ORAL MEMOIRS

OF

CLARANCE HARTFIELD JR.

An interview conducted on

May 16, 2017

Interviewer: Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai

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 Clarance Hartfield Jr. are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on May 16, 2017.

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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.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Okay, so this is Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai and today is May the 16th, 2017. We are in Big Spring, Texas for a *War Stories* interview. So, could we start with your name?

HARTFIELD: My name is Clarance Hartfield Jr.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And where and when were you born?

HARTFIELD: I was born in a town called Nixon, Texas. It's just fifty miles south of San Antonio.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And when was that?

HARTFIELD: Nineteen forty-two. I'm a war baby.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And do you have any siblings?

HARTFIELD: No, I have . . . all my sons have passed away.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And what were your parents doing in Nixon?

HARTFIELD: My father was working during the war. My father helped build Randolph Field Air Force Base around San Antonio. And my mother was just staying home, taking care of the kids. There was five of us in the family: five boys and two girls.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And which number were you?

HARTFIELD: I was number two. I had an older sister.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What was your father's name?

HARTFIELD: Clarance. I'm Junior.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And do you remember anything about that time when he was helping build the field?

HARTFIELD: Well, my mother had brothers in the service, and what I can remember is that we were living in this place called Cibolo, Texas when my sister was born and owned a farm. And when he would come home, there'd also be some G.I. that would come with him, which I didn't know. I learned later on they were my mother's brothers; they would come to visit. That might have had an indirect way of me being in the military. And then again, along the same way as that, my father always said we should go to school for an education. The boys could get an education or go in the military, but it wasn't really pushed. It was just kind of dropped around. They could afford to send the girls to college, but then we boys would more or less be on our own in a way, I think. Eventually, all three of us went in the service. We used the G.I. Bill to get some college. You know, we graduated from college and went about our own ways.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What were your brothers' names and what branches did they join?

HARTFIELD: Sam was a paratrooper. He went to Korea, which was the brother next to me. Dennis was the younger one. He went in the Army, and he went into the medical field. I was the oldest, and I just went into the Army. Eventually, I wound up in aviation.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Was there a specific reason for that branch of service?

HARTFIELD: Well, I was raised in Big Spring, Texas, which they had an Air Force base. And of course, my father worked around Air Force bases. And we looked at it as instead of four years, you could do three, or you could wait and get drafted and do two, which they had the draft during that time. If you didn't have it then, your chances were you weren't going to get it, in a way of speaking, or you get a trade. And my father was a heavy equipment operator, plus being a carpenter. I kind of took up the carpenter side. I didn't really care that much for driving bulldozers and stuff like that. I guess that's it.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, you said you grew up on a farm?

HARTFIELD: We started on a farm, and my dad was a sharecropper too. Being the oldest, I did most of the work because my other brothers and sisters were kind of sickly when we moved out of Big Spring, Texas.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And how old were you when you moved to Big Spring?

HARTFIELD: I was five.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Was there a reason for Big Spring?

HARTFIELD: Well, you know we was on our way—my father has told me—we was on our way to Colorado because my mother suffered from asthma, and they thought maybe the climate would be a little better. The car broke down in Big Spring, and the next day my father got a job and we never left. And eventually my mother's asthma got better, and my brothers and sisters got to where they could live even with the dust, and they were a lot better than the San Antonio area and that humidity. This being drier, I think that helped a lot too. And I never was sickly.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Lucky you.

HARTFIELD: That's what they say now.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, what was it like growing up in Big Spring? The town has grown a lot, hasn't it?

HARTFIELD: Well, back in the day you had segregation. But it was . . . because of the Air Force base, it was interesting growing up. There were things as you got older you could do, like play little league basketball. And with the Air Force, you got to meet different people from different cities. And looking back now, there wasn't too much going down where we were at that

time because being in the Air Force, you could go in. And it was just, you know with the prejudice and segregation going on, there were still opportunities to do things that you didn't have to worry about out here like they did in the South.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, what was the segregation line like? Was it blacks and Hispanics and whites? Or how did that work?

HARTFIELD: Just by . . . like I said, black, Hispanic, white, it just . . . here, black was considered northside, and the Spanish were in between, and then the whites were on the southeast and westside. You could see the difference because the way the city interacted at that period of time. But it was . . . I don't think we ever had to worry about houses being burned or crosses or stuff like that. It just . . . it wasn't really out in the open, but you knew it was there. It wasn't displayed; I'll put it that way. Except for the colored and white signs, which you would find in the government building and all that, but other than that, in the bus station and stuff like that. At the eating places, you'd have to go to the back and stuff like that. I looked at it then; it was just . . . it was there. You knew it, but you never tried to change it. Eventually it did change, but there weren't demonstrations like we was reading about in the paper and hearing on the radio because we didn't have TV back then. So, it . . . and then meeting these people from the Air Force base and hearing different things—most of them came from the North . . . well, Philadelphia—it was always something different that you learned if you wanted to. And that's what I said, so I know I didn't get caught up in that. Well, we didn't.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, there were segregated schools as well?

HARTFIELD: Oh, yeah. That's what you mean. In Big Spring, you had Lakeview, which was for blacks. You had Morrison, which was for the Spanish. And then you had South Ward, North Ward, which was for the white. But what made things change, the Hispanics—when they got to ninth grade—got to go with the whites. When the blacks got to ninth grade, that was it. Eventually, it changed to the twelfth grade by the time I graduated. So, that's . . . and they . . . but military had a way out. We, at least when they had the draft, a lot of us . . . a lot of the men got drafted in the military, so that . . . they didn't really get to mix in a whole lot with what was going on. And the girls, the ladies, wound up going to be nurses and stuff, which that part was a little different because college wasn't integrated; it was segregated. You could go to college if you could afford it. And so, a lot of the women . . . those girls wound up going to college to be nurses and stuff like that. It was . . . we didn't look at it as a handicap.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And what did your father do in Big Spring?

HARTFIELD: Well, he was as sharecropper, and then he went to work for F. V. Jones Lumber Company. He helped build houses.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And so, at what point did you join the armed forces?

HARTFIELD: I joined the armed forces right after I graduated. I was the last part of the last class to graduate before they integrated. But like I said earlier, these fellows that we grew up with, some of them went into the Navy. They would come back, and they were wearing suits.

And some of them went into the Marines, and they came back all decked out. And some normal guys came back. And with the Air Force, it was four years; Navy, four years; Marines, four years; Army, three or two years, so that's what I wound up with. I went to summer camp, and that kind of turned . . . gave me an idea of being in the Army. Plus, I liked the way they dressed. They seemed to have a feeling of freedom about them, you know, freely . . . easy to get along with, not so stuck up, so that could have been it.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, what year was that?

