

Oral Memoirs

of

Robert Holtz

An interview conducted on

April 5, 2018

Interviewer: Christine Lamberson

Angelo State University

West Texas Collection

“War Stories: West Texans and the Experience of War, World War I to the Present”

LEGAL STATUS: The oral memoirs of Robert Holtz are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on April 5, 2018.

Interviewer: Christine Lamberson

Transcriber: Cassandra Schultz

Editor: Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai

The electronic file and complete transcript of this interview were processed in the Department of History at Angelo State University and are available at the Dr. Ralph R. Chase West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

LAMBERSON: So, my name is Christine Lamberson, and, let's see, today is April 5th 2018. We're at Angelo State University doing a War Stories interview. So, let's just start. Can you tell me your name?

HOLTZ: Robert Lewis Holtz, Sr.

LAMBERSON: Alright! And, uh, when and where were you born?

HOLTZ: I was born September the 5th, 1931 in Coleman, Texas.

LAMBERSON: And did you grow up in Coleman?

HOLTZ: I grad . . . Stayed in Coleman, graduated high school in Coleman. But I graduated at 17 'cause, while I was in school, they went from 11 years to 12 years. So, I skipped a year. So, I graduated at 17.

LAMBERSON: Alright. And, um, how do you think about West Texas? How do you think about West Texans? How do you define that region?

HOLTZ: Well, the people are friendly.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: If you're in trouble on . . . on the highway, somebody'll stop to help you out. And, uh, I retired in Arizona but I came back home because I was born and raised in Coleman and stayed there my whole life.

LAMBERSON: Mhm. Decided that was the place you wanted to be?

HOLTZ: Yes ma'am.

LAMBERSON: Uh, how would you characterize West Texas's relationship to the military?

HOLTZ: Unless you are born on a ranch, which means that may be a job for you . . . And in the 30s, the government wanted big families. I didn't know we were poor. I thought everybody was the same way. And, uh, with 11 kids and their dad died, there was still 10 of us at home.

LAMBERSON: Military was the way to go?

HOLTZ: A little difficult. Uh, mother got, I think, 8 cents . . . \$8 a month per child and she had to show where the money went. But, back then, you could buy a pickup load of groceries for 20 bucks. Now, you can carry it in your one arm.

LAMBERSON: And what did your . . . Well, you told me a little bit before we started and you just mentioned that your father passed away. Tell me a little bit about your father.

HOLTZ: Well, uh, he was a concrete construction man. Poured concrete, uh, laid bricks. Uh, and later on he got to be . . . before he passed away . . . He could start from scratch and be able to build a brick home. But he only had 3 years of schooling, because he was in Norfolk.

LAMBERSON: Mmhhh. And . . . And when did he pass away?

HOLTZ: Uh, let's see . . . I said '41. It was '42 because December 7 . . . Nineteen forty-two . . . He died in June of '42.

LAMBERSON: OK. And he had been in the military?

HOLTZ: Yes, he was in the Navy for 2 or 3 years during WWI. And what is real nice, the American Legion in Coleman, Texas, buried my father, paid for the grave, paid for the casket, paid the mortuary expenses, paid the whole nine yards.

LAMBERSON: Mmhhh. And then what did your, uh, mother do with you guys after your father died?

HOLTZ: She beat the hell out of us when we needed it.

LAMBERSON: Oh, I see. OK. Alright.

HOLTZ: Uh, Actually, mother . . . She was single for 4 years. She walked 3 miles from the west side of Coleman to the east side of Coleman, down the railroad track, and stood on her feet all day . . . One of those big old mangled presses that does sheets and things. Worked that all day long and then walked back home. And the ones that needed paddling got a paddling, and the ones that needed hugging got hugged, and fixed supper for us. But in '45 she remarried. She married a guy that worked on the railroad. The ones that keep the train-bed, replaced the cross ties, and things like that. And his name was, uh . . . We called him Scottie. His last name was Scott. And, uh, he committed suicide while I was at Parris Island. What year was that? In the early '70s I think.

LAMBERSON: Mmhhh. And so, when did you enter the armed forces?

HOLTZ: I had . . . I went in at 17 because I graduated at 16. I graduated in May. There were no jobs in Coleman. The only business there that hired people was the brick plant. I weighed 130 pounds. I was 17 and you have to have these big, uh, wheelbarrows that . . . And they loaded tile and brick into boxcars and shipped them out and what have you. That was the only job in town. During school, I worked on Saturdays bagging groceries. Piggly Wiggly. Got \$2 for 12 hours. Thought that was excellent wages. But about 3 weeks after I graduated high school, I came home one afternoon and my mother says, "RL, you got a job yet?" I said, "No ma'am." She says, "Well, you don't live here anymore. I packed your clothes and they're out there on the porch in that cardboard box. Get on with your life." I said, "Momma, it's suppertime." "Ok, you can spend the night but your clothes are staying out there. And tomorrow, you get on with your life." So, the next morning, I went and found a friend of mine. He was a year older than I was, and we went to the post office. The only recruiter there was a marine recruiter. Well, they couldn't enlist

us until 1 July, because of the fiscal year. So, uh, we took the test and everything, and he told us how outstanding recruits we were, you know? So, we ended up in Dallas. One July got sworn in, on a train in 2 days going to San Diego. Went through boot camp in San Diego. The guy I joined with, W. Matterson, he put in for motor transport. I thought the marines had infantry, artillery, and tanks. So, I said, "I'd rather be infantry." So, I became an O3, which is basic infantry. They put me on a train to San Francisco. I went to Treasure Island. Sat there for a week and they put me on a ship going to Hawaii. Got to Hawaii, stayed there 2 days, put me on a plane, and I flew to Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: I was there- let's see, got there in November, I was there 14 months. That was in '49. The Korean War started in June of '50. My older brother, 2 years older than I was, he went in the Marine Corps in December of '48. I went in July of '49. He was at Pendleton when the Korean War started, so he went over with the brigade. I was on Kwajalein, and basically what we did, we run the brig and guarded the single women at night. Single nurses, single civilian workers over there, you know?

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: And we were there from 6 o'clock at night until 6 o'clock in the morning.

LAMBERSON: Mmhm. And this was at the end of '49?

HOLTZ: This was . . . Yeah, this was . . . Well, I got there in November '49 and . . . and left there in, uh, January of '51.

LAMBERSON: Okay. Alright. So, this was all throughout 1950.

HOLTZ: But the guy that they sent back to Pearl Harbor that I replaced was a starting baseball pitcher on the baseball team.

LAMBERSON: Oh, yeah?

HOLTZ: So, I tried out and I became a pitcher. Lost my first 4 games and won 8 in a row.

LAMBERSON: Okay, not bad.

HOLTZ: All I threw was a fastball. Like I'd been throwing rocks all my life. And, uh . . . We were playing the Navy fire department and this one guy had played a little semi-pro ball. He lost 3 balls down the left field line. "Foul!" The catcher comes out "Throw him a changeup." "What's a changeup?" He says, "A lot of motion and don't throw it as hard." I struck him out. So . . . But, anyway, uh, the Korean War started. The Marine Corps had 60,000 active duty personnel. They couldn't get a full division. Because the 1st Division was, uh, yeah, in the Pacific, in California. Second Division was in North Carolina. So, they had to call all the reserves to active duty.

My oldest brother, John, he was drafted in '45. And, of course, on your 18th birthday during the Second World War, you reported for duty. He ended up in the Marine Corps at San Diego. But on graduation, he locked his knees. You know what happens? You pass out. And he clobbered into the blacktop. He was in the hospital for 6 months and the war was over by the time he got out of the hospital. He tells people that, as soon as the Japanese found out he was in the military, they surrendered. So, all three of us were in the Marine Corps.

Well, when the Korean War started, 60,000 active duty, the Marine Corps recalled all reserves to active duty. My oldest brother got called in but they sent him home. There's only 3 boys in the family. You can't have all three of them in combat. My brother Olan was already in Korea. I was overseas in the Marshall Islands fixing to go to . . . go to Korea. In fact, Olan was in brigade . . . MacArthur was using the marines as the stop gaps. What happened, an army unit would be forced off of a mountain, and the marines would come back and retake it and then turn it back over to the Army. And they would just fill in gaps around Busan perimeter. My brother's unit went up, took this mountain from the . . . They were North Koreans then . . . Turned it back over to the Army that afternoon and went back in reserve. Next day had to go back and retake the same hill all over again.

My brother was in machine guns. Now, you have the gunner, the assistant gunner, then ammo carriers 1 through 4 depending on how many people you have. My brother was the third ammo carrier. The second day, they were in such a firefight, he was gunner and was behind the gun less than five minutes, got one round with 4 holes. Four bullet holes. He was laying down, went in the top of the shoulder, out here, went through one of his cheeks. Evacuated back to Japan, went back to the unit . . . same unit . . . in time for "Frozen Chosin." Got wounded again. But he was lucky, he was on the last med evac helicopter that left from Yudam-ni. All the rest of the wounded and KIAs came out by truck. And it was cold. But I . . . And he was . . . He was wounded and was in Japan when I came through going from Kwajalein to, uh, Korea. But because we'd been in the South Pacific, the guys I was with—there were 8 of us—they left us in Japan for a month to let our bodies adjust, because it gets cold in Japan in January.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: In February, I went as a replacement. Well, in the meantime, the Marine Corps had absorbed all these reserves. I joined Baker Company, First Battalion, Fifth Marines in February. I was the only regular marine in the company. All the rest of them were reserves called to active duty.

LAMBERSON: So, they were people you hadn't been working with this . . . before in this . . . in the South Pacific?

HOLTZ: Oh, no, no. They had been in the Marine Corps and out in civilian life and called back in.

LAMBERSON: Right, right but these are . . . They weren't the people you were in the South Pacific with? They were new people?

HOLTZ: No, no, no, no. We . . . We went to all different units, because we weren't . . . We didn't have a parent organization.

LAMBERSON: I see. Okay.

HOLTZ: So, they just put us where they needed us. I was ordered to Baker Company. I was the only regular enlisted marine in the company.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Wow.

HOLTZ: All the rest of them were reserves. And the new man always gets the BAR, because it weighs 22 pounds. And with the tripods on, it weighs 24 pounds. And then you got a belt here with your magazines that weighs about another 20 pounds. Well, I'd been in pretty good shape but the first time we moved out and we started up one of these mountains, about halfway up I was sucking wind. And the fire team leader—what was his name?—Sarber, says, "Let me carry that for you for a minute." "OK, thanks." Ten minutes later, we got in a firefight. You know what I did? Lay there and throw magazines to him and he did all the firing with my BAR. And I figured, well, that's the last time that's gonna happen. So, that's the last time anybody got that BAR away from me. Well, we were on line . . . Uh . . . What they do is . . . The Marine Corps works on a system of three. You have three platoons in a company. You have three companies in a battalion, three battalions in a regiment, three regiments in a division. You have two up and one back. In a company, you'd have two platoons up and one platoon back in reserve. In battalion it was two companies and a company. So, that's the way it worked. Uh . . . Our first good firefight, it was the first firefight that group of men had been in. Well, they sent the third platoon. We were on a ridge line and there was a little nose up there and we started taking fire. They sent the third platoon out. They got up there and it was a pretty good firefight. Young lieutenants think the only way to win a war is to charge. They got the crap shot out of them, one platoon. Now, it was a reserve and only people in charge were reserves. If you run into opposition and you don't know how strong they are, you call in mortars or artillery or an airstrike. You don't up there make contact with them then "Alright, let's overrun them," and charge. How much mortars is worth one guy's life?

LAMBERSON: And so, were you part of the platoon that was trying to overrun them?

HOLTZ: No, no, I was back. And the thing of it is, the ridgeline was basically straight. We could not give them supporting fire from our position because we couldn't. There was trees and vegetation, and we could not see them. So, we couldn't support them. But the platoon leader of that platoon retired as a 3-star general.

LAMBERSON: When was that? How much later?

HOLTZ: Oh, this was, uh, about the time I retired back in the 70s.

LAMBERSON: Okay, it took him a while then.

HOLTZ: Yeah.

LAMBERSON: Wow. And where was this?

HOLTZ: When?

LAMBERSON: Ah, the . . . The firefight that you're talking about. Where . . . Where were you?

HOLTZ: Oh, we were below the 38th parallel. Uh, they were reorganizing after bringing a division out of Frozen Chosin. And they lost a lot of people, so they're building the division back up. We were in . . . The division was in reserve.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Until they got back up, built the strength and what have you, and then they moved us back up. And, uh, they all . . . The year I was there, we were one division from the east coast of Korea. You get up on a tall mountain and you can look over and see the ocean. There was one ROK division—Republic of Korea Division—between us and the . . . So, there were a lot of mountains there. Three months after I rotated back to the States, the marines went over [unclear]. They were over there going out and they'd send a battalion out between the lines on the mountain and the battalion would come back with 50% casualties, because they were just . . . You know, they were negotiating . . . But they had static lines. But we would send people out between the lines to hold something.

