Yes, some did." He said, "Come on into my office." So he sits me down, he says, "Well, tell me what happened." I said, "Well, you know Jimmy Green that I gave the 'B+'?" I said, "I actually gave him benefit of the doubt, so I took him down to a 'B'. Sammy here, who's the lawyer's son, I gave him a 'B', but he really is not a 'B' student, so I gave him a 'C'." He said, "No, no, no, you don't understand." I said, "I think I exactly understand." I said, "If you're asking me to change grades just for the sake of not getting parents angry or to please parents just because they're the doctors and lawyers and movers and shakers of the community, I'm not going to do that because that doesn't fit in with what I think is right in my morals and my values." He said, "Alright." He said, "Give me your grade book." I said, "Sure." I said, "But let me tell you, if you change one grade in that book my resignation will be on your desk Monday

morning." He said, "Give me the book." I gave him the book and I conferred with some people that I had known over the years, some church people who were youth group leaders and some other people, they helped me and I resigned. To show you how vindictive this guy was, I said, "I'll resign," but I'll hang around as long as you want me to, week, two weeks, a month whatever until you get a replacement." He said, "That won't be necessary. You can leave right now," so I left. In the meantime, I did some student teaching and I'm wondering now what's going to happen with the draft board, but still I said, "That's worth it. I'd do it again." In the next couple of weeks I did some substitute teaching, daily stuff, at the high school that I did my student teaching in. My student teaching supervisor was the head of the history department. He really liked me. He gave me an 'A' in my student teaching. I did some substitute teaching and we got to talking and I was telling him that I'm no longer working full time in this other school district and that I resigned and he said, "Do you want a job?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, one of our regular teachers just went out on a medical disability; he'll be gone the rest of the year. I need a permanent sub for the rest of the year and," he said, "I'm offering it to you, if you want it." I said, "Great, but I don't know what going to happen with the draft board." He said, "We'll write the letter to the draft board," so my occupational deferment continued. Quite frankly, that school was in an urban depressed area. It was a tough school, a high school; the other school was a grammar school, eighth grade. This was twelfth grade. I was teaching twelfth graders, and I tell you I had some great experiences there. I got support from the kids. I told, "Listen, all I'm asking you to do is work up to your ability. If you're a 'C' student, you get a 'C' that's fine. If you're an 'A' student and you get a 'B' or 'C', then I'm going to bust you. Then I'm going to give you a hard time. I'm going to try and figure out what your ability is. I'll work with you. I'll help you, but I expect you to work up to your ability. That's the only way you're going to get any place in life." So it worked out pretty well and at the end of the year he said, "I don't know whether this other teacher is coming back or not, but I'd like to offer you a permanent position for next year." I said, "Thank you, I appreciate it. Let me think about it." That's where I went back and I did some soul searching, some thinking and I said, "You know what, I had this terrible experience and it wasn't with the kids, it was the administrators and I had this other pretty good experience and I did pretty well and they liked me. They wanted me back. But I said, "You know what? I don't want to do this the rest of my life." I was talking to friends and relatives and they're saying don't be dumb, take the job, wait it out. This was now '68. The Vietnam War can't last too much longer. Another year, two, three, all I've got to do is hang in there, hang with it and at least I won't get drafted. I finally decided, "You know what? I'm not going to do it. That's not being honest to me and it's not being honest to the students because even if I do it and just to go through the motions, the kids aren't going to get what I think they deserve and I'm not going to be totally enthusiastic about it." I decided, "I'm not going to do it." I went back and profusely thanked the head of the history department who offered me the job and I said, "But really, for a lot of personal reasons, I'm not going to accept it. Thank you, I appreciate it. You've been wonderful to me and thanks a lot." I knew it wasn't going to be long because now that school board would be obligated to notify my draft board that I was no longer under contract and once that happened, who knows. First I looked at the reserves and the National Guard. They were all filled, because everybody was thinking the same thing--six months, some training and you don't have to go to Vietnam. The Navy was full and the Air Force only had openings for pilots and navigators and you had to have 20/20 non-correctable vision, which, as you could see from these glasses, I don't. So I waited and literally within two or three weeks I got the notice from the draft board that said go down to Newark for a physical.

Went down and about two or three weeks after that they said, "Greeting, you're about to join the greatest organization in the world, the United States Military. Report for induction, on this date, down at 1060 Broad Street, the Newark Induction Center."

NM: Now during this time, you mentioned you're talking with family, you're talking to friends about your decisions and your father had encouraged you to--teaching was really the pride of the education and your time at college. What was kind of his point of view on the situation?

WM: My father has mellowed over the years, but I was twenty-two years old at the time, I was a college graduate. I taught for a year and he said basically it's your decision. Because it was serving in the military because of his patriotism it was okay. He had served in the Navy during World War II. I don't know. Maybe he kept it inwardly and maybe he was disappointed, but he never showed it and he never said it. So I said, "Well, whatever happens." Obviously, I didn't want to go. I would not have volunteered to be honest, but once I got drafted there were no other options as far as I was concerned. I'm not going to Europe. I'm not going to Canada. I'm not going to take an ice pick and stick it through my ear drum so I flunk the physical. If I get called, I'm going to go.

NM: So during your time in your year of teaching, you're aware of what's going on. Were others in your cohort at Jersey City, for example, for those who didn't find jobs were they being immediately drafted?

WM: Most of them were finding jobs. I don't know of too many that didn't and I think most of the other guys that I knew got jobs and they were teaching jobs. I'll tell you a quick story. Four or five of the guys that either I went to school with or knew from the local area were teaching in Kearny and I believe most of them were teaching in Kearny High School and this one guy tells me the story. I didn't realize this until after, years later, because I said to myself, "I thought you taught in Jersey City." He said, "I did, but the first year I taught in Kearny." He said, "They wrote the letter." He said, "The end of the school year I get called down to the superintendent's office. 'There were four or five other guys, my buddies I played baseball and soccer with that were teachers in Kearny and they're in superintendent's office." He said, "What's going on," they said, "we don't know." So the superintendent calls them in and says, "Listen," he said, "I cannot in good conscience, when almost all these other guys are getting drafted, whether they're college graduates and not, teachers or whether they're you know getting out of high school, turned 18, have no deferments and getting drafted and going into the service. I can't with good conscience then write a letter and ask for a deferment for you guys anymore. I did it last year," he said, "I'm not going to do it again because I believe that everybody should serve and I'm sure I can get other teachers to fill your positions." So these guys were not happy. They were going to other districts to try and get a job where they would write "the letter." He said the next day he gets a call from one of these guys, who said, "I just went over to Jersey City. I was talking to the superintendent." "They offered me a job on the spot." He said the guy said to him, "I have more openings. Do you know of anybody else who wants a job?" He said, "The other four or five of us were over there the next day, applied and got jobs, and this guy wrote the letter to the Draft Board." So it was just a matter of writing letters and that was almost automatic. Once they wrote it then the draft board would grant the deferment. But that was interesting in what happened to those guys. They had to scramble. They were a little nervous.

NM: Could you tell us about the process of you reporting in Newark?

WM: Yes.

NM: What's the process of going to the Army after that? Are there tests for your ability? You're a college graduate, so they must see you as a special skill set.

WM: Well, yes and no. You have to understand that at that time, and I'll put this very inelegantly, they needed cannon fodder. They were starting to draw down in '68 after the Tet Offensive, which started January 31st of '68, but they had the biggest buildup, about 550,000 troops in Vietnam at that time. [Editor's Note: The Tet Offensive, a series of offensives conducted from January 30, 1968, to September 30, 1968, by the Viet Cong against every major city in South Vietnam, is seen as the point when American public opinion began turning against the war.] So they needed bodies and there were a lot of casualties and unless you enlisted and had a special skill set and took the tests, they might promise you a certain job, but if you were a draftee you were theirs. They did what they wanted. Yes, you do take a battery of tests. They took us down to Fort Dix and I said, "Oh, this is great. I'm going to do my basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey. I'm close to home. I can sneak home on the weekends," because they didn't give you weekend pass until you were there five or six weeks. Basic training was eight weeks and they usually didn't give you a pass until five or six weeks. They kept you there weekends, but a lot of guys that I had known from around the hood, who had gone down there, they said you could sneak out on a Friday night or Saturday night, get somebody to cover for you. You can go home. So we just laid around for three days in front of the barracks. Nobody came near us. They showed us what mess hall to go to. Nobody bugged us, no drill sergeants, and I said, "This is great, man." I said, "If this is the Army…" We're still wearing civilian clothes. Then one day a bus pulls up in front of the barracks where we were assigned. They said, "Get in the bus." Somebody said, "Where are we going?" They said, "Shut up and get in the bus. You don't ask questions in the Army." Long story short, the bus pulls up in front of one of the training companies at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, outside of Columbia, South Carolina, so that's where I did my basic training for eight weeks. That was July and August of 1968. It was nineties, a hundred degrees, high humidity. South Carolina, where Fort Jackson is located, had pine trees and sand, nasty. In fact, a couple of days it was 117 degrees, which was the highest temperature anywhere in the country. We had heard on the radio. Went through that and then, at the end of graduation, they read off where people are going and you know if it's Fort Polk, Louisiana-- they called that Tigerland--that was infantry training, 11 Bravo which is infantryman. Mostly 95% of these guys are going to infantry advanced training, and then they called my name and they said, "Fort Sam Houston, 91 Bravo 20," 91A 10 until I graduated. I had no idea what that was. I asked the sergeant and he said, "Now you're half human because you passed basic training. So I said, "What's that?" He said, "Medical training." I said, "All these other guys are going to infantry. I'm not complaining, but how come?" The guy said, "They do a GT test when you were inducted." The GT test is equivalent of a civilian an IQ test and he said, "You scored 143." I think the highest was 160." He said, "Anybody with over 110 or 115, they send them to medical training," because I guess they're a little smarter, know the difference between an anti-biotic and an anti-inflammatory. All the rest are the dummies that're going to shoot a rifle and get killed or kill other people. So I went down to Fort Sam Houston, got in with some guys who

were pretty good, similar to my background, college graduates, one or two had actually taught and were drafted. This one guy knew one of the instructors and he introduced us to these guys and they said to us, "Listen, a lot of us are getting out pretty soon within the next couple of months and we know for a fact that they need instructors here. You guys are college graduates, some of you taught. Go down to the branch office, talk to the commanding officer; tell him you'd like to stay here as permanent party as an instructor." So about five or six of us went down and went through that spiel and the guy said, "What your instructor friends told you is absolutely right. We need instructors. A lot of our instructors are getting out of the Army soon." He said, "I will put in a request for you, but here is the process." "I can't make anything happen. All I can do is put in a request with the Department of the Army saying I want these people to stay here, stay on as instructors, as permanent party." Then they make the final decision. Well, fortunately all of us were kept us on as permanent party. So for the next five or six months I was an instructor at Fort Sam Houston at Medical Training Center. I got an apartment off base, lived with another couple of guys. It was wonderful and I said, "This isn't bad." Now I'm coming up on a year after I was drafted. It's only a two year obligation. I said, "Boy, maybe I'll stay here for the rest of my time, and then go home and pick up with my life." However, it didn't happen that way.

NM: I just wanted to ask a few follow up questions because you went through a lot of time. Actually, when you're drafted, it's seems like for example you're in Newark when you're drafted in '68 when you're talking to the draft board and in that same, probably within a week or two weeks Martin Luther King is assassinated and there's a lot of unrest because of that throughout. Was that something that was an event for you just like when Kennedy was assassinated earlier?

WM: Not really, not really. I didn't realize that happened and I think maybe because when you're going through training like that it's intense. Basically, it's twenty-four hours a day for eight weeks. You're on the range. You're marching. You're shining your shoes. You're spit-shining you're barracks. You don't have access to TV. You don't have access to newspapers. They only tell you what they want to tell you so, no, that really didn't have any impact. I don't even think I realized it until later on. Now if I was in a unit somewhere where you had some time and you had a regular job you would have known. But at that point in time I didn't even know about it. It didn't affect us.

NM: When you get on the bus and all of a sudden you're in South Carolina was it all draftees who were in that basic training with you?

WM: No, not necessarily. There are some draftees. There's some enlistees. There was a combination.

NM: In terms of the composition of the people when you're at Fort Jackson, are there people from all over the United States?

