

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center**

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
Susan Haack-Huskey  
U.S. Women's Army Corp, Vietnam War  
1994

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**Haack-Huskey, Susan**, (b.1948), Oral History Interview, 1994.

Approximate length: 1 hour, 36 minutes

*Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.*

**Abstract:**

In this oral history interview, Susan Haack-Huskey, a Madison, Wisconsin native, discusses her Vietnam War service in the Women's Army Corps.

Haack-Huskey explains that she enlisted out of solidarity for her brother who was drafted in 1967. Sent to Fort McClellan (Alabama) for basic training and describing herself as a "rabble-rouser," she got in trouble immediately and was put on punishment detail. Haack-Huskey claims she "wised up fast" and became a squad leader before her assignment to the Pentagon as an administrative assistant to Gen. Edwin H. Burba, Sr. Haack-Huskey describes working at the Pentagon as exciting and characterizes life in the Pentagon Enlisted Barracks (Fort Meyer, Virginia) with four hundred women from four branches of service. She addresses inter-service rivalries, especially with the Marine BAMs (Broad Ass Marine) who tried to beat the WACs up. She mentions that she was in Washington, D.C. during the Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy funerals. Haack-Huskey volunteered for service in Vietnam and was sent to Bien Hoa in January 1969. She describes being paired with a male officer during the plane ride over and having him sexually harass her during the trip. At the WAC detachment at Long Binh, she describes a large number of lesbians there saying, "we had our clique and they had theirs."

She details frequent Viet Cong attacks on her base, hiding in bunkers during the attacks, living conditions in the WAC detachment, and near-misses for her buddy, Sue, and her. She explains various duties she performed as an administrative staff member including duty reassignments, death statistics, and real estate. Haack-Huskey characterizes the relationship between the men and women as one of respect where they treated the women as sisters. However, she does tell a story about one man who refused to take orders from her, eventually being sent to combat on the DMZ and reveals an expression used with rookies, "You buy or Fu Bai." Haack-Huskey discusses the drug situation in Vietnam, particularly concerning marijuana. She says that many soldiers in the field were killed because their reactions were slower. She speaks of sexual harassment from men returning from the field, expresses the opinion that the Black women got away with more than they did, explains how they "sneaked choppers" (rode on helicopters to see the countryside), and tells of finding cockroaches everywhere.

Haack-Huskey speaks of her plane ride home explaining that everyone was quiet and apprehensive until the plane got up in the air and then they began to celebrate. She tells a number of stories concerning various reactions, good and bad, to her arrival and travel to Wisconsin in combat fatigues as a Vietnam veteran. She tells how bitter she felt to be serving in Vietnam and reading about Wisconsin and Madison being a hotbed of protest against the war.

Once home, she forgot about being in Vietnam and only revealed to employers that she was a veteran. "I just blocked," and it was twelve years before she told others and then got involved in a variety of veterans organizations including being the first woman commander in Wisconsin of a VFW post. She addresses the healing process that participation in veterans organizations and reunions offer and believes that Vietnam veterans feel they have to prove themselves. She speaks of her PTSD which occurred many years later, but was related to an incident in Vietnam when an Army mortician forced her face into body bags and locked her in the morgue. Haack-Huskey reveals she married badly to a Vietnam veteran, who had gotten involved with heroin in Vietnam, and her use of the G.I. Bill to attend Madison Area Technical College.

### **Biographical Sketch:**

Susan Haack-Huskey (b. 1948) served with the Women's Army Corps in Vietnam. She graduated from Lodi High School in Wisconsin before enlisting in the Army out of Buffalo, New York. Haack-Huskey is now involved with Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans, WACVO, the American Legion, and the VFW. Haack-Huskey now resides in Dane, Wisconsin.

### **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, if possible.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 1994.

Transcribed by Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 1997.

Transcript edited by Brooke E. Perry Hoesli, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, 2008.

Abstract written by Neil Bartlett, 2017.

## Interview Transcript:

Van Ells: We'll start like I start all my interviews. Perhaps you could just tell me where you were born and where you grew up and some sort of basic information about yourself.