LAMBERSON: And so, when were you . . . So, you were sent to Korea in . . . in '51 you said?

HOLTZ: '51

LAMBERSON: Okay, so, you were there for most of that year or for that year a little bit . . .

HOLTZ: I was wounded in . . . in June of '51.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: We were going up a ridgeline and we hit a little outpost. Well, we pull back a little bit and set up our machine guns for field of fire and it was a platoon. So, the platoon leader sent the second squad around to envelope from the side. And my squad, the one I was in, was moved over, and we were acting like we were fixing to charge to keep their attention while this one enveloped them from the side. How far can you throw a grenade on flat ground?

LAMBERSON: I have no idea!

HOLTZ: Okay, uh, suppose that was a grenade and it weighs a pound.

LAMBERSON: Okay, not very far is the answer.

HOLTZ: Okay. Uh, the average person can throw it like 40 or 50 yards.

LAMBERSON: Okay, okay.



HOLTZ: They threw grenades downhill. We had gotten too close and a grenade went off about that window from where I was. But when . . . It was concussion. There was no shrapnel, very little shrapnel. It was just a big explosion. Now, if it had been a fragmentation grenade, I wouldn't be here talking to you now. Because that close, you get blown . . . You know, all kinds of stuff.

LAMBERSON: And so . . .

HOLTZ: So, you see that finger?

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: That's my trigger finger.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: I got two pieces of shrapnel in it. And I was . . . I was in this position. I got one right there, and one right there.

LAMBERSON: From that grenade?

HOLTZ: And I went all the way back to Busan aboard a hospital ship. You know what a round eye is?

LAMBERSON: I don't, no.

HOLTZ: It's an American woman. She has round eyes.

LAMBERSON: Oh, I gotcha. Okay.

HOLTZ: Good looking American women, showers, hot chow, not standing watch, not eating C-rations. I was back there for 10 days.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: And they sent me to the, uh . . . to have surgery aboard ship. Put me out and all this other crap for two little pieces of shrapnel. They weren't that big. But one was right in that joint there, and they other one went right in then off the . . .

LAMBERSON: And what did you uh think of that? Were you, uh, glad to . . . to leave for a little while? Do you . . .

HOLTZ: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And the Marine Corps was just starting evacuating people by helicopter. They had, uh, stretchers on either side, wire stretchers. And they'd strap them in, and helicopters could take two people back. Well, in that little deal where I got wounded, one of our guys got shot in the shoulder. We had what we call chiggys. They were old Korean guys, too

old for service. But they carried ammunition to the front and food and supplies and what have you and carried casualties back to where a helicopter could get to them. They would not let you put a dead person on a helicopter. If somebody got killed, you couldn't send them out on a helicopter. It was strictly reserved for wounded, and it was . . . had to be serious wounded. They wouldn't let me . . . We had one guy shot in the shoulder. A helicopter came in, two stretchers, one on each side. I said, "Hey, how about me?" He says, "Where's your wound?" I said, "There." He says, "Nope. Can't take you." So, I had to walk three miles back to where engineers were building a bridge across the river. And they were nice enough to put me in a vehicle so I didn't get . . . have . . . didn't have to wade in the river. Then they'd take me back to the medical battalion that was handling the casualties. You know what they first thing they'll make a guy do? Shower.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Can you imagine how dirty you get in 10 days living in a hole in the ground and digging holes and in the summer time you're sweating. In wintertime you're freezing. They make you take showers first thing. And they put so much penicillin in you that by the end of 3 days, they can't use your shoulders. They start using the cheeks of your butt, because they'd slap you with that penicillin to fight infections. So, I ended up going all the way back to Busan hospital ship. Round-eyed women, hot food, hot showers.

LAMBERSON: So, it was a nice little, uh, trip out for a bit, huh?

HOLTZ: Yeah. And, uh, then we wondered why they wouldn't let us have liberty off the ship. Well, we found out that they had . . . had been giving patients liberty but a bunch of them didn't come back. They went out and went . . . and went back to their unit. Well, anyway, when it got time for me to rotate off the ship, they took us out to the airport. It was during the monsoon season. We sat there all day waiting for . . .

LAMBERSON: Rain.

HOLTZ: . . . the rain to quit, so they could . . . and . . . So, we stayed there and went back to casual company, spent the night, next day we went back and did the same thing. But they let us go to the USO.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: And the word was passed. There was an American USO lady there that you could sleep with her for 100 bucks. She probably came back a millionaire. Anyway, I . . . I went back and . . . I was a PFC when I got there. I made corporal in June. I'd been there four months, made corporal and, uh, the way it works out where you have three units. Okay, I was in 5th Marines. There was, uh, 5th, 7th, and 1st. 1st and 7th will be on line. The whole 5th regiment would be in reserve. Now, each one of those regiments, two battalions would be on line, and one battalion would be in reserves right there with them.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: So, what they would do is, they would rotate a whole regiment, and then this regiment would stay back two weeks, and need to go up and relieve this regiment. So, you didn't have more than like 30 days on the frontline at a time.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: You'd go back and shower and shave and take a bath in the river, really live it up. But cigarettes came in your C-rations. I didn't smoke. Those Ameri . . . uh, old Korean guys for a little pack of cigarettes with four cigarettes in it, they'd dig a foxhole, work on it all day long. Boy, I had the deepest foxhole in the company. And I'd just . . . tell them what I wanted done, and they'd dig it for me, and cut trees down, put limbs over 'em, and put cardboard on top, and put dirt on top of that. 'Cause what you were really worried about was either artillery rounds coming in on top of you or mortars.

LAMBERSON: And so was this backup kind of close to the . . . to the parallel again?

HOLTZ: We . . . We were always fighting right around the 38th parallel.

LAMBERSON: Okay, so you were around there.

HOLTZ: What would happen is they had a complete line all the way across Korea.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh, yeah.

HOLTZ: Okay, we had Korean military units.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: We'd be pushing up. We'd get up near the 38th parallel. They would attack one of the Korean units and they'd break through and go back like 15 miles. Everybody else had to drop back 15 miles, and you'd start over, taking the same ground over again.

LAMBERSON: Okay. I see. Uh- huh. And so the older, uh, Korean guys that . . . that you were talking about . . .

HOLTZ: We'd call them chiggybears.

LAMBERSON: Why did you call them that?

HOLTZ: Well, you . . .

LAMBERSON: Are you saying chigger bears?

HOLTZ: Chigger . . . chiggy . . .

LAMBERSON: Chiggy.

HOLTZ: Chiggybears.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Uh, we had all kinds of, uh, nicknames for them. But they had an A-frame.

LAMBERSON: Yeah. Okay.

HOLTZ: They could put a 5-gallon can of water on that, and this guy's 70-years-old.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: And he would go up that mountain and never take a break. 'Cause they'd done that all their lives. That's the way they carried things.

LAMBERSON: Yeah. Yeah. So . . . So why the nicknames? Why these particular nicknames? Where'd they come from? Do you know?

HOLTZ: I don't know. [Laughs]

LAMBERSON: You don't know. You just went with them, yeah. So, were they, uh . . . Like, I mean, you said that they would do stuff, like you . . . You would pay with cigarettes or trade with cigarettes but were they civilians or were they actually part of the military or . . . ?

HOLTZ: No, no, they . . . They were . . .

LAMBERSON: They were just civilians who kind of . . .

HOLTZ: Well, they . . . They were an organized unit.

LAMBERSON: They were an organized unit? Okay, that's what I was asking.

HOLTZ: But they weren't military.

LAMBERSON: Right, okay.

HOLTZ: 'Cause they were too old for military service.

LAMBERSON: Right, yes, okay.

HOLTZ: They might have had a, you know, civilian type name for them.

LAMBERSON: But like, they were like . . . But they were getting, you know, paid or officially working or whatever?

HOLTZ: Oh, yeah, they were getting paid. They were getting . . . I don't know what they were getting paid but they . . . but they were getting food.

LAMBERSON: Yeah.

HOLTZ: And rest . . .

LAMBERSON: And all those things.

HOLTZ: And all those things. And when we were up on line we had to have ammunition brought up. We had to have rations brought up. So, there'd be one marine and he'd have, uh, maybe 30 old Korean guys. And he'd take them back and they'd spend the night and they'd . . . Whatever needed to be brought up, they'd bring it up the next day.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Now, after I became squad leader—this was in like November, December of '51—I was . . . I was starting . . . I got there as a PFC. In June, I made corporal. In December, I made sergeant because I was a regular marine. I enlisted. Most of the company was reserves 'cause they'd got called back to active duty.

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: So, I got promoted, and my brother ended up . . . He got promoted four times while he was over there 'cause he was a regular. And, uh . . . Oh, what was I gonna say . . . Oh! Uh, on a clear day, we could look this way and see the ocean out there.

LAMBERSON: That's nice.

HOLTZ: It was nice, but when you went back in reserve. They would have a- a big tent like hmm... 40 feet long. Half of it would be showers. Hot water.

LAMBERSON: Mhm. That's nice.

HOLTZ: The other half would be a changing area. You could . . . You'd strip down at this end and went through the shower and they had clothes that had been washed in there, and you just picked up a pair that was . . . pretty close to fit you, you know. And put clean clothes on.

LAMBERSON: Uh . . . And so as you got promoted up . . . Like how did you communicate with, uh, these Korean guys or with the locals? Did you interact with them that much? Did you . . . ?

HOLTZ: Oh, yeah, yeah.

LAMBERSON: Um, who . . . Who was kinda giving directions? I assume there was something of a language barrier. Did you have translators or interpreters?

HOLTZ: Oh, yeah. Well, uh . . . We gave them the C-rations. Now, I was there a year.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: I did not eat one can of corned beef hash.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: I tried it once. It made me sick. And if I got corned beef hash in my ration, I just skipped the main course 'cause I didn't eat it. But they'd eat it.

LAMBERSON: So you'd trade.

HOLTZ: So, any cigarettes that we had left over, we gave it to them.

LAMBERSON: Uh- huh.

HOLTZ: And what they did with them . . . I don't know if they ate it themselves or . . . They could give to other people back in the rear or what, but . . .

LAMBERSON: Uh, huh. And did you, um, interact with, um, the Korean military much? You said there were some units kind of around you.

HOLTZ: We were tied . . . now . . . Now, they had United Nations.

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: We tied in with the Turks one night.

LAMBERSON: Okay, okay. Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: They were on our flank. And the word passed, "Don't go to sleep."

LAMBERSON: Why not?

HOLTZ: Because they would go around and, if they found somebody, they would feel and see what . . . How their eyes were. If they were slanted or . . . Or what have you . . . If they were slanted, they'd cut your throat. The . . . The Turks could've had three divisions over there. You know why? The United Nations was paying them. They were making five times as much money as they made back in Turkey. We could have had all kinds of Turks over there. We had Australians there. You know, 'cause the United Nations.

LAMBERSON: Yeah. And so, did you . . . Were . . . Were the Turks the only other units that you personally were around or . . . ?

HOLTZ: Well, uh, the division between us and the . . . and the ocean was a Korean division.

LAMBERSON: Right, and did you interact with them.

HOLTZ: No.

LAMBERSON: No, okay.

HOLTZ: Because unless you were . . . They were here and you . . . You were the company tied in with them. You had no contact with them.

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: Yeah.

LAMBERSON: Okay. Um, and would your . . . So, was your brother back in Korea at the same time that you were?

HOLTZ: No, he . . . He was . . .

LAMBERSON: He was in Japan?

HOLTZ: Went with brigade in . . . in July, was wounded in July, went to Japan and recovered, went back to join his unit in December, up at Frozen Chosin, was wounded again, went back to . . . all . . . all the seriously wounded went back to Japan.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: The minor wounded were on hospital ships. They had a, uh, like a Dutch hospital ship. Beautiful women but, uh, no one was lucky enough that I knew . . .

LAMBERSON: To be on that one?

HOLTZ: To be put . . . been on that ship.

LAMBERSON: Yes, okay. And so did you know he was wounded? Like, did you communicate with him at all in . . . ?

HOLTZ: Uh . . . Olan did not write his mother. When he was wounded, she might not get a letter for two weeks. But, back then, they were sending telegrams. Mother got three telegrams: two for Olan, one for me. And you . . . You actually got . . . Actually, you got two telegrams. The first one was a wounded in action. The second one may come three or four days later—the extent of your wounds.

