RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BRUCE MCLEOD

FOR THE

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WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview with Bruce McLeod on March 22, 2011 in New Brunswick, New Jersey with David Ley and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you very much Mr. McLeod for coming in this morning. Just for the record, could you tell me where and when you were born?

Bruce McLeod: I was born in Jamaica in the 1940s.

SH: To begin we will go basically chronologically through your family history. Let us begin by talking about your father and a little bit of his background.

BM: Well, my father is Mr. McLeod. He was born in Jamaica. He was the son of a pretty well to do father, and he turned out to be, essentially, a rich man's son, and consequently, he had problems with his marriage, which after being married to my mother which is Lydia, who was born in Cuba. They had two children, but the marriage didn't last, but I think maybe six years.

SH: Did you keep in contact with your father or your paternal grandparents?

BM: Oh yes, I was really quite close to both families, but my father emigrated to the US I think right after he divorced, or some years, not long after the divorce. So, he came to America, and we really didn't hear much from him at all until I actually arrived here in 1965.

SH: Really? How were you able to communicate with him?

BM: We wrote letters to him, but they tended not to be responded to, yes, and my mother was, I would say, very angry at him to say the least so it sometimes made sense not to do this.

SH: That is understandable. How did your parents meet, did you ever hear that story?

BM: I have photographs, maybe I should even bring it out so you could see them when they got married. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: That is a beautiful photograph of two beautiful people.

BM: Right, yes. They were both quite handsome I would say. … My mother is quite pretty and he is quite a handsome guy.

SH: Do you know how they met?

BM: Yes, they met in, you know, my mother was living at the house or compound, and across the street, he was going to high school, and so he was away from his family. In Jamaica, back in those days, there were a lot of boarding schools, and generally speaking, I don't want to use middle income as opposed to middle-class people. Generally, their children usually board out to school, and so he was boarded to go to high school. … So, he was living across the street from where my mother lived, and so there was an interaction that way.

SH: She had been born in Cuba, had her parents moved to Jamaica?

BM: Yes, there was a revolution in Cuba, I think it was called the Machado Revolution and they decided, "Look, this is not for us, we're going to go back to Jamaica." [laughter]

SH: Had they been originally from Jamaica?

BM: My grandfather is originally from Jamaica, and so is my grandmother.

SH: On your mother's side?

BM: On my mother's side. But they immigrated to Cuba, including my grandmother's family who were there for a long time and been encouraging them to go there. That's my grandfather and my grandmother on my mother's side.

SH: For the record I am looking at a wonderful photograph. I love being able to see all the architectural details and the clothing and the styles.

BM: Oh, yes. … A lot of people think that, you know, maybe you come from Jamaica, you're from some country part. Where we were living in a very urban sophisticated place, as you can see from the photographs, this is not [the country].

SH: What did your grandparents do? What was their profession or their source of income?

BM: Well, my grandfather, there are two sides of the family. My mother's side was, I would call, the poor side of the family, my father's side was kind of like the rich side of the family. … On my mother's side, her mother was a home keeper, right, and my grandfather, he was on my mother's side, he was a cabinet maker by trade and I mean really good stuff. As a matter-of-fact, I'm sorry I haven't been able to keep any of those things that he made. He also did a lot of musical instruments like guitars, violin, and he at one time had a furniture manufacturing shop and store which he sold furniture. … Then, later on, he would do this sometime for the church when they had special occasions, he'd make these beautiful little boxes, they're like jewelry boxes, and it would have trick ways of opening it, you know, and usually he loved doing it in mahogany with all that polished work in it, and inlays, it was just fabulous. I mean, I think to a large degree, he influenced me to become an architect. He was more inclined towards arts. In other words he was, he loved to paint, he was a man that loved history, and he loved the arts, and so therefore, I think he gave me a kind of a direction towards the arts.

SH: Did you grow up in their home?

BM: We spent a lot of time there, I mean I spent a lot of time in other places, but we spent a lot of time with my grandparents. I mean I spent some time with my grandparents and I did spend some time with my grandparents who lived in another place in Jamaica. … On the McLeod side of the family, my grandfather and my grandmother were both teachers and they had the more intellectual approach, the more academic approach to things. They didn't have the same artsy

approach, but I think they had more influence on me than the McLeods, you know, at least in my professional choice.

SH: Were your mother and father both from large families?

BM: … My mother had, boy, let's see. They had six, the Roses had, I think, six children, and I don't know if there are ones that didn't survive, you know, but just the ones that survived. … On my grandfather's, McLeod side, they had, my father had, he and his other brother, and they had five.

SH: What are some of your earliest memories of growing up in Jamaica that you would like to share?

BM: Well, I'll tell you. I often think of the [John] Milton poem, "Paradise Lost," [laughter] really, because of all the places to have been fortunate to be born, I consider it the best possible place to have grown up in. I wouldn't have missed this for the world. It was absolutely wonderful. One of the things about Jamaica is that you can go off into the woods without fear of anything. There was no poisonous snakes, you know, you could frolic in the, you know, the meadow, roll all you want. You have no worries whatsoever, [laughter] but no, one of the things I do remember is that my brother and I, we were big readers of adventure, and so therefore, every idle moment we had, we were searching for adventure.

SH: How much younger is your brother than you?

BM: A year and a half and, you know, we would go off to do all kinds of things. We'd spend eight weeks with my grandfather in the country, the McLeods, every summer. They're in the country, and in Jamaica there's a stigma with the country verses the city.

SH: Oh, really?

BM: Because people tend to call the people from the country "country bumpkins," even though they are really great families there that are landed families obviously, right. Most of the people in the cities are not landed right, so, you know, it's kind of a funny situation, but we would go off and do things. I mean there was a hill called Warika Hill, which was one of the highest hills beyond Blue Mountain, which is another story. … Warika Hill we're talking about almost two thousand feet. … We said, "You know, one day we're going to climb it," and we did climb it to the top, and of course, when we got to the top, there was a light, a radio antenna, huge radio antenna up there. … Of course, to protect it, it was enclosed and it was being guarded. Of course we didn't know that, and we got up there, and the dogs were after us. We ended up stuck in trees, [laughter] and the watchman came along and finally came and asked us, "What the hell are we were doing there," and shooed us out of there. … When we were in the country in the summer, we would leave the house in the morning, and we would never be back home until it's dark, and basically we would live off the land because there's always fruits in season. There's always edible things in season out in the woods or the bushes or whatever or the fields, and so you just lived off that. I mean you'd fish, right, you'd have a fire, you'd hunt for birds with a slingshot, you know. You can roast those guys as well, you know, you could get breadfruit.

SH: How did you learn to do this?

BM: I mean this is just natural, it just comes naturally. You learned it as you grow up like riding a bicycle. These are the things you learn to do or else you're not, you know, you're an outcast, and, you know, we would swim in the river there and raft, you know, when we're in the country. … It was wonderful, I mean we'd go around and we'd, for instance, we went and we saw bananas, we'd cut down a branch of them, we'd dig a hole, we'll put the leaves in the hole, wrap this big branch of bananas, cover it up, and in a few days, a couple of days, it would ripen. We'd go there and have ripe bananas, you know, while we're out, you know, so it was just fantastic. I mean, there are all kinds of fruits. I mean here, you have, you know, maybe eight or nine main fruits, they're just a dozen maybe fruits that goes on. … Some of them I forget about--June plum, Rose apple, Otaheite apple, Star apple, I mean I can't remember half of them, just, Nesberry, just on and on, it's just I mean it's absolutely a place. It's paradise. [laughter]

SH: Now were there organized activities like Boy Scouts and things like that?

BM: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. … Well, actually, in my church it was Boy's Brigade, I think it's kind of the English term of Boy Scouts. I think Boy Scouts originated in America and I think Boy's Brigade is more an English thing. Yes, so I was a member of the Boy's Brigade, yes, for a couple of years. I wasn't really into it … but for a couple of years I was doing that, yes.

SH: What about your education then, did you start out first grade like we do here in the United States or was there a different term that you use?

BM: I think we use a lot of different terms, I don't even know how you can compare it. … It's basically twelve years until the end of high school. So, I mean that's the kind of the similarity, but most people start their education, at least certainly the middle class kids, start their education very early. So, probably by the time, … I wouldn't be surprised if by the time you're four you're going to some kind of a children's school, you know, they get them started really early. So, I mean I started out with, I think there was this, I remember a couple of places and I can't put them in chronological order because I'm not, this is kind of a foggy memory. … I know that when I was in the country in the summer sometimes, even when I was very, very young, I would spend some time, if they had any kind of a schooling, since my grandparents back there was teachers, they wanted you to get involved with that. … I know at one time in the country, I spent some time beyond the summer, when I was very, very young, in the country. I remember spending, going to like a Catholic Kindergarten or something like that. It was actually in the back of the Catholic Church, it was a building behind the church. I remember one time going, the priest took us in his car, and I remember it was an American car. It was black. I think all cars then was black, and it had this very deep base sound as you're in there, and will take us and he took us to, a bunch of kids, all to this place in Kingston, called Hope Garden. … We spent a day there, and then we went back in this car, but I remember that very vividly. [laughter] At a young age, we would go into this kind of a nursery school run by a lady called Miss Crawford so the school was called Miss Crawford's Nursery School, I guess. [laughter]

SH: Did your mother work outside of the home or was she primarily a mother and housewife?

BM: No, because you have to realize that at that time, by the time I could remember things like I'm telling you here, they had been divorced, and so therefore she had to earn a living, and she was a dressmaker. …

SH: You said your grandmother had also done something like that?

BM: No, my grandmother was a homemaker.

SH: You started to talk about your education and how that moved up starting with this early Catholic Nursery School kind of thing, and Miss Crawford's. Then you progressed into a private school like the photograph showed?

BM: … No, then like a public school which was called primary school and you go to primary school and you start out in first grade, second grade, third grade, and so forth. By the time I was in third grade in primary school, I went to All Saints School.

SH: Was that Catholic or Anglican?

BM: No, no, it's just a public school, it has no specific affiliation. Well no actually it has, I think it's an Anglican or Episcopalian connection, but it's supported basically to a large degree by public funds, right. It might have started with the church, but eventually it became a full blown public school, and at that school, by the time I was in third grade, I won an academic scholarship to a full education through high school. I was probably eight and a half at the time. It was a competitive thing, but I mean I was, you know, it was something that I had. … I was very happy and fortunate because in Jamaica, you know, you pay for high school, so in order to go to high school, if you can't pay for it, you just don't get into high school. … Most of the high schools have exams, entrance exams, so it's those two things that does it. So, I got a scholarship for Merl Grove High School, which would take you all the way from whatever that grade is, all the way from like so called, like in here it would be like junior high school and so forth, all the way through high school, but along the way, that school which was a co-ed, decided that they wanted to be an all-girls school, and so they decided, "Look, we want to make it a girl's school. We will give you the money that was, we would use to educate you here, but you have to find another school." So, my brother, who was still in primary school, he was at the time, he was getting ready to take exams for scholarship, which is a government-type scholarship. You take these exams, and if you pass a certain level, you can either have a half scholarship or a full scholarship to a high school of your choice. … So, he was in the process of finding some place, so we knocked heads together, and we realized that we have a family history at this very prestigious high school. It's considered the best, almost an Ivy League high school. That school was founded in 1727 or something like that. So, we decided we wanted to go to Wolmers. As a matter of fact, my uncle had gone to, my father's brother had gone to Wolmers, and he became a doctor actually, and so we decided that that's where we want to go, we want to keep this family tradition going. So, you know, so I went there, but it meant that because this was a more prestigious school, you needed more money to go there. So, that's where my grandfather, McLeod side, was able to provide the rest of the funds for me to go there because my mother couldn't have afforded it on her income, but she was good.

SH: So both you and your brother went.

BM: … My brother won a scholarship also, government scholarship for Wolmers, yes. So we both went there.

SH: Is it a boarding school? Did you now live there?

BM: You could board there if you want, but since we lived in Kingston, you know, we didn't have to do that. …

SH: What were some of the subjects that you found most interesting and challenging?

BM: … I liked geography, history, literature, art and math. I tend to be towards the more artsy things, art area.

SH: And your brother?

BM: My brother, I am not sure if he was more towards the science or towards the arts or if he was kind of in the middle. I think he was more in the middle, yes.

SH: When did your mother re-marry?

BM: I don't remember the exact year, but I think I was probably about twelve or thirteen at the time.

SH: Was that good for you? Did you get along well with your stepfather?

BM: You know, I think we got along well. I mean, it wasn't kind of like a buddy-buddy kind of a thing, but it was, I think it went well. … Let's put it this way, there was no animosity, yes. … Children in Jamaica are not as sheltered as children here. I don't think children revolt against their stepparents as much as they do here because they understand how things are. I mean you see so much, I learned so much, I think I learned so much more by being in Jamaica and seeing people live out their life real because so much of how they live is public knowledge. It's not as sheltered as here. You see a family across the street here and you could live with them for twenty years and not know very much except the public face that they present. In Jamaica, that's not the case. Whatever happens is almost public knowledge, and so you find out all the things about [them], you know.

SH: Tell us how you celebrated holidays such as Christmas and New Year's in Jamaica?

BM: … Christmas was similar. You have Christmas trees just like you have here, except you wouldn't necessarily have to use a pine tree. When I was growing up, you could use a lignum vitae tree which is one of the trees we have there, which is an evergreen, and you would decorate it and all that. You'd have all the things, you know, the plum pudding, which I still love and, you know, the roast hams, you know, and so forth, and, yes, it was very similar here. I mean, we also

have a holiday, which is I think here we call it Thanksgiving, but in Jamaica we call it Harvest, which I think is basically the same thing, you know. You're giving thanks for a good year of harvest.

SH: Is it about the same time as year then?

BM: Just about the same time of year as well, yes, and you would take stuff into the church for the poor, you know, like canned food and stuff like that at that time as well, and you'd have a big meal at that time as well, but it's called Harvest.

SH: What was your church when you were growing up?

BM: When I was growing up I was actually, let me put it this way, the family was Presbyterian, and funny enough, the McLeods were Episcopalian or Anglican which, you know, you'd think it would have been the other way around. So, when I was growing up, I went to Saint Andrew's Scots Kirk. However, when I'm in the country, I'd go to Bogwalk Episcopal Church. … My grandfather on my, McLeod, after he retired, he went to back to school, and he went to the seminary, and he became an Episcopalian minister and the Bogwalk Church became his church.

SH: Oh my.

BM: Yes.

SH: That is interesting. You mentioned Blue Mountain, where does that fit in to the family? Was that a place for holiday?

BM: No, Blue Mountain is the highest peak in Jamaica and in the middle of the island is a spine and the highest peak, you know, is closer. The only time I've actually gone there is … during the mango season. The foothills of Blue Mountain are just completely filled with mango trees, wild, so you know, you could just go out there, and have your fill of mangoes, which was wonderful. [laughter] … There was one thing I wanted to say about the holidays. One of the holidays which is, I mean here we have fireworks on the Fourth of July. In Jamaica, the day, the night, the last day of the year is when all hell breaks loose. Firecrackers, fireworks, I mean it was just unbelievable, it's just the exact, they placed at another time of the year.

SH: That is a big celebration. Do you have Boxing Day in Jamaica like they do in England?

BM: We have Boxing Day in Jamaica as well, yes, yes, and in Canada, I guess.

SH: Are some of the traditions the same?

BM: … Well, no, Boxing Day basically was actually the day when you actually can still give gifts and people did continue to give gifts, but usually that's for the adults because the kids always want their toys on Christmas. … We're not going to change that.

SH: Is there any more about your younger days in Jamaica or are there more experiences you want to talk about?

BM: One of the things that I do remember is that while I was in the country in 1955 which was the 300th anniversary of Jamaica as a British colony, Churchill came to Jamaica, and he was passing through, and we were all lined up along the streets to see him. … In front of our house is a very steep hill, and everything that had to go through, had to go through very slowly, so you end up being in this car sitting up outside where you could see him, and he was there waving with his cigar and as he passed by, I mean it was like we were, I could touch him. … It was really amazing because I say this as really, I don't know how it's taken, but, you know, there's all kinds of people in Jamaica and Jamaica is a wonderful place because until I came here, I didn't even know I was black or was considered black or whatever. I never thought of those things, but I do remember when I saw Churchill, he was so fair, you could almost see through his skin. I mean, you know, and at that time, I mean he was not, it didn't cut a very impressive look because he seemed like a really pudgy guy, you know, with a cigar in his mouth.

SH: Not regal?

BM: No, it was quite surprising, but of course, you know, I know it now that he's considered one of the greatest politicians of the twentieth century.

SH: You had the very honest perspective of a child of him at the time.

BM: Yes, I did. Yes, yes, I was kind of looking for more. …

David Ley: Did you hear him speak or anything?

BM: I did not. Over the radio, but not, you know, we didn't have that long a time with him for him to have gotten spoken [to].

SH: For this 300th anniversary, were there other activities within the school that you were part of?

BM: Yes, there were a lot of, I can't remember all, but there were banners out and all that kind of stuff, but I do want to say is, you know, in my life to date, I've actually waved three different flags--British, Jamaica and American, now American. … Really, that's given me a certain perspective that I wouldn't probably have without that experience and that is that whatever flag you're waving at the time it seems to be, anyway, always to be right.

SH: When did Jamaica become independent then?

BM: 1962.

SH: You were there when that happened?

BM: Yes.

SH: Was any of your family involved in the politics of this?

BM: No, not really. I mean my grandfather McLeod was involved in different organizations, but they were civic organizations like, you know, the Orange Growers Association or, you know, that kind of thing, you know, but it wasn't truly, anything, truly political.

DL: You mentioned before the interview that you grew up very British. Was that because of the school that you went to or was that because of your family values?

BM: Well, I think the culture after three hundred years was very deep, you know, and I think the school reminds me of when I see that movie about that kid that had the wizardry.

DL: Harry Potter.

BM: Yes, Harry Potter yes. That school reminds me so much of how it was at my school. As a matter-of-fact, those colors were our colors, our colors were maroon and gold and, you know, we wore the blazers and the ties and, you know, the gray pants and the white shirt and, you know, that kind of thing--and we had houses.

SH: Did you?

BM: The school is broken down into houses, and so, therefore the houses are always competing against each other. So, for instance my house was Wolfe House, which I think it was named after General Wolfe, Major General James Peter Wolfe, one of the British generals that died in Canada. I thought that was great. I loved the feeling of being in Wolfe. I loved it. It had like a second meaning, you know, Wolfe, but, you know, it was a campus with a quadrangle and with buildings scattered all around and beautiful towering rooftops with, you know--it was quite a nice environment.

SH: Was your brother in Wolfe as well?

BM: I don't remember if he was in Wolfe or if he was in (Cross?). I think he was in Wolfe because I think they tend to want to keep the family in the same, but I can't quite remember that.

SH: Jamaica becomes independent was there a real sense of national pride in that?

BM: Absolutely, absolutely. No different than here, that's why I'm saying this is the perspective. When I grew up and people talk about World War II, as far as I was concerned it's the British that won World War II, period. America had very minor input, yes, really that's the way I learned it, you know. If it wasn't for radar, you know, if it wasn't for Churchill, saying come on in, you know, they would still be on the sideline, you know. So, I mean it's a completely, every single flag that I've waved gave you a different perspective. This perspective is always that, "We're right and everybody else is wrong." [laughter]

SH: Tell us then more about Wolmers. Did you participate in sports or was it strictly academic?

