

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
FELICITUS FERINGTON
Nurse, Army, Vietnam War
2011

OH
1440

**OH
1440**

Ferrington, Felicitus, (1937-). Oral History Interview, 2011.

Approximate length: 1 hour 30 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, Felicitus Ferrington, a native of Buffalo, New York, recounts her experiences as a nurse in the Army during the Vietnam War with the Army 93rd Evacuation Hospital in the Republic of Vietnam. Ferrington enlisted in the Army in the mid 1960's. Ferrington had requested to go to Vietnam, and was stationed at the Long Binh outpost. She recounts her experiences treating soldiers who were wounded in combat, and the experiences she had as a woman in the armed services. She also discusses the reception she and fellow soldiers received when they returned home. After returning home, Ferrington remained in active duty training nurses, and then in the reserves until she retired in 1991.

Biographical Sketch:

Ferrington (1937-) served at the the Army 93rd Evacuation Hospital in the Republic of Vietnam. She was involved in the Vietnam War from 1966-1967 .

Archivist's 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 Richard F. Berry,2011.

Transcribed by Audio Transcription Center, 2016.

Reviewed by Robert Brito, 2017.

Abstract written by Robert Brito, 2017.

Interview Transcript:

[Beginning of Ferington.OH1440_file1]

Berry: This is an oral history interview with Felicitus Ferington, nicknamed Fay, who served with the 93rd Evacuation Hospital in the Republic of Vietnam from October '66 through October 1967 and then went on to serve both in active duty and with the reserve, retiring from the United States Army in 1991. This interview is being conducted at the Wisconsin Veteran's Museum at 30 West Mifflin Street, Madison, Wisconsin on March 8, 2011. The interviewer is Richard F. Berry. Fay, can you tell me briefly about your background of life circumstances before you entered the military service?

Ferington: Yeah. I suppose I could start with mundane--for the stuff like I was born in Buffalo, New York in 1937 and lived most of my childhood on a farm. Born in the city, lived on the farm--grew up on the farm. Always wanted to be a nurse. My mother had six boys and me and she taught me, from the time I could speak, that I wanted to be a nurse. That's what [laughs] she taught me. So, you know, um--I don't know if there's anything special there. It just--I went to a little county--community--hospital to get my nursing preparation and I found out that there was a university program in Buffalo. I knew I didn't know anything about that because we were fairly homebodies here in the country, in the farm, being busy and we didn't get around much. Nobody in our family ever went to college or anything. So, when I found out about that, I transferred to that program and I got some loans and stuff and graduated in sixty--1960 I guess it was, you know?

Berry: From nursing school?

Ferington: From nursing school at the University of Buffalo and thought I would set out and see the world and I got as far as Michigan--Ann Arbor--and really impressed with being in a big town school because now I was really going to see some football and, you know, having grown up with brothers, I was--you know, I was really into sports. And Michigan had five terrible years, but, anyway, I got my master's while I was there in Psychiatric Nursing and I hadn't planned to do it so--

Berry: This was at Michigan State or--

Ferington: University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. I hadn't planned to do it so rapidly. I did--I did work with--before I left for Michigan, I worked for about nine months in Buffalo with head, neck, and neuro-surgery cancer patients and I wanted to be well-grounded, you know? So--because I knew I was going to go into psych, but I wanted to know what I was doing otherwise. And when I got out to Michigan, they started the master's program and I

thought, Well, that's fortuitous and I would just jump in, you know? And I did. And I worked there at the Medical Center, at their psychiatric units, in addition to going to school and finished in '63, took a job with the state hospital system working with emotionally disturbed children.

And, at the time, there was a huge thing in medicine, a community mental health movement, where we were going to switch treatment--the treatment base--for the mentally ill largely to community facilities and try to get rid of all of the state hospitals and so forth. And, of course, we did and, of course, we didn't provide--the funding to provide enough services for the people in the communities. So, working--the program I worked with, with emotionally disturbed children, was to be part of that mental health movement. So, I worked there for about three-and-a-half years at an administrative role mostly, although I did see patients. And I eventually got to the point where I didn't see much future in what they were talking about and I was really, really--you know how a--a new graduate, you're so enthusiastic and everything.

[00:05:18]

Berry: Sure. Idealistic.

Ferington: Oh, yeah. And, you know, the community mental movement--that was going to be it and I'll tell you, you know, just on a sideline is probably the part of the country that did best in instituting that program was Dane County interestingly enough and probably still has some of the best outpatient services for--

Berry: Did you go from there, then, into military service?

Ferington: Yup. Yup.

Berry: How did you get hooked up with the military?

Ferington: Well, they were having teachings against the war at the university.

Berry: This would be early sixties?

Ferington: This would be--at this point, this would be '65, '66. And I was very concerned about the war. My brother had been in the infantry in Korea and, of course, I was old enough to remember many, many things about World War II. Finally, I thought--I couldn't be as philosophical about it as some people were and, finally, I thought, Well, I'll just go over there and I'm a nurse. I can help. And politically, maybe I'll learn or maybe I won't, but I'll go over there and--

Berry: Did you speak to a recruiter, then, or how did you get hooked up with military service?

Ferington: Yeah. I went in to see a recruiter in Detroit and I asked to go to Vietnam and they said they would oblige me. [laughs] And that's where I went for my first assignment.

Berry: What sort of training did you have right after you entered the U.S. Army?

Ferington: Well, we had what they called "basic", which would be nothing similar to what combatants call basic. It was mostly--

Berry: Where was that located?

Ferington: Oh, that was located in Fort Sam Houston in Texas, which is the home of the medical department. And we had six weeks of basic. Probably the first week was, you know, the niceties--how to wear your uniform and so forth. And we spent quite a bit of time on the nature and the mission of the Army as a huge, whole organization and, then, broke it own down in succeeding week on down into theater of operations and evacuation channels and things like that that pertained to Vietnam. And then, we had a couple of brief field exercises and fired a .45, I guess. No training as far as anything else military. We--

Berry: Did they intend for you to continue in the mental health field as your service in--

Ferington: Well, I didn't wish to. I wanted to work with surgical casualties. We did have a little bit of orientation. They had a fake village set up--a fake Vietnam village and they showed us different things and talked about some of the ways that the VC [Viet Cong] fought their war and--

Berry: Training, also, in surgical nursing then at Fort Sam Houston?

Ferington: No. I had my undergrad basic preparation in the operating room and in surgical nursing. And then, as I say, I had the nine months as a graduate with really very, very sick people--massive surgery and so forth. So, I felt--and it had only been about five years--so, I felt, you know, adequate.

Berry: Well-qualified.

Ferington: Yeah, yeah.

Berry: And how long a timespan was your training there at Fort Sam Houston?