LAMBERSON: I see.

HOLTZ: You know, slightly wounded or, you know, in serious condition or what have you, you know.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh. And so did sh . . . Did you write to your mother?

HOLTZ: I wrote to my mother.

LAMBERSON: Did she write to you?

HOLTZ: Yeah. Actually, my baby sister wrote to me.

LAMBERSON: Okay. Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: Because she was in high school.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: I'd been overseas for over a year. I was only getting paid \$80 a month but I had no place to spend it. That gal, "RL, I need a watch." She was a cheerleader. "I . . . I need money for cheerleader clothes." I ended up buying her a damn horse to ride. I did . . . I had no use for my money. You know, there's no place to spend it in combat. It just . . . They write it on the books. And I used to draw like ten dollars and a lot of guys liked to gamble. I liked to play blackjack. But I'd get twenty dollars, and when I lost my twenty dollars, I quit.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: They used to keep me in the game because I was playing a dollar a hand. They were playing 5, 10, 20 dollars a hand, some of the gamblers, you know.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. So, you were playing with other, uh, marines mostly?

HOLTZ: Yeah, yeah. And they were in our unit because, uh, you didn't have time to go someplace, you know.

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: This was all . . .

LAMBERSON: Wasn't at the, you know, USO or anything like that?

HOLTZ: No, no. No.

LAMBERSON: Okay. Mhmmm. So, you wrote . . . So, you stayed in touch with your baby sister, and did she tell you then that your brother was wounded? Is that how you found out?



HOLTZ: Yeah, she . . . She wrote me, but when I left Kwajalein, we spent the night in Guam, flew into Japan, landed in Tokyo, went down to Yokosuka. Olan was in Yokosuka.

LAMBERSON: So, could you see him? Did you talk . . .

HOLTZ: I talked to him for about 10 minutes before they turned the lights out, and then we had to go to our bunks, and what have you.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh. What was that like?

HOLTZ: Well, you know, we just . . . Good to see you and what have you, and we weren't real close because I was . . . He was two years older and I was tagging as a younger brother the whole time. So, you know how that is.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Sure.

HOLTZ: But, anyway, uh . . . From then . . . I got . . . I rotated back to the States. Got sent to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Was there three months. Went into the Mediterranean on a Med cruise.

LAMBERSON: Okay, so when was this? This was in '50?

HOLTZ: Fifty-three.

LAMBERSON: Fifty-three, okay.

HOLTZ: Six months. A battalion of people on one ship.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: You spent most of your time standing in the chow line. And there was no space to get exercise, you know, uh, what have you. You could do a few pull-ups or what have you but there's no place . . . So, they decided that the battalion was gonna land and make a march to get us in shape.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: There was an English island in the Mediterranean. I don't remember the name of it right now. But there weren't English people on it. There was a few there. We went ashore and did a ten-mile hike. Coming back to the ship, everybody had their canteen full of wine.

LAMBERSON: Oh!

HOLTZ: And guys started climbing up the nets, getting back over to the APA, and they were noticing that they were—and some of them were intoxicated. Well, it . . . Well, it had to be wine. So, when you started up the net, first thing you did was just turn your canteen, and you had to empty it before you got aboard the ship.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh. Did they get in trouble?

HOLTZ: No. No. Everybody did it, so they couldn't punish the whole division.

LAMBERSON: Yeah, gotcha. And what were you guys doing in the Mediterranean? What was your mission there?

HOLTZ: The Marine Corps kept a battalion afloat . . . Well, you remember the big deal in Lebanon when they . . . They were ashore and they blew up that, uh, big building and killed so many marines and what have you?

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Well, they were trying that . . . Lebanon was . . . They were having a lot of fights between different people in the same . . .

LAMBERSON: In the '50s.

HOLTZ: Yeah.

LAMBERSON: Yeah.

HOLTZ: And, uh, they put the marines ashore, and the guy with the vehicle loaded it with ammunition and what have you and ran right by the . . . All they had was some concertina wire to pull across, you know. He just ran right over it, right into the building and blew it up. Well, that was the only time they had the division ashore permanently.

LAMBERSON: Okay, and you were there then? When that happened, or no?

HOLTZ: No, no, no, no. I . . . I was, uh, I stayed at uh Lejeune about 15 months.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: They wanted some people for seagoing, so me and a friend of mine, James Quinn, we volunteered. We were both buck sergeants. We went aboard the same ship, *U.S.S. Albany*, 124, heavy cruiser. Forty-man marine detachment. We were on a Med cruise. Hey, and it's wonderful. I wish I'd have had been smart enough to have a camera back then and record all of this stuff. We had Marseilles, France, Naples, uh, Portugal, Spain, uh, Turkey, Greece, uh, Algeria—we only had that once.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And our staff sergeant, our platoon sergeant, “I’m gonna get me one of them gals with the . . . all you can see is their eyes.”

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: He made eye contact with one, and followed her down an alley. He got her up against a wall and, all of a sudden, there was knife about that long right here. They stripped him down to his underwear and let him go. He came back to the ship and you couldn’t get him off that ship. But they found his uniform in . . . in the bazaar where they sell all the junk and stuff like that, you know.

LAMBERSON: That was in Algeria?

HOLTZ: Yeah, but, uh, that was the only time we were in Africa. Rest of the time we were . . . France, Italy. Did you ever see a woman put on her bathing suit on the . . . on the beach?

LAMBERSON: In France?

HOLTZ: In France. They’d come down there . . . regular clothes. In five minutes they’d have their . . . barely have their, you know, on, and out there. But you gotta watch when you’re talking because some people’ll understand English. Three of us were standing there watching a couple gals and we were talking amongst ourselves, and a couple walked by and the man says, “Hey, ya’ll watch your language. Some of us speak English.” Okay, two years seagoing.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Then I got the best orders I ever had. I went to Force Troops Camp Lejeune.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I was infantry. I was a grunt. The only unit in Force Troops that has infantry was Force Recon. I reported in. Ten days later I was on my way to Army Ranger School at Fort Benning, Georgia. And Ranger School is three months long.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: You do a month of . . . of swamp, and a month of regular ground, then a month in the mountains. And they taught us to climb a rope using . . . You’d put additional ropes on here for your feet, and you’d slide this one up, and put your foot in it. Slide this one up and put your foot in it and then pull yourself up. Then slide this one up. You can climb . . . That’s . . . That’s how they . . . during World War II how they got up those cliffs of . . . of Dover when those big guns they had to knock out. That’s how they climbed those. We were doing that. And then we did, uh, rappelling across a river. They got a little deal you hold on to and you go down about. . . oh, about fifty yards.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: But you don't go to the bank. You drop into the river. Well, some guys dropped too early, and they had a long way to swim 'cause you had all your clothes and equipment and things on, you know.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: So you . . . As close to the bank as you can without going into the bank because, if you didn't turn loose, you hit earth. And, uh, then I went back to Force Recon and, six months later, I got orders to scuba school. Key West, Florida. Self-contained underwater breathing apparatus. That's scuba. And, uh, that was . . . uniform of the day was swim trunks and flip-flops but we did a lot of things in the ocean. Well, *Jaws* hadn't come out yet then, and we were out there diving down a hundred feet. And what you do is, you'd dive down and at fifty foot they'd have a barrel there. And they'd have it rigged out where they had air pressure that you could duck in, and there would be an instructor in there, and he would make sure you weren't having any problems or anything like that, and he'd say, "Okay, now go down another fifty feet to the next barrel." Go down, and another guy'd check you out, "Okay, okay, now when you go out of here all you gotta do is just let your hands guide that rope up to the surface because your air in your body will take you up." But it's compressed here and, as you go up, it expands. You can exhale all the way up, and when you get there you still got air to exit. But there was about a ten foot shark swimming around, but *Jaws* hadn't come out yet, so it didn't bother us.

LAMBERSON: You weren't as worried? What did you think of scuba school? How did you like it?

HOLTZ: Oh, I loved it. I loved it. Key West, Florida, I mean, shoot. And then I got back . . .

LAMBERSON: How long were you there?

HOLTZ: Huh?

LAMBERSON: How long were you there again?

HOLTZ: Uh, about a month.

LAMBERSON: Okay, uh-huh, and then you went back where?

HOLTZ: Then I went back to Camp Lejeune to Force Troops. And the following spring I made . . . I made staff sergeant, and we went . . . There was how many of us? Oh, there were six or eight of us NCOs went to jump school.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: And I was a senior enlisted man, staff sergeant. They sent twenty recruits right out of boot camp to jump school at Fort Benning. Well, they were marines, so I was their, the head guy

there. While we were in school, a . . . A paratrooper got killed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. When he went out of the plane, somehow or another his deal that activated his shoot was tangled up in something, and he was back there flapping against the tail of the plane. They didn't have enough people in there to pull him in against all that wind pressure. Well, they put foam on the . . . on the runway, and the plane landed. Well, he was dead by then 'cause he was banging up against the side of the plane. Well, one of the recruits didn't wanna go to jump school. I said, "Look, they sent you here. You volunteered. Go through the school. Then if you do not want to be a paratrooper in the Marine Corps, a jumper, they can't make you jump. If you that dead set against it." So, he decided to stay, so. Anyway, we jumped, and because I was staff sergeant, I went to jump master school. Got to pack my own parachute. Now you're very, very careful when you're packing your own parachute 'cause you don't want anything get tangled up, and you stream her down, you know. Well, anyway I stayed in Force Recon four years.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And then the Marine Corps. Started a jump school in California.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm, and so when was this about? Like what . . . ?

HOLTZ: '50s.

LAMBERSON: In the late '50s, mid- to late-'50s?

HOLTZ: Mmhmm. Fifties.

LAMBERSON: Okay, uh-huh.

HOLTZ: And, uh, they had graduation. Well, they had high winds three days in a row and you don't jump in high winds. Well, they settled down a little bit the third day, so they decided to jump anyway. They had a bunch of guys killed, they had a bunch of guys drug, and, you know, for acres . . .

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. And you were out there?

HOLTZ: No, I wasn't out there.

LAMBERSON: You weren't out there. You were . . . You . . .

HOLTZ: This was . . . This was a new school, brand new people.

LAMBERSON: Okay, I see. Okay, uh-huh, uh-huh.

HOLTZ: It was . . . They were just learning.

LAMBERSON: Yes, okay. Uh-huh. Right.

HOLTZ: Instead of going . . . The Marine Corps were doing their own instead of sending people to the Army school at Fort Benning.

LAMBERSON: I see. I see. Okay.

HOLTZ: So, they . . . They closed the jump school down and everybody there was transferred to Camp Lejeune. We got a major, we got a captain, we got a bunch of staff NCOs, got a bunch of buck sergeants. When they arrived, there were eight staff NCOs. I was one of them that were already there. Within two months, I was the only staff NCO left.

LAMBERSON: Why was that?

HOLTZ: They were kicking them out!

LAMBERSON: Why were they kicking them out?

HOLTZ: Because the major had his people.

LAMBERSON: Ah.

HOLTZ: His people.

LAMBERSON: I see. Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: And, uh . . . I ended up . . . They were . . . They thought they had me 'cause I was duty NCO one night. Well, they had taken an old navy unit's orders, made a few changes—and that's what the duty orders that you did. Well, I read back about twenty pages and made that comment to what my job was and all this other stuff. About on page twenty-four, it said that you would check . . . check every offices . . . every office for any classified material left out on somebody's desk. Well, I went in and flicked on the light in the executive officer's, looked at his desk, there's nothing on there, flicked it off. Went over to the major's office, flicked on the light, looked, flicked it off. They had charges against me the next morning.

LAMBERSON: Hmm!

HOLTZ: And the sergeant major, he says, "Sergeant Holtz, we got charges against you for going into the executive officer's office and the Captain's office." I said, "Give me the orders that I'm . . . that you gave me last night." He handed it to me. Page 24, it says "you will check all offices for any classified material." So, the charges against me were ripped up. Well, about, uh, a week late. Uh, what . . . What was his name? Might've been Captain Sowa—came down from Little Creek, Virginia—needed a staff NCO to be an instructor at . . . up there at Little Creek. So, sergeant major says—he and I were pretty good friends—he says, "You better get the hell out of here while you can because you're not gonna be a staff NCO if you stay around long 'cause they'll get you one way or another," and I said, "Okay." So, I went up there as an instructor. And then . . .

LAMBERSON: So, what were you an instructor for or of?

