Richard Warke
Cedar City, Utah

Interviewer
Give us your full name.

Richard Warke
Richard Brian Warke, Jr.

Interviewer
And where are you from originally?

Richard Warke
I was born at Canadian Forces Base Camp Borden in 1949.

Interviewer
And you grew up in Canada?

Richard Warke
Pretty much. My father was military, so we spent time abroad.

Interviewer
Was he a World War II vet?

Richard Warke
Yes. And Korea.

Interviewer
So you grew up all over the place. You went into the Canadian military first correct?

Richard Warke
Yes. I started off as what they call a Boy Soldier, which is a program they don't really have any more as it was. It was very military, military-minded. You weren't expected to go into the military once you reached recruiting age, but a lot of guys did. And I started off in the Air Arm, and then after I flew a little bit – I was 16 – I was at a 418 search-and-rescue squadron out of Edmonton; I was a crew chief on an Otter, which is a slow-flying egg crate. And we were dropping some guys, some paratroopers, from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. And, of course, like most Brylcreem boys, I was making fun of them, and the sergeant major in charge challenged me to jump. Now, the Canadian Forces was small enough you could get away with stuff like that. So after an hour of practicing parachute landing falls in the grass by the side of the concrete, about an hour later I'm standing in the doorway going, "What have I done?" But after that term was up, I decided to go into the Army. Canada doesn't have a Marine Corps, and it doesn't have some of the specialty outfits, but it did have airborne and reconnaissance commando type units, and that became somewhat exciting.

Interviewer
How did you end up in the American military? You're a Canadian citizen.

Richard Warke
Yup, and I'm still a green card. Which I'm getting a hard time from Homeland Security right now because my green card's supposed to be permanent and with an unexpired date, but they changed the rules. So now I got to fool around with that one again, and I'm a little annoyed, to say the least.

Interviewer
How do you get into the American military?

Richard Warke
It's interesting in some ways. There were approximately 40,000 Canadians, give or take, who went into the United States services during Vietnam, during the 25 years of involvement. At least six of them, as I recall, were Medal of Honor winners. There were in fact, one of the three sons of the Chief of Staff of the Canadian Army, General Jacques Dextraze, who was highly decorated in World War II, was a Marine who was killed about 12 miles from my position. His other two sons served in the Airborne Commando Unit in Canada at various times. So there are a number of vets in Canada. The next question would probably be what was the motivation? Well, there were a number. Believe it or not, aside from the color of the flag, red, in Canada, and the seeming socialist environment, there are a goodly number of the population that are very conservative and actually believe in such things and are rather anti-socialist and so on and so forth. So there was the ideological factor. There was also a factor of adventurism and sometimes tradition. There's been a long tradition of Canadians and Americans serving in one another's forces. And then of course, you have the very famous First Special Force also known as the Devil's Brigade. I had an uncle in there. It was interesting. On my mom's side, yeah. Well the whole family was military, so.

Interviewer
So you had a military tradition.
Richard Warke
Oh, yeah, very much so.
Interviewer
There were Americans going to Canada to avoid the draft, and here we have a large number of Canadians joining the American military.
Richard Warke
I didn't find it necessarily that unusual. After all, it depends, like here, in the United States, how you're brought up. Some families are very conservative tradition ally, and at the opposite end you've got Californians and everything in between. So, and at that time, the Canadian military was being groomed by the late and very unlamented Pierre Elliot Trudeau to become part of the UN International Peace Force, which did not sit well with the professional military people in Canada and is something they'd like to forget because, as you know, we have quite a number of Canadian military serving in Afghanistan and some in Iraq. In fact, a number of guys from some of my old units, because I served in several in the Canadian Army, have been back and forth already, and one was severely wounded just recently.
Interviewer
How did you join, and where did you serve?
Richard Warke
Marine Corps. At first I wanted to go into Army Special Forces, wear that cute little green toupee. I did not know that much about it, but my father, who had been with the Canadian Forces in World War II and Korea, said, "Well the Yanks are nice folks. They have a lot of draftees, which you might not feel comfortable with, but the Marine Corps is a pretty Cracker Jack outfit." Okay. But then I thought no, I want to be a green toupee. So I went down to Helena, Montana, which incidentally is the home of the First Special Service Force and talked to a recruiter there. And honest to God, his name is interesting. I'm sitting there in the office with three other Canadians in the Army's office. It was hot, it was boring, so they decided well, let's go find a beer. And I said, well, I'll stay here and wait for the Army guy. Well, then this guy walks in, he had no neck, no hair, was about the width of a fire plug from his nose to his toes. "What are you doing here?" "Well, I'm going in the Army." "Oh, you're a draftee?" "No." I knew he was a Staff Sergeant because I recognized the rank. He says, "Well, why are you sitting over in the Army chair?" And I said, "Well, I want to be a paratrooper." "Well, the Marine Corps has paratroopers." "Oh, really?" Later on that evening I was on a flight to San Diego to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot and the rest is –
Interviewer
So you get there and what happens?
Richard Warke
Boot camp, which was really an un-fun experience. Then, of course, like every Marine, I went to infantry training. My MOS was artillery fire direction center – that's what I was assigned. And of course I have to take my boots off, and pants, basically to count to 21, so I wasn't very good at math. Besides, I wanted to go to airborne school and do all that silly stuff, so I volunteered for an outfit called Force Reconnaissance. Now, in the Marine Corps there are airborne units. There's what they call air delivery, there's ANGLICO, Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company – or what we called an Air Naval Gang Bang – and then there's the recon units. The battalion recon are basically kind of like the scouting unit in Ranger battalions in the Army. The Force Recon unit is very close to the SEALs. And as you know, you being former SF, we all go to each other's schools, even more so today because I do keep my ties and keep up on that stuff. So after I got my orders to Fort Benning, I was off cycle, so I was the only Marine in my serial at that time, which was also not enjoyable. There were six SEALs there who kept running around the formation, as they were running, which annoyed the Army, black hats. And a couple of Laos and Viets and Cambods and Thais, and I think a couple of folks from the Bundeswehr, they're not called the Wehrmacht anymore, who were Fallschiermager.
Interviewer
This is 1970?
Richard Warke
Yeah. It was very early spring in 1970, yeah. Then I was assigned to 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company at North Carolina at Swamp Lejeune, which I tried to finagle my way back to Camp Pendleton for two reasons. 2nd Force was slated for some rather murky things going on in Central and South America and Europe and Africa and anywhere else they wanted dirty little jobs done, at least that was the hint, although we weren't told that. I wanted to get to 1st Force in order to get to 3rd Force to get to Vietnam, which is why I joined in the first place. But to do that, I had to do a few things. And when I got to Pendleton, I found out that the Force Units were being stood down in Vietnam at that time and that those who were short timers were being rotated back to the States and those who had more long time, they were farming them out. Now this happens in the military, in every military in the world, and it's