HARTFIELD: Nineteen sixty-one. I graduated May of 1961, and I went to summer camp in June in 1961. And what we looked at during that period of time, which might have had a bearing on most of the people I ran around with, was the Cuban Crisis had started. And in that process, the Berlin Crisis came along in that period of time. And like I said, some of those Navy guys had to go back and just thought, "You're going to war. We're going to war." And they just kept saying, "The balloon's going to go up." I found out that, when I went to Fort Hood—I didn't think that much about until later on—it was a predominantly black unit. Well, we had a few whites, but most were all blacks, which was a difference. It was a learning experience because most of them were from the North. But it was that group of us from the South: Louisiana, Mississippi, and that area in Texas. So, it was interesting. It was interesting. Having been around a bunch of airmen, then it's hard to be around—well, it wasn't really hard—being around draftees who were angry. They were angry at that time knowing what was happening. While at the same time, the Civil Rights Movement had started, and even though it wasn't happening in Texas per se, but it had started happening back up North and some in the South. Eventually, it got to Texas but not this far. So, they came with an attitude. We, down here, we were free-living. So, our conflict was between each other, which it shouldn't have been. But that's the way it was.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What sorts of conflicts?

HARTFIELD: Well, we knew not to push the button. We had places you couldn't go. I mean, like in the military law, even with the Air Force Base, there were places off limits. That didn't mean . . . it meant you weren't supposed to go there because that was trouble. And also, you find out when you get in the military you have two laws. You've got civilian law, and you got military law. And either one could be wrong . . . I mean, not wrong; you're wrong. You're wrong. So, that would . . . they would just want to push the issue. And when we was trying . . . when we were going through as a group, it's not an "I." In fact, more times . . . I spent nine years in service. It wasn't an "I." It was a "we." And if one or two was in jail, that means somebody's got to pick up the slack. And you can just do that so long. They come back like ain't nothing wrong, but it is wrong. It was wrong in a way that you picked up the slack, and you find out that they had that same attitude, and you had to live with them, you know. But like I said, they wasn't brilliant in the end to our group. So, that was how you lived and survived. That's the way I looked at it.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Let's go back real quick. Having grown up in Big Spring, how do you define West Texas? Are we in West Texas?

HARTFIELD: I guess it depends on location. I'll say we're in West Texas because if you're coming from San Antonio, you're going out West. You've heard the saying, "Go West, young man." Okay, so we go west. West Texas is rural. It's not really isolated. You're isolated if you want to be isolated. That's my thinking. The idea is you're away from a whole bunch of people, so you can bond regardless of race. You can bond together if y'all are involved with certain things, and you always find somebody will help you out regardless of race. Like if something happens on the northside, there will be somebody to come over and help you on that, or either you go on the westside or eastside and help out. So that's what . . . they're a bunch of friendly people. Even out in Midland or Odessa around in there. That's the way I look at it. That's how I would define West Texas, that friendliness.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, where's the line that divides West Texas and the rest of Texas in your opinion?

HARTFIELD: I guess if you go east past Abilene there might be a line maybe, and get past San Angelo might be another line.

WONGSRICHANALAI: You consider that South Texas?

HARTFIELD: Not really. It's going south, but it's not South.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Hill Country.

HARTFIELD: See, you're getting to another part of Texas. That's what I mean. And when you go past Lubbock might be another . . . or even before you get to Lubbock could even be another line. And then everything else is West, I think. That's what I would define because even all the way to El Paso, the friendliness of the different people since I traveled around like that. That's what I would define.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, your opinion is that folks in West Texas are friendlier than folks, let's say, in East Texas.

HARTFIELD: Oh yeah, I would think because . . . well, what do you call East Texas?

WONGSRICHANALAI: One of the questions is how people generally define East and West Texas. Well, East Texas, let's say Houston.

HARTFIELD: Is that East Texas or South Texas?

WONGSRICHANALAI: I don't . . .

HARTFIELD: I would consider that South

WONGSRICHANALAI: Okay, South Texas then.

HARTFIELD: Because East is when you get around Dallas, and that's different. And you got more of your metropolitan-type cities there, so the friendliness is maybe in that area, but not as a whole; it's kind of patches. Same with Houston. I wouldn't live in Houston, and I wouldn't live in Dallas. But I would live in Katy when you get down in Houston. But I can't think of anywhere in Dallas I would want to live unless . . . you know.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Okay, that's fine.

HARTFIELD: Yeah, you know. I've been to Katy. Katy's a whole lot bigger than it was when I was there, but I read about it because it's kind of out and away from it, and they've got their own area. And plus, they grow a lot of rice in that area so that . . . in that particular area. And then I don't count calling San Antonio South, and one reason is because of the military installations around there that makes up a whole bunch of peoples. And of course, you've got Austin, and you got . . . I wouldn't want to live in Austin. And you've got the Hill Country there. Llano would be a good place to be just because you're out there by yourself, and that's the way I would look at it. Anywhere you can move around freely in the city or in the towns, to me, would be nice.

WONGSRICHANALAI: All right, that's fine. So, when you were in basic training, this was in Fort Hood?

HARTFIELD: Yeah.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And there were folks from all over the United States?

HARTFIELD: Yeah.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Were they curious about Texas?

HARTFIELD: The group I was with didn't want to be there. But they had . . . once they got onto the idea that—on what we was trained to do, or being trained to do, and with the incident that was going on . . . that went on in Cuba and what was happening in Germany and Berlin—that maybe this is something serious. After we got these other little things out of the way, they had to change, and it could have been from the training that we was going through, plus the difference of the people that was training us too. And I think that's what changed all of our attitudes. That it took . . . when "I" was a "we." I think that, to me, that's . . . because eventually we wound up . . . about two-thirds of us wound up going to Germany together. And then we found out over there, in order to survive we got to be a "we" and not an "I".

WONGSRICHANALAI: Okay. So, was that your first assignment after boot camp? To go to Germany?

HARTFIELD: Yes. Well, I'll tell you this: I didn't realize we were going to Europe, and I didn't realize Germany was in Europe. Because when going through school, it was Europe; it was Europe, and it didn't say all of the Germany, France, Italy and all that. It was just . . . you looked at it. And so, Germany just happened to be a part of it. I found out though.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Now, what unit were you assigned to?

HARTFIELD: I was with the—when I went to Germany—I was with the 50th Infantry, 2nd AD—2nd Army Division. And then when they shipped us to Germany, I was attached to the 3rd Armored Cav.[1] Unit, which happened to be a National Guard unit out of Maryland.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And when did you go over to Germany?

HARTFIELD: I think it was February of '62.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What town did you go to? Or what base?

HARTFIELD: The first place I went to was Frankfurt. And then we went to Kaiserslautern, Germany. We called it "K-town." And then we went to Berlin, and from Berlin back to Mannheim. I spent twenty-nine months in Germany.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What was your assignment during this time?

HARTFIELD: I was . . . went from infantry to transportation. We had transportation. We had mechanics.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Okay. So, you were there until 1964?

HARTFIELD: Yes.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Do you remember what happened when President Kennedy was assassinated?

HARTFIELD: I was in Mannheim, but that was, um . . . in Germany, or Europe, you had a 7th Army alert, a USSR alert, and a NATO alert. Now what that means is you go the fields, and you had certain areas that was your area assignment to protect because it still had Berlin . . . well, Russia. Our assignment was Bad Hirschfield, it was up on the Czech border. We didn't know what had happened. We were out there for three days, and when we came back, the unit I was in . . . and I'll tell you it rained, it snowed, and the sun came out the same day.

And like I said, I was in a predominantly black unit. It completely changed when Kennedy got killed. They integrated. They shipped us out, and we really got integrated. And it turned out to be, looking back, it turned out to be the best thing that happened to that particular unit. We really knew we were going to war. I think the attitude changed, everybody changed. Even . . . we had been getting news. My mother was sending me papers that the Civil Rights Movement was really going up, and things were burning, and people were getting killed. But in the military, you're all the same.

