

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

MICHAEL VIZER

Security Forces & Infantry, US Marine Corps, Persian Gulf War & Operation Restore

Hope

2015

OH
2012

**OH
2012**

Vizer, Michael (b. 1971). Oral History Interview, 2015.

Approximate length: 1 hour 31 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, Wind Lake, Wisconsin native Michael Vizer recounts his decision to join the Marine Corps, life aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Independence* as a security guard where he took part in the Persian Gulf War, and his tenure in Somalia with the 7th Marines as an infantryman during Operation Restore Hope. Vizer describes his basic training in Camp Pendleton (California) and his later security force battalion training in Mare Island, California. Vizer then relates his experiences aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Independence* including: daily life at sea, the dangers of the flight deck, naval rituals, and marine-sailor relations. Vizer then transferred to 1st Battalion 7th Marines stationed on Okinawa, Japan.

Vizer then covers his time as an infantryman in Operation Restore Hope, particularly recalling the vivid sights and smells of war-torn Somalia. He describes in detail several encounters with hostile militant forces including weapons search patrols, building-clearing operations, and a daylight ambush. Vizer also narrates his experiences in SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape) school and working with international forces such as Pakistani Troops and The French Foreign Legion in Somalia. He relates the importance of his personal faith during his deployment and his impression of Christian and Muslim interactions. Vizer recalls his eventual discharge and speaks at length about missing the unit camaraderie of the Marines. Vizer concludes by discussing the public's views of lesser known wars, the difficulty of conveying the realities of battle and military life to younger generations, and the importance of having the right motivations for joining the armed forces.

Biographical Sketch:

Vizer (b. 1971) served in the US Marine Corps aboard the USS *Independence* during the Persian Gulf War and later with the 7th Marines in Somalia as part of Operation Restore Hope. He was discharged in 1993.

Archivists' Note:

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript.

Interviewed by Ellen Brooks, 2015.

Transcribed by Audio Transcription Center, 2017.

Reviewed by Tristan Krause, 2017.

Abstract written by Tristan Krause, 2017.

Interview Transcript:

[Beginning of ROH2012.Vizer_user]

Brooks: Today is Monday October 26, 2015. This is an interview with Michael Vizer. Do you prefer Mike?

Vizer: Mike is fine.

Brooks: Mike, who served with the Marines from June 1989 to June 1993 during the Persian Gulf War and also Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. The interview is being conducted at Mike Vizer's office in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The interviewer is Ellen Brooks, and the interview is being conducted for the Wisconsin Veterans' Museum Oral History Program. Okay, so let's just start at the beginning. If you can tell me when and where you were born.

Vizer: I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1971 at St. Luke's Hospital.

Brooks: Okay. And then did you grow up in Milwaukee?

Vizer: I grew up till about second grade then we moved out to Wind Lake, Wisconsin, which is western Racine County.

Brooks: Okay. And what brought you out there?

Vizer: My dad wanted to get our family out of the city. Get to a more—in his mind a better environment to raise children.

Brooks: Okay. And what did your parents do?

Vizer: My dad was—he worked for General Electric, inventory control specialist, until he passed away in 1984, when I was twelve. And my mother was injured in the same accident, and she passed away a couple times on the table, but the doctors saved her. So—it was kind of a rough childhood growing up without a father.

Brooks: Yeah. Siblings?

Vizer: Got one older sister—two years older than I am.

Brooks: Okay. And so, what was your daily life like when you were growing up? What kind of kid were you?

Vizer: Um, I was a brat. I really was. After my dad died I had no fatherly

influence, and so I just kind of did—I rebelled. And I wasn't a good child. Wasn't a good son, which I, you know, regretted later. But—so a lot of it's kind of—I got in trouble a lot. I remember that. And I had one goal, and that was to be like my dad and join the Marine Corps. So, that's what I did.

Brooks: Okay. So tell me a little bit about that decision and about how you went about joining the Marine Corps.

Vizer: Well, it wasn't a hard decision to make: my mother basically told me when I turned eighteen I had to get out of the house. Tough love, I think. But, uh—and then she had remarried during that time, so—it was tough. I originally wanted to go into the Army to be a helicopter pilot, but I didn't have 20/20 vision. So, I went into the Marine Corps, took the test, and they said, "You can do whatever you want." And, truth be told, I told the recruiter, I said, "I want to kill people." And at that young age, I didn't have a clue what I was talking about, of course. But, they said, "Okay, Security Forces would be your best bet." You know, since there's no active wars going on at the time. So, I signed up for Security Forces, and that's where I went.

Brooks: Okay. So, tell me a little bit that—the test and the recruitment period.

Vizer: It was fairly easy for me. The ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery], I scored very high on it. And I was always good in school, so taking tests, for me, were easy. It didn't seem like a problem. The recruiting—that happened so long ago, it's hard to—I remember just going in saying, "This is what I want." And they said, "Okay. You can ship out on June 26." So—

Brooks: So, this was—had you graduated high school?

Vizer: No, I had to graduate early, which was a challenge as well. Most of my time in high school I really applied myself. Except my senior year where I just didn't feel like studying, skipped a lot of school, got suspended for fighting a couple of times. So, it was close. Fortunately for me, my principal was a former Marine, so he kind of—he helped me out, to make sure I graduated early.

Brooks: Okay. So, you graduated early, and then basic training in June?

Vizer: Then I went—yes, then I went to basic training in Camp Pendleton—

Brooks: And what was that like?

Vizer: —San Diego. It was hard. It was a lot harder than I'd thought it'd be. First

time I ever left home. I remember at the airport turning around and seeing my mama, and she was crying, and I was trying not to cry. And then just getting to San Diego, and then—thought it was going to be great, walked in, and—in the airport—and then we followed where we're supposed to go and there's all these drill instructor types who started yelling and screaming at us, and then reality set in. And then got on the bus, and I remember stepping on them yellow footprints in San Diego, and thinking that this was probably the worst decision I ever made. [laughs] But, uh, the first few weeks were—it was chaotic—just trying to get a feel for what's going on. And then I started settling in to the military life. And I think I adjusted quite well. There was one time I wanted to quit. I remember—I had a heatstroke on one of the runs, and I was carrying a picture of my dad and my drill instructor came over and said, “Do you want to quit? Do you want to quit?” And I said, “Yeah, I want to quit.” And he's like, “Look at that picture and say that again.” And I couldn't say it again, and then that was, like, the defining moment when I decided that there's no quitting. You can't give up. So, I didn't.

[00:05:00]

Brooks: And when your dad served was he—did he serve in a war or—?

Vizer: He was—he was in the Vietnam time—

Brooks: Okay.

Vizer: —timeframe, but he came down with Hepatitis C. He was stationed out in California, and they gave him an option. They said, “You can either go to—”

Brooks: You want to pause ? [??]

Vizer: Yeah.

Brooks: Okay. Yeah, so you were just saying about your father's service.

Vizer: He—he came down with hepatitis C, so they gave him two options. They said, “We can either promote you to sergeant and send you to Vietnam, or you can take a medical discharge and go home.” So, he went home. And I didn't really get that story until I was—after he had passed. And I probably would have gave him a lot of grief for it, for not being man enough to go fight. But—and he was in infantry when he was in, and infantry are kind of psychotic to a point: controlled psychotic, but—

Brooks: So, that was kind of your motivation to get through the camp?

Vizer: Right. Yeah.

Brooks: What was, besides that run, what was the hardest part about boot camp and adjusting to life as a Marine?

Vizer: To me it wasn't that difficult. I just—I mean the physical stuff at first, but then after a month or so you're in your prime physical condition, and that wasn't an issue. Other than that, it really wasn't difficult for me.

Brooks: Okay. And when you enlisted and when you went to San Diego did you know anybody that you went with?

Vizer: No, no.

Brooks: So, then you just got assigned into a group to train with?

Vizer: Right.

Brooks: Right. Okay. So, then after basic training what was next?

Vizer: Well, I went home for a week, which was enjoyable. And then went back, and then had Marine combat training for a month. And then I had Advanced School of Infantry, which I believe they still have today. Basically trained you how to be an infantry person. Did that for, I think, two and a half months or so. And then after that then I went to a security force battalion training, which was up in Mare Island, California. And that's where we—it's kind of like a specialty school for the security forces.

Brooks: And what does that consist of, that training?

Vizer: Oh, tactics. I mean, a lot of the stuff we did was—some will argue that it was—it was a version of Special Forces. Just a lot of the training that we did—we were trained to take down ships, hostage evacuations, embassy evacuations, raids, and so forth. Mostly dealing with the maritime aspect of it, you know, helicopter assaults, stuff like that.

Brooks: Okay. Was there anything in there that you felt like you really did well at? Excelled at?

Vizer: CQB [Close Quarters Battle]. Yeah, that was—I had a friend of mine, Chris Weiss[[?]], and we were the best two-man team they had there for tactics, and we would consistently take on our instructors, [laughs] so it was—yeah, we were good. But we practiced off duty and stuff like that. Hand to hand combat was—knife fighting, was also—that was a lot of fun.

Brooks: Was it what you expected?

Vizer: I think so. I think so. I mean, our job, once we were going to leave there, was to provide security for special weapons in the military. And I won't elaborate further, but use your imagination. So, there's [bell ringing]—you had to know what you're doing with regards to security, so we took it pretty seriously.

Brooks: Okay. And how long did that training last?

Vizer: That was about four months.

Brooks: Okay. So, now we're in to—are we already in to 1990—by that time?