HOLTZ: Uh, reconnaissance.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Landing in rubber boats at night and checking the gradient of the beach and the currents, and, you know, where . . . If . . . If you could make a landing, you know. And how. . . uh . . . The consistency of the sand because . . . Can you bring a six by ashore, and drop the ramp and it can get across the sand without, you know, that type thing. We were doing, uh, beach and . . . information in case we had to make a landing somewhere. That's what UDT people did way back. They started it. Then the Army came in with their, uh, special forces. And then the Marine Corps came in with Force Troops.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: So, I was there for about two years and we had a marine detachment off one of the ships there at Norfolk. It went into Portsmouth for . . . They brought up the . . . problems and what have you with the ship. So, they came over there and we put them through our training.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Well, the first thing in the morning we do is, we do PT where we'd do about a two-mile run. We start sing-singing. Some of them can be a little raunchy.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Well, the general's wife was driving by when we were running down along the long parallel road singing, and she heard some stuff that she didn't like to hear. So, I was on . . . Number one on the general's list to get rid of.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: They got a quota for drill instructor school at Parris Island. I found out I'd been nominated, so I went over to request a mast—an enlisted man can request mast with a commanding officer. I requested mast. “Uh . . . General, I do not want to go to DI school.” “Why?” “I know this guy real well. I'm a gunnery sergeant now. If I go down there, I'll get court martialed.” He says, “Why?” I said, “Because I don't take crap. If we're singing a Marine Corps hymn, and a recruit's over there laughing, he's gonna get punished.” “Well,” he says, “okay I'll see if I can find somebody else.” He didn't even look. Two weeks later I went to drill instructor school at Parris Island. I was a senior cadet at this . . . the class. So, I was in charge of the class. I did not know that you couldn't flunk it. They didn't flunk anybody. I didn't know that.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Well, I was a squad leader and I knew half of the guys. Three or four of them were from Force Recon and this new gunnery sergeant came over. I was a gunnery sergeant. He came over and he inspected my squad. He was checking personal appearance: shave, haircut, fingernails, all . . . you know, this stuff. Well, we had our weapons with him. If he couldn't find anything wrong with their appearance, he would give them demerits for the order arms. He can't argue this, you know. You have to see it at the same time, you know. And everybody that he couldn't find anything wrong with their personal appearance, he gave them demerits for their manual arms.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Well, I was getting pissed by the time we finished eight or nine of them. And we got around behind, was coming back up, and I said, "Well, you might as well give me some merits . . . demerits too!" "Okay, you got five." He and I were the same rank. I don't have to take that crap even if I'm a student, so there was a big stink about it. I went in front of the captain that ran the drill instructor school, and let him know what I thought about it, and I didn't hold my language either. Ha, they got even with me. The captain running DI school was good friends with the captain over in 1st Battalion, drill field. They sent me over there. They were watching me like a hawk and I lasted six platoons before I got in trouble.

LAMBERSON: 'Kay.

HOLTZ: Uh, there's usually three drill instructors, a senior drill instructor and two assistants.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Well, they were short a DI, so when you took . . . picked up a new platoon the guys assigned to you were with another platoon that was fixing to graduate. So, you would have your platoon by yourself for a week. You lived with them, took them to chow, put them to bed, woke them up. 'Cause the first week was a lot of . . . sick bay, you know, and eye exams and all this other crap, you know.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And, uh . . . You teach them the Marine Corps Hymn. Well, they had a bugler. When "Taps" blows the lights better go out right then. So I'm standing in the doorway listening for the bugle to blow. They were singing the Marine Corps Hymn. Three bunks down over here the squad bay run this way. I looked over there, there's a guy laughing!

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: A recruit behind me was making fun of me or doing something and made this guy laugh. Well, I took two steps and hit him like that. Two teeth. So, well, the "Taps" bugle blow, so I put them to bed and what have you and I sent him and the . . . mouth was bleeding and what have you. I says, "I need to know how you're gonna react." He says, "Why?" I said, "Because if I go down there right now and tell them I hit you, I can take my hat off, put it on the table, and



there'll be nothing done 'cause I gave myself up. If you don't make a big deal about it." He says, "Well, I'm worried about getting my teeth-" "Ah, the Navy will take care of that. No . . . No big deal." So, the next morning he said, "Okay, I'll . . . I'll keep my mouth shut." "Okay." But I had 70 recruits, 42 of them wrote home to their mamas. And one mama wrote the commanding general. I was relieved and sent home, and I think they had 37 specifications of maltreatment against me. Well, one of them I kicked a guy on the heel 'cause he was out of step. That's not maltreatment. And when you're helping him on his position of attention that's not maltreatment unless you're choking him, you know. But anyway, I got a lieutenant colonel from the air station there at Buford as my defense lawyer. He says, "We're gonna plead guilty of three specifications, put your career against the three specs." So, they had to court martial, and I had to talk to the four officers on it for about twenty minutes. I told them about my life and what have you and . . . and that I was gonna make a career out of the military and what have you. And they said, "Were you guilty of these things?" I said, "I've . . . right there. I've plead guilty. I said I'm guilty of it." Well, the general wanted me kicked out of the . . . busted to private and kicked out of the service, the base commander. The colonel, the head of the court martial board, heard my side of the story and everything. They find . . . They took one stripe away from me, fined me three hundred dollars, and let me stay in the Marine Corps.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. And when was this?

HOLTZ: This was like '62.

LAMBERSON: Okay, and what were the, uh . . . So . . . So, what did you plead guilty to?

HOLTZ: Uh, I don't remember. I . . . I . . . I . . .

LAMBERSON: Same, like . . . Same sort of things.

HOLTZ: There wasn't any argument. I plead guilty of the . . . These three specs, yeah.

LAMBERSON: I see. Okay.

HOLTZ: Wasn't anything serious. Of course, see, if you're a smoker and you wanna quit smoking, you can do it in boot camp. 'Cause I, as a drill instructor, am only, uh, required to give you three cigarettes a day, one after each meal.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: So, a lot of them quit smoking. But then there's pressure on you. You're competing with other platoons.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: They test the kids on, uh, history of the Marine Corps. Uh, you compete at the rifle range with other platoons. You compete in drill with other platoons. And usually the best drill

instructor that can call cadence is the best one to be the one to handle them at . . . on the drill competition.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: On the rifle range, I says, “Anytime you shoot over forty, with ten rounds . . . You fire ten rounds at, uh, offhand at, uh, hundred yards, go back two hundred yards, you fire rapid fire and slow fire ten rounds and . . . And I said anytime you shoot over forty—possible is fifty—you can have as many cigarettes as you want before you get back to the [indistinct]. So, it looked like a smoke screen down there. [Laughs] So, we won rifle competition.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. This is before you got . . . you were court martialed?

HOLTZ: Yeah.

LAMBERSON: Okay. Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: Uh, this was . . . I . . . I lasted I think six platoons.

LAMBERSON: Okay, okay, uh-huh.

HOLTZ: I was on my sixth platoon before I got [indistinct], and this was about- about a year. ‘Cause they’re there three months.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: And, uh, see . . . Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah I got court martialed. They sent me to guard company. Company gunny of guard company. I was there for about uh let’s see . . . about a year.

LAMBERSON: And what were you doing there?

HOLTZ: I was company gunny of guard company. I ran guard company. I taught them . . . taught all the subjects, drill and what have you and all that stuff.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: And then I got orders to the West Coast to go to Vietnam. The Vietnam War was on. This is the mid ’60s.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Stayed at Camp Pendleton for a month. It’s called “lock on training.” You . . . You train the people. You get used to working with people, you know. And then you go aboard ship. We landed in Okinawa. We were there a month. The last three weeks the whole division . . . There was a marine division in Okinawa, 3rd Marine Division—was on standby to go Vietnam because, uh, they were having problems at . . . up in the highlands . . . They were having

problems here, they were having problems there, and they were talking about a . . . a battalion here and a regiment there and what have you. They just loaded the whole division, and we landed at Da Nang.

LAMBERSON: Mmhhh.

HOLTZ: We went across the beach. Loaded weapons. Of course, the general and, uh, division headquarters people, they tied up the pier and walked down the gangway. But anyway, the . . . They started us out guarding Da Nang Airport.

LAMBERSON: Okay, and do you remember when this was? You said mid . . . mid-'60s?

HOLTZ: Ma'am?

LAMBERSON: You said . . . When was this again? Mid-'60s, you said?

HOLTZ: This was like '65.

LAMBERSON: Okay, so you were there . . . You were one of the first ground troops? Among early ground troops?

HOLTZ: Well, no. They . . . They started fighting way back before then.

LAMBERSON: Oh, well, sure, sure, but I mean American infantry.

HOLTZ: But they just kept building up the Americans there.

LAMBERSON: Yeah, okay.

HOLTZ: So, they had, uh, probably a few Americans there before the 1st Marine Division landed there.

LAMBERSON: Yes, okay.

HOLTZ: We were guarding the airstrip and then, after about a month, uh, the planes had to . . . had to land in one direction on Da Nang Air Field because of the prevailing winds. It'd land into the wind. So, they were in lower, going low out over this populated area out there, where a bunch of rice patties and little villages and all that crap. Well, they were getting shot at out . . . out there when they came down low, so our battalion went out and set up in villes out there.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: And our company, uh . . . Two rifle platoons and our attachments were in this little ville, and one platoon was about a half mile away on a river. There was a pedestrian bridge across the river, and we were to keep the . . . the . . . the platoon was to keep the VC from using the bridge.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Make them use boats to go back and forth. We were there for about eight months.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: And I got a picture of me with a beautiful Vietnamese sixty year . . . sixty, seventy-year old woman. [Laughs]

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: About that tall. I sent it home to my wife, showed me what her competition was. But anyway uh, we had a sniper. Every evening at sundown he'd put a round over our CP in this village we were in. So, the executive officer, 1st lieutenant, he decides he wants to go down and get that sniper. 'Cause it . . . When it got dark, the sniper would come in close to the village and shoot a few rounds up high 'cause he wouldn't . . . didn't wanna hit any villagers. Just aggravating us, you know. So, he got six or seven of us and, when it got dark, we went into this little . . . Uh . . . They take water from the river and they run it through canals to their village and then to the rice patties and all that. We went down this canal, wading after it was dark, and we had had a fire team over on this, uh, other side of the bank over there, and they were supposed to move around and then, when it got dark, they were supposed to go away from us.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I mean, we were gonna come down here and try to get behind this sniper.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: One of the guys, instead of being over with the . . . He was over sitting on the bank. And the lieutenant comes around this little curve there, and PEW [imitates gunfire], shoots the guy sitting on the bank 'cause he wasn't supposed to be there.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: So, that solved that problem. We'd . . . That cancelled the whole thing. Anyway, that lieutenant was so upset about . . . He was gonna get wounded . . . about a week before we got pulled out, we did a company sweep. We left a few people in our village and the whole company went out. Well, we tried to sneak out, and they stayed down with this little brook or canal, and the lieutenant, the executive officer, tripped a booby trap. He left, rotating back to the States, wounded bad. But, it was there and, uh, the . . . the people were normal, you know.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. So, the person sitting on the bank was an American?

HOLTZ: Yeah, yeah . . .

LAMBERSON: That he shot?

HOLTZ: It was one of the . . . one of the four in the fire team that was over there and was supposed to move out of the area. So, we could get in there and set up an ambush for this guy.

LAMBERSON: Yeah, uh-huh, right. Right, and they shot and killed. . . killed him. Uh-huh and he . . . killed him.

HOLTZ: And, yeah. Uh . . .

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm . . . And the . . . But the . . . You said the local . . . The locals, were they friendly? Did you talk to-?

HOLTZ: Oh, yeah, yeah.

LAMBERSON: Yeah? Mmhmm. What did they think of you guys being there?

HOLTZ: Do what?

LAMBERSON: What did they think of you being there?

HOLTZ: I don't know.

LAMBERSON: Couldn't tell?

HOLTZ: Well, in . . . In a way, they enjoyed it because we had a lot of money and we improved their deal. And, uh, after we'd been there a month, there were all kinds of little coffee shops, and, uh, knickknacks, and what have you.

LAMBERSON: Right, uh-huh. And did any of you get wounded by the sniper or anybody else other than the booby trap?

HOLTZ: Well, uh . . . the platoon over here on the river . . .

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: We had . . . We had an Ontos—it was a platform about like this with an engine down here, and the driver sits here, we could put all the stuff back here. Flat. Called uh wasn't an Ontos. I can't remember. Anyway, we sent it over . . . supplies over to this platoon on the river.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Almost daily. Mail, you know, uh, anything we needed to do. Well, we sent a fire team with them. Because you don't wanna put a guy on the vehicle with nobody guarding it. Well, they got over there and unloaded and they all got back on top of it and rode back. Nobody was out on flanks protecting. Well, one of the guys got shot just as they entered into our village. Guy

shot from a . . . a rice patty out there over the bank. Shot a guy in the chest. The kid that drove the platform—the reason he was driving that is he could not stay awake at night on watch. Nobody wanted to be in a bunker with him 'cause he fell asleep all the time, so we took him out of there and made him driver. Well, when they were coming back and the guy got shot, the driver didn't even have his rifle with him. So, he and I had a discussion while they were working on the guy that got shot in the chest. And I told him, "I ever catch you without that rifle . . ."