Ferington: It was just six weeks.

Berry: Six weeks. And you went from there to Vietnam?

Ferington: Mm-hmm. Yup.

Berry: Do you have any memorable thoughts about instructors or friends you made at basic?

Ferington: Oh, yeah. We were very close. You know, and there were four hundred of us in the four platoons in the nurse corps basic and we had related medical field basic classes that were there at the same time. So, we got to know some of those folks of course, you know, and made friends and went down to Corpus Christi a couple times and partied all night--

[00:10:08]

Berry: Oh, wonderful. And you still interact with those friends at all that you made then?

Ferington: I was until a few years ago. I kind of lost track of a couple of them. One of them--one of them was killed in Vietnam--one of the guys that we used to hang out with. And it was--everybody was going to Vietnam, of course, so there were three of us out of that basic class that went and two of the three of us were fighting together then at the 93rd. But the 93rd was about a mile or so from the replacement center. So, I got to see a lot of my class--my basic--

Berry: So, you went--you went directly from Fort Sam Houston to the 93rd Evacuation Hospital in Long Binh it says.

Ferington: Yeah, yeah.

Berry: Okay. How did it seem when you arrived there? Were you welcomed by your coworkers and so forth when you arrived?

Ferington: Good question. [coughs] We were welcomed by the men at the 90th Replacement Center, and they called the hospital to see if we could stay there for the weekend and party with them before we went to the 93rd, and they said yes. And I had my guitar with me, so we partied all weekend. Rained--it rained for seven days. So, they took care of some of my civilian clothes that I had brought along. It was kind of--it was fun. The guitar was always, you know, a nice icebreaker and, then, we went to the 93rd and--Monday morning--and I was welcomed by the Chief Nurse. She spoke very softly. She didn't meet my eyes. She looked down at the floor most of the time. As a parting comment after we finished our welcome conversation with her, she said, "I want you to stay in the quarters today

because we think some of the Mama-sans are going to plant explosives. So, I thought, "Well." [laughs] So, I went in and I spent the whole day there and I watched them, you know? And they didn't plant any explosives that I know of, but that was quite an introduction and she was quite an introduction. My major impression was she was depressed. We were the first replacements the hospital received. They had come over in--

Berry: As a unit?

Ferington: Yeah, as a unit a year before. And they had had, you know the usual difficulties that being the first unit in any place has--all the mud, you know?

Berry: Were you assigned a mentor that would kind of show you the ropes or--

Ferington: No, no.

Berry: What were your duties when you first arrived?

Ferington: I was--no--in evac. You know about evac hospitals?

Berry: I know just a little bit about them.

Ferington: Okay. We--I was a head nurse and an evac hospital has about six of these kinds of units that are x-shaped and they had seventy-two meds in each one of the six units. And one of those x-shaped units was the operating room and one was lab and so forth and so forth. And we had one unit that was for medical casualties--malaria, et cetera.

Berry: Did you have a helipad there that--

Ferington: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Berry: Yup. And did you receive the patients both my helicopter and by vehicle and--

Ferington: Yes, we did. Mostly by helicopter though. Sometimes, the slick would bring in their own wounded, but most of the time it was dustoff. If you saw this coming in, you knew you were in for trouble and shut up [??], you know?

Berry: And then, did you have, like, a triage unit that would meet the aircraft and--
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[00:15:00]

Ferington: Yes. The medics would go out and--in this instance, it was just a couple of guys. But if you had fifty or sixty guys, it would--causalities--it was very, very busy. They would go out and meet them, bring them in, and, then, [inaudible], they had one of the first x-shaped building--was what--in civilian life you'd call them emergency room, but we called it pre-op. That's why I laughed when you said earlier--you said pre-op. And, there, people were triaged. I did not work there. I wanted to, but I didn't.

Berry: What were your personal duties in the operation?

Ferington: Well, when it got back to my unit--when people got back there--first, they came in, they were triaged, you went to surgery, they--we had an OR [operating room] set up. We had--people had surgical procedures. And I don't mean to give you the impression that I waltzed in and out of the operating room in my spare time for--just to take snapshots. I did this series of photographs for a convention that they were--a medical convention that they were having in Japan that I couldn't go to, but they needed some pictures, so--

Berry: Now, remember that the person that the person that's going to be listening to this tape won't have the benefit of the photographs.

Ferington: That's true. That's true.

Berry: Probably ought to just try to describe things as if we didn't have the benefit of the photographs.

Ferington: Okay. Okay. So, they go from pre-op, they'd go to surgery, and then they'd go to either the ICU [intensive care unit], which was one of the buildings--they'd go there for recovery or they'd go there for intensive, stabilization-type care. If after they recovered from the anesthesia they didn't need to be, you know, three, four, five days, maybe a week, of stabilization--in other words, if they weren't seriously injured or precariously, whatever, they would go to one of the units and I was one of the units and I was the head nurse there and so, you know, we had a capacity of seventy-two patients. Sometimes, we'd have three or four. Sometimes, we'd have people lined up on the floor waiting for beds. Usually, that was not routine, though. Mass casualties were not routine. I would have preferred to have been much busier than I ordinarily was, except that that's at a high price. We could, more or less, follow when operations were going to occur--

Berry: You mean combat operations?

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. I'm not sure how through the grapevine, but we knew, like, when there was [Operation] Cedar Falls, I think, was one of them when I

first got there. When--I should tell you a little bit about--when I got to the hospital, by the way, it was Long Binh, but they hadn't built Long Binh yet really. I mean, they hadn't--we had our own perimeter and grass all around the perimeter up to your soldiers and, so, I, of course, decided to look around there and see what was going on and I can remember I saw a claymore in the wire, you know, and I thought, What? This is real? You know. Also, I forgot to mention, when I first got in-country, I heard some rumblings and stuff, you know. I thought, My God, this is thunder or what? And, of course, it wasn't thunder. It was artillery. And it wasn't close enough so that I could discern--later I learned about the difference.

Berry: So, it was artillery shells landing as opposed to being fired?

Ferington: No, it was just in the distance. And it wasn't close enough to tell whether it was--except after I thought for just a minute I thought, No, those--that's no thunder. You know? And that was one of the frustrating things about the year is that war as all around us and sometimes it was very close to being on top of us on a few occasions. So, you couldn't ignore it, but you couldn't be part of it either.

[00:20:05]

Berry: Mm-hmm.

Ferington: You couldn't have any effect except after--afterwards--as bringing people in who are injured.

Berry: Did you have a close working relationship with your coworkers?

Ferington: Not at first because I took over as head nurse of the unit that had been there and people don't take kindly to that, but, eventually, they rotated home and so, within a couple months, a really, really good staff--wonderful working relationships.

Berry: Excellent. Did you have access to an officer's club?