Vizer: Yes, yes. And then from there I was transferred to an aircraft carrier, USS *Independence*, which was based in San Diego, California, which was neat, because when we got there the ship wasn't there, so they said we can either stay or they're going to fly you on, we don't know yet. And they ended up flying us on, which was—weird. So, I got to land on an aircraft carrier backwards. That's weird, because you—the reason you have to face backwards is so when you stop you don't break your neck from the force of landing.

Brooks: Oh. Okay. Pause? So, you were talking about coming in on the—backwards—on the aircraft carrier.

Vizer: Right. Landing backwards. It was just different. I had never flown like that before. But the coolest thing was after the plane had landed and they opened the doors we kind of looked out and you could see—it's like *Top Gun* where there's, like, steam and everything. And people are running around, and it looked like it's—some aliens, you know? They all had helmets on and visors on. You couldn't see, steam everywhere, guys going, "Go here! Go here!" And it's—it scared—you're like, "What do I do?" And—because a flight deck is a very dangerous place. When I was on board we lost a couple of sailors. One got blown off by an A-6 Intruder: it turned and he wasn't watching. It just picked him up and threw him right off the side of the carrier. So, yeah, it's a dangerous place.

[00:10:02]

Brooks: Wow. So what was your assignment on the aircraft carrier?

Vizer: Oh, we were just guards. Security guards protecting things on the ship. And, uh, reactionary force for the vessels if a small board attack or stuff like that. We would assist the Ship's MAAs [Master at Arms]. The Ship's—they like their police—the naval police on board. We'd assist them with prisoners and stuff like that.

Brooks: Okay. So, how many Marines would be on a ship like that?

Vizer: Approximately sixty to seventy.

Brooks: Oh, wow.

Vizer: So, it was enough.

Brooks: So, can you tell me a little bit about everyday life when you're on the aircraft carrier?

Vizer: Oh, it was boring. It was boring, yeah. I mean, we'd have guard duty—generally you'd have one day on, two days off, and when—the time off, you'd just do training, clean weapons, work on your uniforms, inspections, and it was boring. It was pretty boring, but—yeah, I was—it was fun though, I had great food.

Brooks: What qualifies as great when you're—?

Vizer: Anything you want twenty-four hours a day.

Brooks: Wow.

Vizer: Yeah, they had two chow halls, one forward and one aft. And the—I guess the best part about it was we in essence ruled the ship. Of course, if any Navy guys are listening they'd probably say, "Well, no you didn't!" But there was five men that we could not physically put our hands on and take down to the ground. Now, that was the captain of the ship, the XO [Executive Officer] of the ship, the admiral on board, the weapon's officer, and the air wing—the commander of the air wing. Anybody else was free game. If we gave them a command to get down on the deck and they didn't, we could physically grab them and throw them on the deck. And we did. So, we weren't well liked by a lot of the sailors. But it was just—part of it—we weren't trying to be mean, but we're trying to let them know that, "Hey, if we are actually coming down national security is at risk and it's better for you to get thrown on the ground than get two 45-rounds put in your chest." So—and deadly force was authorized on there, so it was always in the back of the minds that, "Hey, this is serious."

Brooks: And how long did you stay? Were you—did you stay docked that entire time there?

Vizer: No, no. In fact, out of my four years in the service, I spent a year and a half stateside. The rest of it was either at sea or overseas.

Brooks: Okay. So, when you're out at sea what—this was before the Persian Gulf War really kicked off?

Vizer: Right, right.

Brooks: So, when you initially left dock, where were you?

Vizer: We went to Hawaii a couple of times. But, generally we'd just go out in the Pacific and when we didn't know for sure. I mean a lot of that was classified even to us. But we did go on a WESTPAC [Western Pacific], and that's—we were on WESTPAC, which is when—right before the Gulf War started. We got tied into that at that point. But WESTPACs meaning Western Pacific Tour. You just kind of cruise around and show—I think it's more of a show of force to the world. Like, “Hey, we've got this huge carrier super group, and don't mess with us.”

Brooks: Were you ever involved in any—I know a lot of times the Navy, especially, did rituals, like when you cross the equator and the—

Vizer: [Laughs] Oh, yeah!

Brooks: Yeah?

Vizer: Yeah, shellback initiation. Yeah, I got my diploma in the other building. Yeah, and they had a ball with it. Because, like I said, they didn't like Marines, so—and they'd beat you up, they'd cut rubber hoses off in like two-foot sections across shillelaghs, I think. And they'd beat you with that, and you just got to take it. And you'd have to crawl on your hands and knees from your berthing, wherever it was, all the way up to the flight deck upstairs. And everything's steel on the ships, you know, and non-skid, so guys were bleeding everywhere. Yeah, it was fun. And there's different stuff they'd do: make you jump in and out of tanks and there's one—the last tank you have to jump in and they save food for like a month, so you've got all this rotten food you have to crawl through.

And then—so, one of the funniest things I saw was at the top, at the very end of all this initiation, was this large tank of food, and who knows what was in there. So, you had to jump in one end, swim to the other side, and when you come out of the water they would ask you, “Are you a shellback?” And if you didn't answer, “Yes, I'm a shellback.” You'd have to get beaten and go all the way back—not to the beginning, but down the line. So, we had one Marine, Dieshick [??], and every time he'd come out of the water they'd ask him, “What are you?” And he'd say, “I'm a Marine!” [laughs] “Get out!” And they'd beat him. He'd go all the way back down, get in the water, come out again, “What are you?” “I'm a Marine!” [laughs] Five times they beat him down before—so, we yelled, “Dieshick! Just say you're a shellback!”

Brooks: Wow.

Vizer: So, he finally got out, but [laughs] it was kind of embarrassing.

[00:15:00]

Brooks: Okay. So, it sounds like you had some characters on the ship. [laughs]

Vizer: Oh, yeah. Definitely. Yeah, we had a lot of different characters.

Brooks: So, who—is there like a commanding officer of the Marines then?

Vizer: We had a commanding officer, executive officer, company first sergeant, company gunny [Gunnery Sergeant], and—Gunny Clifton [??], he was—he was one of the funniest Marines I've ever met who wasn't trying to be funny. He was an African-American guy who couldn't swim. And so, every year we had to do a swim qual., and we went down to—and we wouldn't swim in the ocean or nothing, at some port or usually in San Diego, they had a pool there that the—I think the Seals trained in. So, every year we'd go down there, and we'd all line up on one side of the pool, and all we'd have to do is jump in and swim to the other side. So, there's—everybody lined up and the CO's [Commanding Officer] like, "All right, everybody go." So, everybody except for one jumped in the water, swam all the way to the other side, and there's Gunny Clifton just shaking his head. And he was a big man. He was probably 6'6". I don't know how much he weighed, but he was big [bell ringing]. And he's like, "I—I—I—I ain't doing it. I ain't doing it. I ain't doing it." And then everybody's like, "Come on, Gunny! You can do it! You can do it!" He's like, "I ain't going to do it. I ain't going to do it." "Come on, Gunny!" And the XO is screaming at him, "Gunny, I'm ordering you! Get in that water!" And he's like, "I going to jump, but I'm going to drown. I'm going to jump. I'm going to drown." And he's like, "Fine, fine. Here it goes." And some expletives that he launched into. So, he jumped into the water, and went straight to the bottom. So, we're all looking, going, "Are you serious?" And we're looking and finally someone's like, "Somebody's got to get him." And about ten of us jumped in, went down, and pulled him out. But he would have drown. He wasn't even trying. [laughs] He was just sitting on the bottom.

Brooks: So, then what happened? He just—they still let him—?

Vizer: Yeah, yeah. We kind of dragged him to the other side, so we could say he made it across. Yeah, it was funny.

Brooks: Wow. Yeah, that would be—I think that would be a little unusual to be stationed on a ship and not be able to swim.

Vizer: You would think, yeah.

Brooks: Yeah. So then, tell me a little bit about what happens next. Or how long were you on the ship, I guess?

Vizer: Well, I was on the carrier for a year and a half. And we changed homeports from San Diego to Yokosuka. But before we left, one of the coolest things I've ever seen was on—our ship was docked in San Diego, and we had our ship, we had the USS *Ranger*, which was another aircraft carrier, and we had the USS *New Jersey* in between. So, when you're standing on the dock looking down and seeing two carriers bookending a battleship—I mean, it's just, I got goose bumps now just remembering it. Because it—just the feeling of power, of wow. And this is only a part of our Navy.

So, yeah, it was cool. But then we switched homeports, I guess, we went to Yokosuka, Japan and we got to sail past the USS *Midway* before she was decommissioned, which was kind of cool, going side by side a carrier. I think we went past the *Wisconsin*, side by side. It's always neat going past a ship kind of as big as yours. And then, yeah went to Yokosuka, and then shortly after that, several months later, then I was transferred off to go to 1st Battalion 7th Marines.

Brooks: Okay. So, when Japan was your home dock did you get to explore Japan at all?

Vizer: I did. Yeah, it wasn't a good time. There were some incidents with sailors and local women there, and there was just a generally feeling of “ick” towards the military at that time. So, they weren't very friendly. And it just—it was just an uneasy feeling being there. You know, that you weren't wanted. You know, and yeah it wasn't good.

Brooks: And where did you stay when you stayed off? Or did you ever stay off the carrier?

Vizer: We didn't. I never stayed off the carrier.

Brooks: Okay. So, tell me a little bit about what your accommodations are like on the carrier then.