WM: Yes, yes, people from all over the United States. All races, creeds, religions, ethnic background, it was pretty diverse. There weren't a lot of college graduates. There were mostly kids out of high school who didn't go on to college. The other thing they did, there were some guys there who were difficult because you may or may not know, but back then if you got in

some minor scrapes with the law, if you murdered somebody or raped somebody, I mean that was different, but if you were a troublemaker, things like breaking and entering, or some of these minor crimes, eventually what some of these judges would do is say, "You've got a choice. You either go in juvenile detention or jail or you're going in the Army. What do you want to do?" Some of them would chose the Army and they were difficult to deal with especially because what they try to do in basic training and other training is to instill teamwork and these guys had no interest in being team players. Most people, especially draftees, didn't want to be there. But these guys certainly didn't want to and they each had different attitudes on life than a lot of other people, so that made it a little bit difficult for all of us. There were draftees, enlistees and some people who were given an ultimatum--jail or the Army. You had a real mixture of people.

NM: Was this the first time you had ever been to the American south, the South.

WM: Yes, we had gone down on vacation a couple of times to Florida and we had driven down so we stopped at a motel or stopped at a restaurant, but as far as having contact and being there for any period of time, yes, that was the first time.

NM: Was it kind of socially different than the north or was it mostly training?

WM: We did two things. First of all, it was mostly training, but when we did get a pass and able to go to the nearest town, Columbia, South Carolina. This was not a good test because when you're in the Army, especially if you're in basic training, you're lower than low. The locals don't like you anyway, so not only that you're a Yankee and a northerner; you are also an Army recruit and a trainee. I think I only went into town once. I didn't particularly like the comments and the treatment. I never went back in again. I don't think that was a real good test because it was not like being there on vacation or business. It would have been different, I think, in those situations. A lot of these military towns too are a little bit different because they're used to military. Sometimes military guys go out. They want to get drunk. They want to do all the things that they want to do and it's disruptive to a lot of the local people and some of them don't particularly care for that.

NM: You told us how you got to Fort Sam Houston in Texas. Could you describe the training or the medical training that they instilled in you there?

WM: There were basically two types. There was what I would call academic type training, where you go to classrooms and you'd have classes on the musculoskeletal system, the cardiovascular system etcetera. This will fold into another story that I'll tell you later on. But you'd come in, it was almost like a college class. You'd go into a classroom. The instructor would give a three to five minute introduction. It was programmed learning, so they put on TVs. There'd be TVs throughout the room and there'd be a TV program and you had a workbook, a programed learning book where you'd have a blank space, so when you're going through the musculoskeletal system it consists of seeing the bones and there'd be a blank space in the text and you'd hear the guy talk, then you're supposed to write in the correct word that completes the passage. The TV program would play for about twenty-eight, thirty, thirty-two minutes, and then the "live" instructor would come back and say, "Any questions?" Then the instructor would answer them. Then they'd give a summary, three to five minutes, the blocks of instruction were

about fifty minutes, and then you say, "Okay class sergeant, march your class out to the Company Street and march them to the next class." That was the one type of training. The other type was basic first aid and how to stop bleeding and how to keep people out of shock. You'd be out in the field, putting dressings on. They teach you how to draw blood, how to give injections, how to take blood pressure because some of the trainees would be going to hospitals as hospital corpsmen and others would be going to Vietnam as combat medics so they needed [the experience]. So it was two types of training. Academic type training around basic medical issues, very basic, and then some practical like how to read a blood pressure, how to give an injection, how to draw blood, how to put on a field dressing, that kind of thing.

NM: At that point you mentioned that there's kind of two courses, two tracks.

WM: No, you go to both.

NM: Oh, no, but you go to both. You mentioned that when you get out, they determine that after everyone is trained who would go where.

WM: Yes, and my understanding is that's based on what they needed at that time. It's based on numbers. It's based on bodies. Who do I need here? Who do I need there? Similar to the basic training classes where ninety, ninety-five percent were going to infantry training, from the advanced medical training ninety, ninety-five percent were going to Vietnam and maybe five to ten percent were going to hospitals. Now once you got to Vietnam there was another sort, because most of those guys were going to either to battalion aid stations or to surgical hospitals and some were going to infantry units as combat medics.

NM: Now you also mentioned that you continued on at Fort Sam Houston as an instructor.

WM: Five, six months, yes. It was almost to the eleventh or twelfth month of my two year obligation.

NM: You're training people who were just like you five months ago, are you the person who's marching them to the classes?

WM: No, no.

NM: How does it work?

WM: Being an instructor was a great job. I loved it. I was in what was called the Professional Sciences Branch. I was doing the academic type training. Most of it was programed learning off of TVs, so all I do I go in, put my name tag up, the name of the class, opened my book, take my hat off, sit them down--because they'd have a class leader who would march them from one class to the other. I give the introduction. I tell them to turn on the TVs. When it's over, turn off the TVs, any questions, answer the questions, and then give the summary and closing. You had the ability, should something mechanically or technically happen with the TV program, you had lesson plans that you could teach it live if you had to. The way you got your assignment was they had this huge room; it was the branch office of Professional Sciences. They had this huge,

huge scheduling board in front of it. Nothing was electronic then, that's 1968, early '69. You'd go in the beginning of the week and they'd have each instructor's name, they'd have the classes you were teaching from Monday through Friday, the times and the buildings they [were] being held in, so you'd write down your schedule and you'd just show up and do the class. On the side of the room, and this is important because I'll tell you a little story in a minute or two, they had this little white board and occasionally people got sent to different places. Said "On Levy to" which meant you're going someplace--Japan, Germany, Korea, whatever, and Vietnam, etcetera--so you'd look at that. You didn't want to look at it, but you'd look at it and you see one or two names, every week there'd be one or two names. There were two significant things in my life that soured me on teaching. One was that incident that I mentioned before about the grades. The other one was that as I'm at this point in time, eleven, twelve months in to instructing, loving it, great gig, easy, quite honestly, for me at least. I was having a good time. Like I said, apartment off base and there are plenty of WACs [Women's Army Corps] on base and everything, so nice social life, right by San Antonio, right outside San Antonio, so it was pretty good. It's a whole lot different from when I was in South Carolina going to Columbia, well that was a trainee, now I'm permanent party. When I was there as a trainee in San Antonio at Fort Sam, San Antonio wasn't a great place. But now I have my car down there. I have an apartment off base. Different people, you get to know some locals, it's a whole different story. Then, it's a pretty nice place to be. Anyway, teaching this class one day and I don't even know what it was, cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, whatever, class comes in, sit down, I give my introduction, have them turn on the TVs and literally five minutes into the TV program they're opening up their work books and all of a sudden I see kids nodding off and even though it's advanced training and it's medical training they keep these kids up all hours at night, spit shining their boots, doing other Mickey Mouse Army stuff. So some of the kids are flipping their pencil in the air, closing their books so I said, "What's the matter?" They said, "He's going (the TV instructor) too fast." Now you have to understand, when they do these lesson plans they shoot for the middle, so they'll write the lesson plan and pace the lesson according to somebody who is in the middle. So if you're really brilliant and intelligent, it's going to be a hell of a lot too slow for you or if you're not that swift, you're a high school kid or you dropped out of high school, this might be a little hard and it's going too fast. So it seemed that this class, for whatever reason, was not getting it. They might have had a rough week or night and they probably weren't the most brilliant kids in the world, they weren't getting it and my immediate thought is most of these kids are going to Vietnam to treat wounded soldiers and I want them to learn. So I said, "Alright, shut off the TVs." Now unbeknownst to me there must have been, even back then, some type of electronic surveillance because I don't think what happened next was coincidental. I opened up my lesson plan. I teach the lesson, quite frankly I thought I was brilliant, I thought I did a wonderful job and I think I did. I had some questions along the way and answered them. Ten minutes before the class is about to end the door opens and the captain, who was the leader of that branch and the sergeant, E-7, sergeant, sergeant first class, walked in and sat in the back of the room. I finished up the lesson. I say, "Any questions?" A couple of questions, I answered them, did my summary. I said, "Alright, class sergeant, form up your class, take them up to the Company Street and march them off to the next class. They leave, I go up, I'll never forget to take my name tag and class information down from the board, put it in my notebook, close my notebook, put my hat on, and walk down the aisle to the exit door. "Hello sir, hello sergeant." He said, "Just a minute." I said, "Yes." He said, "What happened? No TV program with this lesson?" I knew where this was going so I said, "Oh, yes, there is." He said, "Oh, technical difficulties?"

"Oh no, sir, no." "Okay, you have any classes the rest of the day?" "No sir." "Meet me in the branch in five minutes." "Yes, sir." They walk back, I walked back, I walked into his office, knock on the door, he's sitting behind his desk, the sergeant's standing there, I walk in. I stood at attention and he said, "So there were no mechanical [problems] and you just decided on your own to teach the class." I said, "Well sir…" He said, "Shut up, I'm talking." He said, "These lessons are designed by instructional designers who are experts in the field. They know how to design programs. They know how to pace programs. I'm listening to this and I'm getting so angry because I was there, I saw these kids giving up on the lesson and all he's worried about is pushing kids through. I'm worried about if these kids get in Vietnam and they have to treat a wounded soldier and it might be life or death. Now maybe I'm getting dramatic. So I started, I'll never forget, I forget the captain's name. I'll never forget the sergeant's name, black sergeant, his name was Sergeant Guthrie. He probably kept me from getting court-martialed, because I had just about had enough of this ignorant captain talking at me. I was going to say, "You stupid son of a-" and I got that part off and the sergeant said, "Specialist, shut up and stand there and listen to the captain." Now if he didn't say that, I would have said things that probably would have gotten me in big trouble. The captain--this was a Friday said, "How many lesson plans do we have?" I said, "About 127." He said, "And they all have audio visual aids?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "I want on my desk Monday morning at 0600 hours a list of every audio-visual aid that goes with all of the 127 programs that we have in the Professional Science Branch. Do you understand?" "Yes, sir." So that was my "punishment assignment." I had it on his desk Monday at 0600 and went to get my schedule and then looked on the white board, "On Levy to Vietnam, McClung." Now nobody ever told me and nobody said anything, but I'm convinced that my trying to do the right thing got me sent to Vietnam and I say to this day if I had to do it over again, I'd do the same thing because I think what I did was the right thing. He obviously didn't. Stupid "lifer!"

NM: One of the things that I wanted to ask was in this white board when you saw people going to different places, were the places they most often were going to was Vietnam or were they going to Japan, were they going to different places?

WM: Very rarely was somebody sent from Ft. Sam to Vietnam, it was either Japan or Germany. It was only every week, some weeks there was nothing and one week there was one guy going to Japan, a couple of guys going to Germany, but almost every once in a while you see somebody to Vietnam, but not very often and like I said I'm convinced that was my punishment for doing what I did which in my mind was doing the right thing, obviously in this guy's mind it wasn't. In the military, you follow the chain of command and you obey your superiors.

NM: Could you talk about the process after you're levied. So you see your name on the whiteboard, what happens next?

WM: Well, I had a date to report so I had to clean out my stuff. Then I had a thirty-day leave. Then I had to report to Fort Lewis, Washington to go over to Vietnam. Again, as I'm going to Vietnam, you don't have an assignment so you know you're going to Vietnam, but you don't know where you're going. You don't know what unit. You don't know whether you're going to a hospital or aid station or an infantry unit. You're always hoping that the best happens, but you don't know.

NM: So could you talk about when you went on your thirty-day leave, did you go back to New Jersey?

WM: Yes, I hung out with my friends and my girlfriend and had a few adult beverages over the course of the thirty days and some farewell parties and all that kind of stuff. The one thing that was most disappointing to me was I was really concerned about my mother because, she was sickly, she was ill, she had heart problems and of course when she heard about me going to Vietnam she gasped, "Oh my God." So I said, "Don't worry, listen, with my bad eyesight, with my experiences as an instructor, I'm sure they'll put me in a hospital. I'll be in Saigon. I'll be sleeping on clean sheets. I'll have hot meals, no problem." I said, "Don't worry about it. As soon as I get there, I'll write you a letter. I'll give you my address. I'll tell you where I am and all the details." But I was a little worried that it would affect her health, which I think to a degree it did. So, what I did was what a corrupt accountant would do. I kept two sets of books. It was fortunate then because my father was still working, he had one year to go before he retired. They had built a house in Toms River, NJ. She was living down there permanently, he lived in Kearny, commute to Newark every day, ten minutes, fifteen minutes, and then he'd go down on the weekends. When I wrote him, I told him what was really happening and when I wrote her, I said, "Hey, I'm in Saigon. I got my own apartment. I'm sleeping on clean sheets. I'm working in a hospital, everything's wonderful," and then for him I told him what was really happening.