Ferington: Yeah. I didn't bring a picture of it, but I should of. It just--it was kind of folksy, you know? It was kind of a tin shed really. But people had gotten together and it's amazing what we can do, and the helicopter guys really, really set up a nice place for themselves.

Berry: This was a medevac unit?

Ferington: Yeah. This was 257th Dustoff.

Berry: Mm-hmm. And they were located close to your hospital or--

Ferington: They were considered part of our--they were attached.

Berry: Oh, so they were actually part of the evac?

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. So, we all knew each other, worked as-needed together.

Berry: How about R&R [rest and recuperation]? Where did you go for R&R?

Ferington: I went to Japan.

Berry: Mm-hmm. Did you enjoy that?

Ferington: Oh! [laughs] I did. Yeah. You know, I had trouble just a little bit at home and I thought I'd become a little bit worldly because I'd worked with delinquents from downtown Detroit and, you know, I wasn't--I didn't figure I was naïve. And I never missed home, but, boy, when I got over there I missed the United States. Plus, it was somewhat isolating. You know, you couldn't call anybody. A letter would take--if somebody answered it immediately, it'd be probably ten, twelve days before--

Berry: You mean making call from your 93rd evac unit?

Ferington: Could what?

Berry: When you say you couldn't call home, you mean from Vietnam?

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. There was--there was Vietnamese radio and there was armed forces radio and television, but it was pretty sad.

Berry: How many nurses did you have in your section that you were responsible for?

Ferington: Woo-wee. Just enough to staff the unit. Just a minute. Eight. Six or eight. But we had--of course, as--throughout the Army we had our enlisted counterparts. And it was interesting because it was somewhat--the way the Army set it up in the clinical units--the wards if you want to call them that--it was a little bit similar to how it was being done in civilian life in that there was a unit manager. And that concept was fairly new in the civilian world, but in the Army it was the sergeant who was the ward master and he was responsible for all the logistical support--everything plus the supervision of the enlisted medics. And he and I were closely together. He was a dear fellow--old-timer--and there I was, you know, six weeks in the Army and it was interesting.

Berry: Were all of your nurses female?

Ferington: And one male.

Berry: One male. And how was the interaction there?

Ferington: Excellent.

Berry: Excellent. And how about your--the individual you reported to, were they both genders also or--

Ferington: No. All women. All--just about all of them were fine. You know, had a--our new Chief Nurse after the one who greeted me--we got a new Chief Nurse and she was wonderful. Wonderful. She'd been in World War II, she'd been in Korea, and there was fifty-two years old; she was in Vietnam.

Berry: What would you say overall your impressions of your service in Vietnam were?

[00:24:54]

Ferington: Wow. I was brought up--again, I had six brothers plus a stern father and I was brought up you work and you work hard, and that's the way, I guess, I learned to cope with life in general. I always sort of picked some of the more challenging things to do, which is partially why I went to Vietnam I guess. I didn't have to work that hard. When--as they say, when we had mass casualties, I couldn't go down and do anything and help or anything because they, first, had to get triaged and I still struggle with that. Because if I could have done a lot more, you know, and kept busy and really been put to the test, as I think they were in pre-op and in ICU, I would have felt a lot better--not that we were so adequate in meeting the needs of the patients we did have. I mean, it's not like we were doing a superb, flawless job with those men. It's just that I wanted--I wanted to be busier and I wanted to contribute more.

Berry: And did the evac hospital stabilize wounded soldiers for evacuation out of Vietnam? Is--was that the primary purpose of it?

Ferington: Yeah. And our evac policy, I think, was around a week and if somebody was not going to be well enough to go back to the field--most of my patients would ultimately return to the field with multiple fragment wounds and things like that. So, nasty, but recoverable. But amputees and guys with head injuries and extensive thoracic or abdominal wounds would be evac-ed.

Berry: And they would go to Japan mainly or--

Ferington: No. Well, mainly, first, and then eventually they would go to the Army medical centers throughout the country--like San Francisco, Denver, Washington, Georgia, wherever.

Berry: Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to say about your Vietnam experience? Maybe just kind of sum up how you felt about it.

Ferington: Yeah. [laughter] We [clears throat]--we lived as comfortably as I had lived on the farm growing up, you know? I mean, didn't have water--running water--or flush johns. Well, [inaudible] we didn't have that in the farm either, you know? But it has troubled me ever since I've been there that the only women, for the most part, who were at all even within hearing distance of wars were nurses until the Women's Army Corp formed. But it was still mostly nurses who were where the action was or near it. I heard a fellow about a year ago last November--how are we doing time-wise?

Berry: Oh, we're doing fine.

Ferington: Well, I heard him. He was--he was kind of explaining to--well, let me tell you what happened. I--I heard there was going to be an exhibit--a Vietnam veterans' portraits and so forth at the museum and I thought, Well, isn't that something. You know? And I don't know what I expected, but when I got there I saw thirty or so--you saw--you've seen--portraits of different folks.

[00:30:04]

Berry: This is that art museum here at Madison you speak of.

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. And I saw two women. And, naturally, I looked to see what their jobs were and they were clerks more or less. Nobody had a fun job. So, I'm not saying the job was easy, but it was--it was removed as far as I was concerned. And there were no representation of nurses. It was--a medic was included and a doc was included. I felt really overlooked and let down and irritated. And so, afterwards, we were in a group and we were talking and this guy who led the group was explaining to the people who had assembled the difference between the military in Vietnam and the military now. And I don't think he'd ever been in the military as I recall. But, anyway, he meant well, but--so, he was saying--and the question of women came up at some point. I don't know how. But he said, "Oh, well, yeah, yeah"--he said--there were women in Vietnam. He said that, of course, they were all in base camps or secure areas and, of course, they didn't, like nowadays, carry weapons or anything like that. He said--and he said, "The injuries were not as severe then either"--

[break in recording] [00:31:50]

I didn't feel like it was being portrayed realistically--our service--and I guess I was the only woman veteran in the group and, so, I spoke up and I said, "Well, you know, as far as casualties are concerned"--he said that they save so many more nowadays in our current wars because of the technology and whatnot. I said, "If Dustoff got the patients to us alive, very nearly 98 percent of them lived." And I said I thought that was pretty good and there were troops around and you could tell that they were shaking their head. I didn't like the way he portrayed our, kind of, being set off in a little, safe enclave where we really wouldn't know what--

Berry: When you were at Vietnam?

Ferington: Yeah.

Berry: No. You were certainly subject to being mortared and so forth also.

Ferington: I didn't like the way he--and we never were mortared, but we had a neighborhood ammunition dump, you know, at Long Binh and it was attacked a number of times and we were about a half-mile from it and I have marvelous pictures and recordings--

Berry: What did you do during such an attack? Did you have a bunker you could go to?