Vizer: Well we're in burlings[??], so burling is—it's just a big room with a whole bunch of bunk beds and—mix matched together. It's hard to explain unless you've been inside. But there are little cubbies kind of areas. And, I mean, you've got a four-inch mattress to sleep on that pops up and you store all your stuff underneath your bed. And not a lot of room. We had a wall locker. I mean it's tight, and some people who don't have the best hygiene

they end up learning the proper way, otherwise they get dragged in and steel wool brushes are applied to their skin and they learn pretty quick that they need to shower once a day at least, so.

Brooks: Sounds a little rough.

Vizer: Yeah, take care of your own. But, I mean, there was one time that I know on the carrier, it wasn't our department, but they had like, I think it was a scabies infestation. So, they ended launching probably three hundred mattresses overboard.

Brooks: Oh.

[00:20:00]

Vizer: Yeah, it was—not good. [laughs]

Brooks: Yeah. So, then you got—you said you got transferred off of the carrier.

Vizer: Right.

Brooks: What was next?

Vizer: Then I went to Twentynine Palms, California. And I was supposed to go on recruiter's assistance shortly thereafter I got there, because I think I was there about a month and had all my paperwork. So, I was going to go home and kind of help the recruiters out for a month. And then they told me that I couldn't go, and we ended up going to Somalia. Very soon thereafter, so—and that was hard to take. Oh, no, no, no. I apologize. Going back. Okinawa. We went to Okinawa first. So, I was supposed to go home and then they said I couldn't because I had to go to Okinawa. So, I think I was back in the States a month, and then I was on a plane going over to Okinawa, Japan for six months.

Brooks: And you hadn't had any leave?

Vizer: I had a week.

Brooks: Okay.

Vizer: Yeah, but I was supposed to be home for a month, not a week. So that was frustrating. Fought some depression in Japan, did a lot of heavy drinking, which is never good. But, yeah, it was a hard time being away.

Brooks: What was your assignment in Okinawa?

Vizer: Well, just infantry. Regular infantry unit. And the cool thing about that was I was on the soccer team over there. And our company put together a team, and they had a championship, or a tournament, and our company actually won the island-wide tournament. So, that was kind of cool.

Brooks: Yeah, that's neat. What position did you play?

Vizer: I was sweeper, fullback, you know, defense mainly, so—

Brooks: What do you think the hardest part about being away from home for that long was?

Vizer: I missed the holidays. Christmas was the hardest, because I love snow, being from Wisconsin. Family time was always—that was always the special thing. Easter was never big in our house [phone buzzing]. It was always Thanksgiving and Christmas; deer hunting, I've been a deer hunter all my life. So, it's always that third week in November, I should be in the woods, shouldn't be in Japan. So, that was the hard part. It was just mainly the holidays like that.

Brooks: Did you do anything for Thanksgiving or for Christmas while you were there?

Vizer: Yeah, we'd have, the cooks or whoever, they put on special meals, but it wasn't the same. And once I got to the fleet, in our rooms we could decorate; we could put up a small little Christmas tree and Christmas lights, which wasn't bad. But, I was single at the time and so I had no family besides mom and sister and—the other hard part was a lot of the guys were married, they had their wives who stayed on base. So some of them would invite us over for stuff like holidays, but—the church I went to out in Twentynine Palms they were nice, too. So, especially around the holidays, they'd really reach out to the guys. So—

Brooks: And how long were you in Okinawa then?

Vizer: Okinawa, that was six months. And then we come back, and I think we had about a month and a half. And I remember we were sitting around in the barracks duty, or the duty room, and watching the news of everything going on in Africa. I remember one guy saying, "Keep your seabags packed." And—because we were—and it's weird how the Marine Corps worked it at the time. I don't know if they still do, but whatever unit just comes off of deployment they're the next ready unit to go if something happens. Because, well, you should be all packed. [laughs] I don't know.

So, yeah, they told us December twelfth or fourteenth or something that, yeah, we're going to be going to Somalia. And so, I think the twenty—I

don't know when we landed, maybe the seventeenth or nineteenth. So, we had a couple of days, and we flew—I seem to remember it was Federal Express was on the side of the plane, but it was a commercial plane. And that was the first time I've ever flown around the world. And it was a long, long flight. I think we flew from Los Angeles to New York to Shannon, Ireland, then Cairo, Egypt, and then from Egypt we made it to Somalia.

Brooks: Wow.

Vizer: And they wouldn't let us off the plane in Cairo. I guess they didn't want four hundred something Marines with rifles walking around.

Brooks: I can imagine. [laughs]

Vizer: So—

Brooks: Then you get to Somalia. What were your first impressions?

Vizer: Well, we had seen the news reports of all the starving kids and bones and skin hanging off, and we didn't see any of that.

[00:24:58]

And I felt bad because the first Marines that landed there—there was an amphibious landing, so as you're coming to shore, all they met was media. And hundreds and hundreds of cameras and lights and it was a tactical nightmare for them to try—and they're making an assault on a beach loaded with media. You can't fight a war like that. And we didn't know it was a war; they didn't know what to expect, and we didn't either when we got there. I remember we landed at the airport and—so, we're kind of just walking around and the buildings were all bombed out and shot out and there's human feces everywhere. And there—I couldn't understand it, it seemed like they were animals to a point that in the corner every room of every house building we went into there's a pile of human excrement. It's like [bell ringing], “You can't go outside? I mean, why are you doing this in every single room?” And it was very frustrating. But it—the smell, I'll never forget the smell of just the whole place. And like I said, the people we saw initially, they weren't starving. They had no appearance of that.

Brooks: So, you're just talking about your first impressions of Somalia?

Vizer: Right. And trash everywhere. And the only thing I can compare that to is if—I've travelled to Mexico with my wife, and some of the rural areas out in Mexico are kind of similar. This is my first time being to a quote-unquote “Third World Country,” so I really didn't know what to expect.

You see stuff on the TV, and on the news, but until it's in your face and the scent is crawling into your nose you really can't really grasp what it is. So, yeah, we didn't—like I said, it took us awhile before we finally did get to see the starving people.

And that was mainly up north, a city called Baidoa, which the locals call "The city of death". And we didn't know why until we started getting closer to it. And that was hard to take. There were shallow graves all in the side of the road, and people were traveling to the city for food and they wouldn't make it. So then, their relatives or whoever's with them, would just kind of bury them as best they could right on the side of the road. So, you'd see feet sticking out, and arms, and legs, and decaying flesh, and the smell—it was pretty rotten. But once we got to Baidoa, and then we saw the starving people. And kids with the bellies sticking way out.

And I remember the worst—the hardest thing to get over was the flies over there. And, I mean I don't like flies. Who does to begin with? But these things, it seemed like their sole purpose and mission in life was to crawl up your nose. And they would—and a constant battle just to keep them from going up your nose. I don't know what their infatuation was, I don't even want to speculate. But it was hard [laughs] to fight the flies off. But eventually we got used to it.

We stayed at the airport for the first, I think the first three weeks, just to get acclimated to everything—our first two weeks. And it was—we were camped out or, we had cots with mosquito nets. And we didn't have anything else. So, I remember where we had our cots set up was right next to the landing strip. And so, when these—they had these C-5 planes—when they would land part of the wing would go over the top of us. That's how close we were. And it—what was funny was when they land, of course, they kick up a bunch of dust with the exhaust blowing through, and, depending on how people were sleeping, by when that plane landed people who were totally sleep, unconsciously, they would roll over in the opposite direction that the wind was blowing. And it was like, excuse me, it was beautiful to watch, because here you got forty, fifty guys simultaneously rolling over in their sleep. So, it was kind of cool. You don't see that every day.

Brooks: Yeah, that is neat.

Vizer: So, we did that, like I said, for about a week and a half. We went on a couple patrols in the city, just combat patrols. So, searching for weapons, *hub ma leedahay*, that's one saying I'll never forget. "Do you have any weapons?" is what that means. So, said that a lot. And it was difficult. There was one part in particular, we went to a house and I asked a lady, I went, "*Hub ma leedahay?*" And she said in perfect English, "Well, yes I

do.” So, I was floored, because it was the first Somali I heard speak English. And I said, “Well, where is it?” She’s like, “Well, here it’s buried. Just wait a second.” So, we kind of followed her. And the house was cluttered. I mean, I’ve seen episodes of *Hoarders* that would—that doesn’t compare to this house. So, she finally—back there throwing stuff around, and she pulls out this old rusted assault rifle from who knows how long.

[00:30:00]

So, I said, “Let me see it.” and I couldn’t even operate the action on it. So, I couldn’t even get it to move. I’m like, “This thing can’t fire!” She like—I’m like, “Why do you have this?” She’s like, “Well, for protection.” I said, “It don’t even work!” She’s like, “It doesn’t need to.” And she said, “Can I ask you a question?” I said, “Sure.” She said, “Isn’t it true in America your Second Amendment guarantees you the right to have guns?” I said [bell ringing], “Yes, that’s true.” And she said, “Well, why can’t I have one?” I said, “Well, this ain’t America.” [laughs] You need to get your own Congress and make up your own law. And so I looked at my buddy that was with me, I’m like, “What do you think?” And he asked her again, “What are you—how do you use this?” She’s like, “Well, when the robbers come by, I just show them it. They see a gun and they take off.” I looked down and I said, “Oh, let her keep it.” So, we let her keep it, but we didn’t follow the rules like we were supposed to. But I feel—I sleep better at night knowing that I let her keep that weapon.