a shame. You have highly trained troops, and they're being farmed out to be used for, shall we say, not up to their potential. And a lot of Force guys were being sent to grunt units, who, in and of themselves, they have a job to do and like that, but they were being sent to grunt units to become part of their S2 Scout Sniper Units. And since I had a background of this kind of stuff, off I went. And I went into Da Nang and I was going through the sausage machine, and I got stuck there for a little while. And then so, Meone came in one day and said, "You're one of those Force guys, aren't ya?" “Well, I was.” "Okay, we got a job for you." "Oh, goodie, I'm going to get to do a job." So I became part of a scout team for an infantry battalion. I suppose I should thank my lucky stars in a number of ways because it was what we called a float battalion. This was an infantry battalion that basically tooled up and down the coast line in Vietnam, and when the poo-poo hit the fan, you could be committed into that particular battle as an Amphib and air landing assault unit because the vessels we were on, one was an LPH U.S. Tripoli, which is landing platform helicopter. And the object was is that you had Amphib ships that would flood the well decks in these things called Amtracks, amphibious trackers would come out, and they're like an armored personnel carrier that can swim most of the time. And these guys would assault the beach and do the John Wayne thing up the sand and so on and so forth. Others of us would get aboard helicopters and move in for what they call vertical envelopment, which is drop to the side or behind the opposing force, and, theoretically, this was a very good thing. In practice, it actually was a reasonably good thing. It beats the hold high-diddle-diddle-up-the-middle thing that has a tendency to get a lot of grunts killed. That, plus various other supporting issues like Naval gunfire and so on, makes for a relatively successful enterprise. And that basically was our jobs. On occasion we worked with Vietnamese Marines in some of these assaults. There was kind of an ugly incident during Operation Freedom Torch, however. We were working with Vietnamese Marines, and all of the sudden word came down to pull a couple of our companies out and let them carry most of the load which didn't turn out well.

Interviewer

Was this part of the Vietnamese program?

Richard Warke

Vietnamization? I assume so. I was never privy to that information, but it was completely buggered by somebody at the top. You don't do that kind of thing. It has a tendency to upset your allies, number one. It has a tendency to upset your own troops; morale kind of was not good at that point. And there were some rather ugly things that happened. There were some bad things that happened that might not have happened if we had gone in with a full compliment. There was a CH-46, which was a troop-carrying helicopter, that came down on a landing zone, and an enemy mortar round went off underneath it, and it was full of Vietnamese Marines, and we had one of our scout teams with them. And one of our corpsman, which is the Marine Corps medics, as you know, pulled a bunch of these little guys out of the burning helicopter, and he took a .51 caliber through the thigh, which miraculously, it broke his leg, of course.

Interviewer

When did you first get into country?

Richard Warke

It was kind of a real circuitous route. And I say this in retrospect because for some reason, people in the West – Canadians, Americans, Brits – don't seem to be that interested in history, and, you know, the old supposed Descartes thing about repeating a mistake – he wasn't the first to say that. General Septimius Severus, the Roman general said that, actually. But it was rather circuitous. Gone were the orderly transition of units and personnel back and forth. At this time the attitude was, well, this is the end game, and nobody seemed to know what the hell they were doing. Units would be pulled out, and then they'd say, "Oops, we took too many," and they would then take some other unit who had no clue what was going on or even some individuals and say, “Okay, we need these guys over here. We need these guys over there.” Believe me, I am convinced that there were elements along the command chain, not just in the Corps, but amongst the joint chiefs and especially in Washington, that just didn't give a damn any more. And they were trying to get out with about as much dignity as would allow, which wasn't very bloody much.

Interviewer

So what day did you land in Vietnam, do you remember?

Richard Warke

No. I was kind of off and on. Because, remember, I was aboard a ship.

Interviewer

When did you arrive on station?

Richard Warke

I've never been good at dates. It was at the beginning of Tet. Late, late, late, late '71. Just a few months before, in '72, I think the Higbee got hit, which was a destroyer escort, I don't know if you remember that. And even that was nebulous because one day we'd be going up the coast line, there might be a small operation, very small usually – thank God – and then, for some reason, we would go to Hong Kong, or for some reason we'd go to Subic Bay. Now

remember, we're at the bottom of the food chain here. Nobody's telling us squat. And that also went, my opinion, that most of the higher-ups really didn't know what was going on or really didn't care. It was so, in my opinion, not well-organized, for instance, that when Marine Force Recon left as a group, the administrative staff, who were not necessarily Force guys themselves, but were just Remington Radar Marines, actually dumped a good portion of their records into the dipsy dumpster pulling out and taking all their stuff. This is well-documented. It's documented by a guy named Ray Stubbe and some Force guys like that. And that was not necessarily that usual, as I found out. People, "Oh, we're leaving, the hell with it. Just dump everything, let's go." It wasn't quite that disorganized, but that's the feeling we had.

Interviewer

So you're on this ship. Where is your area?

Richard Warke

Well, for some reason they wanted to hang around An Loc a lot, and of course then the Tet '72 hit at An Loc. And the next thing we knew, our little battalion landing team, the air assets and the ANGLICO assets, or Air Naval Gunfire assets, and occasionally the scouts would go in-country to assist whoever was getting the crap pounded out of 'em at any given time. This was also very confusing. It wasn't quite what I had pictured was going to happen. And it took a lot of years, it bothered me for many, many years – it still does to a degree. But it bothered me because it seemed that and my personal experience – and now I'll speak as a foreigner, okay? My personal experience with American people is, for the most part, especially the Marine Corps, is they're extraordinarily dedicated individuals, very patriotic. And in fact, today, the physical and mental standards are high enough and some of them in force for things like the new combat driver's course are so severe, even on the best day of my life I'd be really pushing it, and I can't fault any of them. I have a place out here, west of town where guys rotate out-of-country now from our unit. And we barbecue, bust a few caps, and they distress and like that. And they tell me some of the stuff that's going on. Morale is reasonably high within the units, but there is very little confidence in the leadership above field grade.