BM: Yes. No, no, we participated in sports. I was, then it was called, the quarter mile was my specialty, 440, quarter mile. … That was my specialty. We played cricket, hockey, field hockey was one of my loves, I love field hockey. I love field hockey. I mean that's a great game. As a matter-of-fact, basketball was a girl's game.

SH: Really?

BM: And so was baseball. It was a girl game, so all the girls played those and the boys, no boys when I was growing up played basketball or baseball.

SH: Is that true?

BM: Absolutely, yes. So, I'm saying it just gives you a completely different spin. As a matter-of-fact, when I was in the US Army, everybody wanted me to play basketball. I told them I didn't, and they wouldn't believe me.

SH: I know from experience, I was so shocked to find out that men played field hockey, because in my experience, it was only girls.

BM: Yes, in America, only girls play field hockey so, you know, so everything is like when America won her independence in the battle down in Virginia, they played, some ditty, it and says the world has turned upside down, but the world is always upside down depending on where you are.

SH: At Wolmers, did you decide then to pursue architecture?

BM: Oh, no, I had no idea what I was going to do.

SH: Were you planning to go on to college at that point?

BM: Well, one of the things is … after you graduate from high school, my mother was already in the United States, and she was here probably for a year or two years. … She was asking me, I mean at the time, I was having a good time after high school. I had a job and I was at the beach quite a few days for the week and I was having a lot of fun and she asked, you know, was I planning to come up. She said, "Come on up and, you know, probably you can go to college here," because it's difficult to go to college. Generally speaking, only maybe one percent of the population or two percent of the population go to university in Jamaica, and, of course, you have to pay for it and it's extremely expensive. … [Editor's Note: Bruce McLeod notes that the percentage may be too low for the 1960s. Figures for the 1980s are 5%, while 27% of Jamaicans in the USA have a higher education degree.] So, therefore most people, except for people who are going in the professions such as medicine and law … does that. So, I said, you know, "Yes, oh absolutely I would like to do that, and see if I, you know," because I thought that we would have more of the wherewithal to pay for college here. Little did I know that that's not always the case.

SH: I know that some young people go to England for college.

BM: Absolutely, yes. A lot of my cousins, they went to England to go to school, and Scotland.

SH: Was that ever a consideration for you?

BM: We didn't have that. I didn't think we had the funds, I mean I wouldn't. Let me put it this way, my mother didn't have the funds, and I wasn't about to ask or put that burden on my grandfather, McLeod grandfather, to do that because I thought he did sufficient in what he did.
…

SH: You were still in high school when your mother moved to the States.

BM: Right, yes.

SH: What brought her to the United States?

BM: Well, I mean she wanted to do better, right. I mean she was working very hard trying to, you know, to earn a living there which is difficult, it's not easy, it's a lot more difficult in Jamaica because just, you know, I mean it's the economic environment, you know. The economic environment in a country like the US is much greater than a country like Jamaica. So, the opportunities that you would have economically here, I mean people say America is the land of opportunity and for most immigrants, I think for most parts of the world it is, almost any place. I mean this is the biggest economy in the world, I mean it should be the best opportunity.

SH: Had your stepfather, did he come as well? Did they come as a couple?

BM: You see what happened, it's very difficult, at that time it was very difficult to immigrate to America.

SH: In the early sixties?

BM: Early sixties, almost nobody is, even more difficult if it's from a non-European country, and the only reason she was able to come is because of her Cuban background.

SH: Really?

BM: Absolutely, yes.

SH: That is very interesting.

BM: Yes. I have no idea how that policy came about, but if you were Cuban, you had a greater opportunity to immigrate.

SH: When did you come to the United States?

BM: '65, 1965.

SH: You actually came after Kennedy's assassination.

BM: Right, yes, actually when I was in high school, I came home and my aunt was crying, because I was staying with my aunt and she was crying. I didn't hear the news, and she was telling me, and I was shocked, you know, and everybody was, I mean in tears. I mean everybody loved Kennedy. I mean, I guess, you know, we got, you know, I know we always read *Look* magazine, and they were in there, and they were, you know, like this young bright [man]. …

SH: Camelot.

BM: Yes, you know, new fresh ideas that seemed to be progressive, and people all over the world kind of had that feeling that they were, you know, this was a special change, you know, from the ordinary. So, yes, it was very big. I mean everyone was very sad at that news.

SH: Was the Cuban Missile Crisis something that you were aware of while you were in Jamaica?

BM: Well, you know, it really was very funny because when I'm here, a lot of folks my age was telling me about the duck and cover here, and we were there, we never had any such thing. Never, we were so close, ninety miles away. We never even, we saw, heard them, and we, you know, okay, they're going to settle this, they're not going to be so dumb enough to have an exchange. Kids, you know. I mean, you know, maybe we didn't. I mean at that age, I mean, we didn't probably have enough sense to be fearful about this, but on the other hand, I mean, now with what we've seen with Japan, just one plane … how devastating that can be. You wondered to yourself can these guys really have, they must have understood how devastating an exchange could be. They had to have avoided it. As a matter-of-fact, as much peace as we had had over seventy-five years of the Cold War, is owing most of that to the atomic bomb really, I would think, you know.

SH: Is there a draft in Jamaica as there is here, any military service required of young men?

BM: No. … I mean Jamaica have no need for an Army. Jamaica does have a small defence force that is all volunteers. It's a small country, I mean there are some natural resources, but I don't know. I don't think most people would want to tackle Jamaica. I mean, we have even beaten the English at the top of their game. I mean, I don't know if you realize this, but Jamaica even today, there are a lot of Jamaicans in Nova Scotia and you wonder, "What are they doing in Nova Scotia?" Well, there was a war between the Maroons, which is a group of people that ran away from slavery into the mountains, and they were like have their little towns up there, and there was a war between them and the British and eventually they won, you know, because they were doing guerilla warfare, you know. I mean, it's similar to what happened with the war here, the Revolutionary War here as well. I mean, the British were, none of the European powers were ready for guerilla warfare. They weren't ready for it in Haiti either.

SH: Right.

BM: Right, and the prisoner of wars, the British prisoners of war that the British took, were taken to the caves, the mines, in Nova Scotia, and most of them died from tuberculosis because, you know, but those that survived still live there today. Some of those that survived actually emigrated to Sierra Leone in Africa.

SH: Well, thank you for the history lesson.

BM: [laughter] Jamaica is a very interesting place. I think it was one of the first economically viable places in the West that spoke English and that was the very reason for having Jamaica. I mean, Jamaica was captured in 1655, at the time Cromwell was the leader of England, and the whole idea, the amount of money that was made in the Caribbean during those periods of time, I mean, was unbelievable, the amount of money. I mean people gave up parts of Canada for a very small island in the Caribbean because sugar was king. So, as a result of that, that was a real base that they gave the English the push to add colonies on the mainland which weren't making any money for years and years and years. … It actually supported that, and eventually they got this triangular shipping or commercial activity between England, Caribbean, United States and back, and eventually they added Africa with slavery.

SH: When you are deciding to come to the United States, there is a draft here. Did that ever enter into your decision to come?

BM: We weren't even thinking about that. I didn't know that there was a draft, I had no understanding, remember, we never studied. In Jamaica we studied places like, we studied places like Africa, we studied Britain, we studied Canada. We never studied the United States. I mean, we had very little knowledge of the United States, it was like another world, you know, but I just wanted to go back. Another very interesting thing about Jamaica, and this was quite interesting to me anyway, because I visited one of my great friends Raymond Leslie that I will probably talk to you about later that I actually met when I was inducted for the first time. He turned out to be one of my great, great friendships that has lasted a lifetime, but I went down to visit him down in Florida, because he lives in Florida now. While I was down there, he is from Belize, which used to be called British Honduras, and he had a book in his library about how it became British Honduras. … It turned out to be surprising to me because I didn't know the history of that until then, was that a group of Jamaicans decided to make Belize a part of the Commonwealth, so this would be the British Commonwealth. What happened is that they actually had a voyage that had a shipwreck in Belize. They managed to get back, and they were telling everyone that there were lots of hardwood there to be harvested, but that was then called the Main, the Spanish Main. … It belonged to the Spanish Crown, and so a group of Jamaicans got together and decided to go there to harvest this wood, and to take a piece of this thing. … They asked the British government for help, and I think they gave them a few cannons and stuff like that, but nothing else, so they actually went there, and actually had a few battles with the Spanish, and was able to maintain themselves, and so was created Belize, what we call Belize today. … One of the greatest of the British, what you call it, fighters or military person is Lord Nelson, and, of course, one does not know this, but the reason Lord Nelson is what he was, was because he grew up in Jamaica, and every year there were naval battles constantly as he grew up in the Caribbean. They would have naval battles, and then, it would stop for the hurricane

season and it would begin the next year all over again. So, he learned all of that stuff so that when he went back to fight in Europe, he was at the top of his game. There are a lot of stories like this and Jamaica is rich with this kind of a history.

SH: Thank you for sharing this with us.

DL: Did any of your family serve during World War II in the British military?

BM: Well, yes. Yes, quite a few uncles and cousins went through World War II, yes. As a matter-of-fact Jamaica has been fighting in British wars at least from the, what's the war there, it's in Russia?

SH: Franco-Prussian War?

BM: No, no, there was a war out there way out in Russia.

DL: The Crimean War (1853-1856)?

BM: Crimean War. … As a matter-of-fact, one of the, my wife is a nurse, and she was telling me that the Nightingale of Jamaica is a lady, I can't remember her name [Mary Jane Seacole], but she gained her fame in the Crimean War. She was a Jamaican, and she did this all on her own, with her own funds trying to take care of the wounded and the sick there. Yes, I love those little tidbits of history. … There was another thing I wanted to say about World War II. You know, I have an understanding about being the number one entity in the world because of our association with the British, when the British was number one in the world, right. … The thing about this is that, and I don't want to lose my thought, people don't understand why people love you and hate you at the same time. There's a hate-love relationship of the world towards the number one guy, who's whom? The Americans, right? They love Americans. They like the way they are, they like the way they behave, their values, you know, the way they're easy going, and all the other things, right. However, they're number one. The problem with number one is, is if you were in a house and you're in a house with a five hundred pound gorilla. That five hundred pound gorilla can decide any time he wants, you know, if he wants to take anything he wants in the house. What are you are you going to do? You have to fear the five hundred pound gorilla, right. It's only natural. Now, let me give you an example. Jamaica has been with the British for all these many years, but some time ago, the British realized that, you know, people of African descent was going to inherit that land. … So, they asked for, at the time, Germany had some issues, economic issues, they took that opportunity to try to have them all to immigrate to Jamaica, and a tremendous amount of Germans came to Jamaica. … A lot of them came to Jamaica, and the thing about Jamaica, Jamaica accepted them, but within a short period of time, they were totally integrated into Jamaican society and way of life. As a result of that, during the entire World War II, there was not one person of German background that committed anything even close to treason. Why? Simple, their interest is met, they're not considered separate and apart, they're totally integrated.

SH: Interesting.

BM: Yes, I mean there was one parish in Jamaica where, I mean, the complexion of the people is completely changed because of that.

SH: Did the British that were in Jamaica remain separate or did they integrate as well?

BM: No, the British remained separate. You know, they could afford to do that. [laughter] I mean, they ran everything and, you know, they had the grand houses and, you know, and all of that kind of thing so they tend to be, but the British generally tend to be a little bit more reserved, may I say.

DL: Do you remember any racial tension, like having to give them extra courtesies or anything like that?

BM: No, no, no not at all. … I think the British understood for a very long time that it wouldn't work very well that way and especially since they were beaten by the Maroons, they didn't want any problems. So, no, it was great. The relationship was wonderful, I mean, you know, given the circumstances. … I mean for instance even today Jamaicans feel no grudge whatsoever. It's just our nature. [laughter]

SH: Was there a Creole population in Jamaica?

BM: I don't know what that means. [laughter]

SH: What about the music that came out of Jamaica that we are all familiar with here. Was that something you knew as a kid growing up?

BM: Oh, absolutely. As a matter-of-fact, not only is that music, but the whole music of hip-hop basically had beginnings in Jamaica. I mean the guy who was considered the father of hip-hop in America--DJ Kool Herc--was actually a Jamaican kid that lived in the Bronx. This created a new musical genre that generates billions of dollars of revenue in the USA and around the world.

DL: When you were in church in Jamaica, did you remember if a lot of hymns were European songs?

BM: Absolutely, yes, they were all.

DL: They did not have any Jamaican hymns?

BM: No, I mean like here in America, I go to the Episcopalian Church, and we have Negro spiritual kinds of music, hymnal, separate and apart from the other hymnal. There was no such thing in Jamaica, no.

SH: Oh, really?

BM: Yes, and, you know, Scots Kirk is where I spent most of my time. I'll say it's a beautiful church. That also probably helped in making my career in architecture, but, you know, not many

churches are like that because that church is filled with historical plaques, all over, I mean it's just totally historical plaques. As kids we would go in and we'd spend time reading all the historical plaques, you know. There's even some guy buried under the, you know, paving in the aisle, you know, all these kind of things just fascinated me to no end.

SH: Is there a dialect that is spoken in Jamaican?

BM: Yes, there is, there is a dialect yes, absolutely, yes. It's called … Patois meaning it's a combination of two languages. However, we have a few Jamaican linguists, one of them very famous one, who is out of Columbia University in New York, who has written out the entire rules of Patois, and as such, is considered a separate language, because of that, all the rules are there, it's not as we would consider helter skelter as I thought, anyway.

SH: Did kids pick that up growing up?

BM: Oh, yes.

SH: Were you allowed to speak it.

BM: Oh, yes, we would naturally speak that, you know, because this is what most people are speaking, at least on a non-professional level, but of course our parents would always be correcting us and saying, you know, "You need to speak as they would say it, the King's English." I don't know if they say that, they probably say that in England too. So, we were always corrected, so we end up kind of speaking two languages, but it was very interesting because when I went to Africa, and that was like Oprah would say a "circle experience," a complete circle experience. I was the first person in my family that I know of that actually went back to Africa.

SH: When did you do this?

BM: This was in 1975, I think, just after college, and I remember going into a village in Ghana and I saw this fowl, which we in Jamaica have a name for, I mean a local name for, and so, I asked them, "What was this fowl's name?" … They called it exactly the same as we call it, it was a special fowl with its feathers all fluffed up that we call a sensa, and that was the same name. … So, as far as I can tell, I mean historically, I'm finding out that a lot of Africans from Ghana, or what was then called the Gold Coast, came to Jamaica, and I looked at some of the folks there because if you stand on the corner, in Ghana there's forty-two different ethnic groups, which they call ethnic groups, which is correct. … You could stand at a corner, and after you are a little bit knowledgeable, you could tell by facial features, what ethnic group each of these different African people are from in that nation. The funny thing about it is that my grandfather looked so much like an Ashanti that I got to believe that there must be some connection here. You know Ashanti, maybe I just would like that to be the case, but it certainly, I think a lot of Jamaicans owe their heritage to the Gold Coast, or what is now Ghana, you know, Togo, and Dahomey, now Benin, the whole main, and maybe even as far as Nigeria. …

SH: Coming to the United States at your mother's behest, where did your mother settle? Was she in New York?

BM: Yes, she was in New York, and of course, like most immigrants, you know, she was living in quotations, "the ghetto," meaning a tough area, yes. I mean when I came … I was spending most of my time in one of the toughest neighborhoods in New York--Brownsville. I don't know if you have any idea, but a famous boxer, Mike Tyson there, he's from Brownsville, it's a really tough area at least during that time, because a lot of the houses were in bad shape, abandoned. Brownsville's motto was "never run and never will." … I think it may only be just some of those areas are having a new life. I think there's some church organization that is actually building single family houses. I forget what the name of that group is the "Nehemiah" group lead by the Reverend Clarence Williams.

SH: I think you are correct. What year did you come, and can you talk about that experience and the decision and what you were thinking?

BM: Yes, the idea was to come, see what things were like, you know.

SH: Was it first to just visit or was this going to permanent?

BM: No, it was to come, but come didn't mean I would necessarily stay, right.

SH: Was the visa process difficult?

BM: It was difficult, yes. I mean it was difficult, absolutely. I mean they checked everything, your health, … your criminal record, you know, and anything like that, and if they spotted anything, it would mean you wouldn't be able to come. … I mean, I wasn't totally aware of that because you sent in an application and it comes back and you pay something, and, you know, that's the kind of thing, … but actually if you really were to pay attention you would realize it's not an easy thing to do. … I mean for me it was, you know, I would come up, see what it was like. …

SH: You had not visited before?

BM: Never visited the United States. I never left the country and, you know, this would be a way of furthering my education. That was the idea, yes.

SH: Was your mother working?

BM: Yes.

SH: And your stepfather?

BM: My stepfather was still in Jamaica. … She was also trying to get him up as well, but the only thing he had a business there in Jamaica right. It wasn't easy to just shut down, you know,

and so, the whole idea is to get the kids up first such that they would, you know, because it becomes more difficult if the person is let's say thirty, than if the person is nineteen right, yes.

SH: What was your mother doing? What was her profession then? She had been a dressmaker.

BM: Right, but when she came up here she got involved in what a lot of immigrants from the Caribbean do, which is housekeeping.

SH: Talk about your first impression of the United States. Everyone talks about having to go through customs for the first time.

BM: … A lot of people think … you're coming from the Caribbean, you're going to be impressed by New York. It's funny, I was not that impressed. I mean the buildings were tall, so you know you got a twelve story and here you got a hundred story--so what, you know. It didn't faze me very much.

DL: You were a city boy.

BM: Yes, I was a city boy, and the thing of course is that, the one thing that impressed me, of course, was the amount of new cars on the road, I mean because in Jamaica people have a car. They keep it for, you know, fifteen years, you know. You go on the street, and the percentage of new car to old car, maybe two percent, three percent, you know. Here you look, it was like fifty percent looks new, you know. I was amazed, I'm like, "Wow." That impressed me.

SH: I am glad something did.

BM: That really impressed me, yes. The other thing that was interesting was the sky, how different the sky was from there. The sky here seems so much grayer and darker especially as it was coming in to that, it seemed to me maybe it was just a weather phenomenon that winter. … It seemed duller, and it seemed like the mornings seemed to take so much longer, and the morning was so much darker, you know. … You get up in Jamaica, the mornings were always bright. I mean six o'clock, it's bright, you know. ... That was shocking.

SH: What time of the year did you come to the United States?

BM: It was in October. …

SH: What did you do then initially when you came?