Haack-Huskey: I was born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin in March of 1948 and my parents divorced when I was very young and I went to school in Lodi, Wisconsin. I graduated in 1966. Moved to New York in '66. Worked there for not quite a year before I joined the Army.

Van Ells: Okay. I'm interested in why you wanted to join the Army in the first place. There was a war going on, as you know. Women weren't subject to the draft. And I'm wondering what possessed you to join the Army. Was it a sense of patriotism? Was it an economics sort of thing? Perhaps you could discuss your motivation for joining the Army.

HH: Well, I guess I've always been a very patriotic person and my brother called me and said he was drafted. So that same day I went down and joined. It's like, you're not going alone to Vietnam cause he figured he'd be going.

Van Ells: Out of a sense of solidarity, then, you joined.

HH: Big time.

Van Ells: Did your brother end up going to Vietnam?

HH: He certainly did, 9th Infantry.

Van Ells: And during what years?

HH: He was there '67, '68.

Van Ells: That was during the busy time over there, I guess you could say.

HH: Yes, that's true. Yes. He came home in January '68 and I didn't get to go until January of '69.

Van Ells: I see.

HH: So, we missed each other by a year.

Van Ells: Okay. To back track a little bit. The Vietnam War had been going on for a couple of years before this. The Vietnam War was going on while you were in high school, essentially. Do you remember having many recollections of the war and what you thought of the war while you were in high school or just after you graduated from high school before you joined the Army?

HH: Truthfully, I grew up in such a small town, it wasn't actually that much talked about. But I remember the protesting more, I think, than anything about the war.

Van Ells: 'Cause you were in Madison here?

HH: Correct.

Van Ells: Do you remember having specific feelings about that?

HH: Being such a patriotic person I was against it.

Van Ells: Against the protesting.

HH: Absolutely against the protesting. Very much. I thought it was totally wrong not to be in support of your troops, you know. And that was very hard for me to, and I'm a very opinionated person, and it was hard for me to keep my mouth shut.

Van Ells: Okay. So you entered service in '67.

HH: Correct.

Van Ells: And where did you go for basic training? Perhaps you can describe the induction process. You had to go take a physical and all those sorts of things?

HH: Buffalo, New York. I had a physical.

Van Ells: To back track a little bit. You were in New York when you enlisted then?

HH: Correct.

Van Ells: I see.

HH: I was working in a Marsha Rain Corporation and I, they gave me a bus ticket to Buffalo from Albany and I got off at the hotel and the next morning I did the test and the physical, signed the papers and what was it a week later, I was gone. Two weeks later I was gone to Fort McClellan, Alabama. If I ever had seen a movie about myself before this I would have never gone to basic training.

Van Ells: Could you explain that?

HH: I was a rabble-rouser type--the partier of the group.

Van Ells: Is that right?

HH: Keep everybody laughing, going. And on the bus I'm cracking my gum and I wasn't there 30 seconds and I was on big time details. Scrubbing bathroom floors with toothbrushes.

Van Ells: That's no fun.

HH: Uh um.

Van Ells: I remember basic training. I know what kind of trouble people like that can get into.

HH: I didn't do anything bad I just called her Ma'am instead of Sergeant which I didn't know rank.

Van Ells: See, now in the Air Force we said Ma'am and you didn't say Sergeant. It was Sir and Ma'am. Enlisted personnel were Sir and Ma'am.

HH: Really?

Van Ells: That's different than the Army? I didn't know that.

HH: Big time! You better believe it. And you didn't confuse that either.

Van Ells: So, were you subject to this sort of, were you singled out for this sort of treatment all through basic training or did you wise up?

HH: I wised up very fast. I became a squad leader. I made E-2 right out of basic. Oh, yes. I knew how to get smart real quick. Oh, yeah. I became one of the favorites. I went OJT to the Pentagon right after I got out of basic.

Van Ells: Okay. Maybe a little bit more about basic training. How long did it last for you?

HH: Basic training is when you first arrive, you go into a holding bay until you get 42 women and then basic training starts. So, you can be in a holding bay anywhere from 2 days to 6 months.

Van Ells: And how long were you in there?

HH: Two weeks.

Van Ells: And what did you do? Is this when you were scrubbing the toilets?

HH: Yeah, that's how I started out.