Ferington: Yeah. We had bunkers and we were supposed to go to them. [laughs] Sometimes I would go out and take pictures. At one point, though, I really did go to the bunker in a hurry because [makes firing sounds]--because it would blow the shells around the area. And, you know, I don't mean to equate that in any way to what it would be like to be a combatant, to live with that as a way of life, but we knew there was a war going on. One of our patients ran off the unit one night and ran down the road a piece and was killed by a Vietnamese unit because he couldn't identify himself. There was a Vietnamese unit across the street. They show their artillery out over the hospital. We knew there was a war going on.

Berry: What did you do for entertainment in your off time at the 93rd evac?

Ferington: Well, when they first fixed up the officer's club, we would go down there because they had air conditioning--they'd put air conditioning in there. And they had music. They had--you know, everybody had tape recorders and stuff. Well, everybody but--

[00:35:04]

Berry: The officer's club was located right in your enclave so you could walk to it from--

Ferington: Yeah, yeah.

Berry: --your quarters and stuff?

Ferington: Yeah, yup, yup. And this is--in all this time this year, Long Binh was being built. We no longer had our own perimeter. We were just part of the Long Binh post. They had cleared every blade of grass from here to the other end of ten miles or so. So, it was--but we had our own little club there. But units would come in from the field. And of course, to them, they wanted to have a good time and they would come into the club and the club was about three times the size of this--what is this--14x12 room or something? And we were expected to be available and some nights you didn't feel like being available.

Berry: You mean just to talk with the soldiers and so forth?

Ferington: To dance, to talk, to drink, to listen--to listen mostly.

Berry: How about your quarters where you slept? What sort of sleeping arrangements did you have in your quarters?

Ferington: Well, we--well, I want to just add with the--we quit going to the officer's club.

Berry: Mm.

Ferington: We would still go to the helicopter pilot's club because we knew those guys and they were friends, you know? And it wasn't like you're demanded to be--when I first go there, a general--like General DeQue [??] and he was head of--I don't know--some brigade or--eventually a division head. But decided to have--if some general decided to have a party, he would call the hospitals to get some women. [laughs]

Berry: Mm-hmm.

Ferington: Well, when I was a civilian, that was not looked on favorably.

Berry: Were you subject to sexual harassment sorts of things while you were in Vietnam and all?

Ferington: Let me just finish with this. We had to go--if we were selected, we had to go to those parties. I only had to go twice because a new chief nurse came in and she refused to do it and that was very nice.

Berry: This officer's club you refer to is really for a much larger group of soldiers.

Ferington: Oh, it's just for our--it was for our group, but the guys that would--you know, it was there on Long Binh post. So, if you traveled down the road, then there are probably a lot of PXs [a commissary of a US Army post] down there--or not PXs--yeah, those too to officer's clubs. So, anyway, harassment. Only one ugly incident, which I'll mention. But for the most part it was--many of the men wanted to see and socialize with American women so much and there were so many of them that sometimes it just didn't feel good. And then, there was nothing--they were polite and it's "Oh, a round eye--beautiful!" It's, "Well, you know, yeah, hi."

Had a funny little incident. I was making a bookcase for myself and I got a hold of some wood and so forth, but, anyway--so, I threw out an old, Vietnamese dresser I had and some enlisted guys were outside on the other side of the fence that was around our quarters, by the way, and they were watching us.

Berry: "They" being the Vietnamese?

Ferington: No, no, no, no, no.

Berry: The soldiers?

Ferington: The enlisted guys. They just wanted to watch some American women. [laughs] So, they were standing there and they told us, "Do you mind if we just watch you?" And I said, "No, no." So, turned out to be kind of funny because, when we threw out the Vietnamese dresser, the guys wanted it for their tent, you know? So, that was kind of funny. We got the dresser over the barbed wire and they walked off with it probably--I don't know. So, it was more that sort of stuff. It was nothing indecent. And the patients were wonderful. And I might add that the veterans that I ran into at Lammo [??] were wonderful too.

[00:40:15]

Berry: How about your--just a little bit about your personal quarters. Did you have a cot to sleep on? What--

Ferington: Oh, yeah. Yeah. That's why I was saying we didn't--poorly--we had one of these [inaudible]. We lived there for about six months. There were fifty-five of us in there and--

Berry: Set up like a barracks or did you have your own rooms or--

Ferington: No, no. You had a--my area was five-feet, ten-inches square and I had a cot and that's how I knew the size of it. And eventually I got a wall locker.

Berry: But this was in an open base?

Ferington: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And it's kind of funny the difference in the Army in peace time and war time because, you know, everybody wanted privacy. So, if they didn't have a wall locker to kind of shield them, they'd go down to Biên Hòa and buy straw mats and hang them up, you know? And if they brought things from the PX [post exchange] like--and then the big boxes of stuff. All these boxes were piled around their areas so they had privacy and stuff. So, it looked just like a really--like the most ramshackle warehouse. You know?

Berry: How about food? Did you have a--

Ferington: Mess hall.

Berry: Mess hall?

Ferington: Hot meals. You know. We had running water in the shower--wasn't potable, but it was--showers was good. We had latrines. Well, that was just like when I was on the farm, as I say. They built us a new quarters after about six months and we had partitions there--partitioned our area so that you had privacy.

Berry: So, you arrived in October of '66--[unintelligible] did the living conditions improve during the year you were there or--

Ferington: Oh, yeah. The new quarters were like ultra-ultra. As I say, you had partitions for your area. It was the--it was like so many buildings. Most of the top of the building was screened in, you know. And they you had little--some wood down at the bottom. We had flush johns. [laughs] They had a lounge that was air conditioned. Mostly, we just stayed in our area. So--which was--listened to a lot of music.

Berry: Okay. Anything else you would like to relate about your year in Vietnam?

Ferington: Yeah, well, I'll tell you I--as I said, most of--when you ask about sexual harassment, it was only harassment by default. I mean, it was not the intent of the troops. I had one sort of amusing situation. I was--I don't know why I was--I was out walking along one of the roads going into Biên Hòa by myself and an enlisted guy runs out. "Ma'am, this is insecure. Come on, come on in here. There is not safe." You know, he's getting all--well, what it was--it was a car wash. Well, now, for our listeners, a car

wash was where the guys brought their vehicles for the kids of the prostitutes who lived there to wash their vehicles while they were in with the prostitutes. And so there I was. You know? And I think it's kind of amusing now, but I didn't--I didn't really know what was going on. And the Vietnamese women were just cracking up. They were laughing [makes talking sounds].