Interviewer

Was it like that back then?

Richard Warke

Yes. Very much so.

Interviewer

So what were the men saying?

Richard Warke

Well, I was an NCO. Well, we were very confused. Remember, we didn't have the instantaneous communication like cell phones and stuff like you have today or satellite phones or anything like that. So we spoke amongst ourselves, and at first we thought we were kind of isolated in our attitudes a little bit that this is not going well in the sense that there doesn't seem to be a focus of purpose. Now whether there was or not, I don't know, and we didn't know. Nobody would tell us, per se. And of course in the corps you carry on, but it didn't seem to us, at that time – this is late '72 – by that time that somebody up top wasn't serious about this anymore. And of course we knew very little of what was going on in the States was, the only news we would get was AFRVN, Armed Forces Radio Vietnam or "The Stars and Stripes" or "Leatherneck Magazine." Although "Naval Proceedings" is a good read and "The Gazette," to a degree.

It's one thing, like at our level, you have to remember – and you know this yourself, I presume you were an NCO at one time – you're being presented with, okay, here's your little box of goodies, you open it up, and this is what you do. The big picture, of course, you don't necessarily have access to it. So I and another kid, we used to sidle up to officer's country once in a while. We couldn't get in there, of course. But we'd go over to the planning rooms and sort of hang around a little bit and see what the heads were doing and watching them make marks on maps and stuff like that. Trying to get some idea of what was going on. Because to some degree it seemed that we were sort of padding around in the South China Sea and not really doing a whole lot. Now, the tempo of operations on land, on the other hand, were quite intense because the Viets had taken over their own show pretty much. There were Special Forces Advisors, there was SOG of course. There was the Naval Advisory unit with part of a SEAL team left. I had the great good fortune – and this is one of the highlights of being in the corps – a lot of people aren't aware of this, there were Australians and New Zealanders involved in the fighting, and I met my Australian cousin in the flesh for the first time in Da Nang. He was a communicator with the Royal Australian Regiment. In fact, he's still on active duty, and he's 60. He's got 40-some-odd years. If you're in a non-combat billet at a certain stage, they'd like to keep you around. It's kind of like my other cousin in the Legion, but that's another deal. And there were also Nationalist Chinese. Very much so. And Korean Marines. And most of them had gone by the time I got there, but there were a few, their version of Force Recon and Special Units, there were a few of them still around.

Interviewer

Tell me your personal experience.

Richard Warke
When we hit the landing zone during Operation Freedom Torch it was a hot LZ, and I mean hot. It was raining mortars. And this mortar went off underneath this 46 full of Viets, and this corpsman was yanking them out like marshmallows out of a fire, literally, and he got hit by a .51, and he didn't seem to feel it.

Interviewer
You're watching this?

Richard Warke
Yeah, while I'm dodging certain things and trying to find a bush big enough to hide in. Because they were pretty close. And he staggered for a minute, went down on one knee, and then he hobbled over and started pulling more of 'em out, and eventually things quieted down. Some air came in and pounded the bejeezes out of the opposition, which was nice, and there was some tubed artillery from somewhere that came in. I wasn't with the FDC at that time, of course. I was running a scout team. A fat lot of good that did because I wasn't scouting anything, it was just too hot.

Interviewer
So how long did this last?

Richard Warke
Several hours. It was pretty intense. The corpsman sticks out in my mind because he was taken aboard the U.S.S. Tripoli afterwards and sick bay, and he was awarded a Silver Star. In my opinion, he should've gotten the Navy Cross minimum. Now there may have been some politics involved, I don't know, but he did one of the bravest things I've ever seen in my life – absolutely incredible. I had a friend who went to battalion recon, we're good friends now, he was a tunnel rat. Brian Peacock is his name. I just have the greatest admiration for him. We're still very good friends after all these years. But he was an acrophobe – he didn't want to jump out of planes because he was scared. So in Force you have to jump out of planes, in battalion it's optional. So he went to battalion. He used to do stupid stuff, he was just a little guy. He used to do insane stuff like he'd go out on prisoner snatches by himself. I'm not kidding. He had more guts than a Belgium cart horse. They came around, and they said, he need a tunnel rat. Well, they did that with us too, "You want to be a tunnel rat?" "Hell, no, I'm a claustrophobe, what are you insane?" Get down there with that creepy crap. It was only years later when a friend of ours died, and he was here in Cedar – it was one of our corpsman – I said, "You know, Brian, I've always admired you for being a tunnel rat." He says, "Well, I didn't really like it." I said, "Why did you volunteer?" "Well, they needed somebody. You didn't volunteer?" I said, "No. I turned it down." He says, "What? You mean you could refuse? You could refuse?" Oh, he was upset. I'm not going down there.

Interviewer
So how many men are under your command?

Richard Warke
At that time I had six. We were supposed to be a scout team, and we could operate as few, supposedly, as two, as many as six.

Interviewer
Was this their first time in combat?

Richard Warke
Oh, yeah.

Interviewer
How did they react?

Richard Warke
Surprisingly well. Especially the kid from Lithia Springs, Georgia. In my opinion, if you're not afraid if you get into this, there's something not quite right about you. But, on the other hand, and I saw this later on when I went to Africa and South America and saw some interesting things there, this is outside the military. That's another issue. But there are people, they do exist, they're very rare – extremely rare – who seem to thrive on this, show absolutely no fear whatsoever. And seem to really almost enjoy it. Not in a psychopathic manner, although there are those, too, as I'm sure you know. Not the My Lai type thing. But just the excitement, they were adrenaline junkies. And this one kid from Georgia was one of those.

Interviewer
Were there any around you that day that were those kind of individuals?

Richard Warke
Yeah, this kid from Georgia. He just showed no fear whatsoever. And the rest of us were kind of, well, let's just put it this way, it was an anus-clenching adventure. It was pretty scary. I don't care how realistic you get it, there's nothing that prepares you for that. You have an idea, okay? But it's pretty complicated at times.

Interviewer
And you're leadership. People are looking to you to define the situation.

Richard Warke
That is helpful in one way because, believe it or not, your training kicks in, and you're thinking, you're scared, there's no question. But you realize these are my guys, and I'm responsible for 'em. And yeah, some of the younger fellahs were looking at me like, "What do we do?" sort of thing. "I don't know, I'm a virgin too, buddy." But you can't. You're the one that has the stripes, so you're the one that's got to carry through.