BM: When I came initially, I started to look for a job right, and my mother had a connection and I actually started to work at this furniture store. Then, I started to think about what I wanted to do, and I had really had a great love for flying, and for things having to do with planes, airplanes, I had this love. … So, I was thinking, you know, maybe I should get involved in aeronautics or somewhat of that nature. So, there was, I think it was, there was a school, La Guardia, something out of LaGuardia, near LaGuardia, that had a school on aeronautics. … So, I applied there, and then I realized when you apply there, there were all kinds of paperwork that they

wanted from your background and your school and all of these things. I'm like, "Oh my God," and they don't understand what it means because what is over here doesn't tie in with this. It was a nightmare, and it took me, you have to send back for papers, and when it did come, they still didn't know what it meant. So, then I realized that the only way that you could really have anything that is going to be real here that they could understand is you're going to have to take the high school equivalency, so I decided to go take the high school equivalency. So, I prepared for that, and of course, everything was so different, so strange, you know. It took more time to get these things done than it would take a local boy, you know, and so, in the meantime I decided, you know, I was having some issue with the thing over in LaGuardia. I said, you know, in the meantime, you know, what I'm going to do? I'm going to go and there was a program at a school called Delehanty Institute for drafting and mechanical drafting and all these things so, you know, I'm going to do that. So, I went there for a year, and of course it wasn't that expensive, my mother could afford it. So, I decided let me go there for a year. So, I went there for a year. … After graduating from there, they helped get me another job at this architect's office to do architectural drafting, and this place, now I lived in the ghetto in Brooklyn, and every morning I had to take the train up to Rye, New York to go to this office. I mean as far as I am concerned, Rye was the ultimate American city or town. It was just what you read in the, you know, the story books so to speak, you know, … the little shopping centers with the nice glass windows, with the goodies showing on the other side. I mean I'm saying that impressed me. … Yes, I mean it was like that, you know, and so, I would counter-commute, you know, to go to Rye, New York, to go to this job. … It was then that at some point in time, no, as soon as I came people started to tell me about this draft. So, you know, you may get drafted and, you know, you have to register. I said, "Me? I'm not." … Oh, yes, one of the reasons I'm not an American citizen, so how can anybody draft you if you're not an American citizen. I was shocked to find out that they would draft somebody who was not an American citizen. That didn't make any sense to me whatsoever, but they said, "You have to register," so being the kind of person I am, I registered. … Then, of course that begins to set off something in the back of my mind, and one of the things I had in mind was that, you know, if I wanted to do something with airplanes maybe Air Force would be a good place to get a start. … You know, it wouldn't cost me that much money or anything like that. You know what, while I'm doing these other things, I said, "Let me volunteer for the Air Force." So, I volunteered for the Air Force. I took all of their tests, right, which I passed, and they told me that I should wait a while, and they would get the paper work ready to induct me into it. While I'm waiting there for this, I get a token from the Selective Service that says that I should show up at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn. So, I wrote my political officials, one of them was US Senator Robert Kennedy, and I wrote him to say, "Look, I don't understand why, you know, I'm not allowed to select the service that I want to be involved in, right, and I did all of this ahead of time, why are they doing this?" Eventually, he wrote me back, and I have his letter, probably as a historical document, I don't know, I didn't bring it, it's in my safe, indicating that he had done some investigation. … Word was that if you didn't get inducted by the other service that then, whatever the Selective Service said, was the final thing, which I wasn't so sure. I think, because at that time, I mean, you know, they were, as a matter-of-fact, I read somewhere, there was a buildup of some 500,000 men and women in Vietnam, and they would take any live body they could find, you know.

SH: This was in 1967.

BM: 1967, yes. … I think it was more political imperative than, you know, some rule that was made without thought to the circumstances. Even though I didn't get my wish to enter the Air Force, what I was unable to do educated my younger brother and cousin. They were successful in entering the US Air Force and achieved their goals. My brother leveraged his service into a medical profession and my cousin into a profession in aeronautics.

SH: As a young gentleman who has just immigrated to this country, before we go in to talk about your induction, the Civil Rights Movement is exploding shall we say. There are riots all around the country. What did you think of that coming from what had seemed to be such a peaceful country?

BM: Well, I tell you. I don't know. … All of these things in trying to come here to talk about this, I really thought about that situation, and I had something which I thought it was going to be like an epilogue and really I think I should see if I can read this. I mean as I had stated before in Jamaica, that atmosphere, I mean, you know, people talk about a melting pot. Even though Jamaica is, I would say maybe eighty percent people of African descent, the other twenty percent is all over the place and totally integrated, and, you know, it's as good a place. … You're going to see, you know, diversity and how it works well. … So, I wrote here, it says, "When I was a boy, in the world consciousness of people of color, the US was one of the worst places on earth even worse than South Africa, during the '40s, '50s, and part of the '60s. I have been fortunate to live during a time of great waves of change that have transformed the world including the USA. I witnessed countries such as Australia and Canada that refused to allow people of color to even immigrate there to becoming countries that now embrace diversity. For many of the countries in African colonies of European power to become independent countries. From the Jim Crow and apartheid policies of the US and South Africa that became broken and is now replaced with more progressive policies, and more freedom for their black citizens, and to crown all of this off, the election of an African American President of the United States of America. This one powerful act has convinced all the American doubters throughout the world, especially the people of the Middle East who are now willing to give democracy a chance. I have always appreciated that especially native-born African Americans have never given up one inch of their ownership of the United States of America, and have a deep and abiding attachment to the values stated in the Preamble of the Constitution, which they will forever carry close to their heart, and the faith that one day it will come to pass, i.e., when you say the words you start the process that will bring that idea into fruition. I am proud to have served in an organization that has helped to pave the way to this new world as paradoxically as that may sound and that is the United States Army."

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Please continue, David.

DL: You mentioned before the interview that you had the opportunity to meet the Tuskegee Airmen.

BM: Yes, yes. I was working out on a job in Ohio, and while I was there, two things I wanted to do, as you know, as I indicated before, I had a love for flying and anything to do with airplanes. So, there was an air show that was advertised that was going to be taking place, and I also knew

that there was also the US Military Air Museum that was located in that area. … So, therefore I wanted to see both of those things and there was a third thing. The third thing was I also knew that Ulysses Grant was born in Ohio, and I wanted to go visit his birthplace. So, I have to say I managed to visit all three. The museum was spectacular. I mean it had just about every airplane from the Wright Brothers to the Predators. What I drew from all of that was there were rockets, and I thought to myself, that a substantial amount of the money that we had invested in these pieces of equipment, and in multiple hundred of numbers of these items, some of them were necessary, some of them we thought they may be necessary, but in the end, it seemed like a lot of this was a spectacular waste of money that we spent. … I grant you, some of this did keep the peace, but if there was another way, we could have used that money to much better results, I mean in terms of just developing our country and our people, rather than just spending so much of that money on this equipment that is mothballed, never been used, never been fired. I mean, that was what hit me hard when I went to that museum. So, that was one thing and I'm coming back to Tuskegee, but I'm going to do the minor ones first, not quite minor. I thought visiting Grant's birthplace was really wonderful. It kind of teaches you that great men usually come from humble beginnings. I visited, it's a one room shack that he was born in. Everything took place there, the cooking, the eating, sleeping, you name it, one room. … From that home, you could look down the hill to the Ohio River down below, and it seemed like about thirty feet, but people, I was told, that when the Ohio River floods, it could get up to that house. I mean, I couldn't believe it, but that's what I was told, and then, of course I went to the air show.

SH: May I ask what piqued your interest in Ulysses S. Grant?

BM: Because he won the Civil War for the right cause.

SH: That is what I thought.

BM: He's one of my heroes. [laughter]

SH: I wanted to confirm that on the tape.

DL: What year did you make this trip?

BM: I think it was 2003. So, I went to the air show and while I was there, I wanted to see, particularly one of the planes that I really loved was the Mustangs, and they were there in numbers. … I also, by accident, met the Tuskegee Airmen. There was a contingent of them, not just one, but maybe about, wow, I think there was at least six of them there. … I went over and they had their planes that they flew in in World War II. They had, they were painted differently than the regular Air Force, US Air Force plane, and one of the things that stood out was the tail was painted red. So, it was a beautiful plane, and some of the planes were still flying and they were actually doing things in the sky, but at one of the stands, the booths, I had met one of the Tuskegee Airmen, and he had a phenomenal story. It actually brought tears to my eye. The following story was told to me. When this Tuskegee pilot returned home from Ohio after the war, he was refused admission into some of the pilot commercial business group. … There was this one Caucasian fellow, who was a bomber pilot during World War II in Europe, that stood up for him, and eventually he was able to join this group. These two fellows became friends and

many years afterwards, their son and daughter fell in love and got married. They are now the proud grandfathers to that marriage offspring. … Most touching was that after many years of discussion, they discovered that their paths had crossed in the air, when the squadron that this Tuskegee pilot led, and actually protected one of the major bombing runs that the other air force pilot had made. As both remember the particulars of the dogfight, the place, date and the encounter. It was stated that the Tuskegee pilot won a dogfight that saved this bomber. Either one of them not then realizing that the person in that other plane would be the future father-in-law of their yet unborn son and daughter. It was amazing. I mean I had tears in my eyes and he told it, you know, with much more detail and nuance that I'm telling it here. It was just, it was a wonderful story.

SH: Thankfully you shared it with us and we have that as well.

BM: … Yes, there was a question that you asked and I don't want to dodge this question, but it was a question that is unsaid, but it's there nonetheless. The question, maybe you touched on it earlier, the question would be, "Why didn't I quit and go back to Jamaica when I was drafted?" With practical certainty that I would be sent to Vietnam, that is the odd question. … Well, my answer is this, and I've thought hard and long about this, and my answer, the best answer I can give is this. Did the pioneers decided to go back to Europe when they discovered that gold and fortune, that they were promised, would mean risking the dangers of the unsettled frontier? Well, frankly, I was not convinced that the Vietnam War was justifiable like perhaps World War II, the Civil War, or the War of Independence. … Even though at twenty years old, I realized, especially since I was born in a small nation, that big countries sometimes fight wars to secure their economic self-interest. I couldn't figure out what America's economic self-interest was in Vietnam, even if I accounted for the need to deny one's enemy certain critical resources, but beyond trying to figure out the geopolitical calculus from a personal point of view, even though I had no desire to go to war, I was not going to abandon my dreams this easily as this immigrant was going to be no less determined than the first immigrants or pioneers. If this was the road I had to travel to get a shot at my dream, then so be it. I am a stoic.

SH: Can you then walk us through the process that you had to go through to join the military?

BM: Well, I'll say this, I, you know, one of the things that I grew up with was a strong sense of duty. … All said and done, you know, your freedom is one thing, the desire to do anything you want to do is another thing, but you have a duty, and that duty is, to a large degree, determined by some community standard. I don't think the standards here were any different than my standards. I would think the standards here, I would think that any person that came to Jamaica I think I would want them to have, to be respectful of the standard there just as I think. … If I think that was the case there, then I have to stand up to the standards that are here. So, that, I think, is essentially was my thoughts then.

SH: Was there anyone who mentored you about what to expect?

BM: No, no. It's just this young man up against the world. I didn't want to say this, when I did tell my employer and the folks I worked with that I was drafted, I remember there was a young

lady that worked there, and she said, "If I would like for her to break my leg," [laughter] and I declined graciously.

SH: That offer you could refuse right.

DL: When you were drafted, did they make it clear to you that joining the military could offer you US citizenship?

BM: No, no. I was told that you could get citizenship earlier than normal, not by the Army or anything official, but just word of mouth, but, you know, that was about it.

SH: Were there any education benefits that you were aware of prior to talking to the Air Force?

BM: No, not really. I never thought about any of those things that far away. As a matter-of-fact, I mean, when I was being drafted I, all the things that I had of value that I had, and I had a few cousins that lived here at the time, my brother hadn't come up as yet, and all the possessions that I had, I gave them away in preparation for this, you know. So I said, "This is yours, this is yours, but if I come back, I want this." … [laughter] So, there was one thing that I actually got back. It was this stopwatch that I'd given to my cousin. I told him, "When I come back, if I come back, I want it back." When I came back, he gave it to me.

SH: Was the stopwatch from your having run the 440?

BM: Yes, yes.

SH: That is very interesting. How did your mother take this?

BM: Very calmly, I mean, at least when she's with me. I don't know what she did when she wasn't with me.

SH: Had you connected with your father here?

BM: Yes, I did. … Let me just go over what the whole process. What I found surprising is that when I went to Fort Hamilton for induction, I would say practically half of all the fellows with whom I was inducted at Fort Hamilton in New York and pledged our allegiance to the United States were immigrants.

SH: Really?

BM: Yes. One such person was my lifelong friend from Belize that I met for the first time that day, Raymond Leslie. Our path mirrored each other through basic and advanced training. Then, we were both sent to Vietnam. He was a medic in a combat field hospital and I was a combat medic in the field. We never thought we would see each other again or even survive our assignments. However, near the middle of my tour in Vietnam we accidentally met again. He had just arrived in the area, and I was getting ready to leave, but we did get a chance to meet later that day to have a few beers and say goodbye and wish each other God's speed. … I do

have a photo of that. Here is my good friend, Raymond Leslie, and here was our meeting midway in our tour with a couple beers.

SH: Thank you for showing us these photographs.

BM: I had sent the photo my friend Raymond and me to my fiancée Veda. It says here, "To my dearest Veda, there we are at the reunion, drinking some beers to the occasion. That cat on the left is a real cool, is real cool, isn't he? They call him doc, the cool operator and the only one that can make him loose his cool is you. Loving you, Bruce," and the cool cat of course is me. [laughter]

SH: Talk about your induction. Where do you report and what do you?

BM: Well, absolutely, as I indicated, we reported to Fort Hamilton here in Brooklyn. … I just want to say, when my class of inductees boarded the bus at Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn, I thought we were going no further perhaps than Fort Dix, New Jersey. However, we disembarked the bus at New York's Grand Central Station, where we were marched by the sergeants, the staff sergeant and our chaperone, through Grand Central. Once the train was on its way, we were told we were on our way to the South. At that time, I had never been to the South. I hadn't been south of Washington, DC and absolutely had no desire to ever go further south. At the moment I heard where we were heading, I visually thought I was given a death sentence, and everything I had heard or seen about the South flashed before my eyes with dreaded apprehension and I wondered what the hell I had gotten myself into.

SH: Before we go further with this, when did you go to DC, as a tourist?

BM: Yes, yes. When we first came here, the first thing we wanted to do was to go and visit President Kennedy's gravesite at Arlington.

SH: Had you been to the Statue of Liberty or any of the other sites in New York?

BM: No, we did go to Washington and visit a lot of the sites there, but that was the key visit of the tour, was Kennedy's grave.

SH: This is only a few years later, 1967.

BM: Yes, yes.

SH: How long had you been in this country by the May of 1967?

BM: Yes, not very long. [laughter] It was a year and a half until I was drafted, just about, yes.

[TAPE PAUSED]

BM: So, we went down to Fort … Jackson on the train, and of course, that was the thing, because we were still in civilian clothes and everybody along the way, as soon as we landed, was, you know, trying to tell us, scare the hell out of us of what we're going to get.

SH: Really?

BM: Yes, and of course the first thing they did, they marched us, you know, and then we could hardly march, we didn't know what we were doing. … The first place they marched us to was the barber shop, and I remember they had such fun, you know, taking all the hair off our head with that razor. It was just so much fun for them.

SH: Did you have long or short hair?

BM: At that time I'm trying to remember if the Afro was in. I don't remember. … I don't quite remember if I had a big blow out Afro, but nonetheless, I don't think I did. I think it's basically when I came back that, you know, I had the big blow out Afro because at that time I was still pretty much very conservative and straight. … I remember there was one guy, a blond guy with long hair that, boy, did they have fun cutting that off. [laughter] I mean it looks like it made everybody's day just to cut our hair off.

SH: Did they have to delight in it so much?

BM: Yes.

SH: What were you reactions to seeing and living in the Jim Crow South during the Civil Rights demonstrations?

BM: … Well, yes, it's funny to say once you get on base, you're in your own world, and I think the fact that when you go off in uniform generally, and usually when you're in a town, they're usually MPs, Military Police, so therefore, you're kind of protected from any stuff. … The towns you would go into, they're basically, I would say, local town, because you know, generally, I mean you just go to a local town. … Mainly to go to a bar to drink, I mean that was the fun, and basically, it was all geared towards the military people, so they would not do anything that would create a problem. So, essentially off base, I'd stay close to the base, and I never had a problem, but I did have some very interesting experiences because, you know, I was an open person. … One of the fellows that was in the company that was being trained, was a young man that was from, I think he was either from Kentucky or Tennessee, but I mean, I thought I could understand all kinds of accents--English accents--you know. Meaning, if you speak English and you have an accent, somehow I could find a way to understand it, but this fellow, it was so, so difficult to understand him. Anyway, we had a good relationship for what it was during that period, and he would tell me that his family were Ku Klux Klan members, but he wasn't like that, you know. Isn't that information I don't need to know? But anyway, it was interesting, you know, interesting thing to happen, I guess.

SH: He was assuring you he was okay.

BM: Yes, yes.

DL: When you are out at Fort Jackson, did they give you liberty to go into the towns?

BM: Not too often, but, yes they did, yes.

DL: When you went out drinking was it in segregated bars or how did that work?

BM: No, it wasn't, as I remember, I don't think it was, no. Like I said, it was, I think it was geared towards military so you could pretty much, yes, pretty much free run, at least in the town, that town anyway. Whatever it was, and I can't even remember what it was but I suppose.

SH: Was this basic training?

BM: … It was basic training at Fort Gordon. Fort Jackson was the processing station but I did my basic training at Fort Gordon, Georgia.

SH: Was this group still predominantly immigrants?

BM: No, no, at that point I guess it changed. I suppose because New York is such a big place, immigrant place, where immigrants enter the country.

SH: Where did you start taking your exams so they would determine where they were going to send you?

BM: Fort Jackson, yes. …

SH: You are there six weeks or eight weeks?

BM: I believe I was at Fort Jackson for approximately a week and the rest of the time at Fort Gordon.

SH: Where did they send you at the end of June?

BM: So, after basic training, I came back home and, of course, two months before I was drafted, I met for the first time, this young lady that had just arrived in New York from England. … It was actually at a wedding reception for a young man that was a Jamaican young man that was going to Vietnam, who actually died, was killed in Vietnam, but it was this wedding reception. … My friend was going to play, was going to DJ for the wedding reception, and so I got to his house late. It was a Friday evening, I got to his house late and he had already left to go to this reception. So, while I was there, I decided to take the time to say a few words to his parents, who are friends of my mother, and he's also a Jamaican fellow. … While I was there, and I was there probably for about fifteen, twenty minutes, all of a sudden he shows up. I says, "What happened, I thought you were gone?" He said he had forgotten something, and so, I was able to then leave with him to the wedding reception. … At that wedding reception, I met this young lady, and she, it was the first time she had been out since she arrived in New York. … From

what I understand from her side, she didn't want to go because, again, when you do come, at first there's a certain melancholy that takes place that just, it's unexplainable, but just missing what you just had and no longer can partake. … So, while I was there, I asked her for a dance, and she did agree, and before we left that evening, I asked her for her information and managed to get that. … When I came back, remember now, it's only two weeks, two months, two months, did I say two months? Is it two months or maybe it was more than that, I'm not sure. It may have been three months, but anyway, when I came back we got engaged. … There we are when at the engagement with our priest. [Editor's Note: Mr. McLeod is referring to a picture of himself and his wife.]

SH: She is beautiful.

DL: Your wife, she was originally from Jamaica?

BM: Right.

DL: Then she went to the UK?

BM: Yes.

DL: What brought her to America?

BM: Her family came to America. I think, it's like anything else, you know.

SH: How young was she when she left Jamaica?

BM: She was, I think she was fifteen. I think she was fifteen, I'm not sure. Yes, she was fifteen I think.

DL: Around how old was she when she met you?

BM: … We're three months apart, so at the time, I was probably, yes, I was twenty. Yes, so she was in England probably five years, but those were key years, you know, yes.