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Why didn't he have it?

HOLTZ: He was just lazy.

LAMBERSON: Mm-kay.

HOLTZ: You know, you're there for a long time and you start getting careless and you're not getting any . . . A lot of firefights or anything, so your weapon's not important. Well . . .

LAMBERSON: So, you talked to him?

HOLTZ: I . . . I talked to him like he was a recruit.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: Picked him up, and I said, "If I ever catch you without that rifle, you're gonna be doing things you don't wanna do for the rest of your tour." Well, we . . . We, like I said, he was driving this little platform. I forget what . . . it's got a name. It was a platform with wheels and a motor, you know.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: It jammed. It quit running on him and he couldn't get it started. You know what he did? Took his M-14 and loaded a magazine. Pow, pow, pow, pow, pow, pow! You know what they did to him? Sent him back to the States! Said he was crazy. I said, "Hell, send me back, I'll do that!" But we had, uh . . . Oh, I guess maybe four KIAs in the three months we were out there.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: We didn't have a lot of contact, but every night we sent out patrols. The captain made up the patrol . . . where they'd go and what have you. And my job was to make sure he didn't fall into a system where they could predict where we would be.

LAMBERSON: Oh, I see.

HOLTZ: Now, there's . . . We didn't "Monday do this and Monday do that and Wednesday do that."

LAMBERSON: Sure.

HOLTZ: And then start over again. So, we never went . . . same place.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh. Did you go out on patrol?

HOLTZ: No, I was company gunnery sergeant.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: I was . . . I was like number three in command there.

LAMBERSON: Okay, yeah.

HOLTZ: See, we got platoon leaders.

LAMBERSON: Yeah.

HOLTZ: You got a commanding officer, you got an executive officer, and then you got the company gunny.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: The captain and I checked the perimeter. One week we checked it before midnight, the next week we checked it after midnight.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: The exec—who was a 1st lieutenant—and the weapons platoon sergeant, when we checked after midnight, they checked before midnight.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: In addition to the platoon leaders were supposed to be checking their platoons also. [Chuckles] Guys out on the perimeter called in, [Indistinct]. “We got moving in the rice patty about 150 yards out in front of us. “You have any idea what it is?”, “No.” So, the mortars put up a flare. One of our patrol says, “Hey! Somebody just shot a flare on top of us!”

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: They weren’t where they were supposed to be. They weren’t supposed to be out in the middle of a rice patty. They were supposed to be over adjacent to the river.

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: They weren’t . . . and they almost . . . We were fixing to fire mortars in on top of them. So, if you’re not where you’re supposed to be, you better let people know. Well, anyway that

was my first tour. And I was the only one in the battalion—a battalion is 1,600 people—that had been in combat.

LAMBERSON: Oh, really?

HOLTZ: From Korea.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: Because it was twenty-five years.

LAMBERSON: Right. Yeah it had been a . . . awhile. So, you . . . So, how long were you there? How long was your tour? Your first tour?

HOLTZ: A year. A year.

LAMBERSON: A year, okay. Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: And then I . . . I went back to the States. Uh . . . Spent . . .

LAMBERSON: And you were in Da Nang the whole time, for the year.

HOLTZ: No, no, no. We were, ah . . . We were around Da Nang.

LAMBERSON: Around Da Nang, yeah, okay. In that area.

HOLTZ: But we . . . We weren't, uh, up in the mountains or up near the DMZ or anything. We were around Da Nang.

LAMBERSON: Right, and you were doing kinda the same thing, guarding the . . .

HOLTZ: Yeah, the . . . the . . .

LAMBERSON: Yeah, okay. Alright. Sorry, go ahead.

HOLTZ: And then I came back to the States, two years, sent orders back to Okinawa.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm, and what were you doing during those two years you were out at a base?

HOLTZ: I was at Parris Island.

LAMBERSON: Oh, okay.

HOLTZ: I had orders to Portsmouth, New Hampshire.



LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: I was gonna work with a reserve unit. Ah, Portsmouth, New Hampshire get cold in the winter I think.

LAMBERSON: It does, yes.

HOLTZ: And I'm a Texas boy.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: But it was, uh, a reconnaissance unit, and the reason they sent me there is because I'd been in recon for four years and had all the training and jumping and what have you.

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: Oh, I got to tell you about my last parachute jump.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I made forty-two parachute jumps in four years.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Some from helicopters 'cause the Marine Corps didn't have planes to jump out of.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh. And where were they? Mostly?

HOLTZ: Most of the . . . them'd been around Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: But we made a jump in Turkey on a NATO exercise.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: And what happened is the plane flew us in the day before the landing and we looked at the area. The helicopters that was gonna bring in the battalion were there picking out their landing spots, so anywhere that was g . . . We were supposed to show them where we . . . They're . . . We're g . . . landing. What we found . . . lucked out . . . They were landing and we knew where they wanted to land.

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: So, it worked out real good. But, the pilot on the plane—it's a two-engine plane, it's the biggest one they can land on a carrier. They deliver mail and VIPs and all that crap. That's what we jumped from. The engine was this close to where we jumped out.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: You can jump out and, before you hit that cowling, you're gone. We tried it! We could not hit that . . . because the slipstream and whip was this way. Helicopter, there's no slipstream. You just drop straight down. But, anyway we went in the day before the landing. Next day, we go up in a plane. In peacetime, you jump, static line parachute, 1,200 feet.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: That means you get out, and you open, and you got time to look around, and, you know, all this other stuff going on. He put us 1,200 feet over the ocean. We jumped about three miles inland from the beach in Turkey.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Time we jumped, we were about 600 feet above the ground 'cause he didn't move from the ground. He had it from the ocean and the ground kept coming up because you jump on a static line—'chute you got time to look around, all this other crap. I jumped out, and my 'chute opened, and I went zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom, hit the ground! So, we jumped at about 4-500 feet. Okay, we had, uh, twelve people. Where are we gonna pack our parachutes at? We found an army unit in Greece outside of Athens running a jump school for the Athens Army. We went there and the next day they're gonna graduate a platoon of jumpers.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I've got a Greek diploma—the only thing on there in English is my name—that says I made three parachute jumps in Greece. And the way we did, they were . . . had . . . We had so many parachutes. Well, there's only four of us got three—you had to have jumped three times to qualify. And this captain, myself, and, uh, one buck sergeant . . . And we were up there to make our third jump, just the three of us, captain says, "Is either one of you ever used your reserve yet?" Well, the problem with that is if you don't use your main back here, and you use reserve, if the reserve malfunctions, you can't trigger your main! 'Cause it's gotta be pulled out, you can't do it. And, "Oh no," and he says, "You know, I'd like somebody to try that one of these days." So, I . . . We didn't . . . I jumped. I was the second and he was first. I was second. I went out. Main opened real good.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I popped my reserve. It's got like . . . like a little compressed umbrella in there, and it pops out.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And air catches it, and it goes up, and it pulls out the rest of the parachute.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Well, I cradled real good, and I was feeding that silk out like this. I came down with two parachutes. There's a problem.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: The main is here, the reserve is here. The reserve is stealing air from the main, so then the main is stealing air from the reserve. I was . . . Every once in a while, I'd drop about 10-12 feet.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: But I lucked out. They were even I hit the ground.

LAMBERSON: That's good.

HOLTZ: I thought I'd get my ass chewed.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: Nobody said a word to me. Anyway, I . . . I went back to Parris Island for two years after my first tour of Vietnam. Made, uh, 1st sergeant. And, uh, had to go to 1st sergeant school. About the time I had two years in the States, I get a set of orders back to Vietnam.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I request to mast the commanding general. I said, "Sir, I don't mind going back when it's my turn," but I says, "The drill field just promoted nine guys to 1st sergeant. They have not been overseas. I think they should go before I do." He says, "I agree with you." So, they cancelled my orders. Sent them. Next month I get orders. Second time I went back I was a 1st sergeant. I was 1st sergeant of Ration Company. Ration Company fed all the marines from Da Nang to the DMZ.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: And, they about to bring a battalion from down here up there, and they would add on, and we'd have to supply them with C-rations and . . . and hot chow and, you know, for when they were back in reserve, and all that crap. My . . . My guys in Ration Company worked six days a week. The only day they were off was Sunday. What did they do on Sunday when they get moody? What do young guys do? Get in trouble.

LAMBERSON: Go drink, yeah.

HOLTZ: They go to a restricted area. Well, MPs catch 'em. In our unit, you had to show something punch them. So, I sat down with the captain and I got rid of him later, thank goodness. He was from Louisiana. He was afraid a black guy would . . . Said he was prejudiced, so he wouldn't punish the black guys. That was my problem with him. Anyway . . .

LAMBERSON: Why was he afraid of that?

HOLTZ: Well, it . . .

LAMBERSON: When was this?

HOLTZ: This was prejudice. This was uh '65-'66.

LAMBERSON: So you . . . So you were first there in '65, then you went home, then you come back again?

HOLTZ: No, no, no, uh, maybe it was '64.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Because I was off two years, then I went back for a year, then I . . . I was in, uh, I was in there in '68, my second tour.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh. Okay, so this is . . . This is '68?

HOLTZ: Sixty-eight.

LAMBERSON: Okay, okay.

HOLTZ: So, I . . . We set up a deal. Okay, first time they caught them, we fine them. Six bucks out of their wages. Second time, you gotta do something more serious.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: So, we'd bust them. Take a shot.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Third time, throw them in the brig. Well, we were doing that to the white guys, but the captain wouldn't let . . . We'd do it to the black guys.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: So, a rocket hit, uh, an airstrip and killed about five officers in an officers' hut. Well, we had to send some officers down. I went to the battalion sergeant major.

LAMBERSON: Mhm.

HOLTZ: Top enlisted man. "Sergeant major, can you get my captain sent down there?" He says, "What's the problem?" And I explained the problem to him. He says, "I'll talk to the battalion commander." Well, my captain went. Well, we had a lieutenant running the bakery. He came up as CO. Worked out fine now that. But, I told him, I says, "You know, we can solve this problem of guys going out of bounds all the time. Well, they're going out of bounds for one reason only."

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: He says, "You solve it, but don't tell me." I said, "Okay." We had an old papa san that did maintenance in our company area. I says, "Bring the mama san in. Put her in one of the bunkers." I put the word down. Send the guy up there about a half hour. Three bucks.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Solved the problem.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Except for the black guys. She wouldn't do what they wanted her to do. So, they wouldn't . . . Well, they kept going . . . Anyway, that tour, I had a black guy. He got caught out of bounds. I notified him the next morning to come up for office hours. Shower, shave, clean uniform, and report up here. He went UA!<sup>1</sup> Was gone a week, came back.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Called him up, "Alright, tomorrow you go in to office hours, we're gonna refer you to battalion. Shower, shave, clean up, clean uniform, report up here." Went UA. I'm a slow learner. The next time he came back, I didn't tell him. I sent one of his staff NCOs down there to get him out at reveille and to stay with him.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Clean up, mess hall for chow and what have you, and bring him to the company office. He was second guy to be court-martialed that day. The defense lawyer challenged the make up of the court. The court is supposed to be a representation of the officers.

LAMBERSON: Mhm.

HOLTZ: Every officer on the court was an ex-enlisted man.

---

<sup>1</sup> Unauthorized Absence.

LAMBERSON: Mhm.

HOLTZ: That's not a typical deal. So, they dissolved the court. Well, they had to appoint a new court. So, here I'm sitting a guy in handcuffs in the company office. Lunchtime comes, I sent my clerk to eat, and I said, "bring him back something to eat." Well, I- had- I had him in handcuffs, and I took the handcuffs off, so he could eat. We had a little partition to keep the guys from going back in where the clerks were. About that high. He said, "1st Sergeant, can I get a drink?" "Sure, go ahead." He put his hand on that partition and jumped, and was out the door running. I almost caught him at the mess hall about seventy yards down. If I'd've dove I could've tackled him, but I didn't wanna go . . . You . . . You don't wanna dive on a board block made out of wood, you know.

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: So, I just let him go, and we went around to the battalion, uh, mess hall, and the back end of the company area. Well, I was just walking then. I was tired. We had some Korean mechanics attached that took care of our, uh, meat lockers. Kept every, uh . . . Kept them running and everything. Korean guys, and one of them was outside, and he says, "Got a rifle." I said, "Okay, thank you, thank you." Well, I walked on around there. I started walking down in the company area down the boardwalk.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: He was standing there with the M-16. Well, I was talking to him.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I says, "You're in a little bit of trouble now, but anything you do from now is gonna get you in more trouble."