Brooks: So, we were talking about Somalia. What was your understanding of kind of your role there as a Marine and the United States in general?

Vizer: Well, we were told that we were on a humanitarian mission. So, we were there to escort food to the starving people in the various parts of the country that needed it. And we were told that there were some warlords and different clans that were fighting each other, but they wouldn’t mess with us, because we’re the Marines and they would be afraid of us. So, we wouldn’t have to worry about any of that. We’d just have to simply make sure the food gets escorted to wherever it had to go. And that wasn’t the case.

We did see a lot of battles between different rival clans, and we saw the aftermath of those battles. But then, they started to get—becoming more aggressive. They couldn’t get the food that they would usually get, because previously the food drops would come in, the clans would all scramble to get the food and take it back to their little warehouses or storehouses. But once we had possession of the food, then there’s a problem. They couldn’t get their stuff anymore, and they were getting angry about it. And most of them were under the influence of a narcotic plant called Khat. And what it was, it’s like a root and they chew on it.

And they just chew on it, and then they'd start probably in the morning when they get up, and then by the time two or three o'clock in the afternoon would roll around they'd be on this almost frenzy from all these narcotics they've been chewing on all day. And then that would be enough encouragement for them to, "Hey, we're going to grab a rifle and we're going to go get some food." And so, yeah, we had to stop them, essentially.

Brooks: And how often did they happen?

Vizer: Not as often. Um, they seemed to lack the leadership to do coordinated attacks, so they would drive by and spray the windows with machine guns or launch a grenade over a wall here and there. But there wasn't really a coordinated attack against us. With one exception that I remember. But part of our mission was to go out and to search weapons, because, I guess, the military thought that, "Well, if we take the weapons away from us they can't shoot us." Well, same thing in America, you can take all the weapons away—people are still going to have guns, and the bad people are still going to do the bad things. So, we would go out and we'd get some intelligence that weapons are being stored in a certain area, so we'd go in with a heavy force, take down the compound, grab the weapons, take the pictures, float the media in, and then we'd leave.

I think it was January twenty—January sixth—I think it was January sixth. ABC News imbedded with us, and they had a crew. And I think we had six or seven trucks. And we went in to this compound and, it's hard to explain, but we went around this big curve and south and the compound was down there. And my job was to provide security with—it was me and Pedro Navarro [??], a good friend of mine, we were up by the front element providing frontal security. And so, we started taking sniper fire. And guys are shooting at us: pot shots, where we could see guys kind of running through the bushes with weapons. So we called it in and said, "Hey, we got guys, you know, snooping around." And they're like, "All right. Just hold fire. Don't return fire." And we're like, "Okay." So, we're sitting ducks now.

So, we kind of got down and they, thank god they couldn't shoot straight [laughs] otherwise I might not be here talking. But we noticed there was a large building where we had come from. And it was a two-story building, and lot of windows.

[00:34:57]

And it was probably, I want to say two hundred feet long, and a lot of windows. And we'd seen a lot of people in the windows with rifles. So, then we called that in, and then they also dragged in—there's a triple-A

gun, anti-aircraft gun, they dragged it into the middle of the road, which was where we were going to come up.

So, basically they were setting up an ambush. So, we called that in too. Our lieutenant, he called it into headquarters, and they said, “Well, there’s no good way to get back, if you don’t go that way. You’re just going to have to go through the ambush. Make sure you’re ready.” So, okay. So, we did a—we got a little get together, let everybody know, “Okay. This is what we’ve seen them doing. So, it’s going to be a heavy ambush from the right. We already know it.” So, we set up most of our guys on the right side of the truck, so when we did get into the ambush zone then we could just let loose with everything we had.” And—okay, so the first truck went around, and I was on the third truck back, and I had my squad in there. So, just about every—probably fifteen guys in my truck, I had all my squad—just about everybody on the right side of the truck facing the way the ambush was coming. I had one other guy on the back of the truck, rear security and watching the left flank. I was on the front towards the cab.

My good friend, Ryan Boltman[[?]], was next to me on the right side facing the ambush. And there was a distance of maybe a foot in between us. And so, we got around the building, we could see them all up there—I remember looking out towards the left flank, because that was my responsibility. I traded weapons with one of my squad members, Eddie Kuntz[[?]], and so he took my—my M-16 with a 203 grenade launcher on there, and he went up to the front Hummer, because they gave him an AT-4, which is a handheld rocket that he was going to blow up this triple-A piece that was blocking the path.

So, we got around there, he launched a rocket, and I remember one that last truck, I remember looking back, seeing the last truck got around that curve, so we’re all in a straight line. I remember looking up and seeing that building and all I saw was muzzle flashes. Just orange flashes, “*pop-pop-pop-pop-pop-pop-pop*”. And I remember looking up at that going, “H—holy crap!” So, I just immediately—I tucked my head, turned my back to the fire, looked in my sights, and I started looking for targets. Waiting, just waiting for one, two, three dozen rounds to start hitting me in the back of the head or the back. I knew—I thought for sure I was going to get shot that day. At that point in time, everybody started moving and two guys came out of the bushes on the left flank. I put twelve rounds through the both of them. They went down. The driver—I remember him screaming out, “You got them Vizer! You got them!”

And then we kept going. Proceeded through the ambush site. And the whole time all I heard was our guns just giving them hell. And so we got through. And I remember when we cleared the area, somebody yells, “Cease fire! Cease fire!” And it was just [inaudible][[?]], “Who’s hit?”

Anybody hit? Who's—somebody's *got* to be dead. We must have lost five, six, seven, with all that fire." Nobody. Nobody. And everybody's checking around, like, "I've got to be shot." I'm like, "Brian! What do I got? What do I got?" And he's like, "Look at that!" And there's a there's a round impacted right between me and Ryan. A foot. And I—physically—not physically, what's the word I'm looking for? Logistically, trajectory—I don't know—I can't understand how that bullet made it between the two of us from the angle of fire that they were firing. I don't get it. And that's when I knew God was really looking out for us. Because that's the only way we survived that day.

We had one guy—one truck went into the ditch. He was swerving around that triple-A piece, and, Marco Martinez—he is a short little guy, radioman—he jumped up the truck bounce and he sprained his ankle when we came back down. That was our only injury after that. Because we knew we were being ambushed, we sent another—platoon was on its way out to assist. After we got through we met them on the highland. [laughs] Just everybody—I can't—the feeling of joy, of elation, at, "Wow! What we just came through. We survived that? Wow." It's just—you—I can't—it's so happy, you know? Then they went through, and I think they counted seventy-seven confirmed killed on that particular ambush. So, yeah, we killed seventy-seven, we had no casualties, which was—that's remarkable, that's unbelievable.

[00:40:11]

And, so yeah, that was a wild day. And ABC News filmed it. We had to—and I can't find that tape to this day, but—we had to write in to get a copy, and I remember I sent the copy. I sent it to my mom, which I shouldn't have done, because she was—[laughs] she was worried about me being over. I'm like, "Mom, we're fine! "We're okay. We only got to worry about bugs and spiders and scorpions, you know." But—

Brooks: Scorpions?

Vizer: Scorpions. Lots of bugs over there. [laughs] That's the first time—second time I'd seen a black guy turn white [laughs]. We had the Lance corporal Matton[??] twice, I'd seen him get scared out of his mind. First was—we're all sleeping and we heard this scream, this terror, terror, and so we go running over there, and there's Matton[??] white as a ghost. And he's laying on his back looking up at his cot and hears this huge walking stick, about ten inches long, about three inches from his face. [laughs] So, we pulled up the mosquito bedding, took our knives out, and we killed it. And that was a one time there.

The second time, we were staying in, I can't remember the city, but we were right by a river. And the natives would not go out night, because of the alligator or crocodiles—I can't remember which one. But they're

afraid, because they would kill, probably, forty-five villagers a year in that area. So, they had reason to be scared. So, we had our—we're set up at this—some emir had a palace there, and he had these wild animals. So, the cages—there were still remnants of cage. The palace, this house, was all marble: floors, walls, everything. In its prime it must have been just beautiful. So, we stayed there. And, so, we had trip flares set up and different things around the perimeter, so we would know if somebody's trying to sneak in.

And so, I was—towards early in the morning, the sun was just coming up, and *poof* this trip flare goes up. So, I'm like, "Alright, Matton. Let's go check it out." So, we go out there, and he was scared to begin with because I'm like, "Matton, I wonder if it's an alligator? I wonder if it's going to get you, Matton." "Shut up, man! Shut up!" [laughs] And so, we started getting closer, and then I saw it. And what is was a Gila monster or a Monitor. I think it was a Monitor.

But it was—it's still about three feet off the ground with a big tall—you know, a big—I mean, it was big. And, so, and I saw where it was. And I was like, "Matton, we—let's go check over here." And then he caught a glimpse of something and he froze. And I was like, "Matton, what's up?" And he's like, "Man, there's a alligator over there!" I'm like, "No, come on, let's go check it out." He's like, "I'm not going over there!" [laughs] He took the safety off. I'm like, "Put that safe back on, now. You're not shooting that thing." "I'm going to shoot! I'm going to shoot!" But he was so scared about it—of a lizard. I'm like, "You're a Marine! Come on, now!" You know? And, so, he wouldn't go over there, and so I went over there and chased it away. But, yeah.