SH: That is an amazing story. So, you met her, left, and came back eight weeks later and proposed?

BM: Yes.

SH: Did you marry before you left for Vietnam?

BM: Well, you know, this is one of the things. I think one of those things about the story about my involvement and the whole thing about going to Vietnam and the draft and everything, the two things that I think about is that I gained two most valuable things--a great love and a great friendship, that so far, it's lasted a lifetime.

SH: What were her plans after she came to the United States?

BM: I don't really know her plans per se, I know that she wanted to, she did not have, I don't think, the same opportunities that I had, educationally, and she was very desirous of that. As you probably see in the write up there, my wife has, I think three degrees. She's now better educated than I am, [laughter] but I will take some credit for that because, you know, I worked, and she had the chance to go back to school. So, that was great.

SH: It is wonderful to have someone who encourages you and supports you.

BM: Well, in Jamaica, I don't know if you realize this, it's one of the great facts that in Jamaica, women are more educated than men in general, yes. Jamaica, unlike most third world country that have a literacy rate of less than fifty percent, Jamaica has a literacy rate of somewhere in eighty-six, and it may even be higher now, I don't know. When I left, it was about eighty-six, which is far beyond most third world countries, and women, generally, stay longer in school. Men, generally get basic education, they go out to work. Women, on the other hand, go to school and continue on and on and on. So, I mean in Jamaica, the whole commitment to women education has always been a big thing, which I personally think is an important thing. … As the years go by, I think it's so much more important I think, because generally speaking, women has, I think, anyway, a greater, I don't want to say commitment or investment in the human resources or whatever than men. I think women, I mean if you were to ask them to go to war, they would think first about, "Is my kid going to go to war," you know, and whereas a guy would basically think about, "Maybe I'm going to go to war, and I'm okay with that." So, I think we'd have a more peaceful world if more women were really educated, and not to talk about all the other economic gains you'd have from that. …

SH: You come home for a brief period.

BM: Two weeks, yes, yes.

SH: You are engaged and off you go. Where did they send you now for your training?

BM: I went to Texas. …

DL: I believe it is Fort Sam Houston?

BM: Fort Sam Houston in Texas, yes. … I was doing, you know, medical corpsmen.

SH: That was because of the testing that you took at Fort Jackson?

BM: Yes, yes.

SH: Was this something that you welcomed or did you say, "Where did that come from?"

BM: You know, not really, not really, because I tell you, it's funny, families seem to tend to have a certain streak, and my family streak is usually in education and medicine. I mean the

majority of people, I mean, in my family, I'm the only architect that I know of. Everybody else is, most everybody is in education and medicine of one type or the other, you know.

SH: It was not something you were totally against?

BM: No, absolutely not. I thought if I had to go to war, of all the things you could do that was positive, this certainly is one of the most positive things that you could possibly do. So, I was actually quite happy that I would be doing something positive, yes.

SH: Can you talk a little bit about your training? Were you well-trained?

BM: You know, I think I was pretty well-trained. I mean obviously you're not a doctor, but I think one of the things that you always have to be, is you have to be able to know what you do know and you also have to be aware of what you don't know. I think I was highly aware of what I did know, and as a result of that, I'm proud to say, that when I was in Vietnam and I took care of the daily medical needs, and all of the people that I referred, generally never came back. They all were sent either back to Japan or back to the States or Germany or what have you. Back here means toward the USA, or in our parlance then, "the real world." It turned out to be something serious that they needed help with, and luckily, I was able to do the right thing and get them the help. … Generally, there's a pressure from the officer corps, to get as many people to be actually doing their duty, and people, at the drop of a hat, would try to say, "Somebody is malingering." So, somehow I had to stand between that desire and the actual needs and not to be influenced by either, you know, one way or the other, but do the right thing. So, I mean I have to say I'm happy that I was able to do that--I think, well.

SH: In Fort Sam Houston, what were some of the other schools that were there? Did you interact with any of the others?

BM: That's interesting that you should say that. There were the WAC units were there, so that's wonderful. You know, even though I was engaged, it was wonderful that I didn't have to just look at all guys all the time. [laughter] … There was also there, I think, and I learned that, I think the second time I was at Fort Houston, because when I came back I went back to Fort Houston, was that there is a whole area of Army intelligence I think, if I'm not mistaken, that gets either training or have a headquarters there or what have you. … I had occasion to meet a few people from that area. I mean, obviously, they didn't talk about whatever it is that they do, and I didn't want to know, but I will say, I've always thought that the girls, that were in that, were the most beautiful girls. They were all in intelligence it seemed. They weren't nurses or whatever, you know, nurses, there were some pretty nurses, but boy, all of these girls in intelligence, they were, just seemed like that much prettier.

SH: This group of medics that are being trained, was there any opportunities to try to go on to OCS or to specialize, or was this just a school for medics?

BM: Well, you know, I tell you what. I was offered, you know, to officer's training, and, of course, you're offered all kinds of training. … Besides officer's training, they want to know if

you want to, you be Airborne, but Airborne was generally in basic, and I don't know if it was the officer's training, I think it was in basic too, might have been, I'm not sure.

SH: Probably because of the testing and all that.

BM: But I refused to do that because I was definitely not a gung ho kind of a guy at all. … Second of all, if you had to, if you go to officer's training, you would have to "re-up" for extra time so that was definitely not on my agenda at all. [laughter]

SH: At what point in all of this do you become an American citizen?

BM: Not at this time. I only became an American citizen after I came back.

SH: Really?

BM: Yes, and many years after, I think a few years after I came back.

SH: People who were not American citizens are actually fighting?

BM: Fighting all the time, and this is one of the points is that most Americans are not aware of. Most Americans are not aware of, that immigrants, which in some parts of the country they might be despised, are fighting for this country all the time, all the time. So, it's quite interesting. One of the also interesting things also that even though Puerto Rico is not a state, the Puerto Ricans are conscripted and drafted just as anybody else. So, there was a big contingent, I remember in basic training, of people from Puerto Rico. It was a lot of fun because we learned a couple of Spanish words. They were all bad words. [laughter] Some of them they were fighting words, actually.

SH: How was the diversity within the school for medics. Was it diverse?

BM: I think it was, yes. I think it was pretty diverse, yes.

SH: The people were, at this point, from all over the country?

BM: Yes. …

SH: How was that for you. You had met the guy from Kentucky who you could not understand.

BM: Right, right.

SH: How was it then when you got to Fort Sam Houston in your advanced training?

BM: Well, you know, I tell you, it's funny, I mean, how should I say it. I think that basically that everybody is pretty much the same. We're human by our very nature right, and so, what really gets my attention is not so much that this person is from here, there or the other, but rather the culture that they bring, and the ideas that they bring. … The way of thinking that may be

different that they bring, you know, all of those kinds of things is what interests me. So, on the surface, especially when you're in basic training, we all look alike. We all look this green, you know, dirty look. We all just seem that way and, you know, you go in, I remember once, … we were out there doing all this exercise and whatever, and when it come time to go to the mess hall and eat, … we all looked like a pack of ravenous wolves. … One time, I stood back and looked, "Oh, goodness." It shocked me the first couple of times, it shocked me, oh, goodness.

SH: A feeding frenzy.

BM: Yes, a feeding frenzy.

SH: At this point because you were being trained to be a medic, you knew you were going to go to Vietnam?

BM: Everybody that got drafted expected to.

SH: Did anyone not go?

BM: Not that I know of. There were a few people that got orders for Germany or South Korea after advanced training. I mean like I was saying, the pressure to get as many people to Vietnam at that time was very, very high.

SH: Was anyone who was training you, had they already been to Vietnam?

BM: Oh, yes, oh, yes, I mean all of the sergeants that trained they had experience. They are guys that had a lot of experience; they're usually guys from infantry, and basic training is geared for everybody to become infantry. It's only then you go on to specialize, you know. Everybody have a basic infantry basic training, and then some people go to advanced infantry, so that was where the split happened, you know, but a lot of people wanted to go to advanced infantry. I mean, it wasn't unusual. Of course, some people went into artillery sometimes, you know. They may go to military police or they may go into administration or engineering, you know, so there's a lot of different specialties that after basic training, you start going on to, yes.

SH: How long then are you in Fort Sam Houston for your medic training?

BM: I think it was about eight weeks too, I think it was about eight weeks.

SH: That short of time, really?

BM: Yes, it was about eight weeks. I might be mistaken, but I think it was comparable to--if it was longer, it couldn't be more than a couple of weeks longer.

DL: You were then assigned to the combat engineers?

BM: Yes.

DL: Did you receive any trade training with them?

BM: No, because I was being attached to them. You see, as a medic, a medic gets attached to anything. I could be attached to infantry. I could be attached to artillery. I could be attached to any kind of these other entities. I just got attached to combat engineers, who in turn, my unit, the 35th Combat Engineers, were actually attached, when we were in I Corps, to the First Cavalry.

DL: Did they expect you to carry out the same sort of roles as they did?

BM: No, because, actually because, when you're a medic, … most of the time you are involved, if anything goes down, you're involved with treating somebody, you know. So, in a way, but you're in the same environment, but, I mean generally, unless somebody runs up to you and you have to, you know, defend yourself, your main thing is to take care of the company, the men, you know, company personnel.

DL: You are carrying a weapon at this stage?

BM: Oh, absolutely. [Editor's Note: Mr. McLeod is referring to pictures of himself in Vietnam.] Here I am, out on a road clearing, this is every morning, we do mine clearing on the roads, and that was our, in I Corps, our area. … We had a load in Vietnam in I Corps. Basically, we tried to secure the roads everywhere we go, or the communication. I mean, when I say communication, I don't mean to say by sound or that, but by transportation rather. All the transportation elements, we try, like for instance, we would make LZs, which are landing zones, or we may do an airport runway, or we would do bridges, roads, you know. We do take care of culverts, making sure that the water gets where it needs to go, all of that engineering stuff, you know, they would do. … My duty is the health, to save their lives when anything happened, and their health is just as important as saving their lives, you know, because if they're not healthy they can't even fight or do their work to begin with, so, you know, that's also an important perspective.

SH: That is part of your training?

BM: That's part of your job, yes. I mean a lot of medics don't have as broad a perspective. They tend to want to just focus on the, you know, the wounded, so to speak, you know, but I always try to have that more broader perspective.

SH: Your training at Fort Sam Houston as a medic was specifically to be a medic in Vietnam. Was there any kind of training as for the type of environment that you were going to be living in specifically to Vietnam?

BM: Not really, but, you know, when you're trained as a medic you could be in the field, like I was, or you could be in a hospital or a clinic or, you know, at different types of, or an aid station, you know. Our battalion headquarters would have an aid station where you would have a tent with things just for people who are sick or need help that they can be there and be treated and stuff like that. Whereas, when I was out in the field, basically in my hooch or my tent, I would have, in the mornings, anybody that was sick would come in and you would take care of their

needs, give them treatment. … Then, after that, you know, your day was yours. Basically, you would either go out into the field where the guys are building the bridges or what have you to be out there in case anything happened, or you would be looking around the camp to see what kind of health issues that may have. You may want to take care of, if there is a tent for the mess tent, you had to make sure that sanitary condition is being taken care of, that if you have people who are going to work there, you make sure that they don't have any health issues. All of those kinds of things are involved.

SH: Now, after Fort Sam Houston, you said it was about eight weeks of training, where did they send you then?

BM: Then, I came home and I went to Vietnam. I came home for, I guess, another two weeks, or a week, and then my orders were to go to Vietnam.

SH: How did they transport you, where did you report, and how did you do that?

[TAPE PAUSED]

BM: … I want to make a correction. I looked at this picture, and on the back of it I see 1967 So, it's my wife having had British upbringing is doing it the way they do it in England, so actually that happens to be a different date.

SH: This must be when you came back from advanced training.

BM: When I came back from advanced training, yes.

SH: So that is a pivotal two weeks in your life.

BM: Yes, and of course, when I left for Vietnam, it was on my birthday. [laughter]

SH: Three days after this photograph was taken.

BM: Two days, actually. … It was interesting because the flight to Vietnam was one in which we went to Hawaii first, and I was able to stop off and buy some stuff for my fiancée and send it back to her, and it was tropical perfume from Hawaii which was absolutely beautiful. We have since gone back to Hawaii searching for that perfume but we have not been successful in finding that perfume. … We did enjoy it because we took our granddaughter with us, and yes, it was quite fun having her there with us.

SH: From New York, how did you travel? Did you travel by plane to the West Coast, and then, fly, or did you fly directly to Vietnam?

BM: I think we flew directly from Kennedy, and I guess it stopped off in LA or wherever, and then it jumped to Hawaii.

SH: Were you flying commercially?

BM: It was chartered commercial, yes. … Then, from Hawaii, we went to Guam, and then from Guam we ended at Cam Ranh Bay which is where all the troops enter Vietnam, I think.

SH: This would have been just before Thanksgiving in 1967.

BM: … Yes, exactly, right.

DL: Did they give you time in Guam as well or was it just the one layover in Hawaii?

BM: … It's just a layover until … you get on another flight. … They allow you to get out and I guess stretch your legs.

SH: Did you know where you would be assigned at this point?

BM: No, no, I had no idea. However, as I was looking through my notes here, something did happen that I thought was quite interesting. Coincidentally, I also met in Vietnam, a neighbor who lived a few houses away on the same street in Jamaica.

SH: No kidding.

BM: In Vietnam. This really took me a back because, until that meeting, I thought naively that I was the only Jamaican this far away from home in Vietnam. Vietnam, in my checking, is on the same latitude on the opposite side of the world, on the same latitude, as Jamaica.

SH: So for you that blast of heat that everyone talks about was just like coming home.

BM: Well, I have to say, one of the biggest problem that medically we faced with the troops, were skin problems.

SH: Really?

BM: Yes, people had all kinds of skin … problems over there and this is an observation that I made as a medic, was that the darker the skin of the folks, the less skin problems they had.

SH: Really?

BM: Absolutely. I mean, maybe it's not shocking, it shouldn't be shocking, but it was shocking to me. I have to admit that it was absolutely shocking to me.

SH: Were these skin problems caused by the climate?

BM: Heat and humidity, heat and humidity, insect bites and blah, blah, blah, whatever. As a matter-of-fact, we had one fellow who was extremely fair-skinned with red hair, and as a matter-of-fact, we all gave him the name "Sunshine" because he had problems staying in the sun. … As a combat engineer, you usually are out in the sun working very hard. … I ended up giving him a

medical excuse for not working in the day. So, he ended up working only at night, and he became our official sergeant for guard duty. So, he handled all the guard duty at night, and he was up all night, and he basically would be indoors in the day. I think he was from Seattle as a matter-of-fact. I think he was from Washington.

SH: That makes it even worse.

BM: Yes, yes.

SH: Talk a bit about your initial reaction to Vietnam in Cam Ranh Bay when you land. What do you see? What did you smell? What do you hear?

BM: Well, you know, when you get to Cam Ranh Bay, basically it was like on a sandy beach, so sand all around in barracks. … It didn't strike you unusual unless you saw beyond that they had tropical plants beyond, you know. So, when you're in Cam Ranh Bay, it's just like another military base, you know, but as soon as you get out of Cam Ranh Bay, and you went in, everything it seemed took on a slightly darker tone. It seemed that everything was just darker. The houses are a little darker, it almost takes on, and you begin to have the smells that you have that are different, and it gave you the sense that boy you're really in a different place, you're really in Vietnam, you know. You're really in the Far East. … Of course, it has its unique smell because I know when I went to Taiwan, Taiwan had also that unique smell, but it was more a kind of an incense, more strongly incense smell, I think than Vietnam was more a food aroma smell, you know. … That's very striking, I mean it's visceral, you know.

SH: Did you arrive at night into Cam Ranh or during the day?

BM: I think it was in the day, I think it was in the day, I can't remember for sure, but I think it was in the day.

SH: How long are you there then--just overnight?

BM: Cam Ranh Bay, no. Cam Ranh Bay is kind of a getting you ready, getting you all the clothes you need because, remember you don't have clothes, fitting you for the clothes, you know, because you have to have all that, the hat, the shoes, and everything. Then you get all of that, sign for it, you know, and if you don't have the right immunization, they make sure you get it, and all of that. So I think it must be maybe as much as a week, you're there.

DL: Before you went to Vietnam, did they give you cultural awareness training, such as teaching you about Vietnamese culture, customs, and language?

BM: Yes, a little bit, but it was very rudimental.

DL: Did they give you any training like that in Vietnam, or did you just have to learn it on your own?

BM: You pretty much had to learn it, but I mean they did give you some, but it was very rudimental.

SH: How long a period were you there before you were assigned to the combat engineers?

BM: Well, once you get in, you get your assignment, right, and that's what you're waiting for once you get there. You get your assignment, and then, you have your assignment in hand, and they load you up on a vehicle and off you go.

SH: Did you have any wish list?

BM: … At that point I didn't even have any idea of what was out there to wish for. [laughter]

SH: Did anyone suggest any duties to ask for before you went to Vietnam?

BM: No, remember, when I was in the US, I had nobody who were Americans that had any experience that I could use. I was totally disadvantaged in that regard in just about everything because everything was a complete new learning experience for me, you know.

SH: From the military on down.

BM: Yes, yes.

DL: In terms of your medical supplies, things that you carry on a day-to-day basis, how much medical supplies would you actually carry with you in garrison or when you are roaming around while engineers were doing work or out on a patrol?

BM: Well, as you can see here, there is a medic bag here with all the stuff that you want to carry and you see I have something hanging there.

DL: It is quite a small satchel.

BM: Right, yes, a small satchel, but it has quite a bit in there, you know, bandages and what you would call pain killers, and morphine injections, and injections in case you have gas or something like that. A nerve gas, we had something to deal with nerve gas, and so forth, but essentially, I think, what was the problem when you're like this, you don't have to carry everything because you're only talking about trying to save a life at that point, you know. You have to, and then, you know, in Vietnam you can always call in a helicopter to medevac somebody out. … You just want to stabilize his condition to get a medevac to take him out.

DL: Were you using tourniquets at this point?

BM: That would be the very last resort, you would use that, you know. You wouldn't use that as a general approach to do it, only if it's absolutely, absolutely necessary because, you know it's so easy to lose a limb, and that was something you really had to be conscious of not wanting to have happen to someone.

DL: In modern combat, there is something called the "golden hour," and it is essentially if you can get them on a helicopter within an hour, and get them treated within two hours--like in an operating room within two hours--they have a good chance of living. Was there any sort of rule of thumb similar to that?