Van Ells: So this is even before you got into the training?

HH: That's right. But, you know, we had this, well one girl had two, or a month before so she really, Vicki was really smart. Vicki Lapinski. Her father was also a colonel. That didn't get her any kind of bennies. (Laughs) My vicious laugh.

Van Ells: In fact, that can get you in trouble sometimes.

HH: You bet it can. Especially when you constantly throw it in someone's face, like your first sergeant's. But I was at two weeks and that wasn't so bad. But you learned. 'Cause those girls that came in the night before, you know, we got that bay filled up with 42. We went over to Charlie company and uh --

Van Ells: So what did your training consist of? Now, as women, you weren't allowed to be in combat so I'm wondering what did you do during basic training?

HH: We had a lot of schooling.

Van Ells: Hang on a sec. -- [INTERRUPTION] -- Back from our interruption here. Now, I'm sorry, where were we?

HH: We were discussing basic training. It was, basically, schooling, learning how to protect ourselves against men, learning some combat, gas mask school, going through the old taking it off inside, saying your name, rank, social security number, the whole, you know. PT big time.

Van Ells: That's um --

HH: Physical Education.

Van Ells: Yeah. That consisted of, was that just the marching or push-ups and sit-ups?

HH: Push-ups, sit-ups, everything. You had to pass. One hundred sit-ups you had to do. [Push-ups] was like 50. And then running. Oh, yeah. And in Fort McClellan, Alabama in February and March is still hot. Trust me.

Van Ells: Especially if you're coming from Buffalo or Wisconsin or someplace like that.

HH: Yes, bloody cold to this. The girls were just falling over like flies. And we had night marches where we had to, as a matter of fact, my squad, I was really proud of

that, we had to build tents and we had to camouflage them. My squad won for being the best. We camouflaged the best. Then we had a night march which we totally, totally made fools of ourselves. Everybody got lost. You heard a sound you had to take your cover off, put your gas mask on, and lay down on the ground. We just fucked that up so bad. And then we had to all play like we were wounded. Big time first aid you learned. But you're talking 1967 when you don't have, you know, we'd do snake bites and. It was fun but nothing like you saw in Vietnam, you know. You weren't prepared for that type of thing.

Van Ells: Did you handle weapons at all? Were you allowed to do that?

HH: Not then. No, we were not. Not at all.

Van Ells: Okay. Now, as I recall as far up as 1978 women in the Army were still segregated into the WACS, is that correct?

HH: Yes, we were still Women's Army Corps.

Van Ells: And this, it was regular Army but -- Women officers, could they give orders to the men and that sort of thing?

HH: Oh, definitely.

Van Ells: Perhaps you could describe the relationship between the regular Army and the Women's Army Corps.

HH: They could do anything. I mean, any soldier that was below them. Absolutely, they had the authority. We were still Army even though we were Women's Army Corps. It was definitely, a lot of them liked that, being able to use their rank. Of course, we had, I had 13 colonels in the Pentagon. And like, 10 captains and the captains really liked pulling rank on me. Cause I was only a 5, you know. But women definitely, some of them liked using that and they had to listen to them.

Van Ells: Yeah. But there couldn't be men and women in the same unit? I'm trying to figure out how it's different.

HH: Now, they have co-ed basic training. Okay. I went down to Fort Jackson for, a year ago. And, yeah, they have the co-ed barracks and everything. I mean, we didn't even see men for 8 weeks, okay? That was it. We didn't see. The Chemical School's there, too, but we didn't see men.

Van Ells: I see.

HH: And, of course, Fort McClellan is no longer a training center. It's the Military Police Corps and the Chemical School. That's it. Everything is done co-edly in Fort Jackson, South Carolina now.

Van Ells: I see.

HH: Yes. It's different.

Van Ells: So then you finished basic training and you said you went to the Pentagon? First of all, what was your MOS?

HH: Actually, I was a 71 Lima.

Van Ells: Which is?

HH: Admin Specialist. But, yeah, then I went to the Pentagon and I worked for this wonderful man, I brought a picture of him and I, and don't laugh all right?

Van Ells: I won't.