There seems to be three things, with variations, that seem to happen. The least desirable is somebody freezes – natural reaction. So somebody generally has to take a boot in his ass to get him moving or something. Or they'll come out of it. Sometimes they don't. I didn't see many of those, very rare. Then there's the one where time speeds up, and it's really weird. In fact, the former regimental sergeant major of the Seaforth Highlanders is a good friend of mine – we served together – is visiting me, and he had that experience fighting Arabs in the Middle East during the '70s. Oh, yeah, Canada was involved in some stuff. Not officially, you know, it's self defense mostly. And he said it was strange. He said it seemed like everything moved, like, in accelerated pace. That's one phenomena. In my particular case, which the third thing was sometimes time just seems to slow to a crawl, and you see things. I don't want to use "slow motion, " it's happening in real time, but something is going on in your head that you're able to see things and react to them. And I think that's the best one of all, in my personal opinion, because something is happening that you're able to make a decision here, make a decision there, do this action or not do that action or whatever. And later on, afterwards you go, "Well, that was certainly different." I'm not sure if you're following what I'm saying.

Interviewer
I know exactly what you're saying.

Richard Warke
Have you had any other guys tell you this yet?

Interviewer
In different ways. So what happens at the end of that battle?

Richard Warke
At the end of that particular battle it was rather odd, in my opinion. Remember, we're not privy to the strategic overlook or even the tactical overlook at that point. See, my job was supposed to be a scout and take guys out, and we're looking for the enemy. Well, we got a freebie pay bonus because they were waiting for us. Didn't have to look for them at all. So basically we were reverting to riflemen in our own little circle of hell. When it was all over, more or less, the Viets trooped off into the hinterland somewhere, and our helicopters came and picked us up and took us back to the ship. Now remember, the entire battalion had not been committed. Just elements of us, like the ANGLICO guys. The staff sergeant that was in charge of ANGLICO, this was his fourth tour in 'Nam, so he was a pretty cool head. He was calling in air strikes and Naval gunfire and artillery. Because he was ANGLICO, their job is to work with allied forces to supply these things. Because we had Vietnamese there, that's why he was there. He was quite an admirable fellow.

Interviewer
So you get back to the ship that day?

Richard Warke
Yes, that evening.

Interviewer
And what's your next operation that comes to mind?

Richard Warke
Well, the next thing that happened was trying to stop shaking and taking a whiz every ten minutes. People react in different ways afterwards. And I was talking with this ANGLICO staff sergeant, and I said, "How did you remain so cool?" I said, "I'm still kind of vibrating here, and so are the other guys." He said, "Yeah, that's normal." He says, "If you're in this stuff long enough, after a while, one day you take a big sigh and go, ‘well, if I'm going to get it, I'm going to get it.’" You know?

Yeah, the ANGLICO staff sergeant, when I asked him about it – and remember, we had multiple tours – he said, "Yeah, it's a constant adrenalin thing until one day, you sort of give a big sigh and you go, ‘oh, well, if I'm going to get it, I'm going to get it,’ and you stop worrying about it most of the time." But I never got to that stage, and neither did anybody else in the unit. Because we were not like the field battalions, they were at it day and night. I don't mean in constant combat, but they could be. The danger was always there. With us, it was an operation, and you go back to the ship.

Interviewer
It was a demarcation for you guys.

Richard Warke
Kind of. And then depending on what overall strategic thing was going on, we might weigh anchor, and we wound up in Singapore one time. I don't know if it was – you know, Hong Kong, Singapore or Bhutan or Youkuska. I don't know if it would show the flag or whatever when we weren't doing that. Just like I said, it didn't make a lot of sense. I had talked to a lot of Marines including one guy who, at 16-years-old, stormed to shore in Okinawa in World War II, fought in Korea, fought through the Dominican Republic. He was in it for years. The guy had like nine rows of ribbons. And I looked up to him a lot, we all did. He said that he couldn't make heads or tails of a lot of what was going on up top. And that subject's been covered to death, as you well know. But when you experience it you're going like, "Does anybody know what the hell's going on?" Now, in all fairness, at the tactical level, for the unit leaders, the small unit leaders and up to about Company and Battalion grade.

Interviewer
Then what happens? Do you continue these kind of operations?

Richard Warke
That was the job, but as time went on, they became less and less, and then only selected people or selected platoon here, a squad there would go on support. We weren't the only ship in the plantilla, there were a couple of LSDs that were wallowing around in the South China Sea, and every once in a while the rifle company or a platoon would be pulled. Like the headquarters' element was on the LPH, and every once in a while a platoon or a company would be pulled from one of the other ships to go in and support some operation or other. I don't think in the whole history of the corps there's ever been anything like that before and probably not since, although they do have battalion landing teams now and Marine expeditionary units. They seem to be – well, to me, from what I see in retrospect and from what I saw later in the world in other countries and other conflicts – Vietnam was kind of a turning point in military history. It was a watershed for one thing, a very symmetrical warfare, which is a fancy name for guerilla war. And the type of thought processes that were inculcated into the upper field grade and general grade officers out of World War II and Korea was beginning to fade. The French had that experience in Algeria and Vietnam, you know, their older officers faded out, and you had these younger kids, younger officers and NCOs that made their bones in Algeria and Vietnam for "Le Guerre Revolutionnaire." And so this is what was happening in the U.S. Forces. Not that it was official. In fact, the upper crust were saying – now this is an actual, almost a quote by some Army general, "Well now that we've finished with that little mess, let's get on with real soldiering type thing," i.e. facing the Russians down in the Fulda Gap in Europe. That type of thinking of course is now long gone. But that seemed to be what a lot of the stars were doing at that time.

Interviewer
So how long were you on this duty?

Richard Warke
About six months.

Interviewer
Kind of a floating Reserve?

Richard Warke
Yeah, pretty much. Now remember, most American troops had stood down by that time. We were largely in support of the Viets.

Interviewer
And so you're on ship, so you might have a little bit more communication with the outside world –

Richard Warke
No. Absolutely not. Communication centers were off limits to everyone, period. That was operational security. We had really no idea what was going on in the United States, we had no idea what was going on. We had no idea what the hell anybody was doing, really. It was very compartmentalized.

Interviewer
How often did you do one of these operations?