But scorpions, yeah, you mentioned scorpions. They were—we were at a checkpoint overlooking a road. It was me and—just a three-man team. And so, I remember going to sleep, and it was sleeping on the dessert of Africa, and it was warm. And so, we didn't have any cots or anything like that. We're just sleeping on the ground. So, I remember laying down on my back. I remember the next morning getting up, and I rolled over and as I rolled over I looked for right where I was sleeping under my neck was a scorpion about the size of a half-dollar. And it was florescent; you could see through it. And you could see all its organs and everything.

And I went, "Oh! That's cool!" So I killed it. And so, I show it to our Corpsman, because he was like the expert: he had the book on all indigenous plants and animals and creepy crawlies. And I said, "Doc! Check this out." He's like, "Where'd you get that?" I said, "I killed it." "Where'd you kill it?" I said, "Oh, it was sleeping under my neck." He's like, "What!" [laughs] It was like one of the third deadliest scorpions in the world, [laughs] and it's sleeping under my neck. But—

Brooks: Wow.

Vizer: Yeah, I was—it—I got other stories on sleeping too. We were doing an assault on General Aidid's compound, and we got into position about one o'clock in the morning, and they said, "Well—" [door opening] So, we got into position about one o'clock, and they said—and we were there, I think, five months, and it rained two times the whole time we were there. And this was the first time it rained—no, the second time. Second time it rained. And it was pouring buckets. And it was dark out, and they said, "Okay. We're going to go on twenty-five percent watch. So, everybody just crash out. Wherever you can find a spot."

[00:45:05]

So, we all—you couldn't see anything. [dog barking] We didn't have our night vision gear or nothing, so—or we didn't have it on. So, we just kind of dropped where we were at. And so, I remember waking up, the sun came up, they're like, "Okay. Wake up." So I woke up. I was lying on my back again, I rolled, and I felt something crawling on my neck. So, I reach back behind and I grab what was crawling on my neck, and I pulled out a handful of maggots. And I looked and I just happened to fall asleep on top of a dead camel covered in maggots. Not the thing you want to wake up to right before you're going to launch an assault. Yeah, that was kind of—that was probably the worst place I've ever slept in my life. [laughs]

Brooks: And how did the assault go?

Vizer: Uh, it went well. We were waiting for—probably one of the coolest things I've ever seen—they had some covert gunships that were hiding behind this, I don't know, this seven-story building. Because there was a triple-A gun, another one, that was the—one of the pilots had saw, a foreign-observer saw, and he's like, "Well, the choppers aren't going to open up till the ground troops take that out." So, not my squad, another squad, went in and they threw a white phosphorous grenade down the barrel and *poof*. So, that was it.

So, then we got to see these helicopters come up and they slowly, there's three of them, they just start slowly hovering up above the building. And they're there for about two minutes. And they were just kind of picking their targets out. And all of a sudden they just let loose with all these different hellfire missiles. And it was just like, *choo-choo-choo-choo-choo*. And things blowing up everywhere. And we're like, "Yeah!" It was pretty cool to see that, you know what I mean? I'd never seen any—and you see it on movies and stuff, but you just, you don't get a—you don't get—you can't appreciate it until you're seeing it right in front of your

face. And then, we launched our assault, and it was pretty non—I don't know, not much happened. Went in and they didn't really fight back that day. So, yeah, piece of cake.

Brooks: A little anti-climactic.

Vizer: Yeah. Yeah. That day. So.

Brooks: So, you said you want to talk about Botello?

Vizer: Tony Botello. That's Corporal Anthony Botello. He was in Second Squad. And he was one of the Marines we lost over there. It was done January 25th, 1993. And, um, I didn't know him well, but I knew him. And it's one of those things that when you're in the Marine Corps and you're in your unit, you have a brotherhood. So, you have a feeling of more like a cousin. You know, for guys that you didn't know. For guys in your unit, your squad, they're your brothers. And it's just that feeling of camaraderie. And you'll do anything for these guys. So, somebody that's not really in our platoon, different platoon, they're still family, but you're just kind of like, cousin family. So, when we got killed, it was a bad time for all of us. And everybody—I remember that night. Well, the night before. Let me go back up to the night before. We were doing weapon searches at night. Kind of going on patrols. Kind of like bait. They'd send us out as bait—hoping that somebody would shoot at us, and then we can engage and destroy them.

So, we went out, and I remember before we got started, there was a Humvee behind us with—they had a thermonuclear scoper. I remember that. So, we got about fifty, or about seventy-five yards out, and they called to us, they called to our squad leader. They said, "You guys, be advised. You got a puma to your left flank." There was a security halt. Everybody stops. "Say again?" "Be advised, you have a large black Puma to your left flank." "Come on! What are you talking about, Puma? What? What?" "You got a big cat to your left flank!" [laughs] Everybody was like, *whoosh*, we all switch over. Taking me in—the grass was waist high. And so, we're peaking out above the grass trying to find a Puma at night. I had a set of night vision goggles at that time. So, I grab it and I'm looking everywhere I can. We can't read heat signatures, so unless—we can't see it. And they're like, "He's getting closer. [laughs] He's getting closer!" So, we had the guys taking safeties off, "Can we fire! Request to fire!" They go, "No! You can't fire." And—but everybody is just scared of this big black cat that's stalking us. And they said he got about five meters from us. And then he finally just crawled away, but [laughs]—so, bad enough you got to worry about people trying to shoot you, and now you got these big black cats [laughs] trying to take you out.

Brooks: Yeah. [laughs]

Vizer: So, yeah. We went on patrol that night; it was uneventful. It was about a two and a half hour patrol. And it was weird—the cool thing about our technology, and this is twenty years ago, the technology. Just the night vision capabilities we had. Because we were in a staggered column, so there was probably about ten feet in between us as we're going on this patrol.

[00:50:00]

And I can't remember how many villagers unwillingly walked through our patrol, because they had no clue we were there. Because it was—I mean, we were out in the country in Africa and it's pitch black. You couldn't see your hand in front of your face. But it was so cool, just watching them through the goggles. Just, they're totally oblivious that there's this platoon of Marines that's walking right through your town.

Brooks: Wow.

Vizer: So, it was kind of cool. And then, unfortunately, that next night, Second Platoon went on the exact same patrol we went on, and they were hit hard in an ambush. And that night I was in the Company Command Post talking to my buddy Sal Sofuentes[?]. And I'm still friends with all these guys on Facebook and stuff. But I was talking to him, and we heard a call come in and—I can't remember exactly what they said at first, but we could hear the shooting in the background. And then we heard, "Request medical. We need medevac. We need medevac. Request medevac." And full on standby, and it's—I was like, "Oh, crap. What do I do?" Because, you know, we haven't had that before. And I don't usually work in the CP.

I was—I was just there talking with my buddy. And so, he got on the horn, he contacting battalion trying to request the medevac., and, "Standby. Standby." And so, you had to get—at that time we had to get approval from the battalion commander to get a medevac going. Okay? "Wake him up." So I woke him up, and he wouldn't authorize it. He's like, "Bring them back on a Hummer. He'll be—he'll make it." And, um, part of it was felt that he didn't want to wake up his officer buddies, because they were probably sleeping good. We don't want to wake those guys up, so they get their beauty sleep. And he died on the way back. He didn't make it.

So, we were pissed. And I remember we ran—I ran down to the Battalion Aid Station, and, "Doc. LaRue[?]" was working on him. Doing CPR when I saw him going into the room. And I'll never forget that. And they worked on him for another five minutes when they called it. But, yeah, he—and it was bad. And so, we were pissed. I mean, everybody in our whole

company was fighting mad. I mean, we wanted to go back out that night. We wanted to just slaughter anything and everything. And the—historically you hear things about—it's frowned upon to kill women and children in combat. But we're at that frame of mind where we would have killed any—women, children—I don't care. If you're part of this pain that you inflicted on us, we're about to magnify that by about twenty thousand on you guys. That was our mentality.

So, they [laughs]—and they knew that. So, they didn't let us go out on patrol for two weeks. They kept us lockdown, because we were still pissed. And then, since—after that happened, and there was just an edge that everybody had. It's like, "Okay. This is reality." We just lost one of ours, and it doesn't feel good. Every patrol you're looking just a little bit harder. Every building you're clearing you're thinking a little bit more about a better way to do it. So, it changed everybody that day. Just that one man going down changed the lives of a hundred and some guys in our unit. But, to this day.

Brooks: So, beside the initial reaction of just anger and violence, what did—did you, personally, have any types of coping mechanisms to kind of help you—?

Vizer: My faith was very strong over there. And I don't think I would have survived that whole time if it wasn't for my faith. I was leading Bible studies over there. It—under—well, we had—there were issues there too, because there was a Chaplain that we were supposed to be going through that. Me and several guys didn't agree with—he told us, "Well, you can't preach this and you can't preach that." And I'm like, "Well, my Bible says I can. So, I'm answering to God. I'm not answering to you." And so [laughs] we had some—we had some issues, but, yeah. It was a good time.

And music was important part of that for me. Gospel music, specifically the Statler Brothers. I would listen to it all the time and it would help me before I'd go out on patrols. I would have peace. And it's different now, because I, at that point in time, I was twenty-one, twenty-two years old, single, no responsibilities at all. So, if I die, who cares? You know, I'm going to heaven, what do I care? But, you know, I reflected on that recently, being a father of four and very happily married, and it's like, "Well, yeah God, I'm not afraid to die, but, if you want to give me another dozen or so more years down here, I'll take it." But my outlook's changed a little bit on that. And I'm nowhere near as aggressive [laughs] and reckless as I used to be. So, that's changed.