Anyway, so--but there was one incident. One night we were just having some soup and sandwiches in our area and the lights went out. It was a real rainy, funny, ugly night. And then--and then all of a sudden we heard this screaming. The quarters was quite huge. So, we wouldn't tell exactly where it was and we ran around trying to find where it was. We finally found--and an enlisted man had somehow come in and hidden in one of the rooms and when our chief nurse came into her area--I say room, but it was, you know, partitioned. And he jumped her. And they had quite a tussle as she was screaming and hitting him with her flashlight and so forth. And by the time we got there, there was another GI [general issue] there and he had his M16 in the guy's chest and the chief nurse is saying, "Don't hurt him, don't hurt him, don't kill him!" And the guy says, "My wife is going to kill me." Well, yeah. That was the only incident that was really unnerving I would say.

[00:46:09]

Berry: Your--how did you feel about leaving Vietnam?

Ferington: Do you want me to leave--do you want me to not talk about Vietnam anymore?

Berry: Oh, no, no. You can continue talking about Vietnam as long as you would like.

Ferington: Okay. [unintelligible] We had POWs [prisoners of war] and--

Berry: Oh. Interesting. Tell me about the POWs.

Ferington: Yes. That was interesting. Yeah. Very, very--these were wounded POWs. I had no problem whatsoever because, I mean, a patient is a patient and, I had no reason to--you know, I hadn't faced these people. Why would I--so, anyway, it was no problem. And--but some were boys, so, yeah, they didn't even have beards, you know?

Berry: Were these Viet men or were they North Vietnamese Army soldiers?

Ferington: They were Vietnamese. VC.

Berry: VC. Were they guarded in the area while they were being treated?

Ferington: Yeah. Yeah. Most of them weren't going to go anyplace anyway. They could--they were--serious wounds -- [unintelligible]. And I'll tell you one situation. I had this one fellow, cute kid, and he was--

Berry: This was a Vietnamese?

Ferington: Viet Cong--Vietnamese--and he was very worried that they were going to cut his leg off. And I've never done this in my whole career, but, for some reason or another, I said, "Oh, no, no, no, no." You know, I'm telling him, "GI medicine number one no--no cut!" You know? Well, when he came back from surgery, they had to get it off and the first thing he wanted to sit up. So, I helped him sit up. [long pause] [coughs] And, of course, his leg was gone. And he didn't say anything. Tears just started rolling down his face. And I thought, what a shitty situation. You know, I gave him a cigarette and I put my arm around his shoulders. And by shitty situation I mean here is--here is just a kid, you know? I shouldn't have told him what I told him. I don't know why I did that, but it's strange to see so much humanity in somebody that's supposed to be, you know, the enemy.

Mostly they were just--they looked at magazines. One guy was really excited when he knew--he was carrying on, so I went over to see what was going on and a 1967 Cadillac in the *Life* magazine. He was just amazed at the car, you know? And so there were things like that that were going to--the other thing was kids. We would occasionally get kids in and--not a lot. But our people would go out on MedCap--medical--

[00:50:20]

Berry: Now, explain MedCap for--

Ferington: Medical Civil Action Programs. And set up a clinic and--

Berry: Treat--working with Vietnamese villagers.

Ferington: Yeah. To care, provide, some sort of, limited, you know, intervention. And if our docs and nurses found some kids they thought could benefit, they'd bring them into the hospital and--or life, as you know probably better than I, in a place like that is not reacted to the same way as it is in the other areas that--where there isn't a war. And, like, one day they found this baby in the ditch on the way back to the hospital. So, they brought the baby and the baby died, but--and then they had--they had a couple other that they brought in. And one was--one was--excuse me. [coughs] One was--I got all the statistics on it because it was really something. He's four-and-a-half-years-old. He weighed fourteen pounds. He didn't move. He didn't

talk. He just sat there like a lump. He had sores from malnutrition all over his body.

The nuns, for some reason or another, at the orphanage had apparently just set him aside. They had shelves and stuff that they would just put kids on and we de-wormed him and, when we got through de-worming him, he weighed twelve pounds instead of fourteen. He was the only child there at the time. So, he was kind of the star of the unit and the GIs treated him that way, too. And so, he began to respond to people and I've got pictures where he's on--like on a GIs bed and they've got--they're playing with packs of cigarettes and stuff and I've got another one where they're giving him a bath and he's--instead of just like a half-dead lump of flesh, he's responding to the--you know--he's moving, he's reaching out and stuff. He was too damaged cognitively to ever really respond verbally in any way, but he was so responsive in terms of--he'd lean against you or he'd put his arms around your legs or--as he got better and he started--his skin cleared up, he gained weight, but we discharged him to another orphanage. So--

Berry: Sounds like you enjoyed that portion of your work there.

Ferington: Oh, I--yeah.

Berry: Now, did you do that sort of thing on your off-duty time or--

Ferington: I didn't do much of it. Some people did it heroically. I mean, you know, they would go out all the time. I felt--

Berry: Was it an assigned task that you--

Ferington: No, no.

Berry: --would do--but you would do it--

Ferington: No, it was--

Berry: --as a volunteer then essentially?

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. People would go out. Some people were very--you know--very involved, provided much care. I--I'm very glad that I went there.

Berry: To Vietnam?

Ferington: Yup. Yeah. I'm not so sure I would have gone if I had known what it was going to be like exactly. I was surprised. I was kind of disappointed in myself in that, boy, I could not wait until the day to leave. I was--

[00:55:17]

Berry: Were you looking forward to coming home or just looking forward to getting--

Ferington: Getting out of there. Yeah. [laughs] I thought I'd seen poverty in my life, but when you see people living in a [inaudible] because it's dry season or in a cardboard box--

Berry: Were you able to select your next duty station? Did you have--

Ferington: You can always put in a preference request. I'm sure you did too.

Berry: Yeah.

Ferington: I asked for the advanced course because I was a captain. I came in as a captain, which I had neglected to mention, because I had my master's and I had, like, four years' experience or something. Anyway, that's another reason the ones I was replacing were not real fond of me. I got to tell you, one night there was--I don't know if it was the ammunition stump or what, but there was a lot of noise and commotion and something going on and one of the young GIs turns to me and he said, "How long have you been in the Army captain?" I said, "About six weeks actually." And he [laughing] just laughed, you know? It was funny. But--so, I went to the advanced course. And the reason I asked--

Berry: That was back at Fort Sam Houston.

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. I asked for it because I was a captain and I would be getting assignments were I was expected to know more and I didn't know anything about the Army except Vietnam. So, I went there and--six months. Went to Fitzsimmons in Denver after that, learned how to ski, loved the mountains--different life. Still got a lot of casualties from Vietnam.

Berry: And then, you remained on active duty for an extended period, did you not?

Ferington: Eleven years. Eleven years. Yeah.

Berry: And that was--

Ferington: Oh, well, I taught medics while I was there in Denver--psychiatrics medics [inaudible].