Richard Warke
Well, on the scale of Operation Freedom Torch or just occasionally going out and getting--? Most of it was getting attached to somebody in-country for a walk in the sun. There'd be a half a dozen of us, a squad, a platoon, occasionally a company, depending on which battalion it was. And you would be in support, usually of the Viets who needed all the help they could get. I felt so bad for those little buggers, I really did.

Interviewer
Tell us why.

Richard Warke
Well, a lot of Americans came away with mixed emotion about the Viets, but you have to remember they'd been at war for 2,000 years, okay? And you have a tour and you're done or part of a tour or almost none of a tour. They're

in it for life, and so self-preservation for them becomes pretty important. On the other hand, some of them realize that self-preservation meant if I'm going to stay alive, I have to kill as many of the bad guys as possible. And some of these little guys were incredibly brave.
I mean almost to the point of foolhardiness. And then, of course, you had the Montagnards, the tribesmen, which a lot of the Army, Special Forces and SEALs and Force Recon worked with. They weren't Viets – in fact, they and the Viets hated each other and for good reason. The Montagnards are still fighting today in the Highlands. They were fighting absolutely for survival, and they were totally committed. But yeah, the problem with the Viets was their officers from field grade on upwards, with some exceptions, were just totally corrupt. Absolutely. There were some outstanding officers, just on par with any of ours. And unfortunately we – when I say "we" collectively, as the Americans, and even the Australians were guilt of this to a degree, and of course the Nationalist Chinese too because they, being the sons of heaven – looked down on them. I'm sure you know all about that. They looked at the Viets as basically not much. And that's sad because they had an ancient culture, they were fighting for their lives and that culture, and unfortunately, they lost.

Interviewer
So at the end of this six-month tour, what happened?

Richard Warke
I was offered an early out. Many people were, and I declined. I had almost a year left. Normally if you got an early out it was a few months. So I was sent to Okinawa, which was fine with me. I liked Okinawa, most people didn't. I actually enjoyed it. I kind of went a little native, actually. The scuba diving was outrageously good. I liked the food, I liked the people. The Oki's aren't really Japanese. They hate the Japanese, and again, for good cause because of what happened in World War II. A lot of them didn't like Americans, but a lot of them did. Especially the older ones because they remembered what had happened. And essentially, for a while, the Marine Corps sniper program was sort of nonexistent at the time. Yes, there was a training program at Pendleton briefly, a couple weeks long, one at Lejeune, a couple weeks long. One at Oki a couple weeks long, one right in Da Nang a couple weeks long run by Marines who were part of the marksmanship units and like that. Basically my S2 scout sniping was a scout sniping unit. And there were guys who had been trained for a couple of weeks on the Remington 700 derivation or the M40s, as it was called, where guys like Chuck Mawhinney and Carlos Hathcock had made their kills. Phenomenal kills, I might add. Or a Warrant Officer, I can't remember his name, he's an Army guy. He had a high rack, too. Battalions were very short. Not so much of scouts but of scout snipers. And there was a kid from Alaska and myself, and the battalion commander came by one day and he said, "You Nanook and Sergeant Preston there," you know, meaning me, "Get over here." "What's up?" "Well, you're from Alaska, you're from Canada. I presume you hunt and fish?" "Oh, yeah, all the time." I love moose hunting. Like Sarah Palin. Anyway. So he says, "All right. Report over to the armory and sign out an M-40." "Why?" They were gathering dust in there because there were too few school trained snipers to be around so basically we were ad hoc. Now, ten years later, I ran the sniper school, Third Mar Div in Okinawa, and I was one of the instructors at First Mar Div also. And in fact, there's a couple of pictures in the file of that. And it had become much more sophisticated by then.

Interviewer
So what year did this happen to you?

Richard Warke
'72, '73.

Interviewer
Was there a chance you'd go back in-country?

Richard Warke
A couple of us were told there might be. But realistically speaking I didn't expect it.

Interviewer
What did you see? What could you tell about the war from being in Okinawa?

Richard Warke
There were some very momentous changes at that time. There was a lot of talk, and it eventually happened, Okinawa would be given to the Japanese. Because it had really been an American possession since the Marines took it in World War II. Now the problem with that was it caused some social upheaval on the island. And a nasty element came in. These were Japanese Communists from the mainland, and they started fomenting a lot of trouble, and this caused problems with crime and drug problems on the island. The Green Berets at Zukeran got booted off the island, literally booted off the island because the Japanese said they were subversive. Now they're back, as of a few years ago.

Interviewer
What could you tell what was going on in Vietnam from your position?

Richard Warke
Well, we actually knew more from Okinawa stance than when we were there because for one thing I was dating a

Navy cryptographer. Join the Navy, ride the waves. And she would tell me some of the things that were going on. And then I had a friend of mine who was an intel analyst, and we'd talk about it, and I began to get the picture. Things were coming to a close very, very quickly and very, very badly. It was a disaster in the making. And I mean it was going to be bad, and we knew it. And then one day the colonel came down, and he said, "We're going back aboard ship. Be prepared. We may have to cover withdrawals and all the rest of this stuff." As it turned out, that never materialized, which made everybody breathe a huge sigh of relief, including me because I was getting rather comfortable on Oki, to be honest with you. Go to the beach, plus I was teaching the water safety/water survival course among other things, too.

But it was depressing. It really was. For some of us. Most of the guys, I mean you're talking 18-, 19-year-old kids. I'm going home, yea, freedom bird, blah, blah, blah, okay, great. But for some of us it was kind of sad to see. The guys who were there in '66 through '68 bore the worst of it, I think. And talking to them, their sense of frustration and loss is crushing. And for us to be there at the end as observers watching this coming to a close wasn't much fun either. I'll give you one example that was really bad. We were getting ready to go ashore – this is off the coast – there was a big battle going on, and the Viets and Marines were loading up in the landing craft. And we were actually going down the ropes – well, I wasn't, I was getting my team prepared for a helo assault because they load the boats first. There was a company actually going down the rope ladders, it looked like a scene out of World War II. And there was some Amtraks were firing up in the hold of the LPH getting ready to go out, and all of a sudden, the announcement came over the one MC, "Cease operations immediately." What? Everybody froze.