[00:55:11]

Brooks: Yeah. So, you were over there for five months?

Vizer: Right.

Brooks: Are there any other close calls that you experienced?

Vizer: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's—almost on a daily basis, it seemed. Just the fear of the unknown. We had one situation: we were driving around and we're taking sniper fire, and it was from this building, it's like a three—two story building. We saw the shot were coming from there. I'm like, "Okay." So, we stop. And right away we surrounded this building and it had walls. The walls were about ten feet high, and then they had—what they did over there was they'd lay mortar down, and they'd put broken glass into it. So, people couldn't just climb over. Excuse me. And then they had a—you know, one large main gate to get in and that thing was bolted and locked tight. So, like, "Okay. We got to get in and get this guy." And so, I told the guys, "All right two—all right, you guys lift me up and I'll go over. Give me—" "I got somebody's flag jacket[?]. So, two guys held their rifles out, so I stood on the rifle and they picked me up just so I could [laughs] get up there. And threw the flag jacket over, and I'm like, "Okay." And then, we had guys watching from the gated area kind of covering the courtyard area. So then, they threw me up—I was up—able enough to get my hands up there. So, I climbed up, and I jumped off the wall, and my knee popped. I was like, "Oh." [laughs] "This isn't good."

So, I'm kind of limping. I limped over to the gate, I open the gate up, and then everybody was able to get in. So, we had three squads. First squad went and they cleared the first floor of the building. And then second squad—my squad was third squad, so we were kind of covering the courtyard area. So, second squad went in and they went up the steps and cleared the second floor. Well, they didn't find him. So then, we had to go we couldn't figure out where this guy went. It was like, "Wait a minute, we got stairs going down." A guy—my squad leader at the time, Corporal Diaz, Miguel Diaz,?? he's like, "Okay, Vizer. Take your fire team down there and clear the basement." "Okay." And Kuntz, there was—I remember Kuntz and Navarro, and so I remember looking down at these steps. And there are steps going down and then a platform and then more steps to go down. And it was dark. There was no lights down there. And so, I went down that first level and I kind of cleared around the corner, and I could just kind of barely see that there was a room at the bottom on the opposite side. And there was a doorway. But the wall was made out of this stucco brick where you could see through it. But there was no lights in there.

So, I'm thinking, "If I'm a bad guy, that's where I'm going to be." And so, I'm like, "Kuntz, let's go. Clear—you go first, Navarro and I'll come last. And he refused. He said, "I'm not going down there." He said, "I'm

scared. I'm scared." I'm like, "Kuntz, you got to do it, man. You got to do it." He's like, "I'm scared, man. I know he's down there. I know he's down there." I'm like, "F it. Fine. I'll do it." I said, "You guys stay here. Wait till I stop shooting." And so, I went down that first landing, and I kind of seen where that doorway was. So, I dove down the steps, threw my rifle into the into the room, and I sprayed the room. And that—I just covered up after that, waiting to get shot, and Eddie and Pedro come down and they finish clearing out the room. And the guy was in that room, in the corner. So, that was close.

Brooks: Yeah.

Vizer: But, yeah. But just to see that. We got—I don't care who you are, Marines tough guys, they get scared. And they can freeze and lock up, and especially that fear of the unknown where you don't know. "Okay. He's got to be down here." You know he's there but what room is it? And then it ended up being, besides that room, there were two hallways, corridors, going down with numerous rooms on each side. So, he could have been in either one of them. Then we still had to clear those rooms, because we didn't know if there was more than one guy, and that's a scary thing to do when, especially when, you don't know if there's more. Somebody behind any corner. That was a tough one there.

Brooks: Did you have any interactions with troops from any other countries?

Vizer: [laughs] We had some Pakistanis that were kind of fun. These guys were different people. They have community baths. They had this big tub of water. And so, it's huge. I don't know how many gallons—like a normal sized swimming pool, but half the size of that. So, the officers would go in first and bath. All the top officers. Then the junior officers would go in and bath. And they worked their way down, so by the time the lowly private guys go in, it's just nasty water. Stuff floating in there. Oh, terrible.

[01:00:01]

One cool thing about it was they'd make their own food. They had their own hot food all the time. Like we had MRE.s, meals ready to eat, these guys had hot food. So, we went over, we were talking to them, like, "Hey! Can we have some?" And they're laughing at us like, "What?" You're like—and they're like, and they're touching their tongue like, *hot! hot!* And most of the guys in my squad are Mexican, and I'd been dabbling in some habaneros, so I figured I could handle anything they could come up with. What is Pakistan got? So, we went over there and it was like a meat curry type thing, and they had these like pita bread things, so they dumped the meat in there and they rolled it up and they eat it. So, they all gave us one, and right away we started eating it. And then we started crying. That

stuff was so hot! And they're laughing. [laughs] Yeah, that was funny.
[laughs]

And we almost had a national incident. Christmas Day, or Christmas Eve, we were stationed right next to the French Foreign Legion. And they're a very Catholic orientated society, and some of our guys knew that they had some ceremonial wine for their mass that they were planning on Christmas Eve. So, several Marines, I won't mention any names, decided to do a little reconnaissance mission, and relieve them of a couple of cases of said wine, which they did. And, yeah, we almost got in a big shootout with the [laughs] French Foreign Legion, because we stole their wine. [laughs]

Brooks: It got resolved?

Vizer: Yeah, we didn't give it back. [laughs] So, they decided that—we had them outnumbered anyway. They weren't ready to die over some wine. [laughs]

Brooks: Was there anything else about your time over there that you want to touch on before we kind of bring you back State side?

Vizer: Oh, there's so many things. I think it was humbling getting up into Baidoa. And in to the outer areas where the famine really was, and the nomads. We'd see camels, and herds of camels and—but just to see the nomads traveling and seeing them come into town and trying to be nice to them. And it was difficult. We had a—well, being a Christian, I'm not ashamed of my faith, and so we tried to witness, to the—and they were all Muslim over there. And we'd have kids come up, and they would tell us, they would ask us, "Are you Christian or Muslim?" And so, "I'm Christian." Well, then they'd spit on the ground and say, "Jesus, *pah*. Jesus, *pah*." And you'd just want to punch them [laughs] in the—but that's not very Christ like. So, "Here, do you want a Bible?" Just trying to talk to them about Jesus. And it was difficult, but there was a general hate of us just because of our religion.

And what's sad is these people that we were fighting with initially, have morphed into the enemy we have today, which is ISIS. Because a lot of the ISIS people have come from Somalia. So, it kind of makes me sad a little bit that the guys we were fighting are now the guys that we're still fighting. So, I don't know. I'd want to—I'd love to go back. If I wasn't married, there's a story in the news right now about that one guy from Wisconsin who—Gile, in fact, not too far from here, where he went—his brother was killed several years ago, so he was in the Army before, and when he got out he—he's went back twice to fight with the militia fighters. To get revenge for his brother, and there's a lot of Marines I know that are—are out, but it wouldn't take much, it would just take one guy just to say, "We're going to team together, and we're going back."

And it would be no problem getting two hundred guys in, probably, two hours. That would be willing to just hop on a plane and go back. So, yeah, it's just that they're fighting for each other, and that brotherhood. And that's just something that—it's hard to explain to people.

And the Marines are a prideful group to begin with, and I think there's a level of arrogance with that. We think that we're the world's best. And then I know the Army has got some great guys, and I know they—a lot of their guys think we're the best. But I think you have to have that arrogance. I mean I think it's critical, especially when you get in to battlefield situations. That—to think, "Yeah!" If you think that you're not very good, yeah you're going to die. You probably will. But, I think I'm proud of what I've done.

Brooks: That's good. Yeah, that's the whole, "Once a Marine, always a Marine."

Vizer: Right. I only got one regret of every—my whole time in. Everything I've done in the whole four years there's only one thing I ever regret doing. And that is going to SERE school, which was Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape. It's a POW school. [01:05:11] And that was the hardest thing I've ever done. Being a POW for two weeks in a POW camp, it wasn't good.

Brooks: When was that?

Vizer: When I was on sea duty. It was a special training. I could either go to jump school—they had some different openings for different schools, and one was—jump school was open or else SERE school, and I didn't feel like jumping out of a perfectly good airplane. So, I figured, "Oh, I'll go be—got to POW school. Might learn something." But, yeah, it was hard.

Brooks: So, it's basically training you about what to do if you are ever a prisoner of war?

Vizer: How to survive in just about any environment. How to evade capture, how to resist interrogation techniques, and how to escape. But, yeah, eventually, because I think we were navigating out—my partner was a Navy SEAL, and he was good to go. Knew his stuff. So, we navigated, made it the whole two weeks without getting caught, and then part of the rules are, if you make that two week, then they blow these air horns and you have to turn yourself in, because you have to spend time in the POW camp.

So, then we were in the POW camp, and what was scary was on our orders, it never had how long it was going to last. They said the school

could last from two months to a year. It all depends on the students. So, I'm thinking, "Okay. I'm a month and a half into this. And, okay, I could be looking at nine months of being in this POW camp." Psychologically it's devastating. And then, just being in the camp and getting tortured and being water boarded. I don't why everybody makes such a big deal. Yeah, it sucks, but [laughs] I've been through worse things. [laughs] But, yeah, that was the hardest thing I ever had to do.