People's attitude changed real quick. Some of us who had been to Berlin, we knew what it was like, and being up on the Czech border, seeing armed guards and stuff, and looking at each other and wondering, the intensity of the training changed. Everybody was taking everything

[1] Cavalry

serious, which it was hard to not to. With the president killed, words keep . . . you're not . . . you don't know what's true. And so, you just got to follow what the sergeant is telling you, and keeping the crew lead, and making sure. The tension that you was going through, and that was why some people was keeping weapons so clean. I mean, they took everything serious. Well, there was some joking, but then there was a seriousness to the joke. And everybody wanted to start writing letters and stuff like that. So, I guess that, if that's what you're looking for, I think that'd be the seriousness of the situation really had changed. And that's the balloon's going to go up; the balloon's going up.

But I would learn later on, they used to tell us, "You've got hold this for seventy-two hours if it happens." I learned later we wouldn't have been able to hold it for seventy-two hours because of what we had. We were still using World War II equipment, and it took a lot of work to bring it up to standard then keep it there. And parts . . . well, you weren't given . . . that's how nobody had been a real mechanic. You take one part off of this one that didn't run; you take one part off and make this one run. So, you keep . . . so with that . . .that was some interesting times. And a lot of fun times. To me, it was a lot of fun times. All of the sudden the attitudes of . . . we called them "Yankees" started to understand what a southerner was that we was going about, and there was a little bit closer bond than it was at first. And we started talking to each other. What I mean, talking to each other like about family, about school, and, you know, how the different cities was and all that. And I go through that now with some of the friends I've made back there.

WONGSRICHANALAI: You still keep in touch?

HARTFIELD: Some of them that are still alive. But that's . . . they're pretty old, but when I go to San Antonio, I visit with them. But when I came back to the states, one thing, they put you in something else, which means you got to start this process all over again. And if you don't adapt to those changes, you get kicked out. Some of them did. And like I said, I'm part of the 19th; I'm not part of the 20th. I got into the 20th. When I came to the states, they sent me to a place in Fort . . . well, they sent me to Fort Polk, Louisiana, which that really was Civil Rights Movement. I found out about the way it was being separated, and you can't do nothing. And I made some friends over in Germany that was from Louisiana, so, you know, DeRidder and Oakdale. Like I said, we started learning each other, so when I get there, I'll visit you. And it came true, I had no idea I was going to Polk. But anyway, I knew they was there because I had addresses, and I had . . . and I visited a few people, a couple of them. And the attitude, they didn't change, but the people changed. Well, I won't say they changed, the people. I just noticed them. This isn't the same thing, and I was there two months.

Then they sent me to Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. That was different. I don't know if you call that South or you call that North, but they still had the same attitude. The town . . . a big portion of town was off limits, which was okay. But it was some more training. And it was a closed post, so you had to have a pass to get off post. And they weren't giving them too freely because you still had the Civil Rights Movement was in big time. It was . . . it wasn't so much on post, but it was around Waynesville and surrounding cities, and I had a car too by that time, which gives you a little bit more prestige [laughs]. And like I said, I made some friends, and we would go to St. Louis for baseball games and stuff like that. And I was up there two months. And they sent me to Fort Sill, Oklahoma where they had a shortage.

I came to the conclusion that if they were short somebody here, they'd send a group of you there. So, they sent me to this place that . . . I don't know. You look at the records of your

school, and I was a mechanic. I was in transportation, and they sent me to this place that didn't have no trucks; they had helicopters. Okay, so back then they didn't just ship you off somewhere else; they kept you. So, they sent me to school back to this place I had been hearing about with Martin Luther King to Fort Rucker, Alabama to learn how to work. And he was doing the marching in Montgomery, which is about two hours away, and he was doing those things in Birmingham, and he would . . . he was really . . . oh man, I survived Berlin. I survived Czechoslovakia. Now I'm going to come to America and get killed. That'd run through your mind.

Anyway, like I said, I made friends, and in my case, I think God what looking after me. I had met Wunderlich in Germany, he was from Maryland. And Johnson was from Maryland, and Hellen was from Philadelphia, and Esposito from New York. I might back up a little bit there. We came back from Germany on a boat, so I went to the World's Fair, and Esposito was from East Rockaway, Long Island. So, I went to the World's Fair in New York, spent three days up there, and then now fast forward. I wound up in Fort Rucker, and guess who I see: Esposito, Hellen, and all of us wound up in the same class. I wanted to go to Fort Eustis, and they wanted to come to Texas.

Well, Fort Eustis . . . Newport News had jazz because in Germany we went to a lot of jazz places. And I was raised on blues because of the Air Force. The airmen . . . my uncle came back from Germany and was stationed there. He was into jazz, and people I was around listened to jazz. So, that's why I wanted to go to jazz fest and all that. And we'd go to that training. We learned a lot, but we had a lot more fun. Okay, I'm going to come visit you now that we're all here together. After the five weeks of training, they go back to Fort Eustis; I go back to Fort Sill.

And about two months later, they sent me to Fort Sam.[2] Johnson was doing the push . . . well, the buildup in Vietnam. We started hearing about Vietnam, but we didn't know where it was. Nobody could show it to us on a map because we thought, "All right, I'm going to get out of here. It's going to be okay." So, I guess in Fort Sam—that's in San Antonio—I guess I had been there about a month, and here they come: Hellen, Wunderlich, Esposito. We used to call Esposito "Speedy." And they assigned us to this helicopter company that was getting ready to go to Vietnam with an air ambulance company; we called it "DUSTOFF."[3] We'd pick up the wounded. And then we'd go through that training, and they'd tell us all this stuff. They'd get a big red cross.

It was nice—in the way I looked at it—that we'd meet somebody that had already met somebody, and it's not hard. You got to learn all over new peoples again. You get spread out, but if you got one little core group there . . . you know. And I can say I've spent nine years in the military, and everywhere I went, even when I was in Germany and in the states, there was somebody I met that I knew, or that I had played football against, or basketball against, or ran track against, you know. So, I wasn't isolated like I hear some of them say, "I was just the only one there." If you don't want to be friendly, well, 'Nam was different.

'Nam was completely different than Germany, even the United States. You're in war. They're shooting at you for real. We bonded; the whole group bonded. I think what led up to it was that we got over there in August 1965, and being in DUSTOFF—we called it "DUSTOFF," the air ambulance—I was a crew chief mechanic. And you're assigned a medic that would work with you; that was your team. You'd get . . . the pilots would be different. So, in a helicopter, you'd have five people on it before . . . to start off with. And you're supposed to have been

[2] Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

[3] Dedicated Unhesitating Service To Our Fighting Forces

unarmed. They weren't going to shoot at you. That's what they told us at Fort Sam. So, we went over there in August, and we were flying missions, and they were actually shooting at us. I better say in my frame of mind, "Okay, they didn't hit us, so everything's okay I think." So, we lost three people from my company in 1965. And today at . . . kind of . . . have some feeling. Well, I got a couple of people. We call each other. If I get home and I have something on the answering machine, and I call them right back. Anyway, we realized then that, hey, this stuff is for real. So, we said, "Let's don't do something stupid. Let's all go home." So, I think the whole company's attitude, including the pilot, everybody got a little bit closer together, and they . . . we were able to get equipment that normally wasn't able to go. Like bulletproof vests, machine guns, you know. We had permission to—when you worked out in the field—to take the doors off. We got rid of everything.