HH: I don't know if people have heard of General Edwin H. Burba Jr.? He was here a year ago in June and this is his father who I worked for in the Pentagon. Edwin H. Sr. And this is when he was giving me my four stripes. I made E-4 three months out of basic training. But then you stagnate.

Van Ells: That was unusual, I take it.

HH: Big time, yeah. Big time. But, this is my DD-214 and stuff. And I worked for General Burba for Main Battle Tank 70, with an FRG.

Van Ells: Which is?

HH: United States joint effort to make a battle tank.

Van Ells: A joint effort with whom?

HH: FRG. Federal Republic of Germany.

Van Ells: Oh, I see.

HH: I'm so used to saying FRG. And every other six weeks we had Germany and then they'd be here. We had to entertain back and forth. But in 1969 when I went to Nam the funds ran out so they dropped it.

Van Ells: I see.

HH: That was really sad because it was a great, you know, effort they put forth to make this. I'd like to have seen it in Nam. General Burba went to Fort Main, Maryland to be commanding general.

Van Ells: And you went to Vietnam?

HH: Yeah. I called him the last day before I left Wisconsin. I said, 'This is Specialist Sue Haack. I'm calling from Dane, Wisconsin to talk to General Burba.' 'He doesn't have time for you.' I said, 'Would you please tell him I'm on the phone?' She goes, 'Sir, there's a Sue Haack from Wisconsin on the phone.' He goes, 'For God sakes, give me the phone.' He had no daughters, just four sons. And I was his pet. When you're 18, what the heck?

Van Ells: Sure. So, before Vietnam, what was it like to be in Washington? It's got to be exciting, I would imagine.

HH: Yeah. It's very exciting working in the Pentagon. Met so many wonderful people.

Van Ells: I was wondering if you could go into like some of the social activities of 'youse guys'. What did you do for fun while you were in Washington?

HH: We went to the NCO Club a lot. I was there for Martin Luther King's funeral. I was in charge, of course, the night that he was shot. And they took myself and another white girl off and put two black girls on because of the riots. I was there for Bobby Kennedy's funeral.

Van Ells: You were there in '68, that's right.

HH: Right. I was there for both of those. We used to go to Georgetown a lot. I love Georgetown. We had a freak incident there once. We had this foreign guy follow us around one night. We came out of the Crazy Horse Bar --

Van Ells: You and some other --

HH: Sue, another Sue. My best friend. And we told the cab driver because he kept following us. He followed us and he called in, he turned the meter off and the guy followed us right to the police station. He didn't even know where he was at. But he couldn't speak English. He knew, I think he knew we were military and, you know, it was really scary because, you know, they grabbed him right out of the cab. The police officers did. It was like, just get us home. But we had the Army, Air Force, Marines and they all four of us were right together. So we were one big

happy family. Except for the women. Cat claws come out when women, 400 women live in the same barracks.

Van Ells: See now, I was going to ask about how you all got along. You mentioned the cat claws and things like that. Perhaps you could describe some of the, little bit about, some of the other women with whom you served. Where'd they come from, what were your impressions of them.

HH: Oh, gosh. Well, Sue is my best friend. She was from, she's an Army brat. Settled in Carlisle. Angie was from Chicago, very rough black girl. Loved her dearly. Couldn't take her, still in that era, we went to parks in DC and around Virginia and we couldn't get into two of them because we couldn't take a black person with us. You're talking 1967, '68 and it was really scary. Nicki was from Binghamton, New York. She was gay, lesbian, I should say. Oh, gosh. And Janet. Janet was really, I can't remember where Janet was from but she was just a tiny little mite, sweetheart. Pat McCuhen was something else. She was funny. She was a Southern girl but she was hysterical. I can't remember, Doris Denny was from Louisiana? She was an NCO and then she went, when Sue and I got out she became captain. Went to OCS school. And we still are looking for her. She was one of our favorites.

Van Ells: Oh, so you've been in contact with most of these other women again?