NM: When you were in Vietnam, you kept in fairly regular communication with your family?

WM: Yes, with family and friends, I was fortunate. My future wife and I weren't yet engaged, but she had just graduated from nursing school and she was working in Newark at St. Michael's Hospital, now St. Michael's Medical Center, and she'd write me, God bless her, she wrote me a letter and a card every day. I'd get something back from my father every week or two. I wrote my brother. I wrote friends and I'd get letters from them because that was the way you communicated, unless you were back in Saigon or some big base [where] you could get a MARS [Military Auxiliary Radio Station] station which you could get a hookup to through a ham radio operator to a phone back home. I never was able to do that. I kept in communications through mail. We are married forty-six years and I said, "I can never leave you, if for nothing else I attribute you to keeping me alive, because I looked forward to getting those letters." When we were out in the field we got resupplied every three days. A Huey helicopter would come out with the supplies you needed and when it came out, it would have a stack of mail like that for me, mostly all from her and so that's what kept me going, kept me looking forward to it.

NM: Oh, yes. That's what I wanted to bring up. So you arrived in I'm guessing Saigon.

WM: No, actually, we left from Fort Lewis, Washington. Then we stopped to refuel in Okinawa, and then into Bien Hoa, Vietnam. Then from there they sent me to the 90th Replacement Depot in Long Binh, which assigned people based on your MOS [Military Occupational Specialty]. I'm almost sure it was the 90th. I got off the plane and experienced the same thing that every Vietnam vet will tell you: the intense heat and humidity; the stench you never forget when you get off the plane. We're standing around there. It wasn't a terminal. It was outside. There were pallets laying around and they finally put us on a bus. This was at

night. The bus has screening on the windows, and you're wondering, "Well, there're pretty big holes to keep mosquitoes out." Well, it was to keep the VC [Viet Cong, Western slang for the National Liberation Front] from throwing grenades into the bus. That kind of slaps you to reality, "Hey, you're not in Kansas anymore. You're not in the States anymore." Then to the 90th Replacement Depot, I'm hoping, crossing my fingers, my toes, my legs, "Give me a hospital. Give me a battalion aid station, at least." They said, "You're going to the 1st Cavalry Division." So they sent me to the 1st Cavalry Division headquarters and they said, "The 5th Battalion 7th Cavalry needs some medics, so you're going out to the 5th of the 7th and at that time the 5th Battalion 7th Cavalry of the 1st Cavalry Division was headquartered in Phuoc Vinh or Quan Loi. I forget which one. I get there and report to the battalion surgeon, Dr. Terrence Murphy from Boston, and he looks at my record and my background, "Listen, you're not just a typical kind of guy that comes out of medical training." He said, "I see here you're a college graduate. You taught. You were an instructor." He said, "I'm going to assign you to Echo Company, which is the recon platoon. "That'll be better than a regular line infantry unit because those units go out bigger. They tend to get into more action, activity." I'm not saying the recon platoon never gets into any action, but it's smaller. They tried to operate stealthily and quietly when they go out to the field and there's typically less activity and action. He said, "You'll be great." "Besides the platoon leader, the officer in charge is one of the best officers in this battalion." "I'm sure you'll get along really well with him." So [I] stayed there for a day or two. The recon platoon was coming back for a stand down and he brought me over there to introduce me. I was with them for seven months. E Company had two platoons. They had a mortar platoon and a recon. I was with the recon platoon. I was with them for seven months from June of '69 to January of '70.

NM: Now because you had been in the States for the previous year, did you receive any type of training in Vietnam to prepare you for the types of resistance or the types of things you would encounter?

WM: Yes, there was some training. There were a few days when I was back at Bien Hoa. There was training we did on helicopters, rappel down ropes. To be perfectly honest I only vaguely remember some of it. It was only about three days and to be perfectly honest it really didn't prepare you for what you were going to go through, but there was some. I didn't think there was a heck of a lot of good preparation. You did that the training and then to the battalion, and then to the platoon that I was going to be with.

NM: So you were with this recon platoon the entire time?

WM: Seven months, the Cav had a policy. The thinking was that because of what medics went through and what they saw and what they had to do--treat the wounded and dead and medevac people out--it was pretty intense and there was a lot of burn out. There was a lot of stress, not that the infantry guys, the grunts didn't have stress, but it was just their policy that they tried to keep the medics in the field for six months and then give them an assignment out of the field. Before they could get a replacement for me, I was out seven months. Then the last five months I spent at a battalion aid station in Tay Ninh which, quite frankly, I don't think was much better. It was only that I didn't have to be out in the field. I had my own hooch, but Tay Ninh is only about eight or ten klicks, kilometers, from the Cambodian border, around the Parrot's Beak and

Fish Hook. We were getting rocketed and mortared every night anyway, so it wasn't a picnic. There were no rear areas in Vietnam. Seven months with the recon platoon and five months at the battalion aid station, "A" Company, 15th Medical Battalion, which was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division in Tay Ninh.

NM: Now why don't we start with your time in the recon battalion?

WM: Recon platoon.

NM: Recon platoon. First of all, could you talk about the area?

WM: Yes, the US military divided Vietnam from north to south into corps, what was South Vietnam then, which was called the Republic of Vietnam, RVN. There was I Corps, or One Corps, II Corps, III Corps and IV Corps. I Corps is by the DMZ, demilitarized zone, which divided North Vietnam from South Vietnam. II Corps was the Central Highlands basically, mountainous and forested terrain. III Corps went from Cambodia to the South China Sea from the Central Highlands down to the Mekong Delta and that was mostly triple canopy jungle, rubber plantations, bamboo and had red dirt. During the monsoon season it was red mud. During the dry season it was red dust and dirt. Then IV Corps was the Mekong Delta, where a lot of rice paddies, mangrove swamps, and rivers and streams. I was in III Corps and most of the time we were in the West, which was called War Zone C and that's where most of the action was at that time. That was where the Cambodian incursion was in May of 1970, and it was around places like Song Be, Phuoc Vinh, Quan Loi, Tay Ninh, Chi Lin, which were all around the area where the Ho Chi Minh trail ended. That's where they tried to infiltrate materials and men and women into around Saigon area and Cu Chi where they had all the tunnels. It was a pretty highly contested area. As I said, the seven months I was out in the field, six of the seven months was the monsoon season, so we were basically wet all day. It rained anywhere between ten to sixteen hours a day. So you were soaking wet and covered with red dirt, which was red mud. You were just caked with it for almost the whole time. We went out on missions and we were out usually between ten and thirty days in the bush. That's when you went out with a full load and with all your equipment and material you had maybe fifty, sixty pounds in your rucksack. You had web gear where you hung ammunition; we had ponchos, poncho liners, canteens, grenades, etcetera. I had my medical gear. I used to carry six quarts of water, three days' worth of food, C-rations mostly, which were cans that were heavy. Like most medics, unless they were conscientious objectors, I did carry weapons. I carried a shotgun and a .45 pistol and I used to carry grenades as well. Some conscientious objectors, after their first firefight, said give me an M16, they weren't conscientious objectors anymore. Then, every three days, you'd call back on the radio and say, " I need this much ammunition. Doc needs this kind of medication and bandages. We need" X "amount of water. We need C-rations," and then we'd try to get to an opening in the jungle. Then they'd send a helicopter and drop the stuff. That's where you get your mail most of the time. Sometimes they couldn't bring it because they didn't get it, so you might wait a week or two. Then if you had written a letter or had anything that had to go back, you'd give that to the helicopter crew and they'd bring it back to the fire base and then it would be sent back to division headquarters into Saigon and Ben Hua, then to Okinawa, and then back to the States.

NM: These missions where you're out in the field between ten to thirty days, after one of those takes place, how much down time is there before the next mission?

WM: Well, I'm laughing because they'd always say, "Oh, you're going back for stand down about two or three days. Well, it seemed we get back for a day and the platoon leader'd get called up to the TOC, which is the Tactical Operation Center where the battalion commander and the company commanders were, and he'd get called up the next day and he'd come back and say, "Alright, saddle up, we're going out tonight at 1800," or whatever. So, typically, it was a day or two, sometimes, if we were lucky, three, sometimes a day, and then we were out again.

NM: Are these missions for the recon platoon? Are they far? Are they far from your main base of operations?

WM: Yes, they could be. They varied. They could be anywhere. Typically, they'd CA or a combat assault us out of the field, which meant they loaded us on helicopters, dropped us in an opening in the jungle and then the helicopters left. Then we might tromp around that part of the jungle for two, three, four, five, six, eight days. Then they might come back, pick us up, drop us in another place and so forth. Sometimes, not often, but every once in a while, if we were on a firebase we might walk out into the jungle depending, again, upon what the mission was. I did about fifty or sixty combat assaults on helicopters being landed in different areas. You could be out a few kilometers to ten, twenty, thirty, fifty kilometers, but the one thing that you'd always try to do--and the concept of building these firebases out in the jungle where they'd put artillery pieces on them, mostly 105 or 155 millimeter cannon and maybe 60 or 80 millimeter mortars, and the concept was that as far as those guns could fire, which for the 155s were maybe fourteen or fifteen miles I think and 105s maybe eight to twelve miles. You could go out that far around the perimeter because if you got into a fire fight you could call back for artillery support and that was the concept of the firebase. So they try to keep us within [range] out of the artillery. Those firebases, by the way, were not permanent. They were very mobile, because if the area dried up or they figured you'd killed all the enemy or disrupted his activities there, then they pick them up and move them someplace else. Each infantry unit, for example, I was with the 1st Cav, might have six, nine, ten, twelve firebases at any one point in time in their area of operations, but they were always moving, closing them, moving, opening up another one. The missions were we did were ambushes. We ambushed trails and roads. We did security when they built these firebases, because the way they built them was they'd pick out an area where they wanted to build them, mostly triple canopy jungle, so what they do is they'd bring in these Chinook helicopters and the flying crane helicopters and they drop in bulldozers, front end loaders, road graders, and they'd just clear out an area in the jungle, usually huge circular area. Now while they're doing that there's a lot of noise, a lot of activity, and the combat engineers are doing that, so our platoon would be positioned around that area outside in the jungle so the bad guys, the VC, the NVA couldn't sneak up and kill the guys building the firebase because the defensive perimeter and other defenses weren't setup. They'd push a burm up, which is about a three feet high pile of dirt, put barbed wire out. During the building process those were not there. We did what they call BDA's, which are bomb damage assessments. When they did arc lights--an arc light is a B-52 bombing,--they'd send us out into the general area. We'd have to be at least three kilometers away because if you're anywhere inside that on a B-52s strike the concussion could affect you. You're not going to get any flying shrapnel, but certainly some concussion. Then the next

morning, after they did the carpet bombing, we'd go in to see what damage was done. Are there any bodies? Were there any materials? Are there any VC, NVA, walking around stunned, and sometimes there were that. We did that and that's three and then fourth was mainly reconnaissance. If they had either intelligence--they used to put these electronic sensors out and if they clicked off they figured there was some kind of enemy activity--and they knew that there were no allied units there, no ROKs [Republic of Korea Marines], or no Americans or Australians or Canadians, who were allies, or South Vietnamese Army troops, ARVNs, they might send us to check it out. The Army's definition of reconnaissance back then, I think, was to use us as human bait. One night we were on a firebase and we knew we were going out the next day, but we didn't know what we were doing and I was with the radio operator and he's listening to the battalion radio channel, what was called PUSH, which is their band and the battalion commander is talking to the company commander--our call sign was Deadly Raider--so he said, "We're going to send Raider out tomorrow morning. We got a lot of hits on the sensors and we're going to put Raider in there tomorrow. We're going to see if they make contact. We're hoping that it's a big NVA unit, a company, a division, a regiment, and then we'll send in a bigger unit to mop up." So, basically, recon is you're human bait. We're going to put you in. We hope they attack you and then we'll put some more guys in and we hope we kill more of them than they do of us. We were a little nervous that day. We weren't real happy with that assignment. As fate would have it, it was nothing. There was some previous activity there, but they had gone and we didn't get into any contact that day, so we were eternally thankful for that, but that was a little scary.

NM: Now these missions, you were flying many different types of missions. Was contact made with the enemy often?