They used to tell us when we were training, "You can stay on the ground, and pick up. Ninety seconds on the ground, you ought to be able to load the aircraft." A lot of time . . . ninety seconds on the ground is a long, long time, especially if you're getting shot at. So, we would talk to each other—the pilots, officers—we would talk to each other. Sometimes we would make two trips to get the patients then stand there and try to load them all, depending on them. So, that was between . . . and when we were support in the field for different groups, whether three days or five days, you take enough stuff with you during the five days depending on things. And you took care of each other. Each one of you dug your fox holes or where you were going to sleep and stuff like that, and everybody would work and take things together. But I think that's what . . . you know, "Hey, don't be stupid. Let's just go home."

And a lot of times, when you're going to pick up somebody, depending on the aircraft, I'd come out into the air or into the prevailing wind, and they brought the patient up on the right side. I would help the medic. The medic wasn't supposed to leave the aircraft. You would help put the patients on. If you come up on the left side, the gunner would jump out and help put the patient on, but the medic stayed. He was supposed to. Sometimes they didn't. They'd do everything else not still on the ground that long. We had someone to work just as fast to get out and get them to the aid station, or . . . and they would be the one to make the call if you're going to take them to the hospital or take them to the aid station. All that was happening right then. They were that trained. And plus, the pilots, they were MSc qualified and could tell if you can make it . . . can we make it back to the aid station, or do we have to take them to the hospital. And that decision would be made, and very seldom that we had to go all the way to the hospital.

We usually . . . another thing that would be there, every twenty-five hours we'd put some kind of maintenance on the aircraft. And then, at twenty-five hours it's not very intense; the fifty hours was nice . . . just a little bit . . . but you took the equipment you need to do the fifty hours and the seventy-five. One hundred hours, they hardly let the aircraft go if you were coming up on one hundred hours because you don't know how long the mission is going to be out there, or like I said, you could be there three days or five days depending on . . . and if the aircraft is coming up on one hundred hours, it wouldn't go. Another crew would go. So, that's how we learned. We'd fly with different pilots. The crew chief and the medic always stayed together because you knew what each other could do, and you trained them on the aircraft and they trained you how to do IVs, or how to do tourniquets, and how to stop the bleeding, and stuff like that.

And back at base camp—what we lived in—we all slept in that little area. There's an officer here and an officer there. All in that little area is it, which we look back now on the way they did that, and it was dangerous. That's just because they would come in and kill a whole crew. One of the problems we had was the aircraft was away from us. That means we had to go

through different people to get to our aircraft. And Vietnam, if the base was under attack, our job was to get the aircrafts off the ground—all the pilots, and crew chiefs, whoever could get there. The aircraft had to get off the ground because you wanted to save them and not try . . . that's what they were going after anyhow. That was . . . we never got shot, but we had heard rumors of people running to the aircraft that got shot by the guards because they thought you was sappers trying to do that, but it never happened to us. I guess that's about it. Anything else?

WONGSRICHANALAI: So what kind of aircraft was it?

HARTFIELD: We had D-model helicopters—Hueys.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And you said there were five people per chopper? Two pilots, a gunner, medic, and a crew chief.

HARTFIELD: Medic and a crew chief.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And how many wounded could you carry?

HARTFIELD: If you stayed on the ground, you could get six. But a lot of times, depending on the situation, we would make two trips instead of trying to get all six of them. And a lot of times, once you took—say you took three of them out, the worst—some of them, while you was gone . . . most of the time we would be fifteen to twenty minutes from the aid station. Now if it looked like the situation would be a little bit more, you would have the company commander call and put two aircrafts up there instead of one. So, if it looked like . . . if they expected a lot more casualties, we put two aircrafts in case you take one that was traveling to the hospital, or they had hospital ships off the coast, so it would always be somebody on station to help out. So that . . . that was mostly the way we worked it. We never had any patient that died on us.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Good. So, how many Hueys would be at a camp?

HARTFIELD: Okay, in 498th Air Ambulance Company in Vietnam, it was twenty-six Hueys, but there's four platoons. So, when we first got there we put two platoons in Qui Nhơn, one in Pleiku, and one in Nha Trang, and the maintenance platoon was in Nha Trang. At that time, they considered it one of the safest places. Now, I think each of the . . . I just came from a reunion. They got twelve platoons, so . . . but they fly in pairs, and we didn't fly in pairs. They call them "Chase." I don't know why they call them . . . I asked why they call them . . . because in DUSTOFF, helicopter one is Chase, so I don't know. But that's the way we worked it. We weren't the only Dustoff company there, but it was platoons and detachments from all over. And by the time we left Vietnam, they had about—besides 498—about ten different DUSTOFF units that was in Vietnam.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And where in Vietnam were you stationed?

HARTFIELD: I was at Nha Trang.

WONGSRICHANALAI: You were in Nha Trang, okay. For the whole tour?

HARTFIELD: That was base camp, but I worked out of Tuy Hòa, Phan Rang, Phan Thiết, Vũng Tàu, Đà Lạt, Buôn Me Thuột, Gia Nghĩa, which is in Cambodia.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Can you spell those?

HARTFIELD: Well, that's where the units were, so . . . where they was sending the units because a lot of them, like the 101st, when they first got there, they didn't have a DUSTOFF. So, we supported them—Nha Trang did—because they came into Phan Rang.

WONGSRICHANALAI: How do you spell that?

HARTFIELD: Nha Trang?

WONGSRICHANALAI: Phan Rang.

HARTFIELD: P-H-A-N R-A-N-G. And Nha Trang is N-H-A T-R-A-N-G. Now, don't ask me how to spell Buôn Me Thuột [laughs]. But that was 498. Now, you had the 57th out of Saigon, I think Saigon. And then, you had the 54th that was basically a DUSTOFF unit, but by the time war was over—well, I'll say by the time we left because the tour was just one year—the 1st Cav. had fifteen; they was a DUSTOFF unit. The 101st had a DUSTOFF platoon, each one. And then the Marines had their DUSTOFF peoples. The Air Force had Jolly Green Giants, but there's did DUSTOFF plus they retrieved pilots. The 1st . . . the 25th had a DUSTOFF platoon that I know of. As the war picked up, and more troops came in, and the way were spreading all over, we couldn't handle all of them. In fact, it was twelve choppers in the first platoon, and just as I was getting ready to leave in August of '65 or '66, they sent six choppers out of Nha Trang—"north" is what we said—which put them up to Buôn Me Thuột and Pleiku because the troops were spreading out and they was doing that. I think it finally cut down on the casualties. But see, there were two . . . two that were in Vietnam. That makes a difference.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, your first tour ended in August of 1966, and then you went back again?

HARTFIELD: In '68. Now, that's a different story.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Okay, how is it a different story?