Berry: Was that a hospital there in Denver?

Ferington: Oh, yeah. It was a medical center--Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center.

Berry: Oh, Fitzsimmons. Okay.

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. And I also taught a six-month continuing education course for the psychiatric--for nurses who wanted to go into psychiatry and I had a therapy group that I met with three times a week. So, I was, you know, busy and--one of our nurses left and she was the one that got killed up in Tu Lý when they mortared the place.

Berry: Did you enjoy the experience of Fort Simmons? That one was more--

Ferington: Fitzsimmons?

Berry: Fitzsimmons. That's more--kind of an academic environment there?

Ferington: No, no. All of the medical centers of courses--clinical courses attached to them. This is like a medical center here in that sense. No, it was--it was a large, highly-active treatment facility. But the thing that--continuing education courses attached and so forth. So, certain--the Army had a school of nursing. I don't know if you know.

Berry: No, I'm not familiar with it.

Ferington: Well, of course, the Army can't grant degrees. A university had to grant degrees. I'm not sure what the arrangement is that the union [??] foreign services helped with university--that they are a university, so they can grant degrees. But what we did is the Army in '65 wanted to--a program set up to turn out a hundred nurses for the nurse corps for--I'm sure for Vietnam among other things every year and they--for ten years. So, they wanted a thousand nurses prepared. And in order to grant--and that was what we, in nursing, call a two-and-two program. In other words, these young women and a couple of men got four-year scholarships. And the first two years they could go to a university of their choice in the country and take all of their basic sciences and their liberal arts and all that stuff and the last two years they came to Walter Reed. It was called the Walter Reed Army Institute of Nursing and I taught there for the next three, three-and-a-half years. And so, we had them in very--of course, Walter Reed was big and busy and we also had Belvoir and Meade and various places around there that we could have students and teach them--

[01:00:43]

Berry: Now, did you apply for those positions? You head about them?

Ferington: I asked to go there.

Berry: Ah.

Ferington: And I went there. [laughs] And--

Berry: And did you finish your active career then out in the area? Where did you go after Fort Belvoir?

Ferington: I--well, no. I was at Walter Reed.

Berry: Oh, I'm sorry. Walter Reed.

Ferington: That's where the school--that's--see, we had appointments at the University of Maryland and that's how they got around--Maryland granted the degree, then, to the students. So, okay. I was there for three years plus whatever. And then, I went down to--downtown to--what was the--as a staff nurse--as a staff officer for the chief of the Army Nurse Corps.

Berry: Mm.

Ferington: And it was zooming right along, you know? [inaudible]. I think I might have stayed on active duty if I hadn't had that assignment, but I was things that I wasn't--I just didn't like the way that operated.

Berry: And what didn't you like about it?

Ferington: Well, I was in assignments branch and professional development where you had officers that were your responsibility to counsel them as to their career options and their progressions through education and blah-blah-blah and assignments and things. And it was not a good assignment for me. It was an end basket this high and--

Berry: On a pedestal sort of thing.

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. Big, huge room with twelve battleship-gray desks and we just, you know, worked. The good part of that job was we would go out on staff visits because--taking the word out to the troops, you know? And--

Berry: To other medical centers--

Ferington: Yeah, yeah.

Berry: --around the country?

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. So, like, on my one trip I went to Fort Oregon and then to Letterman in San Francisco and then up to Madigan in Sea--or in Tacoma. And that's--that's a good trip.

Berry: Did you have any desire to return for a second tour in Vietnam?

Ferington: You know, I don't think I could have taken it frankly. And that's where--where I mentioned I was a little disappointed with myself because I thought I was tougher than that. I figured--I figured that I would at least extend, but I didn't even add any. Vietnam--everybody was going to Vietnam. It was no big thing. It was--either there--

[End of FeringtonOH.1440_file1] [Beginning of FeringtonOH.1440_file2]

Berry: Recording. Okay. So, we were talking about--

Ferington: Well, I was--I had mentioned staff visits out to the field and that was very rewarding. You would meet with as many officers--all the Nurse Corps were officers of course--and you would meet with as many as wished to consult you about schooling or about assignments or anything. And you'd meet with, like, twenty or thirty or fifty people, you know? And then we would address the whole--

Berry: How long did those visits lasts? You must have been there for a number of days if--

Ferington: Well, a couple days each. They were just--they were very, you know, like--and then you would--as I say, you would address the whole assembly and we were given what we were supposed to present out in the field. So, we would present the word and--sound familiar?

Berry: Sure does.

Ferington: Not surprising, huh? So, I resigned from that job. I think, probably, nobody has ever resigned from that job before.

Berry: So, you resigned from active duty then?

Ferington: Yeah! Yeah. I--well, I'd been there three years. Maybe I had been spoiled in that I'd gotten every assignment I asked for in eleven years. And I wanted to get my doctorate and paid for my own master's. I thought this was fair enough. And I applied--

Berry: To which school?

Ferington: To University of Illinois at Chicago. And the selection board met and, of course, working in that office you know everything. Like I knew how, for instance, the five or six hundred majors in the Army Nurse Corps ranked and their OERs [officer evaluation records]. I mean, you know a lot about-

Berry: Were you a major when you--

Ferington: Yeah, yeah.

Bering: --left your service?

Ferington: Yeah, I was--so, I knew a lot about the workings. And you convene boards yourself for--if you're only the Office Major, you only do the little stuff, you know? Of course, it's important to the people you're selecting, but it's, you know--it's--they don't--and they--you know, I used to think to myself sometimes--I was thirty-nine-years-old at the time and I thought, The Secretary of the Army is forty-two, for God's sake and I--you know, I'm just the Office Major. I mean, I--you know how you have to do all these little things, you know? So, I felt really underutilized. So, the-- anyway, for selectees for civilian training--long-term civilian trainers--majors didn't do that, colonels did that and--colonels and lieutenant colonels. And so, they convened the board that, you know--for this. And I put my application in. They selected. Word came back some days later that they had selected two people for doctoral preparation.

Berry: Is that the University of Chicago we're talking about?

Ferington: Well, they accepted me, but this is the Army. The Army has to--see, they're going to pay for it. [laughs] so, they're going to select who they want to select.

Berry: So, you were still on active duty--

Ferington: Yeah, yeah.

Berry: --when you made this application?

Ferington: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And I'd been there in the office for three years--a minimal amount, but--so, they had two selectees for doctoral preparation and I thought I was really happy because I knew I'd be one of them because I knew the records and things of everybody who had applied and so the word came out and it was announced and we were down at the officer's club at Walter Reed when it was announced. And the next week

the Chief of the Corps reconvened the board and that isn't done, you know? And, later, I had the paperwork and, if I hadn't worked in the office, I never would have come across the paperwork, but I saw where she had taken one of the two doctoral selectees and eliminated their preparation--their go to school.