Brooks: Do you think it was beneficial in any way? Or do you think it would have been better if—

Vizer: Hindsight, no. Because—one thing they did was at night, they would play screaming babies nonstop through speakers, loudspeakers. So, that's all you listen to all night long, all night long. And that became an issue when I became a parent. My first two kids we were in bed with them and, we had a set of twins, and I don't know if I flashed back, but I would get so angry and upset at the screaming. I just couldn't handle it. And so, that really affected me. But just the—yeah, I wouldn't do it again—I wouldn't do that again. I would've jumped out of airplanes. Without a chute.
[laughs]

Brooks: Well, now you know.

Vizer: [laughs] Yeah.

Brooks: So, how long did you end up being there?

Vizer: Two weeks.

Brooks: Two weeks. So, it was two months total then or?

Vizer: I—to be honest with you, I don't—there was—three weeks or so of classroom training before we went there, so maybe a month, two months maybe? I can't—

Brooks: Okay. Yeah.

Vizer: A lot of that's supposed to be classified or whatever.

Brooks: Sure. Yeah, and I'm sure they kind of want a bit of a sense of time—it's probably part of the experience. I would expect.

Vizer: Yeah.

Brooks: And so that was in your—like the first half of your service? Right? You said it was while you were on sea duty, so.

Vizer: Right. Yeah.

Brooks: Okay. So, tell me about coming home from Somalia. When did you guys get the orders to head back to the States?

Vizer: That was in May of ninety-three, and I was supposed to get out in June. So, it was good timing. And they tried to get me to reenlist. I think it was in February. They reenlistment officer was like, "Why, over here! [??]" [laughs] Yeah, I'm like, "Yeah, I'm all in favor of reenlisting." I was. They said, "But it's got—," want to stay in the infantry. It's like, "Well, we can't do that." "What do you mean you can't do that?" He was like, "We can't let you reenlist in the infantry." He said, "We've got all these other openings open." He said, "With your test scores, we can get you into S2 or, you know, intelligence or S4," whatever it was." And I'm like, "No. I'm not leaving these guys. I'll get out, but I'm not going to stay in the Marine Corps and do anything else but infantry."

And that was all due to, at the time—I blame Clinton, President Clinton, because he had all the cutbacks on the military. That's what I was told. It was because of presidential cutbacks to the military. So, I'll blame him. So, yeah, I got out. And it was hard. It was hard. Coming back was—coming back was hard. I mean I—when we—the best homecoming I ever had was on the carrier when we came back from the Persian Gulf War. Because we pulled into San Diego and the Marines were all—on the carriers when they come back from deployments, they man the flight deck, the top of the flight deck, all the sailors and the Marines usually are in the bow on the top. A position of honor. But then we got to—when we got to San Diego, we got to position ourselves on one of the aircraft elevators. So, when we got alongside the dock, they dropped the elevator down. We kind of rolled the elevator down. And the loudspeakers were playing "Proud to be an American." And so you couldn't really see from where my position was on the backside. But when that elevator started coming down, you could see there was about ten thousand people on the dock. All cheering, waving flags, and there wasn't a dry eye in the place. It was just a beautiful thing.

[01:10:25]

And then coming back from Somalia was a little bit different. And those are kind of sad, because I didn't have anybody. Even in San Diego, there's nobody on the dock waiting for me. So, it's like, "Ah." And coming back from Somalia was the same thing. People were waving all along the side of the road coming back from the airport. Guys were throwing cases of beer onto the buses and they're all—once we got back it was just, "All right. See you guys on Monday." You know, enjoy your time off.

Brooks: Where did you land?

Vizer: Los Angeles again. Yeah.

Brooks: Okay.

Vizer: I remember we got—when we landed—oh, this is a funny story. We're flying back and, same thing, we flew from Mogadishu to Cairo, Egypt, to Shannon, Ireland, and then we had to refuel. And we landed at like 3:00 in the morning, and all the bars in the airport were closed. And so, somebody talked to somebody and they call all the people back, so they decided to open up all these bars for all the Marines. So we're—I mean we hadn't drank in, you know, five months, so it didn't take much, and Irish beer and whisky. And so, everybody's mostly schnoekered up about the time we get on the plane.

And so, we take off from Shannon, Ireland and everybody's feeling good. And then we hit an air pocket. And the captain said the plane dropped seven hundred feet. And we were up on the roof. People who weren't buckled—I mean, so here we just survived five months getting shot at just about every day, and now we're going to die in a plane crash on the way home. So that didn't happen, but we landed—I remember landing in New York, and just everybody in that dirty, nasty airport got to our knees and kissed the ground. We were just glad to be back in America. So—

Brooks: And then you had to fly all the way back to LA.

Vizer: Fly all the way—yeah, and then fly back to Los Angeles, so, yeah.

Brooks: And then, did you get a chance to take leave? Or you had to—

Vizer: Then I went on—well, I didn't go home, because I was taking terminal leave. I had some leave built up, so essentially I was going to be discharged from the Marine Corps, but I was going to stay there. And I stayed there for three weeks, because I had another friend of mine from home that was getting out in three weeks. So, we were both going to drive back home together, so.

Brooks: So, what were your—did you have any plans for what you were going to do when you got out?

Vizer: I was going to get married. I had a fiancée at the time, and—from down in Georgia. One of my buddies from sea duty, I got involved with his cousin. So, went out and seen her a couple of times, and it was never going to work. But yeah, I had no plans. I mean, I figured I'd get a job and just start

catching up to all my peers. I was—the way I looked at it I was four years behind everybody, so I had to work hard, so.

Brooks: Well, tell me a little bit about your discharge. Was there any type of ceremony or just paperwork signing?

Vizer: Just paperwork. Yeah, there wasn't—the cool thing about it was my commanding officer sent a letter home to my mom thanking her for my service and for being the mother of a Marine, which is real nice. And we still got that letter. I just saw it a couple weeks ago. So, it's kind of cool.

Brooks: That's really nice.

Vizer: Yeah.

Brooks: Yeah. Well, were—what were your feelings when you're leaving and starting to transition?

Vizer: Bittersweet. You know, I was glad to get out just sick of the games I'd—sick of people telling me what to do and sick of shaving. [laughs] And I just wanted to just do my own thing. But then, once I was off base, and then couple week later then it starts setting in: you start missing your buddies and joking around, and it's just a sense of loss, I guess. But then after a while, ten years go by, and then you start really missing them. Anniversaries come up like Veterans Day big—was big. The day Tony got killed is always a big day for me. The day of our ambush. Just certain days pop out and you really start to think about what happened. And several years ago, before Facebook really took off I—we never had contact with anybody. Because when you got out back twenty years ago, nobody had cell phones. You might have scribbled somebody's phone number, address down on a piece of paper, but that probably got washed in a pair of blue jeans sometime. So you lost all those contacts.

[01:15:00]

And then, Facebook comes around, and we started finding each other. And we had a couple reunions now, the unit. And what was real special was on the twenty-year anniversary of Tony getting killed, we all met out in Los Vegas, and we flew his parents out. And it was very emotional. Excellent, excellent time though. And in this seeing these guys after twenty years, and just—you just start talking like it was yesterday. How quick you can just [snaps] go back in time. And, of course, we don't look the same, but—some of them don't even act the same. But some guys do. But just the friendships that we created in this—that short time, it's—they'll never be broken. Just a brotherhood.

Brooks: Did you join any official organizations?

Vizer: I'm in the VFW. Lifetime member. That's the only one I've joined right now. So, and I'd be more involved, but being a father of four young girls, it's—my time is dedicated to them. And church, I'm heavily involved with that. So, that keeps me pretty busy.

Brooks: How do you feel, as a veteran, of some lesser talked about wars, lesser known conflicts? How do you feel, generally, your reception has been to in the public?

Vizer: I don't think we get the respect we deserve. Most people look at it as a, "Oh, it was a humanitarian mission." Well, if it's a humanitarian mission then why did I get the combat action ribbon? Why do several of my friends have Purple Hearts if it was just a humanitarian mission? So, and granted, we didn't have the number of kills as they would anywhere else, but I don't know. When you're going on combat patrols, and you get shot at, and if you're killing people, it tells me that it's a pretty serious situation.

Not that I personally need any—anything from it. I don't. I like talking about it. It just—I think it's therapeutic, it helps me, and people find it interesting. I love listening to Vietnam guys tell stories. World War II guys—my ma used to be a bartender, and so I'd go in and there's Wally and Steve. One guy was in the Navy, one was in the Marine Corps. He actually fought in Iwo Jima. And so, I'd listen to these old farts just pick on each other, rattle back and forth, and it was enjoyable. And I—you can't get a better education than listening to a couple old veterans just talk about the old days and how it used to be. So, that's why I think this is such a great thing here that you're doing, and that the museum's doing, because all those people are going to take the time to sit and listen to what other veterans have to say.

Brooks: Yeah. Tell me a little bit about the play you mentioned. You wrote a play about your experience.

Vizer: Oh. [laughs] Yeah, we did a play called *A Marine's Time in Africa*. And it was a collection of most of the stories I talked about today. And we had some younger members of our church, a lot of the guys, they kind of acted them out. And the whole purpose of it was to express my faith and how I believe it helped keep me alive while I was over there. And it was just a special time. And to honor Tony Botello, he was discussed in that as well, and—and just how you can use some principals of Christianity to get through any situation. It doesn't have to necessarily be combat. You know, any of life's struggles. You know, having a strong faith, in my opinion, can help.

Brooks: And what reaction did you get?