HARTFIELD: Like I told you, we bonded. And they sent us . . . I went back to Fort Rucker in Alabama as an instructor. Some of the pilots that flew with us went back to Fort Rucker. They trained to teach people how to fly. And in the Army, the officers and enlisted men aren't supposed to mix. In 'Nam it was different. When you come back to the states, it's a whole different program. It ain't supposed to happen, but it did happen. So, I was . . . I was an instructor at Fort Rucker for two years. I taught power plants and air frames, so it has to do with loading the aircrafts and all that. I had to keep it running. And so, that was . . . you asked about when Kennedy got killed. Now, I was there when Martin Luther King got killed, and when he did the march. But what's interesting about Fort Rucker, it was open post, and General

Abrams—Creighton—that was the post commander. And I met a girl, and I married her—she was from Alabama—and we had one kid. But what I said about General Abrams, he would come around and visit. You'd be giving a class, and he would just walk right in and . . . you know. The way he was, it was more like a conversation when he talked to you, and he made you feel comfortable. It wasn't . . . you know, and while I was there, I met more friends. Esposito, he got out and went back, and Hellen, and all them. I was still in because I reenlisted. So, after two years at Rucker . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: What was your rank at that point? When you were an instructor at Rucker?

HARTFIELD: I was E-5. A sergeant E-5. I remember that because when we finished, I was . . . a sergeant had three stripes, but my real rank was a specialist E-5, which is different. And some of the people like Jace Lon and Major Bracken and all of us was in DUSTOFF and Rucker together. So, when General Abrams took over from Westmoreland in Vietnam, to this day I believe he looked through the records because he had access to people's records, and he took a lot of Vietnam people back. In fact, I got orders, and I was going to the 1st Cav. It wasn't all of us—three or four of us. See, I thought the 1st Cav. was a hard-luck unit. I didn't want to go to the 1st. So anyway, I got my wife settled in and went back.

Let me back up a little bit. They told us when we came back from Vietnam—the peace movement had started—that, "When the plane stops in Okinawa, Japan, change into civilian clothes, and when you get to the airport, just keep walking." So, that's some of what that was like because the peace movement. When we was going back, in order to get a discount you had to wear a uniform, or you're going back through some of them same people. It really got to a boiling point in two years. Of course, the casualties started coming up, and being in Fort Rucker, we was pushed to train people a little faster. And along the way, you kind of got away from the books, and you start telling reality and what it takes to survive. And I say that because when I went back the second time, some of the same people that came through my class, I wound up going to the company where they were at. And I looked back, and thank God I did because they recognized me. And then it's what you said, and they said, and this is the way we do it and this, you know, and it went like that. And I think like . . . I felt pretty good, okay, like I did a pretty good job because I was there with them.

But I went back to gunships. One reason, you train to save. And then this here, this time you're training to kill. That was, like I said, we always considered 1st Cav.—they were trouble. You go to them, it's going to be fighting. It's just like the 196th Infantry Division, everywhere in 'Nam that was the Westmoreland group. You can look forward to some action. If you supported them, you were going to have—in a way of speaking—you were going in to something, and there wasn't no way in and out. You were going to the same outfit—it was like 1st Cav.—it's going to be the same way in. I was looking at a whole lot of maintenance that I was going to have to do. And after going through DUSTOFF and knowing you didn't have enough ports to keep you flying, you're going to this group of people knowing this. You get in a lot of fights because you know how you juggle this—different aircraft and different breed of people. But it wasn't really that way. The respect really came out between . . . just like . . . especially if they found out it was your second tour. There is . . . you've got to know more they realize. You've got to know more. You just understood things a little different. One reason—I had learned—I winded up in this company . . . Jace Lon was with me at Fort Rucker, he was an instructor.

WONGSRICHANALAI: How do you spell his name?

HARTFIELD: J-A-C-E L-O-N. He passed away about four years ago, and his wife lives in Colorado Springs. We still get together once a year sometimes. Anyway, another fellow, James Steel, was there. I went back to Cam Ranh; that's where I went in. I was assigned to 1st Cav., and I tried to buy my way back to the 498. I went to personnel and tried to give some money to change my orders, and it didn't happen. This is in August of '68. I was supposed to go to B Company, 1st Cav., 227, but I didn't want to ride on a Chinook. So, I didn't get on the Chinook. The next day I was going up north, up the way in a Huey, and I wound up going to D Company. What happened when I didn't ride the Chinook, they got hit that night before I got up there, and I wound up in D Company because I had Cobra . . . I had training. They were starting to get Cobras, and I had training in Cobras. But also, I had training with B- and D-models, but my newest training was Cobras. So, D Company was getting Cobras and I wound up going to D Company, which turned out later to be a lot better.

So, after waiting for the battle to be over with, we went north to Saigon and up to Lai Khê. L-A-I K-H-E. Some of the same people that were at Rucker . . . Jace Lon went on to DUSTOFF. Steel, he came down in September to D Company in '68. I left him at Rucker. And Dodson, and Rivers, Davis, they wound up in 1st Infantry Division, and I was down there with them but different units, and they had helicopters. But it was just by accident, it was just by accident.

Like I said, the war had picked up. But in the process, some restrictions came down that didn't sit too well with some of us. Major Little and General Kinnard said, "That isn't the way. We don't do things this way." So, what I mean by that, we had Cobras and we had Loaches. We wasn't going to wait until they attacked us; we was going to attack them. So, we . . . they—don't ask me how they did—but they knew if the 1st Infantry Division was in the field, we had helicopters flying around. I'd launch them. If the 25th Infantry was in our area, we had helicopters—the Cobras—up flying around just looking for the war. We called them "gunslingers." They just looking for the war. Anywhere, the only aircrafts that were on the ground were those having maintenance, and that was twenty-four hours. Aircrafts flew all the time. That's the only way I know how. We attacked them. If we know where they're at, we're going to attack them. We're not going to wait for them to attack us and then go rush in. So, we liked that; I liked that. Had a group of people . . . I had three groups under me. Even though I was special, but I was wearing sergeant stripes, so you get a little prestige then. And so, we never worked on aircrafts at night because we did all the work in daytime, and with the aircraft flying, we were relaxed a little bit more at night.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Why didn't you maintain them at night?

HARTFIELD: Because you had to have lights. Had to have lights. And to protect the area, to this day I don't know where they got the dogs. We had dog handlers and police dogs—"scout dogs" they called them—patrolling the perimeter. The only place we put a guard was on the flight line, and then there was three men rotating, one kind of crossways. Then it got to four so we could make sure we could protect the aircraft because we had . . . in that process, A Company had moved out with us. And they really worked, so we'd help out. We'd balance out because they

worked a lot harder than we did. Well, what I mean by A Company is they lifted . . . they hauled troops. We didn't haul troops. We just . . .

So, we had a more relaxed team even when I was with the pilots. We built a club and kind of socialized. We had a basketball court, and we had our own cooker. We had our own . . . we supplied all of our utilities, we had our own electric generators and generator lights. And we would raise the flag in the morning and lower the flag at night. We kind of just . . . that was the way it was. And we would let a group of people go to town and go to the village, not all at once. And that whole year, we didn't lose no people that year. We got a lot of aircrafts shot up, but we didn't lose any people.