[00:05:19]

Berry: And that was you?

Ferington: Yeah. And put a master's--put a person in to go and study for their master's instead. And well, now, some of the people on active duty thought I was a sore-head because I resigned, but they didn't know any of this other stuff. And I maybe still wouldn't have resigned except that I was a little afraid if I--if they wanted to send me--I asked to go to Korea because that way I could come back. In a year I could apply for school. And then, they didn't want me to do that. They'd finally decided they'd send me to Europe and, God, it would have been a wonderful assignment, but, you know, I was afraid that--three years was a tour at the time--and that maybe I'd be--maybe I'd lose my interest in going back to school and so it wasn't really a sore-head move so much as I felt deceived and I also felt I was a little concerned about my own motivation. And that same week that they announced those results of the training board, they announced the selectees from this--for LC [line of control] from secondary zone. I thought that was a pretty good exchange. You know?

So, when it came time to leave, I went over to the Pentagon Chief Nurse's office and--Chief of the Nurse Corps. I went over there to sign out--to sign out of the Army and, while I was there, I thought, Well, any time else you'd have an exit interview with your boss. So, I'll be damned if I'm just going to leave the Army and go creeping off into Alexandria, Virginia or something or other. So, I went right up over to the general's office and I rapped on her door and--I didn't have an appointment. I went in and we had our exit interview and she wished me well [laughs] and I wished her well and I was gone.

Berry: Where did you go from there then?

Ferington: I went to University of Illinois at Chicago. They said, "Do you want to go into the reserves?" I said, "I don't want to go to the reserves." You know? With eleven years active duty. Well, you know, I got to Chicago and I--you know--I don't have any money to speak off and now I am a civilian and--

Berry: So, you entered the PhD program then.

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. And I thought, I got \$300 a month on the GI bill. And I thought, I am--I am going to join the reserves. And thank God I did because I would be working today if I hadn't.

Berry: So, you joined your reserve unit there in Chicago?

Ferington: In Chicago General Hospital, had a really good assignment for over five years, worked with a wonderful Chief Nurse, was responsible for the educational programs for the hospital selecting people to run the programs and, you know, all the falderal. So, we did that and enjoyed it and almost died working on my doctorate. Hardest thing--I made it very hard. Smart people don't make it hard. [laughter] You know what I mean?

Berry: So, you obtained your doctorate there?

Ferington: Yeah

Berry: Oh, congratulations.

Ferington: Thank you.

Berry: That's something to be proud of.

Ferington: Well, I am. I am.

Berry: And did you stay in Chicago then?

Ferington: No, I've got to tell you one other thing.

Berry: Oh, okay.

Ferington: We're only on our third half-hour, right?

Berry: Yes, ma'am.

Ferington: Okay, we're not--we got a few minutes here.

Berry: We're going to do this just as long as your comfortable [laughter] doing it. I'm a retired guy. I--it's not a big deal.

Ferington: Okay. So, God, what was I going to tell you? Oh. Making your program hard. The way you go--the way the professionals do it--the way you go through academia, I've heard later, is--and nursing had only had a doctoral program for, like, forty, fifty years or something. It's not like centuries of how they've worked it out in other fields. In other fields--like a friend of mine went from her bachelor's to Michigan to study for her doctorate.

Well, when we got there, her professor assigned her part of his research. She had to do the research, but he had to find what it was and then she wrote--and then she had to do the interpretation of the data and would gather the data and the interpretation and everything, but she did that and in four years she was out of there with her PhD. And that's the way that they do it. That's not the way nursing is. And then, remember my stern, stern father?

[00:10:43]

Berry: Mm-hmm.

Ferington: God, you've got to kill yourself. You've got to--you don't work so hard at things. You know? Boy, they said original research. My God, what would be original research, you know? I spent at least a year trying to figure that out. And I went to my advisor and I said, "What is this 'reviewing the literature.'" You know? I said, "How does that work?" She said, "Well, you go over in whatever your dissertation is going to be about and you start reading in the library and, when you find that you're re-reading some of the same old things, then you're done." [laughs] Is--

Berry: So, how did your family feel about your military career?

Ferington: My dad--my oldest brother had been in the Army in '48 when the integrated the--anyway, blacks and women were just the end of the world, you know? Well, blacks were not blacks. They were--whatever. And women were either whores or whatever, you know? And so no sister of his would ever be in the Army, you know? And of course I didn't pay much attention to that and--but anyway came down to I'm twenty-eight years old and I think they thought I was safely located in Ann Arbor keeping myself busy and I was visiting them and I told them and [laughs] Dad sat there with his pipe and he always had a pipe. "You kids are never happy until you find yourselves in the middle of the biggest mess you can find."

Berry: This is your dad speaking?

Ferington: Yeah. "You kids are just never satisfied until you're in the middle of the biggest mess you can find." Well, he was kind of right. I mean, he was, [laughs] you know? As I found out, you know--that's how he reacted. Mother just was terrible. Mother felt she should always be brave. She was brave when my brother went to Korea and when I went to Vietnam she certainly didn't make any big thing of it at all, but I looked out the window and as she was walking back into the house--and she was all upset. Like--that's how they reacted. They got used to the idea--that I just told them, "I'm doing what I would be doing in civilian life. I'm teaching, you

know? Seeing patients and I enjoy it.” So, then, I got my doctorate and then I thought--that took a little over five years.

Berry: At the same school?

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. And--

Berry: And did you serve with the same reserve unit the entire period of time?

Ferington: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was very good. It was demanding in a lot of ways. It's one thing to teach kids from the north side of Chicago who came from Evanston or some place like that, but when you're getting kids into the Army in--now, this is late seventies, early eighties--who can't read--kids off the streets of Chicago and you find them--like one day I was sitting in the classroom and I looked around and I just shook my head. Somebody had spilled coffee all over the floor and it dried and there were cigarette butts put out in it, you know, and up on the blackboard it said, "Fuck the Army." And it was freezing cold. We had no heat in the building and I thought, Well, people don't know what the reserves are like when you're training kids like that. But it worked out. It worked out. Lived in Ann Arbor, I said, when I got my master's--really enjoyed a college town, didn't want to travel all over the country. I'd traveled enough to suit me for a while. Thought, Madison is a college town and I'll probably enjoy that if I live there. So, I applied for a job at the university and I got that and was there for--

[00:15:23]

Berry: That would be in the School of Nursing?

Ferington: The School of Nursing. Yeah. So, I was an assistant professor until I didn't write articles. You had to write ten, twelve, fifteen, sixteen, whatever articles in order to earn tenure and I didn't. And so, I didn't get tenure, and you could never do enough. You can't do enough. People think the university personnel have it kind of easy, but let me tell you the assistant professors don't.