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And I kept walking toward him and talking to him. He put a round right between my feet with an M-16.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Guess what? I was anchored from then on. I couldn't move my feet. Well, I kept talking to him. And finally one of our other black guys walked out there and took his M-16. I don't know what he got. But, anyway I was in trouble because his defense officer says, "What do you know against the 1st sergeant?" Well, the fact that we had a woman in the bunkers down there taking care of the troops, so that's one thing. The other thing is guys put in for R and R. They didn't save any money. Guy'd come to me, "1st Sergeant, I'm going on R and R next week. I don't have any money." So, I figured I got me some money legally, and started loaning them two hundred bucks to go on R and R. When they came back, on payday, they got paid there. I was sitting right next to the paying officer and they were paying me back the \$200.

“That’s illegal!” I got word that I was supposed to get rid of that. I had twelve hundred bucks available to loan to the troops to go on R and R. I didn’t charge them any interest, but it’s money we had made from selling popcorn in our shlop . . . in our own area. Where we had a pool table and a TV. Rec room. We had a Vietnamese gal in there, a teenager, charging them ten cents for soda pop. And that’s where we got the money to loan for R and R. Well, when I left I didn’t have relief, so the money was left in my desk. I have no idea. And there’s a lawyer here in town.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: That was at Force Logistics Command. Used to take patrols out at night and ambushes and what have you.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: He rotated about a month . . . back to the States about a month before I did. You know Colonel, uh, Dunnigan?

LAMBERSON: I don’t think so.

HOLTZ: He was Bambi’s . . . The voice of Bambi.

LAMBERSON: Oh, right, yes, yes, yes, yes. Okay, yes.

HOLTZ: And then he starred in uh, uh, somebody’s son . . . who was the . . . Boris Karloff was . . . He was Boris Karloff’s son or something like that. *Son of Frankenstein* that’s what it was. Yeah, he was in about six of seven movies as a kid. He started out as the first PFC in the Marine Corps, as a drill instructor. Used to be, you had to be a corporal or above. He started out as a PFC, made it all the way to 1st sergeant. They sent him to officer school. He was selected for bird colonel. And the commandant of the Marine Corps came to see him and told him to put in his papers for retirement. They don’t let enlisted people get too high in the officer rank.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Why’s that? Why’d they tell him to retire?

HOLTZ: Because it shows that anybody can be an officer. Because all officers usually are college graduates, then they go to Officer Candidate School for about a year. Learn mapping and, you know, all that stuff that they’re supposed to learn as a combat officer.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm, mmhmm. And so did you get in trouble with the . . . Uh . . . When they mentioned, uh, the loaning of money and the woman being on base or . . . ? Anything happen?

HOLTZ: I was just . . . The word was passed to me to get rid of it. What . . . What do you do with twelve hundred dollars? You can’t send it home in . . . in checks because they check and see how much money you draw from the dispersing officer.

LAMBERSON: Sure.

HOLTZ: And if you send . . . you draw \$50 and you send a thousand home, they're gonna investigate you 'cause where'd you get the money?

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: So, I couldn't do anything with it. I couldn't have a company party and spend it. Because to have a company party, everything's free. The food, the, uh, beer, the soft drinks, it's all free. So, I just left it in the desk, and don't worry about it.

LAMBERSON: Oh, what about the prostitute?

HOLTZ: The . . . The what?

LAMBERSON: Did they tell . . . Did the woman on the base . . . Did they tell you to get rid of her too?

HOLTZ: I don't know if, uh, what went on. I don't know if they got rid of her, they kept her there, or what. But staff NCOs lived in a what . . . you know, what a Quonset hut is?

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: There were usually four staff NCOs in a building. We had a mama san in each building.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I was 1st sergeant of Ration Company. One of the guys who was 1st sergeant of Supply Company, he got an air conditioner for our hut. He got a vacuum cleaner for our hut, and you oughta see him trying to teach that Vietnamese woman how to run a vacuum cleaner. 'Cause they got little brooms, about like that.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm, mmhmm. And what did the . . . What did she do that . . . living in those Quonset huts? With the NCOs?

HOLTZ: Well, we had a staff NCO area.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: Now, uh, they were lined up here this way, and there's a straight here. Well, my company was in two rows of huts here. Supply Company was back over here, and the people were supposed to be in three places. Either the company area, the movie, or the slot shoot because we had artil . . . not artillery rounds . . . rockets coming in.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.



HOLTZ: And they . . . They wanted you either in your company area or in the movie or the slot shoot.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Because it came in and it hit over here by the mess hall, and you were over there visiting some friends, they'd have trouble identifying the guy that wasn't a member over there.

LAMBERSON: I see. Right.

HOLTZ: Because if you get torn to pieces, you . . . It's hard to identify, you know.

LAMBERSON: Right. Sure, yeah. And where . . . You said you were . . . What . . . Where were you again? Sorry, where was the location of the base?

HOLTZ: Oh, uh, uh, my second tour, I was right outside Da Nang.

LAMBERSON: Okay, you were . . . You were . . .

HOLTZ: The same area, same area, now . . .

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh. And so you were doing resupplying. Were you . . . Did you stay on base to do that?

HOLTZ: Yes.

LAMBERSON: Yeah.

HOLTZ: Yeah. Now, they. . . They sent trucks.

LAMBERSON: Right, trucks out from there.

HOLTZ: Now, there was a Korean regiment about, uh, twenty miles south of Da Nang. They had to come in trucks to draw rations from us.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: There were two problems. One, they brought their weapons because they had to go through Indian country. Two, when they got to our area my guy didn't have his weapon on him. It was hanging over there in a rifle rack. And if they wanted a case of peaches, they just picked it up and put it in their six by . . .

LAMBERSON: Mhm.

HOLTZ: And my guy'd say, "You can't do that!" And they'd point a rifle at him. So, after this . . . the first time I found out about this. Second time, when they showed up, we called the MPs.

The MPs escorted them through, no problem. But they didn't have but one problem. One time they got fired at through eighteen miles of Indian country. You know why? They got a round from that village out there. They went out and demolished the village. They didn't have any photographers with them, any correspondents. They didn't get in trouble. You know those scenes that . . . shows marines setting fire to hootches?

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: The correspondence talked the guys into doing that! So, they'd have something to send home.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: So, a big stink [Indistinct]. But . . . if a Vietnamese is dead, can you prove he's not a VC? When we first got over there, if they ran, we shot them.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: After we were there a year, if they didn't run we shot them. You know who the biggest people that made the biggest mess was? The machine gunners on helicopters. They were shooting elephants, tigers, civilians, water buffalos.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: They'd just shoot anything they saw to shoot at.

LAMBERSON: Why?

HOLTZ: You're in a combat zone! If a guy's dead, he can't deny he's a VC. And when you see some of your own people get a leg blown off or, you know, a lot of casualties or what have you, you wanna react back.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: But anyway my last four years . . .

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Phoenix, Arizona. We had a marine reserve unit there.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. This is right after you came back?

HOLTZ: This . . . My . . . Came back from my second tour.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Uh, they met one weekend a month. Summer, two weeks summer camp. Or a month's summer camp. Captain Sowa and I went out on the first casualty call. I reported in about a week later he reported in. He was captain, I was 1st sergeant.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Except I made sergeant major then. We went on first casualty call, he came back in, "Sergeant Holtz, come in the office a minute. You are now a casualty assistance officer." He didn't wanna do it.

LAMBERSON: What did you think you were going to be doing there? Or what were you supposed to . . . What was supposed to be your job there?

HOLTZ: I . . . I was just . . . Well, I was . . . I was basically a recruiter for our reserve unit.

LAMBERSON: Okay, okay, uh-huh.

HOLTZ: And I did a good job but, uh, I had to sign about three people a month for the reserve unit. They went to boot camp, were on, uh, active duty for six months, and came back to the reserve unit. Served there. That way they . . . They could beat the draft. 'Cause that's how they were getting the people for Vietnam were drafting them and . . .

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: Yeah.

LAMBERSON: So, he didn't wanna be a casualty officer, so he made you one?

HOLTZ: He made me the casualty officer.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: He never went on another one.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And in the middle of that, I got called and asked to bring my nephew's body home. He got killed in Vietnam. He was killed on an ambush. They couldn't recover the bodies for three days. Well, in heat and what have you they swell, turn black, and they're packed in clay. And you can't open the casket. Uh, my sister asked if I could bring his body home from San Francisco. I was in Phoenix, so I flew up to San Francisco, brought his body into Dallas, changed planes into Abilene, went into the mortician with the ambulance, and we drove to Coleman.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: That's the hardest thing I've ever done. 'Cause I knew the kid.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And I was partially responsible for him going into the Marine Corps. You know, because uncle so-and-so, and all that. But my sister asked me and her oldest daughter to open the casket, and to make sure that was her son in there. He was cut across here during a football game, and a big scar.

LAMBERSON: On the stomach.

HOLTZ: Well, the mortician and I and Shirley opened it up, dug the clay out, and found the wound or the scar. And I told Shirley, uh, his older sister, I said, “We have to convince Grace”—my sister—“that that is her son’s body. We don’t want to have any mo . . . it appear that he might be alive or he might be still over there or something [Indistinct].” So, she and I would get to that funeral service. Big old tears running down the whole time. And, at the end of four years, I got orders back to Okinawa.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I had three kids in high school, two boys and a girl. My wife couldn’t handle it. So, I called the headquarters for the Marine Corps. I says, “Hey, I got orders to Okinawa. Any chance of getting out?” He says, “You can retire.” I said, “I can’t get out. I owe a couple months.” When you get promoted you’re supposed to stay two more years, and I’d signed a . . . an extension what have you, and he says, “Well, don’t worry about it. We’re top heavy now. We’re cutting back. Put your papers in.” So, I retired.

LAMBERSON: This is in ’73?

HOLTZ: Seventy-three.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I retired, uh . . . 30 June . . . 30 May. Thirty May.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. And . . .

HOLTZ: Twenty-four years.

LAMBERSON: And what was the . . . What was your time as a casualty officer like?

HOLTZ: It was the worst four years I’ve ever spent in my life.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. It was harder than being deployed?

HOLTZ: It's a . . . It's supposed to be a minister along with the officer making the deal. Now, I had a navy chief. He went with me. But he went mostly for medical reasons in case, you know, somebody fainted and bumped their head or you know.

LAMBERSON: Yeah.

HOLTZ: But it is not fun going to somebody's home and told them that their son or their husband had been killed in Vietnam.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I had a kid . . . When we first were fighting over there, our biggest casualties were people stepping in punji pits. Well, you know what the United States did? They put steel in the bottom of your boots. You step in there, it wouldn't go through. So, you know, the Vietnamese did? They put a grenade down there. You step in there, you trigger the grenade, and it blows your leg off. This kid had got his leg blown off, and I wound up notifying his mother. He wasn't married or anything.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: "Oh, I'd rather he'd been killed than lose a leg." I said, "Woman! He's alive. He's gonna give you grandkids probably and what have you." "But he was such an athlete." I was like, "He can still be an athlete. It's just he . . . He can't compete in the Olympics unless it's the handicapped deal or what have you, but he's alive!" She called me up the next day and apologized. She hadn't really thought it through.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: But we did the entire funeral. I did the notification. When the body came in, we did body bearers, firing squad, we were in the church. You don't want to be in an Indian church in July in Arizona on a funeral detail 'cause it's 112 or 115 and you can feel the water running down inside your dress blues, you know.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: And we also found out when we go to an Indian reservation, get our business done, and get out of there.

LAMBERSON: Why was that?

HOLTZ: They . . . Their . . . Their funerals deal last all day long. It's . . . They did the funeral then they stay and . . . and, uh, for the picnic and, you know, get together and visit and all that.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: We were up there four hours on the first funeral when we found out that, you know. Okay, let's do our business and get out and let them get on with their business.

LAMBERSON: Did you have very many, um, Indian funerals or notifications to do?

HOLTZ: I had two two days in a row.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Then I think we had two more later on.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I had an Indian in four . . . uh, my second tour of Vietnam, I had an Indian in Ration Company.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: He was drunk all the time. I called him in and talked to him. He said, "First sergeant, I joined the Marine Corps to fight. I'm not fighting." I says, "If I get you to a infantry outfit, will you quit your drinking?" And, "I swear." So, I went up to the base sergeant major. I said, "Sergeant major, I got an Indian down here. He's worthless to me right now 'cause he's drunk all the time. And I asked him what his problem was, and he said he signed up to fight and not to issue rations." First sergeant . . . or sergeant major says, "I'll see what I can do." Called me two days later, "Okay, I got him orders."