But the war had changed. We started hearing about people not wanting to fight and demonstrations and stuff. In fact, in our company with Major Little, we had some—about four or five people that didn't want to do anything. He'd call them, and next thing you know he had the MPs up there and off they would go. I'd get on inventorying all of their stuff and all that. But most of them were Yankees from up north. They didn't know. I look back, and sometimes I think that was their way of getting out. Thinking they were getting shipped back to the states, but they were still kept in Vietnam. And I learned years later that they kind of formed them out back to other units because I ran into some of them. And some of these reunions I go to: "I thought this happened to you, and that happened to you, and that happened."

"Oh, I went to the 24th. Oh, I went to the 4th." You know, but they wound up getting discharges, but they learned right quick if you're locked up, you ain't got a weapon. And we still get together. I try to get together twice a year with the group of people that I served with.

And I saw a question on there you have. If I had known what Nixon was going to do, I would have reenlisted. In fact, when I came back to the states in '69, I went to Fort Hunter in Savannah. And after that, like I said, I got married. I was wanting to give up aviation. I wanted to go to transportation school. I didn't have an education. I didn't go to college. So, I was going to take courses at Savannah State. Of course, I was taking courses when I was in 'Nam trying to get to that point. And anyway, so they tried to send me back. I said, "I just got sent back pretty much. Don't send me back." And Jace Lon came back to the same company. I called him my bad luck, "You bad penny." Anyway, so they wouldn't answer, so I just thought, "Okay, just send me back." My thinking was I get back to 'Nam, I reenlist, drop that aviation job, and then go to Germany, and then come back and get my wife. It didn't happen, so I said, "Okay, I'll just get out." So, I got out.

Then I came . . . I stayed in Savannah for a while, and I found out about unions. I was working for Branick and going to college at Savannah State. And they went under, so I went to work for Page Aircraft. They struck, so I said, "Well, I'll just come home," because the Air Force base here, and they had airports. Okay, I got all this aviation. I got all this medical. I ought to be able to find a job. So, I did. I came back here, and they didn't hire me because . . . I knew why. It wasn't . . . the training I had didn't deal with civilian life; it was more like military. And I thought, "Okay, I'll work for the VA then." They didn't hire me. I said, "Okay." So, the refinery hired me, and I went to work for the refinery after I did some research. And they were union, and they had pretty much the same benefits like I could get in the military: hospitalization and profit sharing, you know. So, I said, "Okay, that's . . ." but you had to be with them five years in order to qualify for all that, which was still pretty good I thought. But I had the G.I. Bill, and they paid to go to college too. And when I got my awards, I had . . . they were paying, so I said, "Okay, this is a good way to get this education." That's because that's what it was all about from the get go. And I started going to the junior college here, and in the process, I got the five years invested

at the refinery, and then I started getting a raise. And I was getting . . . I eventually got the degree in diesel technology. And in the process, I got a divorce, which I look back now, and it was one of the best things to happen to the both of us. I'll get to that point. And then she went to work for TI,[4] so that's what I'm saying.

With college, the benefits started. Then after two years I said, "Okay, maybe I can get back in the military." But then I said, "No, this is too easy. I'll just stay out here. I'm not going back." So, I spent . . . I got the degree in diesel technology. And then this G.I. that I was working part time with, we were doing contract labor even though I was still working at the refinery on oil well . . . on drilling rig, diesel. That's the only . . . Stevens sent us. We went to Houston, and I could just see dollar signs, you know. And they hired . . . there were thirteen of them that went down there. If they would have let me stay in and could have guaranteed I could stay in Katy, I would have worked for them. I wouldn't have went back to the refinery, but they couldn't guarantee, so I went back to the refinery. And then they came. You could go . . . they had off-road drilling, and they were doing some work off in Iraq, and, "Okay, that would be good." But then Iraq and Iran started fighting. I ain't going back there, so I didn't. I stayed with them.

But working with Glen, I found out about credit cards. And Glen said—well, he was a World War II vet—he said, "Why don't you go to college and learn how to do these credit cards?" So, I took a business class, and we eventually got to the point where I could do the credit cards. But then Glen got sick and a few other things, but I never quit the refinery. I just worked part time. Then Glen got sick, and I wasn't ready to break out on my own. So, I just stayed at the refinery, and I stayed out there twenty-nine years and retired. I still get a retirement check and social security, you know. Now, my wife . . . ex-wife, she went to work for TI, and she eventually retired about three years ago. That's what I was saying: on both ends, I don't know what would have happened. We talk now and then, but she remarried. We got grandkids. She's trying to pawn them off on me [laughs].

WONGSRICHANALAI: Going back real quick, were your brothers ever deployed to Vietnam?

HARTFIELD: Uh, no. Dennis went to 'Nam, and then . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: And he's the medic?

HARTFIELD: Well, he went to 'Nam as communications, and he found out . . . I said, "Dennis, what are you going to do when you get out? You need to get a trade." So, I think two things happened to him. One, he met a lady that was in the military, just happened to be. He said he went to the dispensary and she just happened to be there, so he got into the medical field because she was in the medical field. And eventually they got married, and that's what he does now. Well, he didn't retire; both of them are retired. He got into the medical, which was a lot easier. Well, it's a lot easier. During Desert Storm, I was surprised he didn't ever want to be an officer. He got out two months before Desert Storm. Now, I asked him why he didn't want to be an officer. He explained it was because he'd still have to go, and she got out and went to work for Scott and White, which is in Temple because he was stationed at Fort Hood. And he always . . . he had some good duty stations. He went to Germany—well, 'Nam—and went to Germany and went to Hawaii. He wanted to spend all his time in the states. I didn't want to do that. I wanted to

[4] Texas Instruments

see . . . you can always come home. I wanted to see what was happening in the world. Well, when I was in Germany, I got to go to France. I went to Spain. I went to Italy. So, even when I was in 'Nam, I went to Kuala Lumpur. I went to Bangkok on leave, so that was enough, and I went to Hawaii on leave.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Were your parents concerned about you when you were in Vietnam?

HARTFIELD: Yeah, I think they were more concerned about Dennis, my little brother, than me [laughs]. I had already been through stuff. I think they were more concerned when I was in Germany because I still had two brothers at home. We had Cuba, then we had Berlin, and you had the Civil Rights Movement. My mother was a missionary, so I think she was more like . . . because she didn't know where I was at. And when you went to write letters, the first sergeant makes you sit down and write a letter at least once a week.

WONGSRICHANALAI: That was a requirement?

HARTFIELD: Yeah, it was a requirement. Another out of many, like the . . . now, out of your check, you had to buy a savings bond. That was one of the requirements of . . . but you could cash it in, you know. It had to come out of your check. Write a letter and it comes out of your check, your savings bond—a twenty-five-dollar savings bond. And she worried, but she would send me the newspaper in Germany, and sometimes it'd be a month old, but it was something to read about to keep up with what was going on in America. And she did the same thing when I went to 'Nam. And then my ex-wife, she mailed stuff to me when I . . . what was happening in America because I always wanted to see or hear what was happening.