Berry: Did you come to Madison after you retired from the reserve or--

Ferington: Oh, I didn't retire there. I just--I joined the unit here in Madison. Forty-fourth General Hospital--was not a good assignment. Chief Nurse [laughs] didn't want me there. She didn't want any psych nurses. She didn't want any--"Well, we have plenty of lieutenant colonels. We don't need any lieutenant colonels." You know, so, fortunately they sent me over to the USAR [United States Army Reserves] school and I taught medics for about five years. And that was good assignment, good personnel, good

students--a lot different than downtown Chicago students. Took a job out at Badger Prairie Healthcare Center, which is in Verona. I don't know if you're aware of--it is an ancient institution, although they just built a new--it's the county hospital. And I worked with the chronically mentally ill there for seven years. During that time when I first took that job, we were alerted for Desert Storm and, having asthma, I was not going to be sent to Saudi [Arabia]. I wanted to go. And I went to Germany. It was--it was interesting. It was a weird--a weird war, you know?

Berry: If you reflect back on your military service, what did it--what does it meant to you? Enjoyable twenty-five years or--

Ferington: Many, many friends--wonderful friends.

Berry: Now, say, have you kept contact with the friends--

Ferington: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Berry: --you made in the service?

Ferington: Yes, yes, yes. We have an Army Nurse Corps Association and, of course, I know--I've contacted more--many more people than I knew because of coming out of the Washington office. I didn't know all those people, but I met many, many neat people and I made a lot of friends and still have contact with them. And I'm very much against the two wars that we're experiencing, but I don't say anything to my military friends because I found that, when I went to Vietnam, after having attended the teach-ins or--I didn't attend them--having head the teach-ins against the war being held at the University of Michigan and then going to Vietnam, I found out that it's a lot easier to be philosophical about wars when you're not in them--in them. So, I--it's easy for me to philosophize about Iraq and I understand it's not easy for my friends.

Berry: Now, are you active in veterans' organizations?

Ferington: No, no. I tried the Veterans Against the War and I didn't feel good about that. What I did do is I went to Lambeau--LZ Lambeau.

Berry: I was up there for two days myself.

Ferington: Really? Wow.

Berry: That was helpful, I think, to a lot of Vietnam veterans. [whistles]

Ferington: I could tell you something. Some friends put a sign up--I'm looking for the nurses. I contacted, like, about--oh, I don't know--a whole bunch of nurses here in Wisconsin.

Berry: Did you have this sign on your back?

Ferington: So, my friends put a sign on my back that I was a nurse. I didn't see any others. And that I'd been to the ninety-three blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. But what happened is guys would come up to me, you know, and, "Thank you so much, you know, for the care we got"--and blah-blah-blah. It was just overwhelming because I became their sort of symbolic nurse. They hadn't been patients of mine, but--and I noticed, not surprisingly, how--of course how important it would be for people to touch base in some way regarding having been wounded and been in the hospital or--and/or evac'd. One of the most significant experiences of their life and then just have it cut off and no contact ever again.

[00:20:41]

Berry: And not be able to be proud of it when you came home.

Ferington: Oh, God. Well, of course, that was the bottom.

Berry: How about your return from Vietnam? Were you treated well or--

Ferington: I've got to tell you some more about that first.

Berry: Okay.

Ferington: So, these guys would come and they'd hug me and they would just--you know, some of them would just hobble, "Thanks a lot", and shake hands. But some of them, you can tell that they maybe thought they weren't going to make it, you know? And they were very, very emotional. And so, I sort of took it upon myself. They would come up, thank me, and they'd be talking and so forth and here's what I do. I'd take their hand and I'd say, "We're home."

Berry: Yup. I remember. There were a lot of people patting each other on the back, weren't they? And it was--you know, that was meant to be a welcome home that we didn't receive four years ago and I think it was very successful at that.

Ferington: I think it was.

Berry: Yeah. It was good.

Ferington: It felt so good because I felt so powerful to tell these guys because I'd been there. They knew I'd been there and I could say to them, "We're at home." You can put that.

Berry: That was meaningful, wasn't it? Wow. I agree.

Ferington: Yeah. Yeah. Pretty much so.

Berry: Yeah. This museum had an awful lot to do with that taking place. So--

Ferington: I know it.

Berry: --they need to be proud of themselves. It did a lot of good I think.

Ferington: They sure do and something coincidentally about a month before Lambeau a friend of mine I hadn't had--we'd grown apart here in down and hadn't had any touch with her--been in touch with her in about fifteen years and so she called me up and she's talking and, "Were you going?" And I said, "Yeah." And blah-blah-blah. Turns out that her partner of twenty-six years or something--I don't know--was a guy named Don Jones who was the event director for Lambeau and he and I have chewed and chewed and chewed and chewed about the event and the--and of course he had been working on it for, like, about a year-and-a-half and going nuts. I mean, it was so complex. I thought they just--they just pulled it off. I think the best thing about it was the way they involved everyone. There was the wall, there was this, there was that, there was the motorcyclist, there was the map, which was a great idea. And then, when we walked in and saw those chairs, I--so, they involved everybody.

Berry: It worked very well. One more question I could ask you that on our list here, can you--could you tell us something about your uniform? Did they--the uniform and the clothing that you were issued as a woman?

Ferington: In Vietnam?

Berry: Well, in Vietnam--just throughout your career in the Army.

Ferington: Yeah.

Berry: Was it well-suited and so forth?

Ferington: Yeah, yeah. Sort of a--on a sidelight, when the nurses first went to Vietnam, the commanders of the various field units wanted the nurses wearing white uniforms. Now, can you imagine? So, down in Saigon they did for a year or two and the Chief of the Nurse Corps went over there and she took care of the white uniforms down in Saigon. You couldn't keep--it

was horrible. I mean, they were dirty, they couldn't--you know. So, anyway, we wore fatigues thankfully. It would have been ridiculous. I mean, if you walk into work and you sink into mud over your ankles, you don't want to be in your white uniform. Otherwise, uniforms were fine. They have whole committees--big committees to design uniforms for all the Army--some headquarters up in New England. It's like everywhere else.

[00:25:18]

Berry: Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Ferington: No. I just hope that I've given a somewhat objective--I wanted to give sort of both sides--especially on the harassment issue. I wanted to be real clear about that.

Berry: Oh, you've done just fine.

Ferington: I also wanted to clarify that in no way did I ever conceive of myself as going through what the combatants went through, but I didn't have a lot of fun either. [laughs] You know?

Berry: Well, thank you for your service, Fay.

Ferington: Well, thank you.

Berry: And end.

[End of interview]