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: The 1st sergeant of Supply Company had like a thousand people. He started getting rid of his shitbirds, pardon the expression. His guys, his slackers, you know, that wouldn't do anything or were on dope what have you. He started transferring them out. Lasted about a month and they cut him off. No more, no more. You don't need to be sending the guys that are worthless to an infantry outfit.

LAMBERSON: So, um, I have a few more questions for you, but we've been here for a little while. Um, do you wanna, um, stop and pick up again later . . . ?

HOLTZ: Nope.

LAMBERSON: Do you want me to ask the questions now?

HOLTZ: Do it.

LAMBERSON: Alright, okay, great. Um, I don't wanna take too long here. Um, so you talked a little bit about uh kind of some racial conflicts and things like that, could you tell me a little bit more about, um, race relations and kind of how things changed during the time that you were in

the military, uh, between . . . I mean you said there were some conflicts between black troops and white folks.

HOLTZ: Hey. McNamara cut enlistment standards and got the black people out of the ghettos.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And they were “Black Power.” I’ve . . . I’ve seen a black guy and a black lieutenant do that instead of saluting.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Now, there’s more problems with the northern blacks. Because they’re from a big city.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: And they don’t have that much contact intermingling with the whites. Whereas down here I got no problem with black people. In fact, a lot of them are outstanding but, in every nationality, there’s the worthless people no matter what nationality or what country they’re from or what have you. You got that. But what happened is McNamara dropped the enlistment standards and got all the people out of the ghettos. And they were all kinds of black people, mostly in the Army.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And, yeah, there was a lot of them smoking dope and what have you. And a lot of them got in the bottom of the foxhole when a big firefight was going on and didn’t stick their head up until it was over.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: But, uh, the Marine Corps didn’t have the problems that the Army did ’cause the Marine Corps didn’t have that many blacks. But it has improved drastically. When I was a kid down in Coleman, there used to be a sign outside of town. Blacks, don’t let, uh, the sun set on you in this town. I’m serious. When I was a kid back in the 30s. So, everything is changing, but there’s a certain portion of every nationality that’s worthless to be perfectly honest with you.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Hell, I’ve got a couple of relatives I’d . . . I’d take out and shoot if you asked me to.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. And did you see, um, you know, often during the 1960s and kind of during Vietnam some of . . . You mentioned, um, you know, people smoking marijuana or something like that. There’s some, um, change in discipline one might say. Did you see . . . What was your second tour . . . Did you have a . . . more disciplinary issues than the first tour or did you see any change over time?

HOLTZ: Well, the thing of it is there were a tremendous amount more of personnel in Vietnam that kept building up and building up and building up. And, uh, it . . . It was, uh, hard like the . . . like the little, uh, Indian guy I had. I solved that problem.

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: But the black guy that shot between my feet with the M-16, his buddies was guarding him when he was in the bunker waiting for his court martial.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And if he wanted to smoke some pot, well, you know. Over there they didn't think pot was a big deal.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. What did you think?

HOLTZ: Well, I would hate to . . . My life depended on some guy and he's been smoking pot . . .

LAMBERSON: Yeah.

HOLTZ: You know. He may not be able to do his job. I have never smoked one joint.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I don't intend to.

LAMBERSON: You're not gonna start now?

HOLTZ: No. In fact, I've never smoked.

LAMBERSON: Oh, yeah?

HOLTZ: I never ever started smoking.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. And . . .

HOLTZ: And I hadn't had a beer since 1977.

LAMBERSON: Okay. Did you drink while you were in the military?

HOLTZ: Yeah. And I've got snockered a few times, but I never was in a . . . got drunk when it was in a position that I shouldn't.

LAMBERSON: Right, mmhmm.



HOLTZ: Uh, we used to have, you know, parties. Let me tell you, my second tour of duty at Parris Island.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I was put in charge of the officers enlisted, uh . . . The officers' kids had a building where they danced and had ping-pong and went swimming and what have you. I was put in charge of that.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I had more trouble with officers' kids than I did anything. They had a dance, and I noticed a kid leaving. Left about three times, came back in. Fourth time he went out I followed him. He had a bottle of wine in the car. You know what I did to him? I gave him an option. I said, "I can call the MPs. Have them take you to the MP shack, and have them call your father, who happened to be a major, and have him come down or you can handle it and I can handle this where there will be no repercussions. He says, "What do I gotta do?" I says, "Okay."

LAMBERSON: And poured it out?

HOLTZ: Poured it out. Then I had another kid, we had a swimming party. He was going around and all the girls that weren't going in the pool, he was throwing them in the pool. I took him aside, and I said, "Look. If a girl does not wanna go in the pool, she's not going to go in the pool. And the next time you touch one of them, I'm throwing you over this fence." We had a fence around the swimming pool. "I'm throwing you over this fence." And I'd been a drill instructor, and I know how to talk.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: "Yes, sir." Then we went on a hayride. We had a trailer or a truck with a bed, and it was pulling a big trailer. We had kids here and we had kids back here.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: One kid up there took a . . . a bundle of hay, and when a car went by, dropped it on the hood.

LAMBERSON: Mhm. Get into all sorts of trouble.

HOLTZ: I hold it, hold it, hold it, and we had a little discussion real quick. I says, "There will be no more of this crap like that."

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I says, "There's a way you're supposed to act, and we're not gonna act that . . . this other way." I says, "That guy could've run off the road and hit a tree and killed somebody all

because you were doing crap like that. You've got a brain. Engage it. You know. Think about things before you do them, what repercussions?" I got a letter from the commanding general when . . . after two years of running the teen canteen.

LAMBERSON: What did he have to say?

HOLTZ: He was happy as could be 'cause none of the officers' kids got in trouble.

LAMBERSON: That's good. That's good.

HOLTZ: And, you know, if you're an officers' kid you gotta [Indistinct] more than what have you.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. So, when you went to Korea and then when you went to Vietnam, like what did you . . . What was your sense of sort of what the U.S. was doing in those countries? What was your . . . Like how much did you know about those places before you went there? Did you get training about them?

HOLTZ: Well, see . . . See in the Marine Corps, in boot camp, everybody goes through the same training.

LAMBERSON: Right, right of course.

HOLTZ: Whether you're going to be a radio operator or you're gonna be a machine gunner or what have you. Uh, you go through the same identical training.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And it is installed in you that you are first a fighter.

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: Even if you end up as a radio operator somewhere. You're still . . . and a lot of radio operators when . . . when the outfit gets in trouble, they put the radio down and get a rifle and they help out.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: So, that has a lot to do with it.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Now, I had a nephew. His son joined the Air Force. Went to Alaska. Was there two months and committed suicide. Oh, I've been trying to find out what would cause a 18-19 year old kid to commit suicide. I . . . I can't get any answers. But I talked to his uh, his, uh . . . my sister, his grandmother. And she said that he had had some personal problems before he ever

went in the Air Force. What do you do when you have three gays in your family? I have a grandson.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Gay.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Where does that come from? And I have a nephew that was married and had two kids, got divorced. Lives with a guy now. And he's happy as he can be. What switch over here do you turn? How do you change things like that?

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: But, uh, race relations in Vietnam, the Marine Corps did not have it because they didn't get as many draftees like the Army did.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: The Army was almost all draftees. Except for the higher echelon, you know.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Whereas the Marine Corps, a lot of them were reserves called to active duty. But then they . . . They all went through the same training and boot camp.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Mmhmm. So did you know like, uh . . . Did you, for example, think that the . . . know about the history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam before you got there.

HOLTZ: No.

LAMBERSON: Did you know much about the country, where it was, what . . . that stuff.

HOLTZ: I didn't know doodley about it.

LAMBERSON: And once you got there . . . or . . . or perhaps by your second tour, like, did you think that much about um like, should the U.S. be there? Why are we here? That kind of stuff.

HOLTZ: Well, I . . . I watched the . . .

LAMBERSON: News.

HOLTZ: Three weeks or a month of Vietnam on the, uh, what channel was that? The . . .

LAMBERSON: PBS?

HOLTZ: PBS.

LAMBERSON: Oh, this. This.

HOLTZ: Right.

LAMBERSON: Yes, uh-huh.

HOLTZ: I watched the whole thing. I watched the whole thing.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh. Yep, just recently the Ken Burns.

HOLTZ: Mmhmm, yep.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh, yes. And . . . But I mean, when you were there, did you . . . Did you think much about it, like should we be here shouldn't, uh?

HOLTZ: Well, uh, what was happening there, we weren't in, uh, in . . . thinking about, uh, what the United States and . . . and China and France and all this other stuff. We don't think about stuff like that. We're thinking about keeping alive.

LAMBERSON: Right. Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: But, I watched all of them.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. And what did you think of that? The documentary?

HOLTZ: I came back from Vietnam my second tour, landed in San Francisco, went in off the plane, and I had a woman spit on me. I was in shock. What in the hell! Now, a lot of guys would explode and what have you. I was trying to figure it out. Why in the world would some person spit on me?

LAMBERSON: And where was that? That was in San Francisco?

HOLTZ: It was San Francisco.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I . . . I was in . . . in uniform. I was a 1st sergeant. Yeah, I was a 1st sergeant then on my way back, second tour.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Landed, went in the airport. "Baby killers!"

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: One young . . . young . . . lot younger than you, came up to me PEW! Lot of guys'd swung.

LAMBERSON: Was it like a group of protesters or just a person?

HOLTZ: There was . . . There was, uh, maybe eight or ten of them in a group and she left the group.

LAMBERSON: Okay. Yeah, okay. Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: 'Cause we were just on our way to . . . We were in a hot pursuit to get home.

LAMBERSON: Right. Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And we weren't going to let anything . . .

LAMBERSON: So, you were shocked. Had you heard much about the anti-war protests or not really?

HOLTZ: Uh, not that much. I . . . I didn't know what was . . . What was happening back here in the States. I couldn't believe it when I watched it on television.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And some of them were related to me.

LAMBERSON: Do . . . And, so did you get home in '69 then? Is that right?

HOLTZ: Yeah.

LAMBERSON: Yeah, okay. You got back in '69. Um, and so . . .

HOLTZ: That's '69 and I was . . . four years . . . '73. I retired in Phoenix.

LAMBERSON: Yeah. And so, if some of them were rel . . . Like what did your family think about your . . . Like were you still in contact with your family very much or . . . ?

HOLTZ: Oh, oh, yeah. Uh, our family since my father and . . . And then when my mother died, we have a family reunion every year in Coleman. Out at Hords Creek Lake.

LAMBERSON: Oh, okay. Mmhmm, yeah. Uh-huh. And was . . . Is there a wide . . . Or was there a wide variety of views about Vietnam in your family?

HOLTZ: Uh, well, uh, I was the only one . . . and my nephew had got killed.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And a couple of people that married into the family, like one of them was a corpsman. Uh . . . There . . . When I was in, uh, outside Da Nang there, and he married my niece. He ended up as a warrant officer in the Army! 'Cause he got out and couldn't find a job. Went in the Army, enlisted, moved up and became a warrant officer. But, uh, when . . . When you're in combat, you're not thinking about what's happening back there. You know, you're . . . You're . . . All your deal is making sure you get your butt home safe and sound.

LAMBERSON: Right, right. When you were um in Arizona, did you hear more about . . . I mean, the war was starting to wind down during part of that time but, um, like what did you think about Vietnamization or like some of the kind of changes of policies, the idea that we were slowly leaving Vietnam.

HOLTZ: Well, my problem was the fact that the United States, when they have one of these problems, they go in and solve it.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: This . . . They pedaled on for what? Ten years.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. A little bit more.

HOLTZ: And it was the guy in the White House that . . . you know.

LAMBERSON: Yeah.

HOLTZ: And some of the people's advice he was getting . . . I don't know what Kissinger's people . . . what kind of advice he was giving the president, you know?

LAMBERSON: Yeah. Um, and did you . . . So, what about, uh, kind of thinking about both Korea and Vietnam, like did you know much about the . . . the Cold War and those kinds of ideas as well?

HOLTZ: Oh, I've kept track of it, like, uh, the war has never been . . . It's . . . It's stalemate.

LAMBERSON: Right. Sure, of course.

HOLTZ: You know, and the North is still provocative.

LAMBERSON: Yeah. Unquestionably, yes. Sure.

HOLTZ: Yeah, and, uh . . . I don't think that the . . . the North will ever give up their atom . . . their atomic bomb. Uh, it's like uh Egypt or . . . Not Egypt, uh, one of the Saudis or whatever. One of those over there.

LAMBERSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sure. Yeah. Um, and so you got married sometime when you were in the . . .