WM: Sometimes, yes, sometimes no. I think probably being a recon unit and because of some of these missions we probably got into less contact with the enemy. God, some of the infantry units were in contact almost every day or two, three, four, five times a week. We were a little bit less than that, but depending upon what you were doing, where you were, you never knew. We setup an ambush on a trail one afternoon and three or four Vietcong came down it. We had setup our .60 caliber machinegun. We heard it start to fire. We were further back in the bush when we heard the .60. We ran up to where the .60 was. We saw a blood trail. We saw some drag marks and that was good because we figured we got some. Also, we found one of their sandals, [which] we used to call Ho Chi Minh slicks--they made out of tires--and one of those straw conical hats was on the trail too. The guy ran out of it or was dragged out of it by his comrades, because they don't want to leave dead bodies to give us a body count. They didn't want to let anybody know how many were killed. Now we're out there and we're probably about ten, twelve, fifteen kilometers away from the firebase and there's no other support around and we figured if they had any buddies around that they'd be back for us so we tried to get as much distance as we could from that spot to a place where we could setup a night defensive perimeter. We found a place in a stand of bamboo. We dug in that night and we never dug in because, being recon, we tried to go very quietly and stealthily. We tried never to walk on a road or a trail. We'd ambush them, but we always walk through the jungle. It was more strenuous. It was more difficult, but you probably weren't going to get ambushed or trip a booby-trap. So anyway, we get into this bamboo; setup a night defensive perimeter, even dug in. We thought for sure we are at least going to get mortared, if not ground attacked that night. First light comes, nothing. I

get up and walked over to somebody in another hole to borrow something and all of a sudden all hell broke loose. They snuck up on us and they fired on us. Nobody got hurt fortunately. We went after them, but didn't find anything. We called in some Cobra gunships and some F-4s. They did some bombings, but we didn't get anything that we knew of then. Then when we got back to our NDP, one of our guys backs me in some bamboo where I was standing. When I walked over to his hole, he said, "Doc, you're standing here, right?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Put your hand up." He backed me into it. He said, "Put your hand on your head," which I did. He said, "Raise your hand." I raised my hand about an inch or two and there was no more bamboo. When I turned around it was all that's left of the ten, fifteen feet of bamboo and the VC were maybe twenty, thirty meters away from us, in some brush. They must have been lying on the ground and they were firing upward and they cut off the bamboo right there, so the rounds missed my head, my forehead by about an inch or two. You had that every once in a while and then it gets all shaky.

NM: I'm trying to piece together as a combat medic the relationship with the rest of your unit, the enlisted men. What type of relationship did you have with the officers? Did you have with the enlisted men? I'm trying to piece that relationship.

WM: There was only one officer. There's a platoon leader, he's either a 2nd lieutenant or 1st lieutenant. Then there's the platoon sergeant. Then there's an RTO, the radio telegraph operator for the platoon leader and the medic, that's usually what's called the CP, the command post. Then because we only had between eighteen and twenty-two guys, if you take those four out, there's only about fifteen, sixteen guys left. We had three squads, which were all enlisted men, private, private 1st class, Spec 4s, specialist 4--the equivalent of corporal--and then, maybe, a buck sergeant who would be the squad leader. We had three squads and the CP, the command post. I hung out mostly with the CP. The RTO and the platoon leader and I, because we had rotating platoon sergeants, that's a whole another story, but we weren't real thrilled with the platoon sergeants we had. The three of us were really tight and when we went back on stand downs we hung out together and had a great relationship because both of those guys were college graduates. Our platoon leader was from Hot Springs, Arkansas. The RTO was from Chester, Virginia which is outside of Richmond. They were both good old southern boys who grew up hunting, fishing, so they knew the jungle. They were as comfortable as you could be in the jungles. They knew how to read a map. They knew how to use a compass and shoot an azimuth. We never got lost. They knew where they were. They had great instincts. They were wonderful. As far as relationships with the other guys, quite frankly, if you're a medic and you're halfway good, you're "golden." These guys treat you like God, because they know that if something happens to them, if they get hit or they get wounded or sick, the only thing standing between them and death or an amputation or serious injury is you. You are going out and getting them if they are wounded in a fire fight and dragging them back and treating them and stopping the bleeding or keeping them out of shock and calling in a medevac and getting them back to an aid station or a surgical hospital where they can do some real medical work on them. These guys were great. They treated me like I was God. When they got their care packages, which are packages you get from home, people send you stuff. If they had any extra, not even extra, goodies or something, "Hey, Doc, you want this?" "Say Doc, I got this here." "My girlfriend sent me this," or whatever, so it was great. You were really treated [well], as I said, as long as you were halfway decent. Every morning I had to pass out the anti-malarial pills and they didn't

like that because I had to stand there, watch them take it, because some guys might spit it out because they wanted to get malaria because it'd get them out of the field. The ironic part about it, and I took my anti-malarial pills, I had malaria twice. Some of the guys thought maybe I was dogging it and not taking them, but I swear to goodness I took them. I just happened to get malaria twice. But the relationships were good. The ironic part is the RTO and I were still good buddies until he passed last year. When I got back from Vietnam I just dropped everything, didn't want to know anything about my service for a bunch of reasons. Fifteen, twenty years later, I started trying to reconnect with some of the guys. I did with a couple of them. One guy was our sniper and the other guy was our RTO that I got in contact and he and I, until he passed last year, we'd talk on the phone every week for about half an hour, an hour. Unfortunately, the platoon leader, who was a great guy and a great friend, was killed on an ambush while we were over there, so that's unfortunate. We reconnected with his family when we got home. A bunch of us went out to Hot Springs, met with his stepmother, his sister and his wife who had remarried. She and her current husband and her son came out and we had just a great reunion with them. I was just treated very, very well by everybody.

NM: That was what they referred to you as, Doc?

WM: Doc, I swear to goodness. Probably not even half of them [knew] my first name, never mind my last name. Now medic was more impersonal, because if you were with another unit or bigger unit they'd call, "Medic," but in our platoon it was almost personalized, "Doc." "Doc, can you do this?" When I call these two guys on the phone now or they call me, they'll say, "Hey Doc, this is Opie," or "Doc, this is Buzz," or I'll say, "Hey Buzz, Doc, how you doing?" They know my name, but I'm still Doc. You never lose that, even after 46 years.

NM: You're on these long missions and you already mentioned that someone is basically aiming at you at one point with probably an AK-47.

WM: I think more than once, but… [laughter]

NM: What types of resistance, what types of armaments would your unit encounter on these various types of missions?

WM: You could get anything from small arms, AK-47s, SKS or CKCs, which were basically like M1 sniper rifles, carbines, they were either Chinese or Russian, some of them from World War II, to RPGs, which were rocket propelled grenades, to mortars, grenades and automatic weapons. You might get some artillery or tanks, but we didn't come up against any of that because we were a smaller unit.

NM: Did you encounter any prepared positions that had booby traps?

WM: Yes. When our platoon leader was killed we were coming in from a mission. We were supposed to go in for a stand down. We had been out for a while. We were supposed to come back in. We were walking back in. There was a huge firebase; actually it was a forward support base, which is a lot bigger. They used to land C-130s and C-123s. They had helicopter revetments. They had two or three divisions there. It was called LZ Buttons and it was in Song

Be and we were supposed to come in there for a few days stand down. We were only a klick or two outside, so we were going to walk in. They said, "Stay there and then just walk in. We'll give you stand down." In the morning they said, "Listen, Delta 1st of the 9th is going down to another little firebase that they built about ten klicks away." Delta 1st to the 9th was another unit in the 1st Cav and that was a gun jeep platoon. They had jeeps. They had .60 calibers mounted on them and on the last one they had a 106 millimeter recoilless rifle. Now that day that was being repaired, so they didn't have it available. They had the M60s on the back of the jeeps. They said, "They're coming down the road outside, meet them at these coordinates. You'll get on. They'll drive down." I didn't even know what the mission was. We were supposed to go down there, for what I don't know, and then they said, "They're coming back later on in the day and you'll have your stand down." So we're going down this dirt road and the tree line was maybe thirty, forty meters away and all of a sudden you can see it getting closer to the road because that's the way the terrain went. So our platoon leader and the platoon leader of the gun jeep platoon stopped and they talked and they were getting a little nervous they said because now if it's forty, fifty meters away you got a chance to regroup if they start firing at you out of the tree line. It's a great place to get ambushed, and our recon platoon would never be on a road or a trail, but we're with the jeeps. They can't go to the jungle, so they have to ride down the road. They called back to the battalion commander and asked if we could do a recon by fire. A recon by fire, other people might call it a mad minute, means you just fire, you don't know if anything is in there, but just in case there are you just fire your weapons in there and if [they are] there it's either going to get them or they're going to keep their heads down. They got permission to do that. We start firing, all of a sudden all hell broke loose out of the tree line. Our platoon leader and his radio operator were killed, immediately. By the way his RTO, my buddy Opie was so good he got promoted to platoon sergeant; so fortunately, he wasn't next to Mike then. But this new guy, who was his current RTO, [was] shot immediately and killed. Another guy got wounded and one of the Delta 1st of the 9th jeep commanders, a sergeant, named, Don Skidgel, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions that day. He provided covering fire so everybody else could get in the ditch and take cover. A long story short is that road was a main road that went from Saigon to Song Be. The next day, there was going to be a 150 to 200 truck convoy coming from Saigon to Song Be with fuel, ammunition, food, supplies. Somehow the Vietcong and NVA had intelligence that was happening. This was a reinforced NVA, [North Vietnamese Army Battalion], the regular Army, not just the rag tag Vietcong that were setup there to ambush that convoy. They didn't want us. We were small potatoes, but they thought once we fired at them that they were discovered. They figured, "Well, we'll take what we can get because they know we're here." If we did not fire at them, we would have went down, came back and the convoy would have gotten ambushed the next day. But these three guys got killed that day because of that, so it was a shame because this guy was just a great guy, Mike Thomas from Hot Springs, Arkansas, just fantastic. He would have been something too. The battalion commander said he was one of the top two or three officers in the battalion. He was just charismatic. Everybody loved him. He was the best officer I ever encountered in the military.

NM: You brought up sometimes you would encounter some of this heavier resistance. Was it apparent that some units you were encountering were Vietcong, were just some guys running around, versus encountering North Vietnamese Army units, regular Army units in that Cambodia area?

WM: Yes, you could pretty much tell because most of the Vietcong were hit and run. That encounter might last thirty seconds, a minute, two minutes, because that was their job and that's what they saw their tactics as. It's mostly hit and run ambushes, snipers, that kind of stuff. NVA units, they were more disciplined. They were very well trained. They were very well equipped and you knew you were fighting a professional Army when you encountered them and we didn't encounter them that much. What we encountered mostly was Vietcong; I don't want to say ragtag, but kind of small, four, five, six. Basically, just trying to spring an ambush, trying to inflict some kind of harassment and whatever else they could get was fine. But the NVA units were professional and they were usually bigger. They would have been platoon size or company size and VC were mostly small.

NM: I also want to get at kind of what daily life is. You're not always on missions, but just kind of a routine. Is it a routine or is it always changing?