BM: … At that time, this was a new kind of approach. I mean they started something like that I guess in Korea and in Vietnam they took it to another level. We were actually in the process of coming up with this, you know, probably that study was a result of all the statistics that came out of, you know, Vietnam and Korea. … Of course we realized that we had this capability, and we want to give every serviceman the best chance to survive and to not be an invalid. … The services are great about, and this is one of the traditions, that is every serviceman is steeped in, is the care for our wounded and our dead, it's sacrosanct, you know. This is something extremely important that we do, and it's sometimes, it's something that keeps us as a unit, ties us together is the whole idea, you know, one for all and all for one. If I were in that situation I expect you to do it for me and vice-versa. So, yes, no I mean we were without knowing all that fancy stuff, we were doing the best we could. I mean, if we could get them in an hour, yes, we'll do it in an hour, you know. Fifteen minutes, yes, we'll do the best we can, yes. … I just want to say another thing, and that was the idea of carrying this because you're just on the road and it's a limited situation, right. When you are, you know that for the men to deal with the company's general health case, you have stuff back in your camp, right. In our case, in my case, I was out in the field for eleven months, which is unusual because most medics only go for six months in the field and another six months back at battalion headquarters at an aid station or hospital kind of situation. … For instance, when I came back from R&R, which was six months into my tour, the guys in my company, when I was back in battalion the first couple of days, were all calling for me to come back out to the field. … It was good to hear that they wanted you and they felt that great about you, and on the other hand, you also felt a certain attachment to those fellows, you know. So, I went back out because the guys asked for me, "They were asking for you, do you want to really go out there?" I said, "Okay, I'm fine with that." So, I went back out for another, you know, six months out there because, you know, medics are, I mean in a combat situation, it's easy to get knocked out so to speak, put out of action because, you know, because it's just the nature of their role. … For instance, when we were out, for instance, on a recon and, you know, whatever, you're going from A to B, and you never have a chance to go back to the camp, the question that you have a problem with, and that I had a problem with, is how much ammo should I take and how much medical should I take? … You're never really comfortable about that because, you know, there's always this dichotomy of, you know, I need to protect me or else I can't protect them, but, you know, how do you make the right balance there, you know, so, yes, that was always an issue.

SH: Did anyone offer to help carry more for you so that you could carry more for them?

BM: … I never take it that way. I take it, you know, each person has a responsibility. He's got XYZ to take care of, and it's my duty as a medic to take care of this issue. So, I got to deal with this issue, you know. I don't think that would go over big. [laughter]

DL: Did each man carry like a field dressing or a certain amount of medical supplies on them?

BM: … Yes, yes. Each person I think had a dressing or two.

DL: Did they carry morphine as well or was that just you?

BM: No, no, no. By the way, just to go back, the fellow that I had met who was my neighbor in Vietnam, … the one from Jamaica, yes, I never saw him again during or after my service in the Army, for that matter, ever since. … I have no idea what happened, whether he made it or he didn't make it or not.

SH: You are in Cam Ranh Bay for about a week, and now you are assigned to the combat engineers. How do you progress from there?

BM: Well, you know, they put you in a truck and you go off to your unit and at your unit, that unit in my case it was, I think it was LZ English and … it was in Qui Nhon. It was near Qui Nhon. … At that point, you see where you're going, what's going to be your hooch, what are the needs, what is required from you, where you are going to have your daily sick calls. … You're trying to figure out how you fit into things, right.

SH: Are you replacing someone in an already established base?

BM: I, actually at the time, they had no medic because the last medic they had problems with him, and he wasn't around so I was, you know, I was filling an empty slot. I don't know how long he wasn't available, whether it was a week or two weeks or whatever, so everybody was happy to see me, and they all tell me that I had better be better than the last one, the last guy. [laughter] So, I was under a lot of pressure to perform well. … The funny thing is, our camp was attached to what I think was the Vietnamese, South Vietnamese Army camp, and so it seemed like we had a common perimeter and the perimeter between the South Vietnamese camp and our camp was just a thin concertina, a razor fence or wires right. … It was just a way of preventing easy access back and forth, to say, "Hey, this is your camp and this is really our camp. You stay there and we stay here." However my hooch was right on the edge of that separation between the ARVN camp and our camp, and I think that must have been in there. I must have been now in the country two weeks and this must have been about a week since I was there. My fiancée had given me a gold chain with a pendant that was round and flat and when you spin it, it said something like love or I love you or something like that. … I had that on, and I guess I must have taken it off and put it to the side where my other things, whether my glasses or hats or what have you were, and the next day, everybody that were in that tent had lost stuff. I lost the gold chain, I lost some other valuable things, but the gold chain was particularly, stayed in my memory because it had so much sentimental value. … The idea was that somebody from the South Vietnamese camp was entering our camp at night and stealing our stuff. Frankly, if the person wanted to cut our throats, they could have cut our throats because we didn't hear anything, you know. Luckily, you know, this guy didn't want to do that. Anyway, the guys were all angry about this, and they decided to set up a trap, and so, a few days later, the trap was sprung and lo and behold this guy was captured and the guys were going to shoot him. At the time, when I saw him for whatever reason, because he wasn't in my hooch, but it was somewhere outside, he was on the ground and guys all had their weapons out at him, and I ran out and I

stopped them. I said, "Guys, you can't do this. You know, the Geneva Convention." I was, at that time, I was big about the Geneva Convention and all those requirements … because, remember, I grew up with World War II and these ideas [were] swirling in my mind. … I think everybody else were big on it too because I just had to say, "Guys, Geneva Convention, you can't do this," and it squelched the whole thing, because these guys were going to shoot him. You know, they were just pissed--mad as hell. So, I was very happy, as a matter-of-fact, I was able to stop them from shooting the guy, but anyway we caught the guy.

SH: Did anybody get anything back?

BM: No, I don't think, I think this guy probably sold it, but I don't know how, I think we got him, and then we passed him over to the South Vietnamese group to be dealt with, you know. … I've always been proud of this, I'm telling you, that's one of the things that I'm very proud of because you save one man, you save a world.

SH: Did you have any of the civilian Vietnamese working on your base?

BM: Yes, I mean most of them were young women. They usually work in the mess area, the mess tent, yes, involved with, you know, preparing the meals and things of that nature.

SH: Were they also washing clothes and shining boots? Did you have that at your base?

BM: You could--from time to time they were little young men that would come either at the edge of the camp that would offer that, and in some cases, they allowed them on the camp for whatever reason, I don't remember, that they would offer some of these services. … I don't remember that in our area, shining the boots was a big thing. That was one of the great things about being out in the field. If you were like at battalion headquarters, then that thing worked. They would do that because, then you go back to battalion headquarters, you have to do all this kind of Mickey Mouse stuff, but out in the field, you never have to worry about that. So, this was the beauty about, you know, a lot of guys wanted to stay away from battalion headquarters because of that.

SH: How far away were you from a village?

BM: Well, at Qui Nhon, we were pretty close to the village, yes.

SH: Did you go in to the village at all?

BM: Yes, they allowed you out in the village, you know, in the days you could go out in the village?

SH: I wondered, as a medic, were you also offering medical care to the South Vietnamese?

BM: Well, let me put it this way, let me, instead of just talking about Qui Nhon, let me give a broad picture, a brush picture of this. I, generally, my aim, was to deal with the health and well-being of our troops. However, on occasions, where it made sense, we would offer help. I will

give you an incident. This is, I think, a good time to give you an incident of, and this is not in chronological order, but when we went up to I Corps because Qui Nhon is in number II Corps, and I Corps, which is number I Corps is further north. … When we went up to I Corp area, and after the, it was the Tet Offensive, we got this assignment to open up the roads going north from Da Nang all the way up to Hue, and particularly through the Hai Van Pass, which was through this mountain pass before you get over to the plains on the other side. … We were on, this was after this area wasn't opened up and we had this recon that went into this area. … On this recon, when we got to the other side, I remember we were on the top of the mountain, and we're about to go on the other side and we're looking down, it was absolutely gorgeous. It was the ocean out there, and the palm trees, the beach, and this little peninsula with a little town on it, a little village with the little huts on it. It was absolutely picturesque, and the guys, we want to get down to this picturesque place on the beach and all this stuff, and we go down and we get down there. When we get down to this area of the village, they were offering to sell us Coca-Cola, cold Coca-Cola. [Editor's Note: The Tet Offensive of 1968, in which every major city in South Vietnam was attacked by the Vietcong, is seen as the point when American public opinion began turning against the war.]

SH: Cold?

BM: Yes, and hot, freshly baked French bread. Oh, I mean at this point, we hadn't had, you know, anything of that nature for a while. … All the guys, they're offering the guys who want to buy, and I'm telling everybody, I said, "Guys, don't eat anything from the natives." You know, because we don't know the condition of what's going on here, you know. We don't know if they're the enemy, they poisoned it, or whatever. They wouldn't pay me any attention, they went, they had Coke, they ate the bread--the whole nine yards. Later on, not too long after, we got communication that the people in this village had the plague. That these people had the plague, and when people found out about this, there were guys with their fingers in their throats trying to throw up all the stuff. I mean, if it wasn't serious, it would be funny. I mean, it was unbelievable, everybody. … We had to call back and try to get, even though we had the plague shots, we wanted to give them a booster shot, and so eventually we got a day or two days afterwards, we got the supply and we gave everybody the booster shot for the plague. … So, we knew that they had this issue, and so, once we got set up, I don't know how it came about, whether it came about by my initiative or whether by somebody else, but I remember ending up being in the village giving the folks the penicillin for this. … I guess we spent two weeks or a month doing this until the thing waned, but it was quite interesting. I mean the funny thing is about it is that even though I knew it was the plague, I didn't have as much fear and respect for it as I now do, you know. … It has to be you, you know, and I remember these big bumps on people that were absolutely black, you know, just like they say in the movies or the History Channel, you know, and it was.

SH: Were you able to stop it for the natives as well? Did you have the resources?

BM: Well, I think we did the best we can. We gave everybody the injection, and I guess the people who were beyond repair died and the people who got the injections survived, you know, but that also brought being that also, I was always on the lookout for, in our camp, for rats. So, my whole idea was to make sure we have poison to kill them, you know, before they infest the

place. So what we would do is, I would take these, we have the poison, but we can't leave it out in the weather or it will disintegrate it, you know, or lose its power, its potency. So, I needed something to shelter it. So, I had some stuff, but I needed some more things to shelter it, and the idea was to get artillery casings and put the trap in the casing, you know, for them to go in and eat it. … So, I ended up with some and I couldn't get some, and usually as a medic, or probably anybody in Vietnam, or in war, you never get all the stuff you need. So, you have to barter. So, you barter with the Marines, we had Marine groups next to us, or with the camp up the road or down the road or wherever, and we'd barter. "Look you need this, I need that, you know. You give me this, I give you that." … I took off on a, intending just to go to the next camp nearby to see if they had what I needed, and I took this three-quarter ton truck with me, and I went to that camp and they didn't. … They said, "Look, you go just down the road here, I think they have it." So, I went down the road, and this happened several times, and before I knew it, I had gone all the way through the Hai Van Pass, all the way to Da Nang, all the way to a place called Marble Mountain and I had no, I didn't even have a shotgun guy on the thing. I was alone, and at the time, I was so focused in getting this thing, I completely forgot about myself, my safety, or anything. The only time when I realized this, … I was on this road going to this last camp, and there was an MP blocking the road and everything. … I asked what happened and they said, "You know, twenty minutes ago there was an ambush here." That's when I realized, but even then, I said, "No, I'm going to go to this place." I went to the place and I got the stuff and I went back. [laughter] … When I finally got all I needed, I went back and, you know, set the traps and everything, but in retrospect, I said to myself, "That was the most stupid thing I have ever done." … It goes to show you that, you know, sometimes, you know, you got tunnel vision that I obviously had some tunnel vision there.

SH: Was it a friendly interaction between the Army and the Marines?

BM: Friendly? I don't think you could say it was that friendly, no. As a matter-of-fact, it wasn't even friendly between the same Army units.

SH: Really?

BM: No, no. For instance Tet, I experienced Tet when I was in An Khe because a group…

SH: You had gone from Qui Nhon up to An Khe?

BM: We went from Qui Nhon up to An Khe with a group, a company or two of ours up there. It wasn't the entire battalion, and we went up there because we had to make a new LZ somewhere west of Pleiku or someplace like that. So, we have to leave An Khe, which was a basically 1st Cav, 1st Cav Camp, and at the top of the mountain were their insignia. They owned it, it was their thing so we guys come in here. Now, the thing about it is that the guys from engineering are really big guys because they do physical work. I mean they are huge guys, you know, and so they can hold their own right, and so, you go drinking in the bar and there's Army engineers with, you know, the 1st Cav--you know there's going to be a fight.

SH: Really?

BM: Oh, absolutely, you know, because you start out with bantering, you know, how bad he is and how good he is and, you know, this, that. Before you know it, it comes blows you know, put downs right here, you know. It happens. [laughter]

SH: And the medic is called in.

BM: Yes, so that was one, you know, this all, you can see it. … I think with the Marines, we didn't have the same interaction because they're kind of like almost a separate unit. Not separate unit, there's a separate entity because they're basically tied with the Navy. They're not Army related in any way.

SH: Their medics are corpsmen, right?

BM: Corpsmen from the Navy, they're corpsmen, they're actually not Marines, but Navy, Navy corpsmen.

SH: Did you have any interaction with them?

BM: I had relationship with them, they're great guys. The Navy corpsmen are great guys. I mean, yes, I had a lot of respect for them, especially since they only took a .45 with them. Yes, they only carried a .45. I was always like, "What? No, I'm taking an M16 or M14, I'm sorry."

SH: Where were you when you were first under fire? Was it during the Tet Offensive or prior?

BM: … I think that the first time that we, I remember it, in our camp, if I'm remembering correctly, there was always times when they were harassment mortar fire at the camp. … I think the first time we really had a serious encounter with the enemy was at An Khe during the Tet Offensive. … This happened at night because usually in the day, we kind of owned space, you know, because we had just more firepower than everybody else, you know, but at night it's a completely different story. So, you know, we were attacked at night and An Khe is a very big camp. It's like a military camp here in the United States, it's huge, and so, each unit has its areas, right, and in our unit, as a matter-of-fact, we had the barracks. Let me see if I have a picture of that. I don't have a picture of that. Guess you can never take everything. [laughter] Anyway, yes, well they had even wooden barracks with concrete floors. It was the best accommodation we had. Now, it was just that good of a camp.

SH: Was it left over from the French or was this American built?

BM: I think the Americans had built this, yes, and so we loved it there. … The convenience was great, you had a real mess hall with, you know, all the good stuff, all the beer you could want, you know. It was okay, and they even had a town nearby that guys would get off and go downtown to do whatever, and so this attack happened at night. Sometime during the night, and I'm not sure what time. … It was dark nonetheless. We were told that there was, an attack had begun, and they're not sure if anybody even had gotten on. It's an ongoing situation, and we need to secure our perimeter in our area to make sure that no one breaches that and that we need some help on the outermost perimeter. So, you know, I don't remember if it was volunteers or people

were chosen to go out there, and I wanted to go out with the guys that were going out there. … At the end they said, "Look, we have medics out on the outer perimeter, you stay with your unit," and, you know, so that was what happened. So the guy, so all night, the entire night, there was a constant pitched battle going on with the mortar rounds hitting the camp. So, that was, that was really a big encounter with the enemy, and luckily, none of our guys from my unit got killed, but, you know, there were some casualties with the 1st Cav, and luckily that nobody had actually breached, had actually gotten in.

SH: Were there injuries? Did some of your troops get injured with this shelling?

BM: You know, it's funny that we didn't take a direct hit in our area, but it was just beyond us, yes. You know we could hear it and all the racket and, you know, we were on alert with our guns and helmets and the whole nine yards ready for and looking, appearing to see if anybody was trying to creep in and breach our perimeter. So, it was a very nerve wracking time.

SH: Was it just one night that this happened or did it go on for a few days?

BM: I think that the really big thing was one night. At this point, I don't remember if it happened for more than one night, but I know one night it was really a big thing, yes.

SH: Did they call it the Tet Offensive at that point?

BM: Yes, … it was the Tet Offensive. It was really big, it was all over the country. We all knew it was the Tet Offensive.

SH: Did you expect it to happen?

BM: No, we didn't. Nobody expected it to happen. … The only reason why it was the Tet Offensive was because it happened during the New Year of/in Vietnam, that they celebrate as the new year which is Tet, considered Tet, and there was a national offensive by the enemy so that was the logical, you know, naming of it.

SH: What kind of intelligence did you get? Would you as a medic be advised of any of this or told what to expect?

BM: The intelligence generally would go to the officers, and they would give us information as needed, on needed basis. … As I probably indicated that when we were, Air America was the airline that was transporting the intelligence groups, whether it's Army intelligence, Navy intelligence, CIA, or what have you. Obviously, it was some or probably all of those, but these guys, because most of the other tents were always filled to capacity, and I had a little bit more room in my tent because of the fact that you had to take care of, you know, the troops for their medical things. … I had as a matter-of-fact a couple of bunks empty, and so they would, whenever the Air America stops in our camp, they would end up being in my hooch, had to spend the night in my hooch. … So, at night, we would, you know, we would sit down and we would have conversation, and as I remember, it was broad conversation about a lot of things, you

know, and I'm sorry to say, they seemed to be like the craziest bunch of people I've ever seen in my life. [laughter]

SH: Did you ever know their names?

BM: I don't remember their names, but we would talk about religion and all kinds of things I think. … They seemed to be more "true believers" than anybody else, it seems to me.

SH: Really?

BM: Yes, it seems to me that they, if you believe whatever it is that you believe and you believe it like seventy percent, sixty-five--I think they're ninety-nine percent or ninety-five. They really; they're true believers.

SH: They had no doubt why America was in Vietnam.

BM: They had no doubt, and I get the feeling there's nothing they wouldn't do--I mean nothing they wouldn't do. That's what really is what got me to the point that I think, you know, these guys are a little bit crazy.

SH: Did they ever recount things to you that they have done that shocked you.

BM: They did. I wouldn't want to repeat it. [laughter]

SH: I will not ask again.

BM: Yes, yes.

DL: You mentioned before the interview that your camp had been hit by a typhoon.

BM: Yes, yes, and I have pictures of that. This is what happened to my camp after the typhoon. That's my tent--that was my tent. [Editor's Note: Mr. McLeod is referring to pictures of himself in Vietnam.]

SH: That was your tent.

BM: That was my tent.

DL: What camp was this?

BM: This was the one north of Lang Co, this was way up north of Da Nang, on the other side north of the Hai Van Pass.

DL: Can you tell us a little bit about your experience with it?

BM: Oh, yes. I mean, our camp was situated on the beach, just off the beach. So, we were right on the water. … This is now up north of Da Nang, north of the little village that we went down and somewhere between Lang Co and further up Phu Bai and Hue, I think, if my memory serves me right. … We were right there and all we had, the camp was just a bunch of canvas tents. Basically everything was that, except for the guard station around the perimeter which were made of wood, heavy plank wood with sand-bagging, kind of thing, and then, you know, you have several layers of concertina wire and mines and claymores out there to give us extra protection in case of an attack. So, we heard that there was going to be a hurricane. … I think we heard there was going to be a hurricane, but you know, and I think we tried to secure everything we had as best we could. We didn't have the means to do a very good job, but at the end, you know, it was a terrific amount of rain. It was torrential rain like a tropical rain, I mean a huge amount of it, and this went on for practically an entire week. Yes, I mean, you know, you had water coming in, and then, it finally hit, and then, you had rain going on for a few days after that. … All that time, it ripped down the tents and all of that, and all that time the only place you could probably have any shelter is on those guard stations along the perimeter and the command center which is usually where, you know, the head of our unit is, you know, the command, the captain and the officers, and all of the electronics, and all of that stuff. So, it's only so much people it can hold in there, so we end up being wet for a week. I did not take off my clothes for a week. I didn't take off my boots for a week. I was wet for a week. When I finally dried out and took my boots off, my skin was as white as his skin, and also, I begin to have the skin, little peeling and holes in it, like I was getting an infection or something. … We took all we could, like things like anti-fungus things to give everybody. You know, the powder to powder their feet and, you know, especially their feet because, you know, the chances of getting, you know, athlete's foot or something like that is, you know, it's quite great. … Then, of course, after that, I mean you would see a lot of skin issues with a lot of people that you have to give them different kinds of salves for it, and so forth, but yes, it was uncomfortable. … Of course, during that time, you know, you had no shelter a lot of times, and whatever you could cover yourself up with you cover yourself up with. Luckily, of course, you know, around every tent is like three feet of sand bags so, you know, you could actually hide behind that and throw something over your head as best you can to, you know, not to suffer the pelting or something like that. …

SH: Were you spared at least from enemy mortars?