HOLTZ: Which time?

LAMBERSON: First time, some time while you were in the milit . . . Oh! Three times. So, when did you get married?

HOLTZ: I . . . I got married in 1953.

LAMBERSON: Okay, and so what was that like . . . I mean 'cause you were deployed and, you know, back and forth. Um, so, what was that like for your wife and then your kids?

HOLTZ: Well, uh . . .

LAMBERSON: And for you being far away from them?

HOLTZ: Wasn't much I could do [Indistinct]. They got all my money, and uh . . .

LAMBERSON: Did you guys write letters a lot?

HOLTZ: But, uh . . . But, uh, in '73, I divorced my first wife.

LAMBERSON: Okay. How much did you . . .

HOLTZ: When I . . . When I retired . . . Let me explain. When I retired, I got out, I went and sat down and see where our financial situation is. She had been handling the money because every time I turn around I was overseas.

LAMBERSON: Right. She went with you if you were in the U.S. to the different places.

HOLTZ: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LAMBERSON: Right, yeah. Okay.

HOLTZ: Uh, but I had, uh. Well, just the two tours to Vietnam.

LAMBERSON: To Vietnam, during that period of time. Right okay, and so then the other places you were . . . She was . . . she and your kids were . . .

HOLTZ: But, uh, I wanted to take over the finances, see what the situation was. She says, "No, you're not touching them because I have been handling them the whole time." And I says, "Well, where's the money?" "Well, it's not in the bank. I've got it in a investment account somewhere."

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: Well, when I told her I was leaving her, divorcing her, she took some pills, and if I'd just kept my mouth shut and waited another half hour I . . . I could've buried her. But I called the doctor and he said bring her in. Well, they pumped her stomach out and what have you. So, we had, uh . . . Well, two of my kids were grown then. I had uh two daughters . . . Three kids were gone, two daughters at home. And then, uh, next to youngest went into the Marine Corps, and that left the youngest one. And, uh, I started messing around with a younger woman naturally, you know. Indian gal. And she had three kids. Well, after I married her, I kept getting phone calls from my wife 'cause we were both still living in Phoenix. I was working for the, uh, post office there. And I got tired of her picking up the phone and . . . So, I moved there to Texas. If she wants to pick up the phone it's gonna cost her money now. [Laughs.]

LAMBERSON: This is your ex-wife or your . . . or the . . . your second wife.

HOLTZ: My . . . My first wife was [indistinct].

LAMBERSON: Your first wife, okay. Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And when I retired from the Marine Corps in '73, you were not required to give your wife half of your retirement. That did not come in until like '78 or somewhere in there, so she got none of my retirement, military retirement. And she's raising hell now about that. I says, "You had a lawyer. I had a lawyer. We agreed and we got a divorce. Now, what's your problem?"

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: "Been twenty years or more. What's your big deal about it?" Well, I married the Indian gal. We came here. I retired from the post office. We were out at Grape Creek. Her sixteen-year-old got pregnant and had a baby. When she was seventeen, came home. Her mama laid down the rules. "But Mama, I'm seventeen and I want to go out and date and have fun." Well, there's your problem right there. What are you gonna do about him? "Will ya'll take him?" She gave us her kid. And all she wanted was an apartment in town. So we adopted him. Her mother says, "Whose the father?" "Well, Mama I don't know. Let's see. It's one of seven guys." In one month. She was work . . . uh, a steakhouse out of Grape Creek, and she was working there on Saturday nights waiting tables. They closed 11:30. She'd call up, "Mama, we're running a little late tonight. Don't come down 'til 12."

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Well, anyway we adopted a kid. Well, my second wife, the Indian gal . . . The kid we adopted started in Grape Creek school. Well, we didn't have anybody else at home, so she started volunteering down there. Then she . . . They hired her to oversee the lunch room. So, the teachers could eat and they didn't have to oversee it, you know. Then they kept finding more work. Well, when they built the high school out there, the, uh, prin . . . not the principal. the superintendent signed a contract with IBM. He got a 16-foot copying machine. You could put a



book in here, hit some buttons, and a copy would come out at the other end bound. Well, she'd been . . . They'd been paying her five bucks an hour and they started paying her fifteen bucks an hour. That was more than the teachers were making! About a month later, she came in town Saturday, and came back with a \$40,000 Chevrolet automobile. She drove home, I says, "Who's paying for that?" "We are." I says, "We didn't buy it. You bought it." I says, "I ain't gonna help pay for that." 'Cause I'd been retired from the military, retired from the post office. I was volunteering here and there and doing stuff. So, about three days later, she still had that, I packed up and moved out. A week later she was driving a little scout or something. So, that . . . We got divorced.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And I swore. "Okay, that's it, that's it." I do family genealogy.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: My mother is a Tomlinson. She's the 11th generation of Tomlinsons in the United States.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: They landed in South Carolina when . . .

LAMBERSON: Colony. Yeah, sure. Mhm.

HOLTZ: When there was nobody there but Indians. My father . . . His father, my grandfather, Holtz immigrated from Germany. The sailing ships stopped in England and a lot of English people boarded. They were coming to Texas to settle Texas.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: My grandpa was such a good worker he was mar . . . engaged to one of the Englishwomen by the time the ship got to Texas. And he married her, and they stayed in, uh, Corpus and there was a diphtheria or some kind of a epidemic down there, and both of them died. And my dad and his sister went to an orphans' home.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Okay. Um, okay. I just have a couple more questions, so when you came back, you talked a little bit about coming back, um, already, but did you expect or face any challenge sort of moving from military life into retirement?

HOLTZ: Well . . .

LAMBERSON: Or into civilian life, I should say.

HOLTZ: I . . . I went to college at, uh, Phoenix College.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: In . . . In Phoenix. And I was gonna be a juvenile probation officer. That's what I wanted to be. I graduated with a two-year degree from Phoenix College. My second son was sitting next to me. He graduated too. And I was gonna hire on there in Phoenix but Maricopa county—is where Phoenix is. The Maricopa county guy in charge of . . . We went to one of his lectures . . .

LAMBERSON: This is in the '70s?

HOLTZ: Yes, it was in Phoenix in the summer. And, uh, while I was still in school.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Last semester.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: He was there talking to us about, yeah. And he says, “Anybody that is low income, broken family, they're gonna be convicts.” I stood up, and I says, “Ah, you're full of crap.” I says, “When my dad died, there were eleven of us. There were eight of us at home when he died in 1941,” and I says, “Not none of us have been in jail.” I says, “We didn't have a lot of . . . In fact, we didn't have an automobile for five years 'til Mom remarried.” But I asked Mom after Dad died, like in '43—he died in '41—“Mom, if Dad hadn't died, would there have been more of us?” “Probably.” But he was a brick mason.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Okay.

HOLTZ: Build houses and roofs and that . . .

LAMBERSON: Yeah. I . . .

HOLTZ: He built a lot of gymnasiums all down in that area down there. Yeah.

LAMBERSON: Oh, yeah. And so then after that, you ended up working at the post office instead?

HOLTZ: And retired.

LAMBERSON: And retired. Um, so, looking back on your military service, how do you feel about your time in the military?

HOLTZ: I'm knee deep in money. I'm serious. I'm a hundred . . . 80% disabled.

LAMBERSON: Okay. And that's from, you said, PTSD?

HOLTZ: Partially. But I also got wounded here.

LAMBERSON: Oh, right. Uh-huh. Were you wounded . . .

HOLTZ: And . . . And, uh, I got hit in the eye with a complete grenade.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: Not a . . . Not an explosion but we were climbing a mountain and a guy up there . . . They usually put grenades on their suspenders here.

LAMBERSON: Yeah.

HOLTZ: One of them fell off and it rolled down past me.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh. And where was that?

HOLTZ: This is was in . . . in Korea.

LAMBERSON: In Korea, okay.

HOLTZ: And, uh, somebody says, “Hey!” and I turn like this and got hit in the right eye. I can’t see out of my right eye.

LAMBERSON: And did you have to leave for a little while?

HOLTZ: There was a black spot right there.

LAMBERSON: Did you have to leave Korea that time too?

HOLTZ: No, I . . . I just had a beautiful black eye.

LAMBERSON: You just stayed there? Okay.

HOLTZ: They said, “How’d you . . . How’d you get all of that and not get wounded?” I was, “Well, the whole grenade hit me, not a piece of it, yeah.”

LAMBERSON: Right. Oh, geez. Um, okay, so . . . So the . . . Your finger injury, your eye injury, and then PTSD is giving you disability from the military?

HOLTZ: Mmhmm. Mmhmm. And, uh, hearing, and what else . . . Oh, I broke my wrist.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: Shattered my thumb back here. A lieutenant did that. I was a quarterback playing football at . . . in Phoenix when we were there at lunch hour we went out and practiced to stay in

shape. I was quarterback and I threw the ball like that. He came in right there with his arm. Just shattered that.

LAMBERSON: Mm, yeah.

HOLTZ: And I was a bowler! Right-handed. Six weeks, they took the cast off, I bowled that night.

LAMBERSON: Oh, good.

HOLTZ: Almost had a six hundred series 'cause I made sure that thumb came.

LAMBERSON: Nice. That was good. Yeah, that's right. Um, when were you diagnosed with PTSD?

HOLTZ: Uh, I went to . . . I . . . I was seeing a guy out here.

LAMBERSON: Uh-huh.

HOLTZ: Uh, I . . . Don't ask for an opinion of him please.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

HOLTZ: He's a . . . He's a nice guy, okay. I went to Big Springs, made an appointment with this guy just up there. And I sat here and talked to him just like you and I have been talking to, and I went through my whole career. He says, "Mr. Holtz, it has been a pleasure to sit and listen to you and your career." He says, "I've been talking to these guys that been in combat for one year, been in this military four years, and . . . and they want us to take care of them for their lifetime, you know." He says, "I'll take care of you, don't worry about it." So, I'm getting 80%.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: But actually, you can add up and have more than 100%, and they cut . . . cut it back to . . . and uh, uh . . . What the hell's the name . . . Laura. I was working through her. She says, "Bob, come on. I can get you 100%." I says, "I don't want 100%."

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: I'm happy here.

LAMBERSON: Right.

HOLTZ: I'm saving \$2,000 a month.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Did you know about PTSD or, uh, some of those challenged when you first retired?

HOLTZ: It . . . This is new. Hey, WWII they had this. My cousin was a tail -gunner on the B-29. They could not get him in the airplane for his fifteenth mission.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: He was back in the tail-gun, and it took him about five minutes to crawl up through a deal like that to get to where he could get out of the airplane.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And the planes he'd been in, none of them had crashed, but he'd been shot up pretty bad, and guys had been killed and what have you. They couldn't get him on the airplane for his fifteenth mission. Yeah, and these were cousins. Three boys, let's see, uh, one went in the Navy in '39 before the war. He had three destroyers sank out from underneath him. The other, Alfred, went into the Marine Corps. Made Guadalcanal and Okinawa, and he cracked up on Okinawa. He was a sixty-mortar man. It's like a long-range grenade. When they shot up the ammunition they made stretcher-bearers out of them. And they had to go up and get the wounded out of the frontlines and carry them back and get . . . being shot at . . . at the same time. He was in the hospital in Okinawa, cracked up.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: And they were still . . . The Japanese were still flying planes down there. He said they were in the hospital on this ridge.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: A Japanese plane came down, through . . . through the valley and waggled his wings and went on out and into a ship. And let's see, Edwin . . . Edmund was the one that was . . . went in . . . in '39. He had the three destroyers sink out from him. He was missing in action for three months. They sank a destroyer out from him. He went to shore, worked for these women for three months before he went back.

LAMBERSON: Wow.

HOLTZ: You know, in Australia. And he figured he, you know, it might be a good idea to go back. He's been missing long enough.

LAMBERSON: Right. Long enough. Um, do you have any advice for, um, young people who are entering the military now?

HOLTZ: Keep an open mind. Keep an open mind, and for a lot of young people, it . . . It's a good career because you can learn so many trades now that wasn't available back when I went in.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm.

HOLTZ: When I went in, I thought the Marine Corps had tanks, artillery, and infantry. When I went in, the Marine Corps was having electricians, plumbers, doing that on the base. They didn't have civilians doing it. The marines did it, but they gradually changed it over. And now, everything is taken care of if you got a broken sink or something like that, it's a civilian that fixes it, not another marine or what have you. But it . . . It, uh . . . because if . . . If you spend enough time in to retire, you're young enough to do something else.

LAMBERSON: Mmhmm. Anything else you want to add?

HOLTZ: I talked.

LAMBERSON: Well, thank you so much, we appreciate it.

HOLTZ: Hey.