WM: It changes, but most of the time you are on missions, it was scary but not constant action. It's clichéd, but it's like hours and days of boredom and seconds and minutes of terror, because most of the time you're sitting around waiting for something to happen, hoping it wouldn't, but kind of knowing that, eventually, it would. But the routine was you'd get up in the morning. You'd breakdown your night defensive perimeter. You'd have your breakfast. Whatever the mission was, you'd go, and then you might stop for a break and you might setup an ambush or you might look for indications that there were enemy movements around. You might be looking for a cache of food or weapons. If you saw anything or anything suspicious you might call back for some artillery. Then, late afternoon, the platoon leader would look for a place to setup your night defensive perimeter. The process was you'd try to find a place that was defensible, that's certainly off a trail or road. If you can get some high ground that was even better. Then you'd spread out the three squads in a circular formation. The command post would be in the middle. Then each soldier would put out trip flares in a continuous circle so if somebody tried to sneak up on you at night, they'd trip a wire and a flare would go off. It could be an animal too; you didn't know that because there were a lot of animals in the jungle. Then about ten meters behind that you setup claymore mines. Then what you do is you take your poncho-- everybody had a poncho, you never wore it because it didn't do any good. It's a 100, 110 degrees and if you put a poncho on you wouldn't get wet from the rain, but you'd be soaking wet from the sweat. So you use the poncho. A poncho is a square piece of rubber, it's got snaps on it and it's got a hood. You'd tie off the hood and make a two man hooch. You'd snap two ponchos together, everybody carried some metal stakes and rope, and you'd get either trees or bamboo and you'd tie the rope about two, or three feet off the ground, and then you put the two ponchos that were snapped together across it and it would come down and form like a little hooch, a little tent. You'd stake the four corners with the stake or you tie them off if you had bamboo and that would be your shelter for the evening. At least it would keep some of the rain off you. You'd still lay down in the mud. Sometimes you'd have air mattresses, but at night, especially if you're wet, some of these guys would turnover in their sleep and it would make that squeaking sound and so a lot of times that's when the platoon leader would say, "Take all your mattresses down. Take the air out of them," because you don't want to give away our position. Then you'd have one guy on guard duty. You'd divide the night into time and maybe it was half an hour, forty-five minutes, when he was done he'd wake the next guy. They'd sit in the position where you'd have all what we called the clackers, which were the detonators for the claymore mines. They'd all be sitting in

front of them so he knew if a trip flare went off over here, that was this clacker, if went over there, it was this one. The first thing, as soon as a flare went off, he'd hit the detonator, you'd have to hit it three times. It was an electrical connection and you hit it three times and it would blow, by that time everybody else would be awake and you'd fire. Everybody knew what their job was. About two or three in the morning, usually, it would stop raining and what that meant is now you got these rubber ponchos that you're using as hooch's. The moon would come out and the reflection of the moon would shine off the wet poncho, so everybody had to get up and quietly take down those ponchos and fold them up because that could give away your position. So now you're lying on the ground and even though it's not raining, water is still dripping down from the trees. It was a mess. Then in the morning you'd get up and the guys would go out and take the trip flares down. They take the claymores back down. You'd have your breakfast. If there was a routine, that was the routine. But most of the time during the day you're busting bush or you're humping through the boonies with fifty, sixty pounds. Our platoon leader was good. We'd take long breaks, a half an hour, forty-five minutes and you just sit around and you might play cards. There'd always be somebody on watch and you'd setup a defensive perimeter, but if there was a routine that was it. Then, depending on whether you're doing security on the firebase, whether you're doing bomb damage assessment, whether you're doing the recon, it might vary a little bit. Quite frankly, most of the time it was just plain boring and hard work because you're expending a lot of energy and really not a lot of stuff is happening.

[Tape Paused]

NM: Now in these types of missions did you have to work with the allies?

WM: We never worked with any of our allies, Australians or ROKs or ARVNs. We did have once a Chieu Hoi. Chieu Hoi is the program where the enemy surrenders and they turn our side. It could be VC or NVA. They are trained, indoctrinated, some military training, some political training, and then some of them become Kit Carson scouts. So we had one assigned to us once and he didn't work out. We weren't real happy with him. We thought he almost got us killed, so when we got back from the mission, our platoon leader went up to the TOC and told the company commander and battalion commander, "We don't want this guy anymore and if you send him out with us again we'll probably kill him," so we didn't have him anymore. Sometimes another company or platoon was short on manpower, if they were in a big firefight and a lot of guys were killed or wounded, they'd put us in to supplement that group until they could get replacements. Other times they would OPCON us, which meant they'd put us under operational control of another 1st Cavalry Division unit, for example when we were with Delta 1st of the 9th on that gun jeep mission. We did that a couple of times. There was a mechanized unit that had armored personnel carriers, tanks, they used to have Deuce and a Halfs, two and a half-ton trucks, called the 11th Armored Cavalry and we were OPCONed to them every once in a while. We hated both of those assignments because whether you're going down the jungle in tanks and armored personnel carriers or gun jeeps, the enemy knows where you are ten, twenty klicks away. We hated it because we were cautious. We were careful. We still got into trouble every once in a while, but we hated being with them. We didn't like it. We didn't have anything to say about it though, but we did not work with any other units, not with the ARVNs, or the ROKs or the Australians at all.

NM: It sounds like you might have had more of this later when you're in your last five months

WM: Yes, the battalion aid station.

NM: Yes, when you're at the battalion aid station. But was there any chance to interact with the South Vietnamese civilians? Were there any villages or were there major population areas?

WM: Not major but, yes, every once in a while we'd go through a village and not a lot of interaction because at that point in time you were skeptical. You didn't know whether they were friend or foe. You'd walk through and they'd say, "GI number one, GI number one," and we'd joke to each other say, "Yes, when the VC come through here tonight, they'd say VC number one, GI number 10." So you didn't know who to trust. We never mistreated anybody, but you're always cautious or on guard. You're right, maybe more so when I was at the battalion aid station. We did what were called MEDCAPs, which were medical civilian action programs. Every once in a while they'd take some of the medics from the aid station with a doctor. We'd go out to a village, the village chief would say something and people would line up and we'd get everything from infants to old people and treat them for whatever they were complaining about. You'd have a local Vietnamese there who was our ally, who could translate, but not a whole heck of a lot of interaction otherwise.

NM: Now I just want to ask a quick question about the MEDCAPs missions. Did you have to receive training when you were training about the MEDCAP missions or was this something that you already had learned?

WM: No training. Some of us were combat medics. Some had been at the aid station treating the wounded or the sick or the ill. There was hepatitis, malaria and other diseases, so the guys had been doing that. Some of the other guys did security. A doctor, the battalion surgeon was usually there. He was a captain and a full medical doctor. His specialty might have been orthopedics and he might have been treating some kind of tropical disease, but he was a medical doctor. Quite frankly, I think we did some good, but a lot of that was political, trying to win the hearts and minds. Everybody in the village would lineup whether they had anything wrong not because they were curious and they wanted to get something whether it was a pill or bandage. Some had a slight wound or little scratches. Some were seriously ill people. They tell you before you go out that as far as they know this is a friendly village and don't be harsh, but no other specialized training.

NM: Now I want to get some more on the perspective of a medic. What were some of the things that you as a medic were concerned about in terms of for example injuries, preventable injuries? You mentioned diseases, malaria. What were some of the things that perhaps you uniquely would keep an eye on to keep your unit healthy?

WM: Well, one thing was the anti-malaria pills that I would pass around. We had two kinds. We had chloroquine primaquine, which was a big orange pill, that was once a week. The other was this little white pill called Dapsone, and I didn't know it then, but that was actually an experimental drug that did nothing for preventing malaria, but they didn't know it then. They were working with a pharmaceutical company and I guess they used us as guinea pigs. They

were daily and my job was to pass them out every morning. I did that at breakfast while they were eating. I'd have to stay there to watch them take it. If we took any water out of the stream I'd try to make sure the guys put the purification tablets in it. Probably one of the biggest things that I had to treat was what we called jungle rot, which in World War II was called trench foot. Everybody's feet got wet. The first thing when we got a new guy in the platoon I would tell him to get an extra pair of socks--clean dry socks--get a plastic bag wrap them and make sure that it was tight and put them in his rucksack. Every night while we were setting up our defensive perimeter, when everything was done, I had a little sick call at my position. Our feet were always wet. The boots weren't waterproof. We wore the olive drab socks, so when you were walking through the jungle the socks would get wet and bundle up and start rubbing between the toes and would cause big open, gaping holes. If you didn't treat them properly and try to keep them as dry as you could, they could get infected. Sometimes I had to medevac the guy. So at night I tell them to take their boots off, since they weren't walking through the jungle anymore. Take your old wet socks, wring them out, if you could get them inside your little lean to or hooch try to do that and if you needed, if you had any open sores, come over to my position and I would try to clean them out, put bacitracin, which was an antibiotic ointment and then try to bandage them. Then tell them to put their dry socks on. Then in the morning, after we leave out of the night defensive perimeter, we might stop at about nine, nine-thirty. By that time it hadn't started raining yet, so we'd stop for break and I'd tell them take out their wet socks from the night before, squeeze them out and hang them over branches to dry them out so they'd be dry for the night. The other thing that was pretty prevalent during monsoon season was leeches. Now most of them could take care of that themselves and you either squirt insect repellant on it, we call bug juice. You couldn't pull them off because if they were on you their head was embedded into your skin and if you pulled it out the head would be in there and it'd get infected. If you smoked you lit up a cigarette and burn them and they'd let go and then you can just flick it off. On one occasion we all had leeches after walking through a stream. Some guys were calling for me and telling me they had leeches. I said, "We all do. Take care of yourself. Everybody's got leeches." I'm squirting them off me. You got to lift up your pants and lift up your fatigue jacket and look on your arms and your chest areas, guys screaming, screaming and screaming. In fact, one guy says, "I got leeches." I said, "We all got leeches." He said, "No, I got a leech up my" and he used the word, I'll say, "penis." I said, "You got to be kidding me." I said, "Show me." So he showed me and sure enough all I see was this tail coming out of his urethra. I said, "I can't help you. I mean, you're going to die." He said, "No, no." "I have no idea what to do with this. This wasn't in the manual." Fortunately, we were going to get resupplied later on that day, so I told our platoon leader, I'm going to have to medevac him, and they'll probably have to give him a course of antibiotics. Sure enough, I medevaced him. He came back a week later and that's what they had done with him. So, most of the non-combat issues were some of the diseases; hepatitis, malaria, what we called jungle rot, leeches. Those were all very prevalent things other than gunshot wounds, booby trap wounds, sprains and fractures.

NM: The noncombat injuries, did they put a lot of guys out of commission?

WM: Yes, they did. If you had those sores and infections in your feet you can't walk and so you got to get out. Malaria and hepatitis were pretty debilitating because not only would you have the disease, but you'd be weak, have a fever and not able to keep up. I know because I had malaria twice. You're not eating; they're feeding you with IVs. You're going to lose probably

twenty, twenty-five pounds. You probably already lost fifteen, twenty pounds from humping around in the jungle in 100, 110 degrees, heat and humidity. I'm six foot one and I was down to about 120 pounds after I had malaria. So then after a week in a hospital, you are sent to a convalescent center to get some weight back on you and get some nourishment before you can go back. So yes, they could be very debilitating.

NM: You mentioned that you would tell soldiers to put their socks in plastic bags and for their trench foot. Are some of the things that you did, were they the result of learning on the job?

WM: Yes, learning on the job and learning from people. You talk to people who are medics. Because when I first came in I was back in the rear a few days and some of the medics who had just come out of the field were telling me some of their experiences. Now some of it was BS. They tell you some war stories, but a lot of it was good information. So mostly, things that you either learned on the job or you learned from people who preceded [you] or you learned from other people in the platoon who had gone through it. There was a lot of learning on the job.

NM: Is there anything that stands out from your time in the recon platoon, your seven months there? I want to get to your time out of the field and in the aid station. Is there anything that you like to share for the record?

WM: When I do tours at the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial Museum and Education Center (NJVVM) one of the things I tell the groups it was almost like a million dollar education that I wouldn't pay a penny for today. It's like unless you've been there you wouldn't understand it. It was something that was extremely intense and terrifying, but I'm glad to have made through it. Sometimes I don't know how I did, but if you asked me if I would want to go through it again or if I want my sons to go through it, or you or anybody else, I would say no. I wouldn't want anybody to have to go through that. The other thing that I tell people is I'm seventy years old so my year in Vietnam is one percent of my lifetime. I had a great childhood. I had a good upbringing. I graduated from college. I have an MBA. I taught in the NJ Public School System. I was in business for thirty-five plus years, but that one year of my life was the most invaluable experience that I've ever had. I learned more about myself, about what I can do, what I couldn't do, about operating under stress, about other people and how they react to stressful situations, about war, than I ever could have anywhere. I'm not telling people to go and do it. I wouldn't want anybody to have to do it, and it sounds crazy and it sounds contradictory, but that's the way it is. There were some times when you thought you weren't going to get out alive. There were other times where you second guess yourself. Probably the most difficult thing to do was when we had casualties was the triage. I mean multiple casualties. When you had one casualty, no brainer, you do what you need to do. You almost do it automatically. Many times you don't even think you improvise. You do things you didn't think you could do. But when you had more than one, then you have to say, "Alright, which guy am I going to treat first." If the others don't make it, you think, "Maybe I should have treated this other guy. Maybe I should have helped him first. I've read a lot of the books from nurses and some doctors and they said the same thing, it even happens back there at the hospitals when they triage people because, basically, they're determining who's going to live and who's going to die. I think the terminology is expectant, serious and secondary. Expectant means they expect that they're going to die and so they put them off in a corner. They might come back an hour or two later and they're still alive and they

say, "Maybe if I gave him some treatment an hour or two hours ago…" But that's probably the most difficult thing that you had to do was to decide who you were going to treat first. Four of the guys that are tour guides at the NJVVM that were helicopter pilots and although none of them were medevac pilots I still say that these helicopter pilots in general and medevac pilots, specifically, were just unbelievable. They're nineteen, twenty, twenty-one-year-old kids. By policy, they did not have to come in to a hot LZ. Hot LZ is where you're taking fire. Most of their aircraft commanders or unit commanders didn't want them to, because if the helicopter got shot up they'd lose a half a million dollar piece of equipment. They wouldn't be operational. I can say this, every time, any time that I ever called a medevac in, never once did they ever refuse. All they wanted to know is, "How many wounded? Is the LZ hot or cold?" If it's hot, "What are you taking, automatic weapons, RPGs, small arms? Where are they? Where is the fire coming from and what's the best way we can come in?" You give them all that information, they'd say, "Okay, we'll call when we're two minutes in bound, have everybody ready. I'm not going to be on the ground any more than thirty seconds." But never once did they ever refuse to come in, so I have nothing but admiration. Those guys used to get shot up all the time. They were brave, courageous and sometimes heroic.