BM: Well, I don't think the enemy wasn't anywhere there either. They wanted to take shelter. … I remember going out in the middle of the hurricane and I grant you, to move, I was walking like a forty-five degree angle. [laughter]

DL: Were you issued ponchos or anything?

BM: Yes, we had ponchos. … That was part of the help, you know, but you still got wet … because remember you can't staple it down and make it into a real little pup tent, it just wouldn't work, you know. So, you kind of hide behind and wrap yourself over as best you can.

SH: Was keeping ammunition dry part of the requirements?

BM: Well, you know, those ammunitions can get wet, I mean unless, I think even if you threw it in a pond of water you could take it out and fire it.

SH: Okay, that is good then.

BM: … I understand your point. The thing you're more concerned about is your weapon, but most guys always had their thing. They had some kind of plastic that they covered it up because, you know, in case of a thing you can just rip the plastic off and fire, but if, you know, if not, the weapon would be useless in less than a day.

SH: After the hurricane subsided, did they quickly resupply you with what you needed that you had lost in the hurricane, as far as medical supplies or bandages?

BM: Well, you know, I think most of those things, I had like a cabinet and all that stuff was in the cabinet, the cabinet didn't blow away because, you know, it was heavy, and it was a low silhouette kind of thing and well I mean the tents got repaired or replaced, right, and essentially that was it and, you know, you dry out, and you keep going, you know.

SH: What kind of equipment does a combat engineering group have that you recall?

BM: Oh boy, you know, they have, let's see, I probably have here. … They have every big equipment that you can think of, including that crane, right, i.e. bulldozers, grader, front loaders/lifters, backhoes, five ton dumpster trucks, *et cetera, et cetera*.

SH: I was thinking that there must be injuries not just from the enemy, but from their jobs.

BM: Oh, absolutely, oh, absolutely.

DL: How often did your men sustain heat injuries like dehydration and that sort of thing?

BM: No, we didn't have, not too often. I think the skin problem was the worst problem. People keep pretty hydrated, and it's a humid environment.

DL: What about on patrols? You were involved in several large-scale reconnaissance missions. How much water did an individual carry and how often were you resupplied with that?

BM: Well, we had the little canteen, you fill up the canteen and the next place you find water, right you fill it up and you put one of those tablets. … I don't remember if it was chlorine, but it was a tablet that we had that we put in there that supposedly made it good.

SH: Was there ever any instances where it did not make it good?

BM: No, not really. I think it made it good, yes, even sometime little water that it didn't look as clean as you thought, it ought to be, you put that in and, you know, you make the thing settle out and you can drink it, and you're still good.

DL: So, you would always drink off the land, like drink out of rivers?

BM: Well, you know, unless they bring you a tanker with water, which sometimes can happen, but you can't depend on that. You have to depend on trying to, you know, let's put it this way, they know you need water and from time to time they will find ways of getting you water if the situation needed. … I think that's probably comes by way of the captain or the lieutenants or what have you. They'll say, "Guys, you know, we ran out of water. These guys are … [saying], "Can we get some water," or they'll bring it in with a helicopter, sometimes also a tanker truck, or something like that, but in general, you try to live off the land, at least in the recon, especially on the recons.

DL: Back to these recons, was it a fighting recon where you were actually going out there advancing to contact or were you trying to take a look?

BM: The recon that we had, basically, was in association with an infantry group that we are providing the engineering that they might need, you know. They might need a bridge, a pontoon bridge, fix a bridge that had been knocked out, you know, or something of that nature, so we're attached on those occasions with, in our case, with the 1st Cav in the I Corps. … We go on and we do whatever engineering the infantry needs.

DL: On these long reconnaissance missions and you can only carry so much stuff. What about with foot care, how many extra socks are you carrying--or foot powder? Are you carrying all of that or is each individual carrying their own equipment?

BM: Each individual is carrying that, yes each individual. Usually before we leave, you make sure that they have all that stuff. There's some kind of briefing as to what's going on and what you may need and, you know. Most people have an idea what they need to take.

SH: Were you in charge of these briefings as the company medic?

BM: No, usually that, you know, these are kind of things that happens all the time in these kinds of situations, so it usually comes out of the officer corps where they kind of give an instruction to what's going to happen, and so forth, but I mean if the medic were to carry that, you'd never have enough stuff for it, you know.

SH: Were you in charge of briefing your men on what they should be taking?

BM: No, no.

DL: What about insect injuries?

BM: Well, the biggest thing was the mosquitoes and malaria because malaria was a big issue. As a matter fact, in the tents, you actually should cover up with a net at night which we had, but, you know, as a supplement to that, we had malaria pills, which we had two types, a little small white one and a big brown one. … You'd take one a day of these and they're supposed to be anti-malaria pills, but from what I understand, we were the guinea pigs.

SH: Oh, really?

BM: Yes, but that's why we are called GIs, because it's supposed to be "Government Issue." One of the things about that is that I remember one of the guys that I sent away, was having some medical problems and I couldn't figure out what it was and I sent him away to have him tested and checked out. It came back that he never came back, they sent him off to Japan, and he never returned. He was having some bad reactions or allergic reactions or what have you to the malaria medicine.

SH: Really?

BM: Yes.

SH: Did you ever have to treat self-inflicted wounds?

BM: No, I actually didn't see any of that. I do remember meeting one fellow that was, seemed desperate to get out of Vietnam and to get out of the Army or what have you. … We thought it was funny because he came to me and was asking me that he would like to have his, I don't know why he was telling me, I guess I was a sympathetic ear or what, I am not sure, you know, if I know anybody that could break his knee caps. I said, "I would recommend to you that you don't even mention it." He wanted to pay somebody to break his kneecap, I think that was what it was. … I told him, you know, "I suggest that he doesn't say this to any of these guys because these guys would break it for nothing," break more than his kneecap for nothing. Somehow, he took the advice because he didn't get his kneecap broken, and I think soon afterwards he went on R&R and he came back married.

SH: Really?

BM: Yes. [laughter]

SH: Where did you go for your R&R?

BM: I went to Taiwan.

SH: Was your future wife able to join you?

BM: No, no. Just myself, yes.

SH: Was it an interesting culture?

BM: It was a very interesting culture, I loved it immensely. I thought it was, it transported you like to another world which, to me, is always interesting, and like I said, as soon as you landed, that smell, you get this new smell, you know, kind of incense, you know, and the pagodas on the side of the roads. I mean, it was wonderful. I mean the architecture, I mean, especially the more rural architecture, which is more traditional, it's nice. I mean, when you go to Taipei, it's

like any modern city, you know, but when you go off in the countryside, you know, you get this kind of charming eastern kind of architecture that … was pleasant to see. It was interesting to see, yes.

SH: Was it hard to go back then to Vietnam?

BM: No, not really, because you realize you're going to go back and you really, you're happy to get a break. The funny thing about that, when I left, and it was very funny, and I guess probably that's the reason why young men are encouraged to go to war because they never hear the bad stories, they only hear the good stories from people who have survived and were lucky. … I remember that when I was supposed to leave my camp to go on R&R, I had missed my ride, and so I missed my ride and I might even miss my plane because, you know, the next thing … might not get me down to Da Nang and get the plane out to and get my flight out to Cam Ranh Bay and out of the country. … So, you know, like anything else, I adjust and I found a way to bum a ride down to Da Nang. … It was either that night or the night after, but my camp was attacked viciously. … It was a really big attack and several, I came back, several of my buddies were killed.

SH: Oh, my word.

BM: Yes.

SH: And the medic was not there.

BM: I was not there.

SH: Did you know the attack had taken place until you came back?

BM: I didn't know until I came back.

SH: While you are in the country, do you know what's going on all around Vietnam?

BM: Not really, no, … you just focus on where you are. You have no idea what's going on around, none whatsoever.

SH: I wondered if Air America filled you in.

BM: No, no, it wasn't like that. … They weren't telling me secrets that's for sure. No, … it was basically stories, you know.

SH: Were you getting *Stars and Stripes*?

BM: Yes, we were getting *Stars and Stripes*, yes.

SH: Where was your news coming from?

BM: *Stars and Stripes* basically.

SH: Was anyone sending you news from home about the anti-war protests?

BM: It was mostly, I mean, we were isolated in that regard, and we were all happy to be isolated. I mean, I don't think we were particularly interested to hear that kind of thing when you're there. … We knew it was going on in a way because it was there before we left and we knew we were going to go back to it, you know. I mean, frankly, this is the first time I've talked to anybody about Vietnam since I left. I mean, I basically--yes. As a matter-of-fact there was a challenge made by Hemingway to write a six-word autobiography.

SH: Really?

BM: He said anybody should be able to write an autobiography in six words. So, I took on the challenge and basically my autobiography is to "Love my family and to forget war." I think I've done that pretty well up until now.

SH: Here we are, trying to draw out of you.

BM: … Yes, it's funny about all this, but what's interesting, my son, when he was wooing his wife, one of the things that gave them a real connection was the fact that her father was a Vietnam veteran and my son, you know, had a Vietnam veteran as a father. … They would both talk about and have fun about their crazy paranoid Vietnam veteran father. … Like for instance, I had like a Toyota car that was parked in front, sometime in front of our house and sometimes it would be parked in my garage in the back because I lived in a row house or a town house. … I would sometimes get up and look out to check if the car was still there, you know. … My son says, "Dad, what are you doing? Nobody wants that old piece of junk. It's thirty-five years old, you know, you're paranoid." … They both had fun at our expense, but it led to marriage and three kids.

SH: You have given us a wonderful chronology about your Vietnam experiences. One of the ones that has intrigued me was that you saw a large cat on a mountain.

BM: Yes, one morning we were out doing … the mine sweep, and, you know, when I'm out there, a medic is a really strange position in all of this because you're almost like an officer and you're not an officer kind of thing, you know. You have this kind of responsibility that is greater than the average [enlisted man].

SH: You must have a lot of respect that goes with that as well.

BM: There is a lot of respect that goes with that and so, you know, you move around and you try to move around with the troop and, you know, like I suppose an officer, you try to show by example that you do everything and willing to do everything that everybody else does. … So, you know, from time to time, I would be at the back, in the front, you know, and so forth, and in this particular day I was on point, you know, which is a dangerous position, supposedly dangerous position. … While I was there, along, this was not, this was like going north, but this

time it was one going south and as we were going up the mountain, there's like a ditch at the side, and then the hill goes up and it's all bushy, and out of the ditch maybe like, I would say like from here to that door, where that door is, which is about thirty feet, twenty, thirty feet, out of the ditch jumped this thing. I mean, and it was like a split of a second, you know, you could only see almost like a dark silhouette of this thing jumping in, but the silhouette looked to me as if it was a large cat. I mean, I couldn't say that I actually saw stripes on it, but I can't think of anything else that would be there other than a tiger, but I would say this, if you were close enough to something like that, it was so fast that unless you're gun was pointing in the right direction, you probably wouldn't hardly have time to swing it around in time. It was extremely fast. I was astounded. I mean, I said to the other guy, "Guys, did you see that?" The guy down there, "Yes, I saw that Doc. That was a tiger, it got to be!"

DL: When you are on point, did you actually put your safety of your gun on or was it off?

BM: It was off, yes. No, when we're out we're always with the safety off. In some cases, you know, the funny thing you were asking about friendly fire or accidents that happened--it happened all the time. I mean, one time I was going on the truck. We were outside and, you know, climbing on to the back of the truck, and the guy in front of me took out this .45 and we had a lot of accidents with .45s. It's by far the most dangerous weapon because, very interesting, you just don't pull the trigger for it to fire. The safety, it has another safety element which is on the heel of it, right, and the guy was taking off the other safety, right, and as he takes the other safety off, the truck lurched. … I was right in front of him, and it fired, and I could hear the thing whiz by my ear. You talk about being shocked. …

SH: There must have used some curse words.

BM: Yes. It was--I mean. It was [scary]. …

SH: Did everyone carry a .45?

BM: No, no, some people carry .45s, some people carry others. …

SH: Could you arm yourself with what you wanted?

BM: No, no, well yes, and no. When you're out in the field, … a lot of times, weapons pass through, exotic weapons. I mean, there was a Browning submachine gun that came by that everybody kind of wanted to kind of pass around. Sometimes you get guns that are AK. …

DL: 47s?

BM: 47s, yes, and the only thing here with the AK-47 you don't want to use it, because everybody knows what it sounds [like] and it will draw fire. So, if you get an AK, you tend not to want to actually fire it out in the field because, you know, you'll draw fire, but we had a carbine, we had a few carbines go by. We had a lot of exotic weapons. People loved to have this extra thing. I don't know, it's just a fascination that the guys had with these other weapons. So sometimes guys would carry these other weapons, but generally speaking, I could have carried a

.45, but I chose not to, and like, for instance, somebody carries a machinegun, he can also carry a .45 as well as a backup. … Most of the officers, I think, generally walk around with .45s, but sometimes we can carry, you know, the other rifles if they so desire.

SH: With this group, was there ever any trouble with the officers in your experience?

BM: Oh, absolutely, yes. … They made a point to make the officers know that there is such a thing as I think--what's the word that we used in Vietnam?

SH: Fragging?

BM: Fragging, yes. They had made them realize that there's such a thing as fragging. So, if an officer is a mean guy or incompetent or creates, you know, something where men got injured but people think was due to his ineffectiveness or lack of ability, you know, they had the idea that you could be fragged. One of our officers, it was the captain for some time, and he was, as a matter-of-fact, I think he was a West Pointer guy. We were told on the mountain there was a big explosion and he got injured and he never came back and the rumor was that he got fragged because nobody liked him. He's one of those know it all kind of do it this way when a lot of times the officers are not as capable as the NCO, the non-commissioned officer. The non-commissioned officer is the guy where most of the combat knowledge lies, you know, and you get some guy fresh out of West Point that thinks he knows it all and if he goes out and do that and people see that he's a nut case, you know, this is when this kind of thing could happen.

SH: In this combat engineering group that you were with, you were attached to the cavalry.

BM: 1st Cav.

SH: Were you then assigned to someone else or did you always stay with the 1st Cav?

BM: Well, you know, firstly, when you say when you say attached to the 1st Cav, is that they don't have complete command. Your command still comes through the line of, chain of command through the engineering battalion, but you are like a consultant, let's put it that way, to them. You are going to do a job for them, you know, but they don't know how your business and how to do this engineering. They know their combat end, and they let us do our engineering thing. Now, we need a bridge--we go out and do the bridge, you know, and whatever instruction we need, it comes by way of our battalion. So, it's, you know, it's that kind of a relationship.

SH: Most of this time you were working with the 1st Cav in the different places you went to in Vietnam.

BM: Not everywhere. I think the 1st Cav came up most when we were further south, it seemed as if we were more or less on our own and doing what we need to do. … Then, somewhere, I guess it was after the Tet, or before the Tet, no it was after the Tet, we got together, they sent us to, on boats, in this context really meaning ships, to take all of our equipment, put it on a ship, several ships rather, and we went, we sailed from Qui Nhon up to Da Nang. It took about, you know, I don't think they were going fast, so it seemed like it took about a week, and most of that

week I was almost seasick, almost, you know, almost, so here it is. … I was on the ship there and this is either before or after we came off the ship.

DL: When you were actually on the ship, did you have any real duties besides making sure people were not seasick?

BM: Yes, that's about it, just giving out these motion sickness pills that we had.

DL: Was the rest of the trip just playing cards?

BM: Yes, just relaxing, yes.

SH: Did you feel relatively safe then when you were on the ship?

BM: Yes, we felt relatively safe because we didn't think that the Vietcong had much in terms of navy.

SH: That is what I meant.

BM: Yes, yes.

DL: You also mentioned before the interview that you were you were adjacent to the USS *New Jersey* while on a base camp.

BM: Oh, yes, I mean at night, yes. At night, we had, some of them was howitzers.

DL: 105 mm howitzers?

BM: 105 howitzers, and then they had these bigger ones, and these were mobiles, and there would be on the camp, and all night, they would have harassment fire to the enemy, and this would go on all night long. … The funny thing about it, they were always telling me, you know, because I was always interested in our defense so, you know, whenever there was, I hear from the guys that there's a need and the officers are not getting it, I'd be like the go-between. I'd get it, I'll go to the officers, the guides, you know. "I'm getting word that we're lacking in this, this, this thing, I think that's important that we get it up to snuff, blah, blah, blah." … This would get done, but I was told sometimes that, "Don't worry about it, we got the artillery here, if we have the enemy, we just give them," I think it was grape shots or some kind of shots like this. … What that was, they lowered the gun straight out, they put in this thing with these little arrows, they looked like baby arrows, and it would go like a shotgun and it would just destroy anything in its path. … I'm like, "Forget that, so where are we going to be," you know. I didn't buy that at all because these guys were in the middle of the camp so how's that going to work? A false sense of security, I thought it was.

DL: How close to the artillery were you when they were firing?

BM: Oh, pretty close, you know, pretty close. … It was funny, I thought my eardrums were going to be busted, but it didn't burst, but after a while you got, one of the things that I realized when I was in Vietnam and it was probably luck that I was young, is that I could sleep through anything.

SH: Really?

BM: I could sleep through anything, anything. As soon as we get a chance, I mean like we were on recon, and we stopped and say, "Guys, take a rest," we're gone. They say, "Get up," we're up and we're going again. I don' think it was only me, it was everybody. If you didn't have that ability you'd be seriously at a disadvantage, yes.

DL: When you were in camp, how much sleep would you get a night on average?

BM: I think on average I think you would probably get, I mean depending on when you go to bed because you can decide when you go to bed. There were guys in certain hooches that get together at night, play cards and, you know, and don't go to bed and play music and all of that kind of stuff and don't go to bed until very late at night. So, it depends on when you go to bed, but, yes, I think you can get eight hours sleep. … Also, since we were right on the beach, at the time I was there, the USS *New Jersey* was in Vietnam, and they were also part of this harassment fire, and they were noted for their sixteen-inch guns if I'm not mistaken. … Those things, we could see the boat out, we could see it out on the water and, you know, with sideways with all the guns go "Bow-wow!" [Editor's Note: Mr. McLeod mimics a salvo being shot from a sixteen-inch gun.] … You could see almost like a smoke ring, you know, on those things going up, yes. They would be out there for, you know, days at a time, you know, and then, they would go away, and then, you know, maybe two weeks later they would be back. …

DL: When you came back from Vietnam, did you ever get a hearing test?

BM: Well, my wife thinks that my ears are damaged, but I did take a test and that doctor indicated that, it didn't indicate that there was anything that he found because my wife tells me, and my son tells me the same thing, that I speak loud. … I'm not aware that I'm speaking loud, so I'm not sure that doctor quite got it right. … [laughter]

SH: I wanted to ask if your unit could call in air support.