Vizer: It was well received in the community. A lot of people turned out. And it seems a lot of people who don't know military [bell ringing] get—they seem to be enamored—

Brooks: [phone ring] Pause?

Vizer: Yep. Yeah, so I think a lot of, like the younger people, you know, they've seen the movies on TV of different stuff, and then to hear a veteran tell the stories. A lot of my stuff I try to find the humor in different things. So, a lot of my—the funny things that happened over there is what I try to really impress upon people at the—yeah, I mean I wasn't in war per se, but there was some elements of combat in it. But there's still a lot of funny things that happened, so I think it's important that you don't dwell on all the negatives of everything. And there are some positives that we should focus on.

Brooks: What are some of the things—well, I'll start with the how. How much about your service do your daughters know?

Vizer: Quite a lot. I don't hold nothing back from them. I don't. I know there's veterans out there who don't—they don't feel comfortable talking about it. Me, I find comfort in sharing my experiences. I get sad during times, but we all get sad about different things.

[01:20:08]

My daughters are quite young yet. I have a ten-year-old, an eight-year-old, and two six-year-olds. So a lot of them are young. I know one of my youngest twins, she enjoys watching war movies with Daddy, [laughs] which is kind of scary, because when people are getting blown away I start laughing, and she'll just start laughing, too. So, I might be creating a monster. [laughs] I don't know. But I—I've had discussions about death and dying and that war isn't fun, and war isn't something to be glamorized, but it's a part of life. And there's been wars since the beginning of time, and it's an unnecessary—or sometimes necessary thing that has to happen. But we just have to deal with it.

Brooks: So, how did you end up here in Green Bay?

Vizer: Well, I worked out in Milwaukee for this company, and then up—this position became available, and my boss asked me if I would move up to Green Bay, and I said, "Yeah!" [laughs] I got—my family bought some land up in Marinette County back in 1969, so I've been coming up this

way my whole life. Spending most—a lot of my summers up in the Northwoods of Wisconsin. So, it wasn't a hard decision for me to make, and my wife was fully behind it, a hundred percent. So, that was a big help.

Brooks: So, you've just always been a Wisconsin guy all the way?

Vizer: Yep! Pretty much. Packer fan from birth, so.

Brooks: [laughs] What, if anything, do you miss about the military?

Vizer: I miss shooting guns. [laughs] Shooting big machineguns, that was always fun. But I think the biggest thing I miss is the friends, the camaraderie. Last year—two years ago we drove out to California and back. Camping the whole way. And went back to Twentynine Palms, California. And—and met my buddy Doc Shannon up there, who still works on the base. He's retired from the Navy now, but he's a civilian contractor. And so, he took me around, gave me a tour of the base, and it was very surreal. It—it's like a lot of things had changed in twenty years, but a lot of things were still the same. And it just felt good to be there. But then I still—I felt out of place.

And I remember when I was waiting to get in, because you got to go through all these checkpoints and show proof of insurance, and you got to have a sponsor to get on base. And so, we were going through all this red tape, and I was talking to a couple of Marines at the main gate, and I was wearing a Marines veteran hat and they were looking at me like I'm crazy. "Oh, he's one of those crazy vet guys." So I started talking to them. I'm like, "How are you guys doing?" They're like, "Oh, all right. You know." I'm like, "You guys loving this Marine Corps?" They're like, "No, this sucks." Kind of typical lance corporal E3 behavior at the time. I said, "Someday you're going to miss this." They're like, "No way in hell. I'll never miss this. I'll never miss this base." "I'm telling you. Twenty years ago I was here saying the same thing." I said, "You're going to look back." I said, "When you guys get out, get phone numbers, keep all your contact information of everybody you like, because you're going to miss these guys." "Yeah, whatever. Whatever." I'm like, "You stupid kids." [laughs] So, it just—it's kind of neat looking back now that I'm the old guy. When I was growing up I'd look up to my dad's friends and all the Vietnam guys, and those were the heroes. Those were—those were the men. Those were the veterans. You know, carrying the flags in the parades. Those are the guys I admired and looked up to. And now I'm in that position where, hopefully, there's younger people looking up to me in that same way. And it's a lot of responsibility, but I'm willing to accept that.

Brooks: Is there anything that you would tell someone who hasn't made the

decision yet, but is thinking about going into the service? Any—

Vizer: My nephews, in fact—one of my nephews is really thinking hard about it, but he's—he's not motivated correctly. He wants to be a Navy SEAL just because he saw the movies, and wants to be the next Chris Kyle. And it's like, it's not all about the glory. It's—and the same thing. And one other story I got too, real quick if I can go back.

Brooks: Sure.

Vizer: Before I went in one of my dad's best friends was Vernon Stoltz[??] who was a tech sergeant in the United States Air Force and the Reserves. And I told him, I said, Bob, he's like, "What are you doing in the Marines?" He said, "You're smart. You should join the Air Force." I'm like, "No, I ain't going to be no fly boy." And he's like, "Why are joining?" I'm like, "Bob, I want to kill people." He's like, "You don't know what the hell you're talking about. You're stupid." And I'm like, "No! I do. I do." He's like—and he's like, "I'm telling you. When you get back we're going to talk."

[01:25:01]

So, long story short, I'd done my time, and I went over to Bob's house. And I remember walking in the door and I looked at him in the eye, and he looked at me in the eye and we knew. [crying] And I didn't know what I was talking about when I was a smart aleck seventeen-year-old kid. So, he gave me a hug and we hugged for probably, it seemed like a half hour, but it was probably two minutes. And we pulled away from each other, he's like, "I told you! You dumb son-of-a—" I'm like, "Yeah, you're right." But right away he could—you can just see it in a person's eyes, and he could see it in mine. He knew what I'd been through just by looking at me. So, that was humbling. But for my nephew to try and tell him the same thing that this should be—yeah, you're a good swimmer and yeah, you're physically fit, but I trained with SEALs. [laughs] I mean you got to—that's—they're a special breed. I don't have what it takes to be a SEAL. There's no way I could do it. Mentally, probably, but I never was a good swimmer. [laughs] But just the whole pie. He's seeing a sliver of the crust of what he think he wants to do, and he doesn't understand there's a lot more to it. And there's no guarantee of anything. I don't care what branch you join, what you're trying to do, there's no guarantee. You might fail out of that school, and then what? Then you're stuck doing four years of something you didn't want to do.

And I mean, if my kids want to join I don't—as long as they stay away from the infantry side—I mean, right now, there's not a log of women in combat and I only have daughters right now. I wouldn't want them to serve in a combat role. But, unless, they're, like, fighter pilots or

something like that, but I wouldn't want them to be on the ground. I just, knowing what I've been through—I mean I wouldn't even want my sons to really go through that. But it's one of those things if the needs be—I mean, if our country is in that bad of shape or if they need troops so bad that they need my daughters to take up arms to fight for this country, then yeah you go ahead, this country is more important, so.

Brooks: Well, that kind of exhausts all of the questions I have. And I—and you've already kind of answered a lot my kind of wrapping-up questions, which is always good when you can answer them without me even asking them. Is there anything else that you want to talk about? Anything that we haven't addressed or—and you can feel free to go backwards and—if there's any stories we missed.

Vizer: No, I mean there are a million things I could think of, but I don't know what's interesting. Yeah, I don't know. It's probably pretty good what I've got, so.

Brooks: Yeah! Yeah, I mean, one of the questions we usually ask at the end of the interview is kind of why you thought it was important to do this interview. And you kind of talked about that a little bit, about hearing the World War II stories and the Vietnam era, and now it's your turn. Is there anything else that you have to say about kind of sharing your story with the museum and kind of letting it live on?

Vizer: I think it's—and I'm glad I found out about this. I really am. There was some anxiety. What are they going to ask? What do I got to talk about? But—and some people aren't comfortable speaking. I'm—I'm not one of those people. [laughs] I do some preaching at our church from time to time, so it's not—it's not difficult for me to speak about what's on my mind. And I'm not ashamed of anything that I've really done, pretty much. Maybe a couple of things, but, yeah, there's a few things, [laughs] but we won't talk about that. Yeah, I always look at it as, is this a story that my mother would be interested in hearing? And, if not, you should probably be ashamed of it." [laughs] So, I'll leave those out.

But, I think, part of—one thing I did want to mention, is the military isn't what a lot of people think it is. I know at our church, they have this view of the Marine Corps as the way it's advertised. The few, the proud, you know? They're righteous, and this and that, and if they ever spent a weekend on a US Marine Corps infantry base and sees what happens, and the lifestyle that a lot of these guys lead, it's not very becoming, in my opinion. I take pride in the Marines, and as far as their leadership, they have a very strong leadership program, and I've modeled my life and my career off of those leadership principals. And I think a lot of that goes out the window on the weekends.

[01:30:00]

But there comes a point in a person's life where you just have to grow up. And I think a lot of the younger Marines, they're not really—they haven't matured enough. And they will. I think everybody goes through those growing stages. But I think people just need to be careful how they idolize a certain group of people and get all the facts first, because that super righteous person you think is doing this is actually not as nice as you think he is. If that makes any sense.

Brooks: Sure. Yeah. Well, I think that people can learn from you and your experiences, and that's the goal of a lot of these interviews, is that so people can hear it from that first-person resource, and hear the real story.

Vizer: Yep.

Brooks: Yeah. Okay, I'm going to turn the recorders off now. If that's okay.

Vizer: Yeah.

Brooks: All right. Thank you.

[01:30:55] [End of Interview]