We'd never heard that before. Subsequently, there were only a few guys who were already going down, and basically we were told you're not going, but the Vietnamese were, and it didn't take them long to figure out that they were going without us. And the expression on their faces was – there's no describing it, there just isn't – and we weren't very happy about that either. I mean yeah, we were kind of happy we weren't going to get our asses shot off, but you know. I know one guy who I keep in touch with, he still feels guilty about that, and I keep telling him, "We didn't make that decision. We don't have to feel guilty about anything." It's just, "Le fortune de guerre," as the frogs say.

But that to me epitomized the end of it all. And somebody once said that it's dangerous to be an enemy of the United States, but it can be fatal to be a friend of the United States. I don't think that's strictly fair. Frankly, I find what the United States has done in world history, to the vanquished and all the rest of that stuff, is far in excess than any other people would do. And because of that, they've made three stupid mistakes in this last decade that's going to get our asses kicked overseas. And it's a repetition of history once again. And there was no reason to make these three mistakes.

Interviewer

So where were you when Saigon fell?

Richard Warke

I had returned home to Canada, and I had taken a commission in the Canadian Army, and I was with the Jump Company of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and I was succonded to Number 2 Parachute Commando briefly. And I was in the officer's mess one night having dinner, and someone came in and said, "Hey, Rick you've got to see this." I cannot possibly describe to you how I felt. There's just no way. There's just not. And when I consider, when I talk to other guys who had spent two, three, four tours there. Like there was this guy called Gunny Davenport, Gunnery Sergeant Davenport who I kept in contact with – he had four tours in 'Nam – and he was just devastated. I mean, you know?

Interviewer

You were devastated, too?

Richard Warke

Yeah, I was pretty choked. I really was. I really was. I mean my personal experience in that of my guys wasn't anywhere near as intense as say the guys who were there in '68 for Tet. But, you know, it's not so much how often you do this, it's the degree of intensity. What I mean by that is, I've talked to people who were in combat for five, ten, fifteen years. And there are people like that, there's some of the guys in the Legion étrangere, including one of my cousins. And then I talked to one guy who jumped in an armorment in World War II and was hit within 20 minutes of landing, and that ended his war.

Interviewer

How did that put in perspective what you saw on the screen that day?

Richard Warke

An overwhelming sense of sadness, like it was all for nothing. However, that's not strictly fair either because I found out in later years, traveling in Thailand and Malaya and Australia, that realists there said had the United States not intervened and given them the breathing space, the time to build their militaries, they, too, might have fallen. So that old domino theory had some credence to it. Especially the Thai's. The Thai's have one of the most Cracker Jack militaries in southeast Asia now, and they can pretty much take on anybody that gives them a hard time. But they had essentially a decade or two breathing space to realize they were in danger; to get rid of certain people that

were obstructing the building of their national economy and national interest; and time to build their forces to be one of the top-dog forces in the third world.

Interviewer

What did your fellow Canadians think?

Richard Warke

My family's military, and they were very supportive with the exception – my dad at that time was an active duty Warrant Officer. I also didn't know, in my absence, and I didn't find out until just a few years ago, what affect this had on my mother. And thank God she doesn't know about some stuff in Central America or Africa or afterwards. She'd have a lot more gray hair. But my sister was a teacher at the time, an assistant principal, and she's still very, very liberal, and we do not see eye-to-eye. And I don't have any use for some of my fellow Canadians in that regard. But you would be surprised. The press here in the United States is your worst enemy. It's also Canada's worst enemy. The CBC, or Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, we call it the Communist Broadcasting Corporation. And basically the toadies that sit in Parliament are very much like a lot of the toadies that sit in Congress. And I don't need to explain that one I'm sure.

Interviewer

So when Saigon fell, what was the reaction of the Canadians?

Richard Warke

You mean vicariously watching it? It was mixed emotions. There were those, oh, yeah, you know, those poor little downtrodden socialists have triumphed over the evil United States. I mean, it was almost comical, it was almost cartoonish the way that went down. But there were elements in the country that were very sad. In the military, and Canada is very, very conservative and very, very pro-U.S., and they were just absolutely outraged. And Pierre Elliott Trudeau was Prime Minister through this whole thing, who, in my opinion is one of the main reasons women should never have gotten to vote, but he ruined our military. He encouraged anti-Americanism and the press and in politics. So there was an element in the country for many years because of him and one of his predecessors, Lester B. Pearson, Elmer Fudd, who was also very much like him, where there was an element that looked at this as, “Well, the Yanks got their just deserve sort of thing,” which still leaves a very bad taste in my mouth. And Canadians are supposed to be all these polite people and all that, right? And so the conservatives in the country don't say much about it, but I do. I don't put up with that.

Interviewer

You're a foreign national, you volunteered for combat. What do you want to tell us that you don't want us to forget?

Richard Warke

Actually there's a whole lot of stuff. But there is a thing I want to do, and I can't stress this enough. I keep saying that the next liberal that says, "Thank you for your service," I want to punch in the face because they don't mean it. They really don't. If anything, they're being skeevier about it now because this way they can camouflage it, but they haven't changed. Not one damn bit, and don't kid yourself. They haven't. The thing that hurt the morale of the servicemen there, and even to this day, even my friend Craig, he'll talk to me, and he won't talk to most other people. The thing that hurts them, and I hurt for them, because again, I'm in an odd position not being an American, is the sense of being out there without the love and support of their people. Sort of like social orphans. That's the best one I can come up with and that still permeates most of them today. Yes, it's true, and the statistics bear this out, that most Vietnam veterans are not the drug-ridden losers that Hollywood portrays them and that still rankles, mind you.

In fact, of all of the veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam, they're the most, per capita, adjusted. The guys who are in real trouble, of course, are in real trouble. But you had that then, too, and it wasn't recognized. But the sense, even the guys who are successful, the sense of being a social orphan—does it help for someone to say, "I'm sorry that I didn't tell you this 20, 30 years ago, that we care, and we appreciate what you did?" It helps a little. But like one guy said, "Why didn't you tell me this 30 years ago?" Americans are unique in my opinion in a lot of ways. When they go to war, more than any other nation I've ever seen, they seem to do it for higher ideals. I run into true believers at every turn – they believe they were helping someone fight for their freedom.