NM: Now you say it was policy that they didn't want the medics in the field more than six months.

WM: They tried to switch them out in the 1st Cav. I don't about any other units or divisions, but that was a 1st Cav policy. Some were never in the field. Some went directly to an aid station or directly to a field hospital and were never in the field. That's why the one thing that I'm proud of most in my service, of the awards I received is my Combat Medical Badge. To be eligible for a Combat Medical Badge in Vietnam you had to have a medical MOS, which is military occupational specialty, which was 91 Bravo 20. You had to be assigned to an infantry unit. That infantry unit had to be in the field. That infantry unit had to be under attack, under fire more than once and the officer in charge of that unit had to write a recommendation for you to receive that Combat Medical Badge. I think they said less than five percent of medical personnel in Vietnam ever received a Combat Medical Badge, so I was very proud of receiving it. A lot of the guys, and I have nothing against them, they were fortunate and God bless them. They didn't get a Combat Medical Badges because they were in the battalion aid station or field hospital or convalescent center. They got rocketed and mortared every night. They treated wounded. They debrided wounds. They stabilized guys before they sent them on to surgical hospitals, but they weren't under direct fire with an infantry unit and didn't hump the boonies, so they were not eligible for that award.

NM: Were you awarded the Combat Medical Badge while you were still in Vietnam at the aid station?

WM: Yes, well actually before, while I was in the field.

NM: In the field.

WM: Yes, I got it because our platoon leader had recommended me for it and I eventually got orders for it so I could wear it. Now you don't wear it in the field, you don't wear medals or rank

or anything in the field because you don't want the enemy seeing who you were and what you were, but when we're back at the aid station, yes, I could wear that award. So I received it while I was over there.

NM: When you go to the aid station, you were still in the 1st Cav area?

WM: Yes, yes. The aid station was A Company 15th Medical Battalion and that was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division. It was a support unit of the 1st Cavalry Division, the 15th Medical and just the ABCD--Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta--each one was an aid station, but they were in different locations. One was at Quan Loi. One was at Phuoc Vinh. I happen to be at Alpha Company, which was at Tay Ninh, which was a pretty big base.

NM: While you're there the 1st Cav is in operations for

WM: Around that area.

NM: Around that area and also the beginning of some operations into Cambodia?

WM: Yes, I was there from end of January through end of May 1970 and the incursion into Cambodia officially started in early May of 1970. Now I'll also again back track. There were times when I was with the recon platoon. We were in Cambodia. We knew it. We'd call back and we'd say, "We think we're in Cambodia. Here are the grid coordinates." They'd say, "No, you're not in Cambodia." "Okay, fine. Thank you very much." But we knew because there's no border and there's no checkpoint and there's no line that says "You're now entering Cambodia." The US was in Cambodia for a month. They got a lot of arms, weapons, food and so forth, but that was the official incursion to Cambodia, yes.

NM: Well, definitely it was much different. It was different serving in the recon platoon versus the medical aid station. Could you talk about some of the major differences?

WM: Yes, it was very different, I guess. I don't know if disciplined is the right word, but it was more relaxed. You had more of a routine. You got up in the morning. You went over to the mess hall. I did have a hooch with sandbags. It was a four man hooch. It was pretty nice and I had a cot. It was more like a bed and I had the poncho liner on top of it. We had a fan. I had pictures taped to the wall behind my bed. So you got up in the morning, went over to have breakfast. You went to your job--you had a regular job, whether it was at the aid station, in the clinic or other, different areas. So you worked during the day. You're off at night, unless casualties came in. You'd take a shower each night. I'm saying shower, people think you're in the glassed indoors with shower heads. They had a fifty-five gallon drum with a spigot with a 3/8" inch pipe coming out. You'd get wet. You'd soap up. You go back in. Then you dry off, but at least it was a shower. In the field you did not have that. If you came across a stream once every week, week and a half, you jump in and take a bath and that was it. So you'd have your shower. You'd clean up. You'd go back to your hooch and you put on your underwear and your flip flops. Then there was a club, an EM club where we had a huge old cooler and they had beer and a tape player, so you'd be there and you'd have a couple of beers or maybe more than a couple of beers. It was more of a routine, more like a regular job. There were routine sick calls

every morning because there were a lot of different units around there. Guys would come in with headaches or with fevers or whatever complaints they had. There was a dentist there. They had a dental clinic. There was a lab technician; he could do some rudimentary lab work. There was a morgue, a room that's set aside for casualties out of the field. If we had any KIA [Killed in Action] that was a holding area before they got another helicopter and then took them back to Long Binh or Bien Hoa or Saigon for graves registration. It was a medical compound. The only thing that upset the routine is when you had casualties coming in from the field then it was all hands on deck. You'd go over to Admissions and Disposition, A and D, to provide medical treatment. We typically didn't get a lot of the very serious wounded. They would go right to a field hospital where they had doctors and nurses. We had doctors, no nurses or sterile fields. We had a little A and D area. We could debride wounds--take shrapnel out--if they weren't real serious, if there were no bones broken or nerves damaged. If we had injuries that were found to be beyond our capabilities, we'd call for another helicopter and get them to a field surgical hospital. We still [had] red dirt, mud, and had the outhouse and you still had to burn the feces and you had a tube where you urinated. There was no flush toilet, no plumbing. But it was a hell of a lot better than being out in the field because you slept in a bed, you had hot meals, you had pretty much of a routine. Every once in a while we'd get together with some other units--engineering battalion, helicopter guys, etcetera--and have a barbecue on a Sunday. Somebody would borrow or steal some steaks; somebody got beer and we'd have a party. Usually every day a rocket would come in here or there on the base, so you had to be aware, but it was a heck of lot better than what we called humping the boonies--walking around out in the jungle every day.

NM: So people who needed surgery would go on to the field hospital?

WM: Yes, serious surgery. We could do minor surgery. We could debride wounds and things of that nature. Some of the guys were very good. We had a guy, who was about six-two, six-three, maybe weighed about 220 pounds, a country boy from Idaho. This guy was the best medic I've ever seen debriding wound and performing minor surgery. The doctors would let him do that, he was good, he was very good. So we could do the minor stuff, but if there was anything serious, especially with bones involved or nerves or life threatening injuries, they probably wouldn't come to us to begin with, but if somehow they did, we'd try to stabilize them as best as we could, then send them on to the surgical hospital or the field hospital.

NM: So what kinds of things kind of stand out for your five months. What I'm trying to get at is that, what I'm not sure of because of that 1st Cav operation was there an increase in casualties as a kind of a major operations being carried out?

WM: It fluctuated. We certainly got a lot in May and that was when, quite frankly, my mind was focused and concentrated on going home because I knew I was a short timer and I was going home pretty soon. But there were a fair amount of casualties and the 1st Cav was one of the units, major units, that went into Cambodia and we weren't too far away from it. Otherwise it did fluctuate. I mean, some days you might go with either one or two real minor things or nothing. Other days you might get a large amount of casualties. We also took in ARVN troops if their medical facility wasn't available, we might get some of them as well.

NM: That's a good segue. You brought it up that you're a short timer now when you're at the aid station. Could you tell us about the final days and how that process went about, and then, of course, your return?

WM: Yes, final days are a blur, but it's even walking from your hooch to the mess tent or to the admin building you're thinking, "Damn it, I'm short, I only got a month," or two weeks or a day. "I hope to hell a rocket doesn't come in and land next to me and kill me or maim me," so your mind focuses on stuff like that. A lot of parties, a lot of saying, "Oh, yes, we'll keep in touch. We'll write. We'll get together when we get back." But it was just, "Let me out of here. Get me home. Get me home in one piece." Then from there you got to grab a ride down to the outplacement center. You get orders, "Report to replacement battalion at Bien Hoa on this date." So you have to hitch a ride on a helicopter or fixed wing to get down there and then they process you out. Then you get on a plane; eventually, that goes back to the States. If you were coming back from Vietnam and you had less than ninety days or sixty days, not sure, left in your service commitment, you were discharged. When I was going back, I flew back from Bien Hoa to Okinawa to refuel, and then from Okinawa to Oakland, and then in Oakland I processed out of the Army. You're there a day or two and they give you a battery of medical tests and they go through your financial stuff and they give you your awards, which they had almost nothing in stock to give you they'd say, "Alright, you live in New Jersey, closest airport is Newark and the average flight" is, I don't know, let's say for argument 160 bucks, "Here's 160 bucks cash," and see you. "You got to notify your reserve component when you get back," because when you were drafted it was supposed to be two years of active duty, two years active reserve and two years inactive reserve. It was a six year obligation. But when I got back all the Reserves and National Guard units were filled, so I didn't have to do anything. Then, in 1974, they sent me my final discharge papers because the six years was up. I encountered what I guess a lot of guys did, going home. I flew home from the San Francisco Airport. Everybody said, "If I were you, I'd get rid of your military uniform." Well, I was going to the airport five, six in the morning. There were no stores open. I just want to go get a ticket, get on the plane and get home. There [were] hippies and protestors there and we took a little bit of harassment walking through the airport. I bought the ticket, got on the plane, got home. My wife and my father met me at Newark Airport and we went home.

NM: If there's anything you want to add that you think we skipped over, feel free to add now. I wanted to ask about your transition back to New Jersey and just what that was like and also you use the GI Benefits that you're entitled to and that you used them to get a master's in business.