BM: Yes.

SH: Was that frightening? We talked about friendly fire.

BM: Yes, we always worry about that because you could always get hit, you never know, so that was always, always in the back of your mind, but, you know, I mean that was one of many, many things that could go wrong. … There were a few cases of people, two cases that come to mind of accidents and friendly fire. One was a fellow that, at night, he would go into town and he had a girlfriend in a nearby town, and he would take off without, you know, getting approval there, you know, on the sly. … When he was coming back into the camp, one of the persons on guard

heard the noise or whatever trying to sneak his way back and he was shot and killed. … Of course, the guy was shot and never, you know, no charges were brought up on him because, you know, it's a reasonable accident that could happen and he had no approval to do what he was doing. Another case was this young man that drove one of those, like a tractor trailer, but he was carrying these great long like telephone poles that some of those things were used to make, if we're making wood bridges, or we can sometimes put up electrical poles and things like that, and if necessary, the engineering activity, or piles or what have you. He was driving and the load was not locked in properly, and so when he was coming off the hill, he pressed on the brake for whatever reason and that whole load came right through the cab, completely killed him, instantly. I'm sure he never even realized what happened, it was probably instantaneous, but there's a lot of that. I mean, just the nature of everybody with a gun and, you know, all the confusion of war, when something is happening, half of the time you're not absolutely sure what's going on out there, you know, and you get conflicting information and, and you know, after all the firing going on. It's really, I mean most of the time, you're not absolutely sure what's happening.

SH: Going to the lighter side then, were there USO shows that you were able to avail yourselves of?

BM: Yes, there was a USO show that came to the camp, yes.

SH: More than once?

BM: I think probably a couple of times. I think while I was in country, I probably saw two shows, yes.

SH: After you came down to Da Nang, what are you duties and what are your combat engineers doing? What are you building in Da Nang?

BM: Well, Da Nang, we went north to Da Nang, and in Da Nang, basically, we were opening the road from Da Nang all the way up to Hue, right, and especially, the entire road was subpar and we were actually building a new road, blasting out the mountain and creating new roads, building many, many bridges, and culverts and all of that and maintaining it and securing it in general. I mean, the Army, basically, is to hold ground, you know, and the infantry and basically infantries to conquer new ground. So, as they moved forward, us, the engineers, were supposed to build the roads, secure the roads, keep the roads secure, and they can go off and do whatever else they need to do.

DL: You mentioned that you spent time in a foxhole. How was that experience?

BM: Well, you know, that's a very interesting experience because when we first went to Da Nang, we had no secure … perimeter. So, the first thing we had to do in case we got attacked at night was to dig foxholes. So, my foxholes happened to be right next to a Vietnamese grave. So, I was down in there, it was all sandy because it was, again, near the beach, and so, the fear we all had was the fact that it was going to cave in all the time, you know. So, if you wanted to sleep, we decided, rightly or wrongly, so that the best way to do it was to put on your gas mask,

would give you, you know, a little bit of chance that something won't get into your nostrils, will at least protect you quickly, sufficiently that maybe you can use your hand to get out. So you'd be in the foxhole with your gas mask. … You wouldn't lay down, you put your head, your back against the wall, and you try to hold your hand like this to sleep so that if anything happens, at least you had a better chance of digging yourself out so, you know, that was an experience where it wasn't a very, let's put it this way, a disquieting night in the sense that you were really not sleeping. … You're always, the whole thing was a big watch for what might happen. So, it was, you know, an unbelievable night, and on top of that, it was right next to a grave site, but I tell you, at some point in time, and I'm not absolutely sure whether it was there, but I think it was that time that I basically said, you know, if I get out of here, I don't know how, what was the exact promise I made, but I was going to make sure that I would further the job of God, Christ, or what have you. I mean before I, you know, when I was a very young man, I really was an extremely strong believer, and then I went through high school, and by the time at the end of high school I was not such a strong believer because science had somehow replaced it, you know, and then I went to Vietnam and this kind of situation, it was so important to have some kind of a faith in this unpredictable situation, right. … Basically, you say, I think the wish was, "God, if you let me get through all of this, you know, I kind of will believe in you and I will do everything to further thy kingdom," or something to that nature. I end up after the war, I got back home, and the interesting thing is that my friend Raymond Leslie that I met halfway through, by accident, we again met, and he happened to be living in my neighborhood. … We just happened to be driving by his house and I saw him pushing his lawn mower cutting his grass.

SH: You are kidding.

BM: … I just moved in the neighborhood. I didn't choose a church yet, I wanted a church, and he was also an Episcopalian, and he says, "Hey, come on to my church, it's right here." So, I went to his church, our kids grew up together, and, you know, ten years afterwards here am I now ten years afterwards. [Editor's Note: Mr. McLeod is showing the interviewer a photograph.]

SH: Oh, my.

DL: Is that when you started to grow out the afro and the beard?

BM: Yes, exactly, and if you look at the other side you'll see us with Raymond together.

SH: Where are you?

BM: I'm taking the picture, yes, I was the picture taker. I didn't get in the picture.

SH: That is wonderful. Whereabouts are you living then when you meet Raymond after the war?

BM: I'm living in Queens, yes, yes, yes, I'm living in Queens. …

SH: I wanted to ask some more questions about Vietnam.

BM: … I want to just finish the thing. So, I went to the thing, and of course we had this wonderful reunion and our families grew up together and all of that, and we went to the same church and all of that. … Of course I spent, my church was a very small church, extremely small church, and they wanted to make a larger church. And being an architect, I was involved in all the processes of fundraising and trying to deal with the surveys and all the needs of the church and such thing as later on we had to figure out what it really was going to cost. … We have to select an architect that does churches, you know, and so forth. … This whole process, which was the payback to what I had promised in the foxhole, it took me ten years to do this, and at the end of which I think they thought I did a great job and I ended up getting the Bishop's Cross.

SH: Oh, wonderful.

BM: Yes.

SH: What is the name of the church?

BM: Saint David's Episcopal Church in Cambria Heights.

SH: Wonderful, congratulations--that is a lot of work. From Da Nang do you move again?

BM: No, Da Nang is the last place we stayed, and in Da Nang, of course in the I Corps area, whereas the other areas that I was in, at least Corps number II was all Army. I Corps was a combination of Army and Marines in I Corps, so it was almost like half and half, but, you know, we had different, I suppose, activities or goals in terms of what the Marines does, you know. We didn't overlap so to speak. They had their different focus, I should say, would be the better word.

DL: When you are out in the fields like in camp, how often were you actually getting mail and care packages?

BM: We were getting mail. We were getting mail I think it was either every day or every other day, we were getting regular mail. … Of course, you know, I didn't get mail every day, you know, maybe once every two weeks I would get a mail, you know.

SH: How long did it take you to make Da Nang into a livable base? You talked about getting there and it not having a perimeter.

BM: In very short order. I would say, you know, I mean, you know, it's always an ongoing process you know as you may, but the basic things that you need as basically a good perimeter, and then, you know, decent infrastructure to get what you do done. I'd say in three, four weeks we were pretty good, yes, yes. I mean, it's, you know, the military has great systems, you know. They know how to do those things and they do it very efficiently, quickly.

SH: You quickly wound up with decent hooch to be able to treat your men in?

BM: Right, yes.

SH: Could you talk about race relations among the men in your unit?

BM: Pause. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Before we took the break, I had asked about race relations as you experienced them in Vietnam.

BM: Right. I think that race relations in the Army, especially in a war zone, is generally very good, at least from my experience. I think part of that has to do with the whole idea of one for all and all for one, and essentially the best way that an Army unit works has to work like a wolf pack basically. However, I did have the occasion of being … at the chow line out in the camp going to the mess tent to eat. There was a fellow that had just arrived from the States, as a replacement, that was what we called a "green troop," and he happened to have met a fellow soldier that was there ahead of him, you know, a member of our unit who apparently was from the same State or from the same area of the same State. … They were talking, and for whatever reason, I was in the vicinity and apparently was commiserating or greeting some of the other folks, and this young fellow, which I overheard, says, "What is that," using the "N" word, you know, "Who was that 'N' word," right. … I overheard him, and I could see that his friend, who was a part of the unit, knew that I overheard him. … He immediately told this fellow, this fellow that had just arrived, that, "That is the Doc, a medic, and he just heard what you said, and you better go over and apologize." So, he came over and apologized, and I graciously accepted his apology, and basically that was the end of that. … I think, generally speaking, one of the motivating factors why this resolved itself so quickly was the fact that he knew that there was a possibility that in a triage situation, he would come up last and he wanted to make sure he had a better chance than last.

SH: It was self-serving.

BM: It's self-serving, it's self-serving, but it's the whole idea that, you know, there were repercussions to such behavior that made … the need for an apology so obvious.

SH: We had talked about how you were aware of the antiwar demonstrations in the United States, but there was also this horrible string of deaths of major figures in the United States as well. The first that comes to mind is the assassination of Martin Luther King. What was the reaction in Vietnam?

BM: … I thought that was important because I had to think very hard to try to remember, kind of, what the sentiment was at that time, and I'm going to try to see if I can look at my notes here to try to cover that issue because that one was a tough one. The day I heard about the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as best I can remember when I or the members of my unit heard about it, a few days had elapsed. I remembered, I can't remember if it was two days, three days or a week. We were not informed officially at a meeting or a morning parade

assembly. I believe I heard the news from a fellow African-American soldier, and before long, the news had spread throughout the unit by word of mouth. I don't remember that anyone was prepared to hear this news or was not shocked or surprised. However, I did not remember any outward or animated anger about hearing this news. Nonetheless, there was universal understanding of the anger, rage and riots that were being expressed in the cities in America. My guess was that Dr. King was respected by the young black men in the Army, i.e. my unit, but they were not sold on his, they were not sold on his … "turn the other cheek approach." They might have even taken some vicarious pleasure in the angry response taking place at home in America because they did not believe a man such as Dr. King, who promoted non-violence, should have suffered this fate. However, there was a certain detachment from this event, partly because we were not currently in the racially charged environment in the United States, and secondly, in the Army, we had a strong bond among our unit members. Since we were accustomed to depending on each other for our survival, it is important to know that over approximately the preceding five years, Dr. King's assassination was the third. The two previous ones were President Kennedy in November of 1963 I believe, and Malcolm X in February of 1965.

SH: At no point then did anyone address this assassination to the troops?

BM: No, no. I think it would be, you know, it would be very uncomfortable. … I guess, the idea would be, you would hear it by, you know, by happenstance or osmosis, you know, you would deal with it. I thought people in the Army, African-Americans dealt with it very well. I mean, you know, and of course as I stated again … part of it is our custom of depending on each other for survival. That made, I think makes a big, big difference, yes.

DL: Is the reason because they had white colleagues who laid down their lives for them that African-Americans were not thinking about racial issues?

BM: Absolutely. Absolutely, I agree. I think it was the Army in that kind of situation, is completely removed from the kind of the US environment, where it was more in keeping with what it ought to be than back in the States.

DL: At this time did you get any correspondence from your fiancée about how it was in America?

BM: I think she probably mentioned it in a letter, but it wasn't anything that was overtly emphasized.

SH: Was Dr. King someone that you were aware of in Jamaica?

BM: Yes, yes. As a young man, and as most young men are concerned, young men are not generally inclined to want to take an approach that Dr. King, you know, projected or wanted … and this is true of every group. I mean, I read stories about, you know, some of the guys like Red Cloud, and how he had to deal with his young warriors and how strongly they are about not, you know, signing peace treaties and how much they need to fight. I think this is true across the board, I think young men tend to want to use force of arms as opposed to anything else.

SH: One other question that I had that you had listed here for us, was the popular beliefs held by many of your fellow soldiers.

BM: … Yes, yes, there were quite a few very interesting ideas and beliefs that the fellows had in the service in Vietnam. One of them was that we thought that we would never allow ourselves to be captured, but I have no idea if we would ever follow through on that, but the whole idea that the worst thing that could possibly happen to you is to get captured.

SH: What had you been told would happen to you?

BM: No, nobody tells you any such thing, there was no briefing, it was just in mind and the idea was that you'd be tortured and, you know, and people would make up, I think, a lot of, you know, unbelievable torture. … Essentially, you know, everybody came to the general opinion that, you know, that's the worst thing that could happen, you know, so, you know, you'd do everything to avoid that at any cost, even if you have to keep a bullet, a last bullet for the gun. … I don't think, I don't know if people would follow through on that, but that was the general belief, yes. Another one was that there were Russian or Soviet agents working or fighting on the other side with the enemy, and so we had to be aware and actually take out any. … This is really funny, but everybody thought it was somebody like you see in [the James Bond spy movie] "From Russia With Love," any blonde person in the company of the enemy and not mistake them for an American prisoner. [laughter] … That was another one we had because there were always these rumors. … Also, African-American soldiers believe they can bear and achieve anything as long as they have their music to sustain them. So guys would, like we're going on recon, and guys would spend extra time to carry some kind of like a cassette radio or something like that, something that plays music, so that at some point in time when they are allowed, they can play some music. … I suppose it would reenergize them and, you know, whatever. So, that was it and of course, well for me, the song that kept playing over and over in my head was a Diana Ross hit called, "Ain't No Mountain High Enough." "Ain't no Valley Low Enough, Ain't no River Wide Enough to Keep me Away from You."

SH: "Babe."

BM: "Babe," i.e. my fiancée, this was always on my mind. [laughter]

SH: Was there ever a movie or a scene from movies that you have seen about Vietnam that truthfully portrayed what you experienced?

BM: I haven't seen a lot of war movies, but I did see "Platoon" (1986) and I thought it was probably closer to reality than anything else that I'd ever seen. …

SH: Did you find that the African-American soldiers stayed on one side, and the white soldiers stayed on the other?

BM: Well, I think at night, generally there is a conglomeration, … a preference for a particular music. If, let's say they're guys that love rhythm and blues, then all the rhythm and blues guys

were there. All the guys that smoke a little marijuana would be one way, you know, the guys who were drinkers would be staying in one way. … In that process, you'd find that there would be a lot of folks who are either black or white or Spanish, Hispanic, who would congregate mostly in those off hours, yes. …

SH: How prevalent were drugs being used during your time in the service?

BM: It was significant. I mean, I know one of the things, and I don't know, I never thought about it that way, but I was offered by some of the guys, you know, to smoke and I was not a smoker and I didn't smoke and I told them so and funny enough they respected me for that. … It wasn't as if, you're not one of the guys. After a while they realized "Doc doesn't smoke, you know, he doesn't do that." … I would basically, I would, my thing is I would go to each camp and I would spend a little time with each camp, you know, at night, you know, you'd go over to the guys who are beer drinkers, or go with the guys that smoke, or the guys that, you know, you do your own to keep yourself entertained, keep your dinger on the pulse of the companies and for camaraderie.

DL: I imagine that drugs were contraband. Did they have to worry about that from officers or anything?

BM: Yes, yes, they had to worry about it from officers because they could go up on charges.

SH: Did that happen often?

BM: No, nobody, I don't think that, know that anybody got caught. I think there were other things that people were using, you know, because, yes, part of the thing that really triggers all of that is the psychological effects that sometime happens that I would have to deal with. You know, like there was one night where this fellow, he had a brother who was also in the service and we thought that two brothers, they wouldn't induct two brothers at the same time, but apparently they did. … Apparently, his brother had gotten some significant award for his activity in Vietnam, and this other brother had heard about it in our unit. … I don't know what he was taking, whether it was doing drugs or whatever he was drinking or what have you, or smoking, but he put on his entire gear at night, which at night you can't be outside the perimeter, and his weapons. … He wanted to wander out to go find the enemy, and apparently it seemed as if he wanted, he didn't want his brother to outdo him and so we had to restrain him. I had to get a bunch of guys to restrain him, you know, take him in to the medical hooch and give him a sedative so he could sleep it off, and the next day, you know, I don't think he even remembered what he wanted to do.

DL: Was that actually reported or is that the sort of thing you tried to keep under wraps?

BM: Well, I mean I think those kinds of things will get around, but it's nothing that, it's no infraction broken there, you know. I mean whatever you may suspect, there's no proof of it, you know, and people are actually, people are not looking for proof, they are looking for you to just do your job. So, long as you do your job, you know, nobody is paying attention. It may be more of a problem the higher up you go, you know, as if you go to like a battalion headquarters as

opposed to out in the field, but in the field, no. As long as you do your job, it's fine, but once you can't do your job, then that's a problem.

SH: Did your battalion ever have inspections?

BM: Yes, I think we do have that, but it was not frequent in the field, but back in battalion, it was more frequent again, yes.

SH: What did you think of the leadership that you had in your officers within your unit?

BM: I never thought about it. I just think they're doing their job, I had confidence in the process, you know, and I just do mine. … The one thing I talked about is, where I was concerned about, defense, and so therefore, that was one of the areas where, I mean I saw what sometimes seemed like complacency. … Therefore, my idea was I wasn't complacent, I just wanted to do all the things that would maximize our ability to defend ourselves, you know, and if we have an attack. So, for instance, sometime here we were putting out claymores on the perimeter, cause that's one of the defense elements, and generally what we try to do is, we try to not have anybody see where the claymores are, so we try to put out differently or put out at night so that or in the evening, so that the people would generally come in and out and say, "Well, you know what, there was a claymore there, there, there." This is just one of my buddies. … It happened to get a show a sense of the mountains behind, so you realize there is the sea at one end and behind us was the mountains.

SH: I assume that this picture is of equipment for making gravel or rock to build the roads.

BM: Not really, I think that was just put there for whatever structure was over in the corner.

SH: I was looking at the structure itself.

BM: Oh, you're talking about back here? Yes, yes, that was probably rocks and stuff to do construction. … We had a lot of big equipment, you know, we had bulldozers … and you saw the crane that we had. We had graders, you know, and I mean, we had so many bigger pieces of equipment. We could do just about anything. We needed to, you know, not really break our backs. The guys wouldn't have to break their backs too much, you know, but there was some hard work. … All the guys, like I said, were big, burly guys.

SH: Did you have any interaction with the Vietnamese people themselves as a medic?

BM: Oh, yes, like I was saying, we went to that village to try to help with the plague thing, and one time, when I was in An Khe, we had a problem where people were coming down with, I don't know how to say this politely, VD, and so, one of the ideas was how could we minimize that. I mean one way is to ask the guys to use some kind of a protection, and, you know, if that didn't work, the other ideas would be to go to the village, and do it from the other end, you know. So that was one of the things that I tried to do when I was in An Khe. Some places you can't do it, but in other places you can do it, you know. I mean, this was just to keep general health of the guys so they can get on with the job. Another part was, like I say, the people that work on the

base, you know, trying to make sure that, you know, we checked to make sure they didn't have any health issues since they have to deal with the food, and, you know, generally people try to keep a good relationship with the people in the village. I know, for instance, we had, on that little village called Lang Co, when we're coming down the mountain, we eventually had one company at a camp, a satellite camp, in that, just outside of that village, and that was C Company I believe. They took a lot of casualties, I mean, they lost a lot of people, and I would go out there. The funny thing is when I'm out there, staying there, nothing happened, when I go back to the other place, something happened over there. … It was just like, unbelievable, like nothing bad would happen where I am, you know, but for instance, you know, sometime the villagers would complain that our activity damaged their crop or something like that, and we would have to try to find ways to, you know, pacify that situation or pay them for their losses or, you know, something like that. … I mean, generally, the only other time that you interact is, you know, you're driving through a certain place, and we would get a lot of candies, a tremendous amount of candies. I mean, you know, you name it the kind of candy, and so, while we're going along, we'd always throw this out to the kids we'd see along the way, and the kids knew that, and when they saw the truck, and they would be waving and [saying] "candy," you know.