Another thing, graduating from an all-black school, we knew the feeling of being close like that. Those of us that went in the military, we knew each other even though we might not have been close to each other. We knew where everybody was at by the parents talking. Rufus is here. Sam's here. Jimmy's here. Don is here. I don't think it ever crossed my mind. It wasn't just that easy to get to them, but at least we knew where they was at. And they would get to us because they probably went to the same church, and they prayed a lot. So, we knew where each other was. They knew where their sons were at. But I don't . . . They might have worried more about Dennis in 'Nam than they did about me. And then my brother in Korea was probably something that they worried about because she had brothers that fought in Korea too. They probably worried more about Sam. I ain't never heard them say they worried much about me. "Oh, Junior, take care." It wasn't . . . sometimes . . . my father passed away about six years ago. "Oh, you take care, son," but a lot of times it might not be that way.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What did you understand about the United States' mission in Germany when you were there and the mission in Vietnam when you were there? What were you supposed to do?

HARTFIELD: Okay, I understood Germany because of World War II. I understood that part. I could understand that. Defending the . . . to defend something that you already helped once, and we had learned in school how bad Hitler was and all, so I understood that. To this day, I'm still not sure what happened in 'Nam—the reason. I look at it, and it's hard for me to really see about it. Vietnam helped during . . . when we were fighting Japan, and Kennedy had troops there that

Mao and other people didn't know about it. Truman had troops there. Some of the airfields that they used was . . . had been built by Americans.

They say we stopped communism. Okay. All right, but then I didn't see any . . . well, maybe protection for one small town. I never could identify with the city, well, with Vietnam. And I think a lot of it might've been that there's a lot there we couldn't identify with Vietnam. We knew about Korea. We knew about Thailand. We knew about Japan. We knew about China, but that was a country there. Now, China's right next to it, and Russia's over there. What are we going to do with half of a city? Korea, we got it split. So, that . . . just like this mess we got going in Iraq and Afghanistan. I can see now it's about—they might not want to say it—but it's about the oil, I think. And . . . but 'Nam, even now looking at the map I can't see a reason. We were there, but . . . sometimes, I think superpowers pick a war to check out new equipment that we create. We build this equipment against someone like Russia or China, but in order for it to work, we've got to check it out. And we can't check it out on each other, so we got this . . . we pick. Now, that's just me. That's me. It might sound different. Whatever way you want to look at it, it just . . . I think they do.

The reason I think that . . . Take Vietnam. Russia jumped on Vietnam. No, I mean Afghanistan. Back up. And they fought in Afghanistan for ten years without backing. I mean we didn't back them; we backed Afghanistan, and they gave up. Like I said, they gave up, and they pulled out. And they're using the same stuff we gave them even though it was old. They're using it on us now. But we got something new we're trying. And that's what I meant by that: Russia had something they wanted to try. And another is like Clinton. We jumped on Kosovo with new stuff we got. I mean that fellow . . . I don't know. So, we still got troops that can check out some of the stuff that we created to take care of Russia or China. Okay, it didn't work on them, so we still got troops there. And to look at another, take Reagan. We jumped on Grenada. They check it out. Grenada gave us something like Cuba, if you look at it like that, to check out some new stuff—because I met some peoples—for jamming. We created a way to jam radar, plus we got a few satellites. And we got something new, so we put troops on the ground.

But also, what Kennedy created with the Special Forces, Special Operation Groups, we took that group, made elite groups, and just . . . different services came out of that kind of group. The Navy got the SEALs, Air Force got the Commandos, and we got the Rangers. So, we'd just send the Rangers into Grenada to check out the . . . we also used them first in Panama. That's what I meant about it. I'm just trying to say that, you know, it's important to me being in the military. You can see new things. We keep trying it, and it worked. So, they had to get something to balance it out, get more upgrades. And right now, what we got going on in Iraq and Afghanistan . . . I'll back up and say Desert Storm. That was Carter. With these . . . we created these planes and these helicopters, and we were going to go get these hostages, but something went wrong. So, we found out that didn't work, so we'll do something else. We did do something else in the process—expanding it. And I believe some of the same technology that we used to try to get the hostages from Iran, we used them to get Osama bin Laden. We experimented with the Russians; they couldn't do it, and we had got a foothold there in a way of speaking. With Iraq and Afghanistan, Desert Storm helped us get a foothold to get to somebody. Then we got Bush. Then we got Obama. So that's . . . I say this, but when we talk about this when we . . . I go to reunions, and we laugh and talk about, "Do you know this? This is what we did. That's what we did."

And we sit around, and the new troops, "Y'all actually did that?"

"Yeah, we did that, but that ain't the way you're supposed to do that." So that's why I said things like that. So, what do you think?

WONGSRICHANALAI: I think that . . . on that issue? President Eisenhower, when he left office, tried to warn against something like that—the "military industrial complex." And he said that was very dangerous.

HARTFIELD: It is. But he helped train Kỳ[5] and Vietnam. He helped train China . . . I'm trying to think of the Premier of China. But before China went that way, that's what I mean. We do this to . . . and then we take them out.

WONGSRICHANALAI: We create a mess.

HARTFIELD: We do. We do. Have you ever been in the military?

WONGSRICHANALAI: I have not.

HARTFIELD: We look at them, and we think about this. We talk about this, and I just came back from two reunions. The first reunion was in Nashville. That's the company I served with, and 1st Cav., D Company. Okay, you know when we went to Savannah, down to that reunion, the company that was part of it is now . . . in Vietnam it was D Company, 227. Now, it's 160th, and that was part of the group that—not that particular group that got Osama bin Laden—with these aircraft that had changed a little bit, and they call them "Nighthawks." They don't fly in daytime. They just fly all night. They do other things. That's basically what they train for is just night is what I'm saying.

Now, I belong to the Army Aviation Association of America. They was showing us some new stuff at the reunion in Nashville, so we were sitting around talking at the reunion with the company, and they sent these people over. And we were all in conversation, and they were telling us how much it changed since last year. Then what we . . . they showed us, and they took us out there, and they showed us stuff. They got rid of the turbine engine and went with GE's electrical engine. Quiet doing the same thing. Only thing is it's got a little whir. Except for the blades, you wouldn't hear it. They would've shown how it could run the engine without turning the blades. Okay, if we look at it, and I look at it, and a few of us look at it, you know, you get about . . . when you were in 'Nam, we would fly about 12,000 feet. They got these helicopters going about 25,000 feet. I'll never do it, and they got the blades changed. They go into a plane and sit down, you know. Then they make us get ready to leave. I said, "Okay, all right."

And these things, we go through this and we talk: "What if we would've had this when we did that?" You know, and then we was talking to these mechanics, which now is going back to . . . you're training G.I.s to be mechanics, so you'll all be a mechanic. No more civilians doing your work. Some of them ain't liking it that because that's the way part of it was when they were in Iraq and Afghanistan. You'd hire a civilian. I'm training you, but I'm paying somebody else. Now you're going to have to start learning, so they're out of a job. Then we were looking at that, and they was showing these new things, and we said, "Okay."

And they said, "Why did y'all do this?"

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"Well, we experimented, and it worked." That's what we said. An example, like we took the posters out where they load the litters in, and put them on the floor, so you can get more people in there. They found out if they put the litters here like this inside the helicopter and put the gunners up here, they can get more people. Well, not more people. They can get them in there a lot quicker. You can get them back here and back here, but I got all the . . . I got the guns up here. You ain't got to lean out. You can see. I said, "Okay." Because it makes sense.