WM: Right. Yes, when I got back I knew I didn't want to teach anymore. I wanted to go into business and I figured the best way to get into business would be to get an MBA since I had no business experience. I was home two weeks, my girlfriend and I got married. She was working at that time as a nurse and I said, "Well, I can use the GI Bill." I said, "I'll get a part-time job," and, "You're working and I'll go through school part time." She said, "Absolutely not." She said, "How many of our friends have tried to do that, go to school on a part-time basis and it never happens? It'll take seven, eight, ten years. Or they might have a child and dropout." She said, "I'm perfectly happy working full time. You got the GI Benefits. You go back full time. That way you get it done." I felt, I say this kind of jokingly, but maybe it's half true that I felt the world owed me a living after what I went through for the last year and I said I got some wild oats

to sow, so I spent basically that summer and a lot of the fall just kind of catching up with friends and going out, hanging out with the boys and having a few beers and stuff. Then finally, I applied to schools--Rutgers, Seton Hall, and Jersey City State--was accepted at all of them and I was really interested in Rutgers at the time because Rutgers had just gone into a new MBA program that included finishing it in four straight semesters, straight through, sixty credits, no thesis. In lieu of the thesis, they had added an inter-functional business course which you took in maybe a marketing, finance or similar project and you had to work at a company for a period of time that would sponsor you. You would actually learn a lot about business and that seemed like a good practical way to do it. So I applied, was accepted and started in June of 1971 and went through the four semesters and graduated. I always said '73, but it's actually not '73. I think my diploma says it's December of '72, since it was four straight semesters, and then I had a rude awakening. There was a little recessionary trough in '72, '73. I figured, look at my credentials. Man, I'm a college graduate. I taught for a year. I spent a year in Vietnam. I have an MBA from Rutgers and I'm going to go out and conquer the world. Well, to make a long story short, it took me five months. I didn't get a job, didn't get offered a job until May. I was starting to get worried and the story almost was the same, "Hey, you seem to be a fine young man. You have great credentials, great academic credentials, military credentials, but you don't have any business experience and, quite honestly, we got a lot of other people [who are] lined up outside the door who have the business experience that you don't, so keep on trying. Thanks, you're a wonderful young person, but we can't offer you the job." I'll tell you a quick aside that made me very angry. I was doing this for a couple of months and didn't get a job. I was working with some recruiters in New York City because I figured I might be better off in the city because there are more jobs, more companies. So this young kid who was younger than I was, because at this time I was twenty-five, twenty-six years old, this kid maybe was twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four working with these headhunters. It was like entry level, low level. It was like a boiler room. So I went in one day and he says, "I know why you're not getting a job," and I said, "Oh, you do? Well, tell me. Maybe I can get a job." He said, "The reason you're not getting a job is because you've listed on your resume your military experience and even more so that you spent a year in Vietnam." They were still protesting the war. There were still a lot of animosity going back and forth, so he said, "Take," he didn't say "I recommend" or "If I were you," he said, "Take your military service, at least if not the military, take Vietnam off your resume." I almost came across the desk at him. I said, "You son of a gun." I didn't say "son of a gun." I said something else. I said, "I'm very proud of my military service. I'm proud of my Vietnam service and what I did in Vietnam." I said, "You can pack it because as far as I'm concerned our relationship is done," because I was working with a couple of other recruiters and I said, "I will never do that." Long story short, I wound up getting a job at a brokerage firm in sales training. Didn't pay a lot, but it was a job. My wife at the time was pregnant. We were starting to worry because she said, "I'll work up until I have the baby, but then, at least, I'm going to have to be off a few months and there's going to be no salary," so I took the job, worked in the city at this brokerage firm for a couple of years. I then became aware of a job with a pharmaceutical company in New Jersey and worked for them for about four and a half years. I worked at the job from '73 to '75 in the city and I worked from June of '75 through December of '79 in New Jersey for the pharmaceutical company. Then my dream and ideal job became available and I worked for Johnson & Johnson for twenty-seven years, 1980 to 2006). Can I mention names?

NM: Yes.

WM: For companies?

NM: Yes.

WM: I went from the brokerage firm E.F. Hutton, which is no longer around, to Schering-Plough for four and a half years and then J&J, and then worked for J&J for twenty-seven years and retired a few years ago.

NM: You brought a lot of great issues that I wanted to follow up on. The 1970s and especially for someone who is trying to get a job and raise a family, could you talk about the, if you can, about the economy of the 1970s? The way that we learned about it in the college classroom, for example, the professor teaching it say, "Oh, it's the time when there is inflation of course? Were these some of the things that you have encountered as someone who lived through this decade, had to raise a family through it?

WM: I consider myself extremely fortunate and very lucky. My father pushing education, my wife having gotten her RN degree. Nurses are always needed, so she always had a job. Once I got the job, I was lucky enough to be with a couple of very good companies and I was fortunate enough to do fairly well and have some people in those companies who were higher level than I was that liked me and that kind of sponsored me. Yes, there was inflation. I remember when we bought our first and house. We're still in the same house we bought in 1976. We thought it was an exorbitant price then, now I look at what's it worth, it's amazing. But even the interest rate on it was over ten percent. Now I think they're talking about mortgage rates that are three, four percent, five percent. I was brought up very fiscally conservative and we didn't spend money we didn't have. We didn't go into a lot of debt. I think we were protected from the inflationary times because we tried to live within our means which we did and I think it worked out in the long term. I worked for some good companies. I received some good compensation and things worked out well.

NM: Now also you brought up the incident with the headhunter and what I wanted to ask was from a different perspective. Did your experience in the military; did that help in your long career in terms of decision making? Did that inform any decision that you made your experiences in the Army and in Vietnam?

WM: Yes, I think we're all a product of our environment, a product of our education. Sometimes we don't even know it and don't understand it, but I definitely think we are. My wife to this day thinks that sometimes I'm overly cautious and think things through too much and am too cautions. But it's done me well over the years. I don't think I've made too many bad mistakes, certainly not financially, and that's a direct result of my experience in the field where you're very careful where you went, which way you walked, how you walked, what you did, what you didn't do and making certain decisions on who you're going to treat, how you're going to treat them. The way I got the second job, which was an eighty percent increase in salary. When I went from the brokerage firm to Schering-Plough, [that] was [an] interesting situation. I got called while I was working for the brokerage firm and there was a guy I had known, he was a higher level head hunter and he said, "Hey, I got a real interesting job for you," and he said, "It's

a great company and I want you to go talk to this guy." So I said, "Alright." So I went and talked to the guy. That was when the New York Stock Exchange was changing the test to register brokers from the one hour, multiple guess test that you took to be registered a stock broker that a dead Resus monkey could probably pass, to a half a day where there were some multiple choice questions and some essay questions, so you had to be thoughtful. You had to think. This was a great firm. It was Goldman Sachs; that was the Cadillac or the Mercedes of the investment houses at the same time. It was a step up from the brokerage firm. I sat with the guy, talked to him. He said, "I'm going to offer you a job." He said, "Now, here's what I need. I need somebody to come in and put together a training program and some practice exams for our people who need to get registered as brokers and I need this done within the next month or two." He said, "I'm about to offer you the job." Being cautious, not wanting to make a fatal mistake because it would have hurt him and it would hurt me. I said, "I appreciate the offer. I appreciate you telling me what you're telling me, but I'll be honest with you. I'm relatively new in this industry and I'm not a real financial guy. Yes, I have some education background, but not with the brokerage area, with finances." I said, "I think I can do this job and I think I can give you what you want, but I think it would take me six months to do." I said, "You need it done in a month or two." He said, "I really appreciate your honesty." He said, "I'd love to hire you and if it was anything else, I would." But I really do need somebody to do it quickly." I said, "No hard feelings, thank you." We parted. A couple of months later I get a call from this same headhunter. He said, "I got job in New Jersey at Schering-Plough." So I went through a couple of interviews and it looked like it was going well. I said, "Joe, just out of curiosity, how did you get my name for the Schering job?" He said, "Tell you what. I got a deal for you. If you get the job, I'll take you out to lunch and I'll tell you." They offered me the job and I accepted. It was eighty percent more money than I was making. It was in New Jersey. I was living in New Jersey. Everything was just perfect. It was a great company. So I called him up and I said, "You know Joe, you told me you're going to tell me about the referral." He said, "Yes." He said, "What are you doing tomorrow, I'll meet you for lunch." So we met and he said, "You remember the guy from Goldman that you interviewed with?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, he and I play golf together." He said, "I was playing golf with him about a month or two ago and I was saying I got this great job in New Jersey with this pharmaceutical company. It's designing an educational program." He said, "I really need a top notch guy and I need to get him soon." He said, "I'm afraid because it's a nice sized commission that I might lose." He said the guy said to him, "I got a guy for you." He said, "A guy interviewed with me about six months ago." He said, "He was perfect. I loved him." He said, "Besides the fact the guy was honest and for what you're looking for, what you described to me," he said, "I think this is the guy for this job." He gave him my name and he called me and the rest is history. So I think first of all, it obviously pays to be truthful and honest, but also being cautious and not over promising and not doing something that you can't do because it would have been obvious if I took that job with the guy I might have failed and both he and I would have lost. It was more money and it was a prestigious firm, but I think I would have failed in the short term and would have hurt him, would have hurt me. Yes, I know certainly my military experience played a part in that situation and helped me tremendously.

NM: Some of the principles that earlier in your career that gave you a bad experience in teaching same principles really, well they paid off.

WM: Yes, and the same with the military, with the teaching and teaching the kids. Yes, absolutely, that has definitely had an effect on my life, some good, some not good, but mostly positive.

NM: I kind of jumped ahead a little bit. I did want to ask about your time at the business school and some of the same questions. Who were some of the professors that stand out? This is at Newark, so what was the Rutgers-Newark campus like?

WM: Yes, it wasn't really like a campus like New Brunswick. It was in downtown Newark. Newark is Newark; it wasn't terrible at that time. Once I saw it was Rutgers I thought, "Great, I'll get to go to New Brunswick," because New Brunswick at that time was like the suburbs, but when I inquired or when they sent me information they said at that time the MBA school was in Newark and Newark only and that's where all the classes were and there were no classes at all in New Brunswick or Camden or any place else. That was fine, quite frankly, because I was living then in Irvington and in Union and that was a ten minute commute to get down to the school. It was a very, very good education. I loved the interfunctional program. I loved working at a firm. We worked at a company that made computer hardware over in New York City and four of us had a project to do there and that worked out well. The professor that stands out most in my mind was a finance professor. I'm not a finance guy, I'm not a numbers guy, but this guy was humorous, funny and practical, pragmatic and you could understand him. His name was Dr. Dyer, Raymond Dyer. You knew he had money from how he's telling you to invest and not to invest and what's going on in the financial world and he was talking about how he saved and invested his money, really practical stuff. He told us the difference between bearer bonds and general bonds. He was great and I liked him because he was very knowledgeable, very informative and talked at our level, was very practical and pragmatic and made that course fun and enjoyable. He was good. Most of the classes were in one building right there on Washington Place. It was a block away from where I went to church. I went to church on Washington and James Streets and this was right where the VA, the Veterans Administration, building is and Rutgers had a building there as well. They had other buildings in Newark, but most of the classes were in that building. It was the Graduate School of Business Administration it was called back then and they conferred the MBA degree. Now I think it's Graduate School of Management. They give you an MS or an MA in management.

NM: Now you're attending the business school using your GI Bill benefits. Were there others in your cohort that you knew of that used the GI Bill benefits?

WM: There were some, not many. Most of them came out of other areas, had worked in other areas. Some had worked. Some had just come out of school. Because back then, it was '72 I believe. They started the draft lottery in '70 or '71. I think they did away with the draft in '72 or '73 I believe, so I don't think these guys were worried a lot about the draft. [Editor's Note: Beginning in December 1969, the Selective Service System held draft lotteries to determine the order in which young men would be called for induction into the US Armed Forces, replacing the earlier oldest-to-youngest system of conscription. The lottery system expired on June 30, 1973.] The war was kind of wound down by then and so these weren't guys that were concerned about getting drafted. I think for the most part, I'm trying to think of any veterans and I don't remember if any, quite frankly, I really don't.

NM: Is kind of the wind down of the war; was that something that you found in passing?

WM: You know what, I didn't. It's interesting, when I got out of the service I didn't want to know anything about the service. I didn't want to know anything about the Army. I didn't want to know anything about Vietnam. I just didn't care. Let me get on with my life and let me get away from that. Within the past twenty years or so I became a lot more interested. I read voraciously now and the only books I read are mostly non-fiction, every once in a while a fiction on Vietnam. I probably read a book or two a week and that's the only thing I read. So I'm very interested in the military, interested in the Vietnam era, but back then, for a whole bunch of reasons, I didn't want to deal with it. I have never denied my participation in the military, never denied my Vietnam service and never would, but back then I just said, "Not my interest." It's interesting; most of the guys that I hung out with before I went in were not in the service. Most of them either were teachers and got deferments until it was over and four or five others had physical disabilities that made them 4F and ineligible for the military, which I had to shake my head. One guy had a trick knee and they flunked him. Another guy had a punctured eardrum and somebody else had something else, so there was not a lot of guys that I hung with that had military experience that I could talk with. I don't think that they would have wanted to serve anyway.

NM: I want to come back in the world about being involved with the veterans organizations later on in your life, but I also wanted to ask about it seems that during your career you're always, whether it's immediately coming out of college, you're teaching and you're actually training in the Army for a point, and then you become at Johnson & Johnson you become involved in training as well. Could you talk about in terms of your career as it progressed in training? Could you talk a little bit about your time in the work force?