SH: How did you spend your holidays in Vietnam?

BM: … If it's Thanksgiving, they would have the turkey and food, kind of stuff like that. … I don't think anything overtly was done to celebrate other than things like food or something, you know, superficial of that nature as far as I can remember.

SH: Did you have a chaplain attached to your group?

BM: No, sometimes a chaplain comes there every so often, yes, and, you know, there's a chaplain at battalion headquarters, but when you're in the field, they kind of come out and visit once in a while, yes.

SH: When we had spoken on the phone, you had talked about how you had to go and get some kind of medical supplies for your troops?

BM: … That's what I was talking about, those casings for the traps, yes.

SH: There is one note in your letter and your pre-interview survey where you talked about a trip to the US Army morgue in Da Nang.

BM: Yes, I tell you, I would recommend that anybody who is in any kind of service or in a war zone, never go to the morgue. … As I remember, I had to take something to the morgue, I don't remember if it was a body or what, but anyway, I think it was a body, but anyway I went to the morgue. It was down in Da Nang, and I was not prepared for what I saw. There was this building, and in that building was like bunkers, like what you have bunk beds, and like you'd have a body on the top and a body on the bottom, and it would be attached like with a hose of some kind. You know, like an intravenous kind of thing, and it was like draining, it looks like it was pumping and draining. … The bodies were in different shapes or, you know, positions and

what have you, that was really gross in a sense of that, I mean, you know, when you're there you're trying to keep at bay the idea of death, and there you were with it staring [at] you. …

SH: Do you remember how close it was to when you were getting ready to come home?

BM: … This was several months before.

SH: Oh, no.

BM: Yes, yes, so I mean when I came back, I didn't even have the feeling to eat anything like meat. It was that, you know, impacting, but I suppose luckily you are young enough to get over it, in short order, or forget about it. I think part of all of this is, what I'm just saying is that part of one of the things that we all do, and certainly I think I do, and I suppose maybe other Vietnam vets do, is try to forget. … I think it's a very valuable thing to be able to forget because I think if you're not able to forget, sometimes it doesn't allow you to function as well or the way you would like to function, you know, because it gets in the way.

SH: Did superstitions start to play a part--a fatalism--in all this as your time to leave is getting closer?

BM: I think everybody is more than happy to tell everybody how short they are. I had my hat and on it, I had every month, and on the front of it, I think, I forget what it said, "short-timer," you know, or something like that, but everybody, as soon as you get to a certain level, you always say, "I'm a short timer," you know. That's like the thing, but I think in saying that, you're happy to be able to say that, and I think you tend to be more careful, but I don't think fatalism get into it because I think fatalism kind of, it--how would I put this--it cramps your style, you know. It cramps the way you want to do it, it gets in the way of being what you want to do, i.e. being what you want to be and doing what you want to do.

SH: We have heard of people who had lucky rabbit's foots or different things that they use.

BM: I think, on a personal level, everybody kind of have that, you know, and I don't know if it's because you're short or before, because I know that when I was in Vietnam, I had a different ring than this, but it was also a blue stone, and I always thought that, you know, so long as I had that ring on, I kind of have some, you know, superstitious protection of some kind. … I think everybody probably have that, you know, their lucky chain or, you know, I'm sure, but most of the time, I don't remember anything overtly. …

SH: Were you able to have laundry facilities in Vietnam? In many of the pictures you have you look fairly clean.

BM: Yes, you do. However, when we came to Da Nang, at first we went through a recon, we had a period where we went for something like about two months, four weeks, eight weeks or so where we didn't have any hot food, we had to use C-Rations, where we didn't get a bath, where we were grubby. … Consequently, during that period, I decided that if I got out of Vietnam, I was going to make sure that the first thing I did, surprisingly, was to get circumcised because I

thought that was just too much problem trying to be clean in those conditions. … Consequently, I've heard people say all the time about having women in combat. I think all women who is in the military is going to be trained to fight because there's always the chance of that, but just being in a combat unit by itself, now I was in an engineering unit, in a combat unit, your chance of staying dirty and being dirty and all that thing is even at a higher level, right. Having a woman in that kind of condition, it would be a gross situation of inconsiderate, being inconsiderate to them of not having any idea what it means. So, as soon as I came back, back to the States, and I went to Fort Houston, and I had a friend, they were married, they were husband and wives, they were from Ohio, and I used to spend a lot of time over there, they had an apartment down in, and I used to go over there for dinner almost. We had a really good relationship, and I went in, and I asked to be circumcised. So, I got circumcised when I was twenty-one or something like that, and that is prior before I got married. His wife, they would come to visit me, and his wife would come to the hospital, say, "Can I see your wound?" [laughter] "No, you can't." … But since that time, when I was in Ohio … and I also had another job in Ohio that I was doing it was a pharmaceutical facility that I was doing, and I looked them up. This was many, many years afterwards, yes, and I managed to get together with the husband. … At that time they had separated, they were divorced, yes, but, yes, I was happy to have, you know, hooked up with him again.

SH: Before we come back to Fort Sam Houston, are there any other notes about Vietnam that we should cover before we start talking about your return and how you actually get out of Vietnam?

BM: … I think, right now, it looks like we covered most of that. The only thing I have here is something, that I talk here, about the power of my experience in a way, what I think. This may be something from, I think the power of my experience is that it's not the stereotypical story of an American soldier, and I think sometime maybe the exceptions, may prove or disprove the rule, whatever that rule may be. I also learned what I've considered a few lessons from my service. One of them is that in war you can more easily observe the best and the worst in people. That practically anyone can be driven to kill another human being, unfortunately, no matter, you know. Before I went to Vietnam, I thought, you know, some people, they couldn't do that, but having served there, I think almost any human being, practically any human being, can be driven to do that. That even love can be taken to excess because I think, for instance, I love flying so much that if I, I often thought that if I had an opportunity to fly, I'd be so in love with flying that, you know, I'd bomb anything, I'd shoot anything down. You know what I mean? That's just too much, that's loving something too much, you know, where that you lose a sense of, almost a sense of right and wrong. … Also, the converse to that is never allow yourself to hate or to love to excess as they both can lead to immoral or unethical behavior. Especially during a time of crisis, one needs to keep a cool head, and that is rational, unemotional, and strive to be ethical and strive to be as ethical as the situation allows. I think, you know, you can be flippant when something isn't serious, you know, you can get a little emotional, but when it's serious, you really need to get a grip of it and just steady yourself, you know, and prepare to do what is the right thing to do in that situation, you know, because that's when it's so important, you know. It's more important in those situations to do the right thing. I believe that the true aim of war may be to make the enemy our friend, but I don't believe you can completely do that while you're still fighting the war, you know. You hear about Afghanistan and how we're going to pacify them. I

think it's almost impossible to do a complete job there, you know, but I think, I would think if there is any justification to some of these wars is that if in the end, you can make an enemy a friend, then I think maybe, you know, it has some worth there, you know. I also want to say, this is just an experience that I had some years ago, but many years ago, I think it was on a 4th of July weekend, I'm almost sure it is. I fortunately found myself and my wife and two children visiting Fort Henry in Baltimore, home of the "Star-Spangled Banner," written by Francis [Scott Key]. … Pause.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Ready?

BM: … Yes, the "Star-Spangled Banner," written by Francis [Scott Key] as he watched the bombardment of Fort Henry by the British fleet. After watching an audiovisual presentation in the presentation auditorium building, the wall with the screen opened up to the outside, and the wonderful view of the harbor beyond, and out in front of us, waving majestically in the light breeze, was one of the biggest US Stars and Stripes flag I've ever seen while our anthem played in the background. I could feel a tingle run up my spine, but at the same moment, I realized that in 1776, my ancestral family, the loyalty was to the other side, and that the possible existence, and that the possibility exists that whoever is one country's enemy today may one day be our friend or even our fellow citizen tomorrow, that war is a failure to negotiate a peaceful agreement. Ironically, fifteen to twenty years after leaving the Army, I was also part of an architectural design team that designed Fort Drum in upstate New York for the light armored 10th Infantry Mountain Brigade for the US Army. So, I mean a kind of, that's kind of, you know tells the story about we have to be a little bit careful about who is enemy, you know, and who is friend.

SH: We talked before about how you had served all of this time and still had not been offered citizenship. When does this happen for you?

BM: Well, I mean I came back, and I think when I came back, soon after I came back, I decided to marry the young lady that had waited patiently for me.

SH: Did you marry her before you get out of the military?

BM: No, no, I didn't marry her before I got out the military. What happened is that when I came back after I got out of Vietnam, we were planning the wedding so when I got out of the military, soon after I got out of the military we got married. … We got married in 1969, soon after I got out, and kind of like to show you a little sense of, I couldn't bring in a picture, my wife would not allow it, so I decided, you know what, I'll just bring the [wedding] album, this way you can kind of bring that to life. …

SH: I am going to put this on pause.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Ready?

BM: Yes, so after I came back, I married my fiancée in 1969, and we quickly thereafter started a family and, you know, I wanted to get back to work and to school. So, I was working in the day, and going to school at night. …

SH: You were using the GI Bill?

BM: I was using the GI Bill, yes, and I believe, and I should take a look at this because this may tell us because I had to research it, but I don't know if this tells you when I became a citizen, but as I remember, it was some time after I got back. I actually receive citizenship three years later and my wife another three years after me. It may have been as good as five or six years before I actually, you know, applied and got citizenship, and frankly, this is something that a lot of people postponed for a long time because I know, for instance, my mother, and this is a picture of her when she just got her citizenship. … She, at the time, had been in the country for, goodness, many, many, a couple of decades at least.

SH: Really?

BM: Yes.

DL: How soon did you wife get her citizenship?

BM: I think she got it soon after I got mine, or thereafter. Yes, yes, because, you know, I had gotten it and I kind of encouraged her to go ahead and do it.

SH: Had either one of you become politically involved in any way?

BM: … My wife is not overtly political, and my mother also is not political at all, but I've always been involved in community activities. I mean I was president of my block association for eight years or something like that. Actually, I started the block association. I think we even got an award for, we came in second, for the second best newsletter in the city of New York. Yes, we had a very good newsletter, and my friend and I, we used to do security watch for our community. The church had this "blue-light program," you know. We would drive around our community, we'd have a blue light, and we'd have, what was the name of that radio they used to have back in the days?

SH: All I can think of is the two-way walkie-talkie?

BM: It wasn't walkie-talkie. It was everybody, every car, every truck had that, you know, what it was.

SH: CB radio?

BM: CB, yes, we had like had a CB radio where we could connect with, you know, either back to the church or with the police, right and we did that for many years. My son would tease us.

They say, "There was Starsky." They used to call us "Starsky and Hutch," [laughter] but, yes, that was kind of the things that we did. It was, you know, community-based kind of things that I got involved in, you know, and my wife was involved with the Girl Scouts and I was also involved with my son's soccer team. So, we did all of those, you know, things that, you know, good citizens should do, you know. So, yes, we did all of those things, I mean, maybe I shouldn't say this, the best campaign ever I had the most fun on was the last presidential campaign of 2008. I had so much fun in that campaign since I was the first person in my extended family to recognize candidate Barack Obama to be a strong, viable and worthy candidate for President of the USA. Most people I knew knew very little about him but I had read his books starting right after I saw him give his first nationally televised speech at the 2004 Democratic Convention. During the early primaries all the women in my family were enthusiastically campaigning for Hillary Clinton. However over the span of the national campaign I watched them and the nation change their support 180 degrees. I don't imagine I will ever see another election like this in my lifetime.

SH: When you came back, how much time did you owe the military? How long did you have to stay in before you were discharged?

BM: Probably I had stated somewhere, I'm not sure, it was that you had to spend I think something like six years of inactive.

SH: Did you have to do that?

DL: It was probably two years total that you were active.

BM: Yes, and one of them is that you were like …

SH: Part of the ready reserve?

BM: Ready reserve, yes, exactly, yes, yes. There was ready reserve and inactive reserve so the ready reserve, at any time, practically, [Editor's Note: Mr. McLeod snaps his fingers.] they can call you, the inactive reserve, I guess you're second on the list or something like that, yes.

SH: You came back to Fort Sam Houston then from the second half of 1968 to the first half of 1969.

BM: Yes.

SH: Were you training other medics?

BM: We were training other troops in a camp called Bullis. I can never forget that name. That's the strangest name, yes. [laughter] We were training.

SH: Camp Bullis?

BM: Camp Bullis, yes, yes. It was funny about that because there were, on that camp, I mean I'm sure there were other wild creatures, but there were wild turkeys on that camp, and I remember once where this gobbler actually chased us. [laughter]

SH: Were you serving as a medic for those being trained or were you training medics?

BM: We were training medics.

SH: What do you think is the best advice you imparted to them?

BM: That's a good question. I can't remember. [laughter]

SH: You had been so well-prepared.

BM: That one--you stumped me on that one.

SH: Did you ever consider staying in the military?

BM: In the military? Why, you know, prior to all of this, when I volunteered for the Air Force my idea was, if I could get a chance to do something dealing with planes that I really enjoy, I might consider it, right, but I didn't consider anything in the Army. I mean, by the time I had finished my tour of duty in Vietnam, I actually had an aversion to blood, and I don't know if most people know it, but to me, blood has a distinctive smell, and it sticks in your nose and you just can't get it out. … That kind of turned me off from any kind of consideration of any kind of medical thing, even though, you know, there are medical things that doesn't have a lot of blood, you're not involved in too much blood, but nonetheless, it kind of made me stick in the direction of architecture.

SH: When you came back and you went back, did you go back to work for the company in Rye?

BM: I went back to work for the company in Rye and I got married while I was still there. … Then, of course it wasn't paying that much, now I wasn't single anymore, and so I started to look for, you know, a better paying job which I got one in the city. … Also, it was helpful because it means my travel wasn't as great, and also it meant that it was easier for me to go to school so, you know, all of that kind of tied together.

SH: Where did you go to school at night?

BM: It was New York City Community College, which is now New York Technical College. …

SH: That was where you were able to get your architectural degree?

BM: Well, I had an AAS degree.

DL: In construction?

BM: … In construction technology, which basically is, you know, it's two years of degree that you would take if you were taking a straight, architecture degree, but my whole idea is I didn't have enough money in the GI Bill for four years, which is really a big thing and it's a shame that the GI Bill doesn't at least give a guy a chance to get four years of college. … Since I had a family growing, I had to be as efficient as I could be, try to make the most of the least. I was also confident in my abilities, and so I felt that I found a way of reaching my goal without spending, without having to put myself in debt, and the idea was that I would do a two year degree, I would get the experience on the job, and I would apply to take the licensing exams. … There are many people that go to four years of college and cannot pass their licensing exam, and I was happy to pass the licensing exams. … I was an architect and I was doing great work, you know, in a lot of different places. I mean, every day, I can remember some of the things that I've done that I think has had an important impact to society that I'm proud of. … Genentech, I've designed some of their first facilities. Celebrex, I have designed their facility that put that drug out in the market, you know, that is now the only drug that really does what it does. The other drug … was Vioxx, which was our competitor. They're off the market, they're no longer available, and, you know, I've done, like I say, I've done Fort Drum. I mean, some of the things I've done so many jobs, half of them I don't remember. Every now and then, it pops in my mind, I said, "You know, that was great," you know, in retrospect, you know. I was also award-winning, I've had architectural awards. I had in 2000, I won best project, one of the best projects in New York City. I was doing the flagship store and museum for Steuben Glass in New York City, yes.

SH: Is there anything that we have not covered that we should have asked during this time?

BM: No, I think you have pretty covered it completely. … The only thing I have in the end here and I don't know if it's appropriate actually. It's basically, it's a critique on the war. … This whole process started the whole idea based on Socrates idea about an examined life, and I took the opportunity to do just that, and it led me to St. Augustine and his ideas. He happened to be one of the first people to set out any rules with regard to what one considered a "just war." … As such, one of the things that I have postponed doing actually as most Vietnam veterans do, is to really try to forget, you know, the war, and to try to begin some kind of healing domesticity. … Essentially, I think, you know, being human we're all fallible, so I would preface what I'm about to say with that, but nonetheless my examination and my critique is as follows. Even if the Vietnam War was a just war, which I don't believe it is, at the very least, it had a just cause for its termination i.e. a state may end a war if it becomes clear that any just goal of war cannot be reached at all, or cannot be reached without using excessive force, and we the USA had the excessive force to use if we wanted to do so, but we would also run the risk of an apocalyptic war with the Soviet Union. We have to be on our guard against getting into a war, gradually, incrementally, as we did in Vietnam, and I hate to say perhaps even in a situation like Libya. [Editor's Note: Mr. McLeod is referring to the civil war in Libya which was occurring at the time of his interview.] I have checked the seven criteria of *just ad bellum*, Latin for the right to go to war. We don't meet the requirements of these seven criteria, giving a score of only one out of seven, and the one criteria we met was "only duly constituted public authority may wage war." In contrast, many times one can lose a just war. Therefore common sense and moral law require that you should also engage in a military or other violent conflicts if the possibility to win …

using this approach is high. Did you understand that? Therefore common sense and moral law require that you should only engage in a military or violent conflict if the probability to win using this approach … is actually high, yes. … Basically, you shouldn't get into a war that--with all probability--you can't win. Thus, the need to invent and engage in an appropriate non-violent conflict that is effective even though there is no guarantee that you won't be violently be set upon based on the just war criteria, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian non-violent association had a five to seven justification to wage a just war, but used the non-violent method of last resort instead.

SH: Thank you. Any questions, David, before we end?

DL: One last thing. You mentioned that your nephew is related to Paul Robeson?

BM: He's related by … Robeson, yes.

BM: Yes, you know, and this was quite interesting because he's related by way of his mother, that's my brother married an American girl. Yes, well, you know, what this came to me by happenstance, it never hit my consciousness, this fact, except when I was about to come here and, you know, personally, you know, I think based on what I learned about his, you know, his experience as a student here, that he would definitely qualify as one of the greatest students to attend Rutgers. Paul Robeson was an all-American in 1917 and 1918 and he was, you know, he was a good scholar.

SH: Phi Beta Kappa.

BM: Yes, thanks. Paul Robeson was a non-conformist who had been practically erased from the official mainstream history of Rutgers and for that matter of the United States. He was nonetheless a man of character, strength, bravery, talent, intellect and was never afraid to speak the truth as God gave him the ability to see it. However, like all human beings, he was not infallible.

SH: Your nephew went to Rutgers?

BM: Yes.

SH: He graduated from Rutgers in 1997?

BM: Yes.

SH: Is he a professor?

BM: He's a doctor practicing in Florida.

SH: Oh, he is a medical doctor.

BM: Yes. …

SH: We thank you so much for coming in and talking to us. It has been a delight and very informative and I am sure it will be a wonderful resource.

BM: Yes, my pleasure.

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

Reviewed by Katie Ruffer 12/12/12
Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 12/24/12
Reviewed by Bruce McLeod 2/26/2013