But they got more powerful engines, so . . . and they put . . . they put protection around the engines. I'm going to say "bulletproof," but they don't call them that, but that's . . . anything armor piercing would do it, but nothing else. Normally, you would sort of be protected, you know. That's what I was saying: they're learning in the 21st century. Next year, there might be something else different that they learned. That's what I'm saying. Afghanistan, Iraq, they are learning a little bit more. They were saying like we had gauges; they got screens just like a GPS. In fact, they do have GPS, and I was watching last night on the History Channel that they got autopilots on a Black Hawk. Why do you need autopilot on a helicopter? But you know what they said? When they're doing a lift, they put it in autopilot, and it holds it there. You don't have to steady, keep playing with the pedals and all. You just watch the lift and watch what . . . and then, the pilots can hang the machine gun out and help do you some covering, you know. And that's makes sense now, but we wouldn't have thought about doing something like that.

That's what I was meaning about bringing up the 21st . . . and through this group, we keep up with everything that's going on. And we also find out . . . we do talk to people that are in now: "What are you going to do when you get out? You got to have something. Even if you retire, it's not going to be enough. What do you do when you get out?"

And they would tell like, "Well, we flew with airlines," or "I went to school and flew for Delta." They'd say, "Yeah, I flew for Delta," and they'd pull out their card then they say . . . that gets them thinking that there's something besides this that's out there.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Just a couple more questions. Can we go back again? Do you remember if there was support or opposition to the Civil Rights Movement when you were in the military?

HARTFIELD: You know, I will put it this way: most of the people I served with in the military were from the South. They kind of supported what Martin Luther King was doing because they lived it. And we get those Yankees up from the North, and they didn't see it because they thought they were . . . you know, but they had never been there, so they don't know how it was—the younger ones, the group. But I would tell you this that I found—like when I came back from Germany—I would never go to Detroit again. Not even now. Detroit was worse than Montgomery, Alabama as far as we could see . . . I could see. They were saying that you can go here and go there, but no, this is your area. That's the way it was. That black area is probably bigger than this city. That's their area. They don't know what's happening in Detroit, but they know what's happening in West Detroit.

That's what I said about a big city: too many peoples, not a big area. You got your own little world. Down here, we don't have all those cities down here. Even like in Montgomery, it's one area there, but everything is kind of . . . you got to intermingle. You go to. Same with Carolina. You got to mingle. You're not just over here by yourself. What you want to do? Well, you got to go down there to get to it. And then you're not stuck there. That's what I said that for, but the time of . . . most southerners got along a lot better than the North mixing in at that time. It

might be different now. But that's what we . . . I mean, I'll tell you I had more fun in Macon, Georgia than I had in Chicago. And I'd been to Chicago, West Chicago, and I found out while I was up there . . . I never did understand why Martin Luther King went to Cicero. What did . . . ? Somebody was crazy. I mean, that's Italian? Why? What did we got . . . ? You know, that's what . . . I look at it that way. That's my thinking. I don't know, but . . . what I did find out though: some of the people in Alabama didn't like Martin Luther King, and some of the people in Memphis thought he was in the wrong spot that he shouldn't have been. Once you get into that problem, I mean, get into that situation, "I'm okay. I'm okay. I don't want to rock the boat." They're going to push back. I'll say this now, push them back with some of the ideas we have come out with in this city, you know, how to advance the city. You got that group that wants to push back, and you got that group that ain't never left that's still thinking, "What's wrong with the old ways?" Maybe it's not the answer you're looking for. I hope.

WONGSRICHANALAI: No, that's fine. Do you have any advice for young men and women who are joining the military today?

HARTFIELD: Get some education and think. Look forward. Take the military and help you get to the future because, I mean, if you're going to get out at thirty or thirty-eight years old, your life is still ahead. You need to try to find something. Take training to get into something, or even if you're going to stay in twenty years or thirty years, look at something you can do after you get out.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Fair enough. Very good. Well, we've covered a lot of ground. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

HARTFIELD: Well, no. You think that's too much?

WONGSRICHANALAI: No, it's great. This has been fantastic. Actually, one more question: did you expect to find or did you face any challenges adjusting back to civilian life?

HARTFIELD: I still have challenges. I guess, what I learned in the military is all this about "we" and not "I." I have challenges of getting people to understand it takes *us* to do the job and not "I." If we both work together, we can get it done and a lot easier. And it's . . . the quicker you work together, the quicker you finish. I have a young minister. He's a veteran. He'd rather talk about it than do it. By the time he's finished talking, it's finished. I mean, for the work. Now, on the Christian side of it is a little bit different. I'm old, and he looks at new ideas. Let's do it and not talk about it. And the quicker you done it, the quicker people would fall in line with you or go with your idea. That's what I mean about that. If . . . that's challenging, trying to convince, "Let's do it. Not talk about it." If you start looking for . . . If you start doubting yourself, you got a problem. You got to have it as if you think you can do it, let's do it. And that's a challenge I have. Trying to convince them, okay, let's go ahead and do it. And okay, who gets the praise? Let's do it and move on. But if you're doing it for praise it ain't never going to work. You might . . . Somebody's going to push back against you. If they ever get the idea you're doing it strictly for show, they're going to push back. And that's going to make the project a little bit harder to do.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Do you think that West Texans, in general, have a good relationship with the military?

HARTFIELD: Oh yeah. San Angelo, Abilene, even out in El Paso. I've been to El Paso, Fort Bliss. Even out in Albuquerque.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, there's a lot of support?

HARTFIELD: Yeah, I think they can understand, but some people, some groups . . .I'll put it that way: is do they push their agenda or do they push someone's agenda? Are they really sincere? Like in Fort Hood, are people really sincere about what they're doing? I know out in San Antonio I believe there's a group of them that's really . . . but Fort Hood, I . . . again, because you got so much movement, and with Iraq and Afghanistan, you got so much troop movement down there that some of the people are not really sure about it. Even I . . . I think it's a lot of politics in Fort Hood. Because we're having a reunion, and they . . . what I've been to them, even though I am a civilian, I think you're doing more instead—for the G.I. with the reunion—but more for the city. I mean, why have a golf tournament, when you got . . . at a city place, when you got golf on post? You know? Why not put that money there, and invite them to come to you and you not go? That's just me.

WONGSRICHANALAI: People don't always think about . . . yeah.

HARTFIELD: Now, we have a reunion with DUSTOFF in San Antonio. We . . . most of our stuff is done out there at Fort Sam. The things . . . because we got an investment at Fort Sam. We got a museum, so we do . . . we support a museum over there that's on the military base. So, we do a lot. We invite them to be with us. Very seldom do we use any civilians. I mean, stuff with the civilians. I guess that's because I've been a part of that for so long. And now I think here in Big Spring, we got a director—speaking about that—we hadn't had in a long time that wants to . . . that is involved with what's happening in the city, and she's got peoples meeting with us out at the VA. They inform them about what's happening at the VA, and that's what's coming down on the news. I think it's been a long time since we've had one like that. So, I think that brings the community in, and not just looking at a bunch of . . . a bunch of Vietnam vets looking for something. The VA, the hospital, and I think, as a whole, the community is starting to like look at it. We got some pushback out there, but I think the positive action, the positive vibe that's coming from the people is different.

WONGSRICHANALAI: All right! Well, thank you very much for your time.