WM: Yes, sure. When I first started I would have taken anything and I did. It was sales training and that, quite honestly, was mostly coordination, scheduling and getting speakers and I didn't do a lot. But when I got to Schering and then, eventually J&J, I was involved in actually providing some of the classes and teaching some of them and facilitating some of them, and started learning about adult education. I would say it's more than teaching. It's facilitating because, and I believe this, is that adults don't learn by people talking at them. They learn by doing, so if you could put adults in a situation where whether it's a simulation, whether it's a role play, whether it's discussing what they've done--what worked, what didn't work--you learn by doing and you learn from others and you learn by stories. You don't learn necessarily by reading a book or somebody talking at you and the reason I got into adult education [is] because of my undergrad education as a teacher and military teaching. When I first got into business, recruiters would ask, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "Well, probably human resources, personnel because I'm a people person." "Well, why?" "Because I like to work with people." They responded, "So does everybody, get out of here." If you go into business, it's "I want to help the organization attain its financial objectives by providing people education so they can become proficient in their specialty." But I really did enjoy working with people, trying to facilitate discussions and to facilitate their learning and you can watch them grow and develop. Also, I did a lot of organization development, organization behavior, a lot of team building. To work with dysfunctional groups and start to see them making some progress and starting working together.

Management likes to see that the bottom line is going up. "I'm making money" or "I'm selling X more products" or whatever. To me if I can work with a group or with individuals and see them progress in obtaining their business objectives, that's kind of a turn on for me. My first job at J&J was working with a cross-functional team. I was in a consumer package goods unit, the Baby Products Company and one of the big complaints was that in order to get something done, certain groups needed to work together, but they wouldn't work together. The research group would design a product, and then they throw it over the wall to the manufacturing group and say here make it. Then they throw it over the wall to the marketing group and say here, sell it or promote it and market it and they'd throw it over the sales group and say, "Sell it!" Well, we got those four groups together. After a lot of hard working and cajoling and getting the leaders for those departments, the manufacturing, the research, the sales and marketing--and started doing some activities, team buildings, some organization development, some organization effectiveness. It was hard work and didn't happen in six months or a year, but over a period of two, three years to see these groups now working together and to have them say, "We wouldn't have ever thought that this was possible." Maybe that goes back to my military experience because when I was out in the field everybody had a job. The platoon leader is directing the platoon. His RTO is his right hand man. The platoon sergeant is supposed to be the operational guy. I'm supposed to take care of the medical needs, each of the squads are doing different things. The squad leader is responsible for liaising between the platoon leader and the guys in his squad. If one or two guys don't do their jobs, some people could be killed, and here if one or two people don't do their jobs or cooperate or coordinate or work together, then your business is not going to be successful. So that's another thing that very much relates to my military experience and to the business world and how to get things accomplished and achieved. I really enjoyed doing that. Working with people to help them to work together and become more effective whether it be individually or in these work groups, that to me was something I thought that I had an ability to do and that really gave me great satisfaction to do, so that's kind of how the work career started and progressed. Then at J&J, back in '96 I switched jobs. I went to about five or six different J&J companies over the course of my career there, which was a good thing about J&J. They have 250 or so operating companies, all different functional areas, so I was able to move around and '96 on I worked with a couple of groups that had international responsibilities, so I got to work a lot in Europe and Asia as well as North America, which was really a lot of fun for me because I was curious, are Asians any different or Europeans any different in the way they work or do business? You find out that there might be peculiarities, but pretty much people are people and if you turn a little different way here and there you can achieve and accomplish as well. So that was a lot of fun too, getting the opportunity to work internationally as well as domestically.

NM: So it sounds like it wasn't nine to five in the sense it's more a problem oriented career that you have problem with certain groups and you would go and be responsible for trying to have them work together as opposed to kind of a regimented…

WM: Well, kind of both. The early on, through the middle part of my career, especially at J&J, it was more the situational; what's the problem, how can I help you now, how can I work with your groups to help you achieve your accomplishments. Toward the end there was big push, especially at J&J for entry level management. We said, "We do a lot for executive-level people. We do a lot for middle-level people, but you know what we anoint somebody, a research

scientist or an assistant product director or a machinist and we say, God bless you my son or my daughter, you are now a supervisor, go forth and supervise, but we never gave them any support, any training, any tools to help them do that." So I was on a team that helped develop an entry level supervisory training program. We did studies before and after. We'd ask the supervisor, "Are they any better?" We, the team, designed a blended learning approach. The program lasted a year. Six months online, then they come to a learning lab where they'll come together for four days and work together and practice what they learned through simulations, group discussions and the role plays. Then they go back on the job for six months and take what they learned and implement it in terms of an action plan and at the end of that their supervisor has to send feedback that they've achieved or accomplished their action plan. Then we certify them. It was first of all new that we were even training these first line supervisors. It was a blended approach where they did different things. It was over a period of time. It's not just come in for two days, we'll fix you and you'll be a brilliant supervisor. They had to take something actionable based on what they learned and put it to work and their supervisor had to sign off and say, "Yes, they did it," and now they were certified, which was a nice credential to have. It became institutionalized at J&J and became an important thing to have to say I'm certified in Management Fundamentals I or Management Fundamentals II. After First line of Supervisors we said, "What about supervisors of supervisors? We don't do anything with them or supervisors who had been supervisors, but for a longer period of time than new ones. What do we do for them?" So we developed some other programs that were using my skills and abilities and it was fun and enjoyable for me.

NM: I see that you're part of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans Association, of course the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial. When did you become involved in these organizations?

WM: The ones such as the VFW, VVA, Vietnam Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, 1st Cavalry Division Association, 7th Cavalry Division Association, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry Association, I'm not real active in those. I'm a member. I got to some reunions for some of those groups. I get involved in some of the initiatives that they do, but the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Education Center and Museum. I am very active in as a volunteer. I started doing that about 10 years ago and that's only because it required time during the week and I was working. I was so busy at work, especially the last ten, twelve years doing a lot of international travel; I just didn't have the time to do it so the active participation just started the last ten years. Especially with the Memorial, Museum and Ed. Center in doing tours and working with some other groups and getting involved in some of the fund raising activities. I can do that now because I have the time to do it. I also joined the DAV, Disabled American Veterans, since the VA, Veterans Administration, has classified me as one hundred percent disabled due to my Vietnam service.

NM: You, obviously, value honesty throughout your career. You value a good education and are these some of the things that you and your wife tried to instill upon your family?

WM: My wife came from a background similar to mine. Her father was in the Navy in World War II, blue collar worker who worked for Ballantine Brewery. He drove a beer delivery truck and then worked in the distribution center. Her mother worked on and off to help raise the kids--

she has two brothers. My mother-in-law was born in England, came over to the US when she was four, five years old. My father-in-law was born in the US, but his ancestry is Scottish and those are the values that they were brought up with as well--work hard, be honest, help people as much as you can--and education is important and so, yes, I think those are the kind of things that we've tried to instill in our kids. There were bumpy roads. My one son is a college graduate. Very interesting, he's a college graduate and now he's a carpenter and building inspector. My other son went to the University of Delaware for three years, didn't graduate and he's working with a pool and spa company and plays in a band. He's going to be the next great American Rock Musician, but time is getting late because he's thirty-seven. My older son is forty-two, married and happy. He does good work. He's a good kid and we're very pleased with our kids. I'll be honest, no excuse I said because of work and whatever, but my wife, mostly, raised the kids because I was away sometimes on business and business trips and she just did a fantastic job in raising the kids. I keep on telling them and they know it, "You're lucky you had your mother, because she's the best. You couldn't get a better mother." My youngest son has a girlfriend and lives in Philadelphia. My older son is married and has a fourteen month old son and another child on the way. He's got a home of his own that he completely remodeled. We still kind of hang out together. His wife's parents are great people. They're very compatible with us. We all went out to dinner together last week. My son and his wife, her parents, my wife and I we went out to dinner and then we went to a show at The Stone Pony. So we hang out together and even vacation together sometimes. As I said I look back on my life and just say "Boy, I was so lucky." I was so fortunate. I just look at where I came from and I say, "If you were to tell me back then when I was growing up in East Newark that at this point in my life I would have done what I had done in terms of education and in terms of career, financially, I would have told you you were nuts. There was absolutely no way that I could have achieved or obtained that level of success." We're pleased. I never would have believed that things would work out the way they did. You hit the bumps in the road and everything, but at least in my life things just seem to have worked out. Health wise, I'm fine for a seventy-year-old. Hopefully, things continue. A couple of years ago I was diagnosed and treated--stents--for Agent Orange related ischemic heart disease and PTSD. But, I am doing well so far.

NM: Well, is there anything that you like to add or is there something that we missed?

MW: Just one thing that bothers me still about the reputation of Vietnam veterans. These days it seems it's become fashionable to be a veteran. Even fashionable to be a Vietnam veteran, which wasn't the case for a long time and some people some pretty prominent people still portray Vietnam veterans as baby killers and war mongers and drug addicts and so on and I'd just like to relate one incident that belies the negative connotation. My Lai was terrible. I think the people that perpetrated it didn't get punished enough. It happened. It was unfortunate and unfortunately it cast a lot of us in that light. We were out on a mission once and it was a free fire zone. There were two areas when you went out on these missions. One was, I don't even know what they called it, but it was if you wanted to take action, which means you want to use deadly force, you had to call back and get permission. There were other areas when you went out that were designated as "free fire zones," which meant as far as we know there's no friendly villagers or villages. There's no allied troops. There's no other American troops in that area. Anything that moves kill it. We were in a free fire zone once and we were off a trail and we saw maybe a hundred, two hundred meters down the trail we saw a little rustling in the bushes. We had a

sniper. One of the guys I still keep in contact with was our sniper. He's a retired police officer in Denver. He had this M14 with a big old starlight scope. The platoon leader called him up and he said, "Buzz, look down there. What do you see?" So he looked and he said, "Looks like two individuals, black pajamas with the conical hats," immediately looking like VC and Mike says, "Well, what are they doing?" He said, "They're just kind rustling around." He said, "Did they have any weapons?" He said, "Not that I can see." So he said, "Alright, I'm not going to force anybody," because by rights he could have put them in the crosshairs and shot them both. He said, "Looks like a man and a woman, and they look like they're older." So he said, "Any volunteers to go down there and take a look?" You never volunteer in the Army. Three guys volunteered. "Alright, take a radio, go down, be careful. Be quiet, sneak up on them and don't get yourself hurt." So long story short, they went down, it was an older man and woman. They looked like they were in their nineties. They were probably in their fifties or sixties, old man and old woman and they had wrinkled skin and just kind of tattered and in bad shape. That time we did have an interpreter with us and so they called us up. They had no weapons. They're here by themselves kind of jabbering around and we don't know what they're saying. It turned out that they were villagers who were kidnapped by the VC, put into forced labor and were old and sick and the woman was in particularly bad shape. Her eyes were rolling back in her head and she was going in and out of consciousness. The old man was very worried because it was his wife. We were about a kilometer or so outside of a firebase. They called me up. I looked at her and I said, "She's not in good shape and needs immediate medical attention." He's getting all excited and everything. I put an IV in her and it took me about ten minutes because she had these rolling bands. Her skin was all wrinkled and every time I tried to put the needle in the vein, it rolled and I missed. Sometimes people have rolling veins, which are very hard to work with. We snapped together two ponchos, cut a couple of pieces of bamboo, made a litter and a couple of guys volunteered to carry her. Somebody else took their packs and we carried her into a firebase and dropped her off with the ARVNs, because American medical personnel were not supposed to treat Vietnamese civilians, unless you're on a MEDCAP. Now what happened to her? I have no idea, but by rights we could have, no questions asked, not even investigated and shot them, killed them. When we found them we could have said, "Well, ain't my problem. We'll go get some ARVNs, see if they'll come back and get you." But we decided to do the humanitarian thing. Everybody in our platoon agreed and everybody did a little bit extra that they didn't have to do, besides exposing themselves to any extra danger, because then we had to carry her down on a trail to get her back. We couldn't carry her through the bush. So to me that's just an example of how we operated. I think that was the rule, not the exception. So I don't think American troops in Vietnam were wild, indiscriminate killers. Was there some bad stuff going on? Yes. Did some guys take drugs? Yes, but no more than the normal population back in the world. Were there some atrocities? Yes. Were they common? No. Some GIs went over and above and did things like building orphanages and schools. A lot of the nurses that were in the surgical hospitals on their day off--they had one day a week off--went into villages and attended to the indigenous population. So that's just something that I'd like to say that I experienced firsthand. So we all weren't crazed alcoholics and drug addicts and baby killers and monsters. A lot of people did a lot of good. It was a war that I don't think a lot of us understood and probably still don't to this day. I mean the more I read, the more I think I do, but it's just something that I like to say because it bothers me when I see some of these other people say things that are disparaging toward Vietnam veterans. So that's my public service announcement.

NM: Okay, well thank you Bill.

WM: My pleasure Nick, thank you.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

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