They believed all this stuff. And as time went by, that crumbled. And it wasn't just seeing the Asian practice of corruption – because remember I said there were Viets who were incredibly brave and incredibly patriotic – but to watch their own politicians, their own news media, their own entertainment media, their own educational system buy into this crap. And it has literally destroyed a number of them. But it leaves even the most well-adjusted with a very bad taste in their mouth to this day. They may not tell you that, but I guarantee it. I'll take that to Vegas because I hear it all the time when we talk. And in some ways, it doesn't affect me as badly, and in other ways it does. It doesn't affect me because I'm a foreign national, but it does affect me because these are my friends and my brothers and because I feel it, too, to a large degree. Not as intense as them. And I would say to Americans, your fathers, brothers, sons, cousins, husbands, whoever they are that go out there and do what they do, are not, should not be the focus of your deride nor wrath or anything like that. You need to back them 100 percent because they need that.

Napoleon once said that morale was a factor of three to one or something like that. And when you destroy a soldier's morale, essentially, you destroy 'em. And that can be as bad, or sometimes worse than, some types of wounds. So if any lesson is to be learned from that, and I see it happening again, is that this country has to get behind its people because otherwise this nation, no matter what firepower it has, no matter how dedicated your troops are, no matter what strategy or tactics you have, will never win another conflict. Never. There has to be a complete realization by the inhabitants of this nation at every level, that the military is the life insurance policy of nation. It is not a bench for social experimentation. Neither is it a crying towel for people with less than honorable agendas, etc., etc. Perhaps I'm being a bit obtuse.

As I said, I am from a family, not necessarily a country, of history of marshal service, although Canada has a small but a very distinguished military. And maybe this will help. It's like military families in Canada and their sons who go out are different than all other Canadians. It's like two nations. You can't do that here, and that's what's happening. The country is devolving or diverting into two distinct entities. I wish I'd brought it with me. I have a quote from a Roman legionnaire to his cousin in Rome. The guy was stationed with Legio Fetensis, the 10th Legion in Jerusalem that was there for 300 years. The legionnaire said, "We have gone forth from Rome as dedicated soldiers and patriots to the empire. We love our nation, and we do what is asked us and more.

Yet we have heard that in Rome there is corruption and degradation and debauchery and all of this and cynicism that is crumbling the structure of Rome. Pray, tell me, cousin, that this is not so. Otherwise, beware of the anger of the legions." And less than 100 years later, part of the crumbling of the Roman Empire was because the military couldn't take it anymore and contributed to the destruction of the Empire. Not intentionally. So I would say to Americans, those are your brothers, your sons, your husbands, your cousins, your fathers, beware of the anger of the legions. I do not believe that any American would deliberately revolt against his country. But we all took an oath to defend against enemies foreign and domestic, and if the legions perceive at any time that the enemy's domestic are the caliber that now sit in D.C., there's no telling where it could go. They wouldn't necessarily start it.

But no country is immune. I'm surprised at some Americans that say, "Well, we would never have another revolution." Oh, really? Why not? It can happen anywhere. I'll tell you, when I was with the Canadian forces at one time, I went to see the games and Sarajevo one year. Remember the Olympic Winter Games? A couple years later, my unit was on NATO duty in the area. Went back in the soccer field there. I mean the city was in ruins, I mean it was century's old center of culture. And down on the soccer field were there these bumps. And I'm pretty sure you can guess what that was. And that was a country that had a long history of civilization and culture. It couldn't happen here? Don't kid yourself. But that's one of those subjects that's kind of taboo almost.

Interviewer

Are there any sensory triggers that bring back Vietnam?

Richard Warke

More like I'm voting democrat. What! No, yeah. To this day, if I hear a helicopter, I mean it was a helicopter war, and it brings back floods of memories. It brings back, at the low end of the scale, anxiety, tension and pounding adrenaline rushes. At the other end of the spectrum it's like, oh, good, mail, food, get-me-the-hell-out-of-here type thing or just nice ride up in the atmosphere to cool off from the heat below. It's a flood of memories. It's olfactory memories also that bring back things. At one stage of the game, the second time I was in the Corps, I was stationed at Pohang in Korea where I met a couple of Koreans that I actually met ten years before Vietnam, and one of the guys actually taught me how to make kimchi, which I dearly love. And every time I smell that odor, that brings back memories too.

Interviewer

So when you hear helicopter planes?

Richard Warke

Oh, yeah. I can tell you what kind of a helicopter it is. Whether it's a Huey, a 46, a 53, even the newer ones, the Apaches, the Blackhawks, they all have a signature. It's the same with weapons by the way.

Interviewer

How do you know where the enemy is? Talk about the sound of war.

Richard Warke

Yeah, or as MacArthur once said, "The strange, mournful mutter of the battlefield," although it's gotten rather louder these days. Just this morning, now that you mention it, the Sergeant Major and I and his wife were out – I have 100 acre property, and we were shooting 16s and FNs and AR-10s and .45s and .44 mags and stuff like that. And you learn very quickly what sound a specific weapon makes. Like an AK is a cack, cack, cack, cack type thing. An M16 has a somewhat higher pitched sound with a slight metallic sound because that's the spring that's impinging on the buffer in the stock. You can actually hear that. A .30 caliber weapon like an FN, which is what the Canadian Army used up until a few years ago, or an M-14, has a much deeper noise, a louder noise. A .45 has kind of a booming noise, and a 9 millimeter pistol has a crack. They all have their particular sounds. You can even tell the sound of artillery, what type of artillery it is. And you don't normally hear mortars.

Interviewer
As an NCO, how do you communicate through all that vast noise?

Richard Warke
Training and discipline. I can't speak for the Army, although I've served in six different uniforms in four different wars and various other things. The Marine Corps discipline, like the Legion etrangere, the foreign legion is unique. The Canadian military and the British military rely on the regimental system, which is a family. The Marine Corps, to me, is the closest thing that the Americans have to the regimental system. Like my family regiment is the Seaforth Highland Regiment of Canada. But I serve with Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, the North Saskatchewan Light Infantry, South Saskatchewan Dragoons, which is a light armored reconnaissance outfit. And it's a tribal thing. All those little badges and nifty stuff that you wear are not decoration. You know this. "De oppresso liber." To free the oppressed.

They all mean something. It's all traditional. And a unit that inculcates its men with that, instills that pride, this is why Marines have a tendency to be very, very Marine-like, you know? And there's disciplines of various kinds. There's self-imposed discipline. That is the pride that you have in your unit. Then there's imposed discipline, that's like if-you-screw-up-we're-going-to-kick-your-ass type thing. And various things in between, discipline one. But not misused discipline, that's a whole other subject. And training. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel once said, "The best welfare for the troops is first-class training." And that is as true today as it ever was. And Americans should be happy to know that their troops are the finest fed, the finest clothed, the finest armed and the finest trained in the world, outside of special operations, of course. Man for man, there's no better army in the world that's trained, as far as I'm concerned.

Interviewer
So in battle, the training gave you the skills?

Richard Warke
The skills and it also, what it does also is your body and your mind and your emotions react better with the intensity of training that you have. There's many, many examples of how that comes out.

Interviewer
So you're in that zone. The world was so different back then.

Richard Warke
General Marshal wrote a book in the '50s called "The Soldier's Load and the Mobility of a Nation." Very short pamphlet, and this began the more scientific approach to training. You can't turn a soldier into a packhorse because it systematically degrades his performance. They used to have things like water discipline – you're only allowed a few sips of water – and they found out that was not only unhealthy, it was deadly, and it caused brain fog and all that. Like for instance, the Israelis have three things they do that they absolutely will do anything to do. One is ammunition, above all. They supply their troops with. The second thing is water. And the third thing is every opportunity to put them to ground, make 'em rest. And these have been quantified, as you put it. And all this sort of testing goes on constantly. It's gratifying in some ways to see that I was lucky enough to grow up at a turning point in world history, especially in warfare. And kind of unique in some ways, although I'm not the only one, to have seen different wars and different operations go on and, plus the fact, I served in U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, World Canadian Air Force, World Canadian Army and a few other things, so I could see it from other services in some ways. Plus, I occupied enlisted rank, NCO rank and officer rank.

Interviewer
So in Vietnam, you're an NCO. Try to impart what it was like back then with popular culture against you. What's it like to lose a man? How do you put all of it together?

Richard Warke
You don't. You never get over it. Ever. Ever. You never ever get over it. It helps if you can visit with their relatives. It helps to realize that this is inevitable, sooner or later, and it could happen to you. This is why one of the mistakes U.S. made in Indochina was not keeping unit cohesion. They've stopped doing that now. The Brits and Canadians and Australians didn't ever do that, they had unit cohesion. The idea of sending a guy over for your tour, he goes over by himself, he comes back by himself – bad news. They started off with unit cohesion, but then McNamara, being counter in politics and everything else screwed the whole thing up. And you had this sense of isolation. Unit cohesion is a good thing because eventually you're not fighting for your country or your ideals, you're fighting for the guy standing next to you, and I'm sure you've heard that hundreds of times before because, all of a sudden, politics don't mean anything and patriotism takes a back seat or anything else you're thinking about. The guy standing next to you is more important even if you don't like him.

That's a really strange thing. There were guys that I absolutely detested, and some of them didn't like me either. But you'd fight your guts out for 'em. And the idea if you lose one, you know, I thought that, "oh, if you lose a guy, you lose a guy, it's part of the game." No, it's not. If somebody gets it, you never get over it. Ever. I don't care if anybody tells you different. I don't buy it. And you can ease it a little bit. It's an occupational hazard, whatever you want to

call it. And this is why I think that personally, that veteran groups are very important. I want to mention this case because this is the best illustration I can get. You may remember, you know something of military history, so you know what happened at Dunkirk. The British Expeditionary Army was pushed literally into the sea by the Panzers, and there were long lines of men standing in the water. Well, rowboats came from Britain to pull them off.
I had an uncle who was in the Canadian Lone Officer with the British Army at that time who was there. These guys in their thousands stood in the water, and the Stupa's would come down and drop bombs and strafe the crap out of 'em. And then they would fire back with the only weapons they had, which were rifles. A guy from the Yeomanry Regiment, which is the Lancashire Fusiliers, very old regiment in Britain, was asked, "How did you do that?" The answer was simple to him. "Well, we were with our regiment and with our friends." And it was that cut and dry to him. Wouldn't necessarily be for me.

Interviewer

But it meant something at that time, at that moment in Southeast Asia?

Richard Warke

Oh, absolutely. You know, some guys were reluctant to talk about it. One, they may not know how to articulate it. Some guys have never seen some of their comrades in 40 years, but they will never forget them. I maintain ties, the young guy, Brian Peacock that I told you about, the tunnel rat, he'll be coming out here again this summer. We've seen each other physically in the last 37 years maybe six times, but it's just like yesterday. And sometimes it can be sad, like he came out here when I buried my corpsman two years ago. But it was kind of bittersweet, you know, it was good seeing him again and stuff like that. And this is something else. Shakespeare once – and I think it was Henry the V, the St. Crispen's Day Speech – "We few we have, we few we band of brothers…" that's not corny. That really is like that. I'm closer with Brian than I am with my two brothers – I love them dearly, in fact, one of them served with me in the North Saskatchewan Regiment – but there's something about this.
People say war is not a good thing. Of course it's not a good thing, Jesus; people get killed for God's sake. But sometimes there are things that come about that I'm not sure how to put it. There are certain ennobling factors. There's factors, of course, that turn people into absolute goddamn beasts for various reasons. But there's certain ennobling things. You've probably seen "Band of Brothers." I have relatives who were with the Canadian Airborne Battalion that related to that very well, and although this is going to sound kind of ridiculous, in a way it was a kind of a cleaner war. Then I saw "Pacific" by the same people who did that about the Marines in the Pacific, and I met Eugene Sledge before he died once. I never did meet Robert Leckie, unfortunately. And of course Manila John was killed on Okinawa.
It's not real, of course, but I had the creeping creeps. The heat. The dirt. The sweat. The blood. The crud. The just overwhelming sense of exhaustion. I guess that's why actors are actors. The one that really got me was the kid from New Orleans. In the one scene you're looking at him, and he's talking to one of the guys, and he's throwing pebbles into something that's going "plook" like a little stream, right? And the camera backs up, and he's actually throwing them into the brain case of a Japanese soldier whose head is off, and the brain matter's going "plook." Yeah, that's more realistic to me. It's kind of hard. No war's the same for everybody. You know, somebody once said that the grunt's view of war is as far as you can see in front of the foxhole. That's partially true today, but now that it's more mobile and everything else like that, these kids are more aware, they're better educated. I won't say necessarily more intelligent, but they're better educated. They're incredibly physically fit compared to some of us back then, and they're just as dedicated. They're just good American boys. But they do question. And I don't have a problem with that because we usually didn't or weren't allowed to or couldn't. But they do and this is a good thing.