HH: I've seen Sue. No, I've seen Sue 6 times in 28 years, which was just 2 weeks ago I saw her. Otherwise we haven't. There was one girl from Madison I was in basic with. She got kicked out. I've seen her maybe twice in the last 28 years. Not a lot in common. I'm the "God, country and apple pie" type and she was, 'I'm so glad I got out of that Army.' So. But there was so many, on the first two floors we had all Army. The third floor was the Navy and the fourth floor was the Air Force. Only the Air Force was really picky because only the perfect people from the Air Force could go to the Pentagon. I mean, all those girls were sharp looking, intelligent, you know. I'm not saying some of us weren't but. And those, we got along with the Air Force girls, not because of you. But the Navy girls really.

Van Ells: I was going to ask if there were inter-service rivalries. A lot of the student workers around here, they all just got out of the Army, and people kid each other about 'lazy Air Force people' or 'Army grunts' or whatever the case may be.

HH: And BAMs.

Van Ells: I don't know what a BAM is. B-A-M-S?

HH: And that was the hardest part with them because --

Van Ells: I don't know what a BAM is.

HH: Broad Ass Marine [whispered].

Van Ells: Oh, I see.

HH: And of course, they would come to our NCO club right and they'd try to take over and, of course, that wasn't going to happen. We fought with them verbally, constantly. It was really bad. Really bad.

Van Ells: Was it, they were braggarts or something?

HH: Oh, big time. And I mean, I have to admit, they did have, they stood inspection every single morning, still in the Pentagon. We had it once a year. And they never let us -- Of course, it was our NCO club and we, they'd be out on the dance floor and be really crude. We'd run over and say something and we'd run like hell home because our WAC barracks, at that time, were right across the street from the NCO club before they moved us up the north post. And, of course, we never go out after dark without escorts because we know they'd beat us up. Oh, we had a big time rivalry.

Van Ells: That sounds serious.

HH: It was. We were afraid. They're big girls. I didn't see any small women Marines.

Van Ells: Interesting.

HH: Yeah. Scary.

Van Ells: So where is the barracks for the Pentagon enlisted personnel? I'm not that familiar with Washington.

HH: It's, well, we were at Fort Meyer, Virginia on north post. Which we were at south post, I was there, for a year and a half. We had a tunnel that we could just walk to work. Just go through the tunnel. Across the street from our WAC detachment. It was really nice. But then we had one WAC that was raped in the tunnel 'cause we had a lot of them that weren't top secret and night shift and anything and one was coming home. So then they made us take the bus. And then they moved us up to our new \$4 million barracks. Then we had to be bussed all the time 'cause it was quite a ways away.

Van Ells: Okay. So you get orders for Vietnam. Did you volunteer for service?

HH: Yes.

Van Ells: You volunteered to go over?

HH: Correct.

Van Ells: And then you got your orders to go. So this had to be late '68? Early '69?

HH: It was like October of '68 I got my orders because I went on leave December 3 until January 3, '69 cause I had to be in Bien Hoa January 4. And I got to California and I cried my head off. I didn't know where I was going, what I was doing. I bawled all night. I never slept. Like what did I do to myself? I'm like, "That's a real war; it's not a movie now Sue." You know, I did.

Van Ells: You were scared.

HH: I was petrified. It was like, what did I get myself into? I met these wonderful people on the plane. Thank God. When I got on my way to San Francisco and they got me a hotel room and helped, they drove me. Yeah. His little 80 year old mother. They picked her up and they said, 'We'll take care of you.' They could have been muggers, you know. Here I am and I'm trusting. I'm from a small town of 200 people, what the heck. And the next morning I'm like where do I go? What do I do? I finally just made my bus within seconds. And I'm like, this is it. It's all over but the crying. And I'd done enough of that.

Van Ells: Did you get on the plane?

HH: Midnight, yes. Stopped in Hawaii and they said, 'Everyone off.' I said, 'You got me on this plane, I'm not getting off until Vietnam.' The pilot said, what did he call me? I can't remember. He called me sergeant or something. I was a Spec 5, 4. He said, 'You have to get off.' He said, 'I'll carry you off if you don't.' I said, 'I don't know if I'll get back on.' He goes, 'Trust me, we'll take care of you.' So I did get back on.

Van Ells: And you did get back on.

HH: Then I get to Guam. Mama-san stole my pearl and my watch. We'd just stopped there for refueling and got off. Of course, I'm sitting next to this major on the plane. They put WACS with officers on the flight going over and back because they figure officers have more respect for women personnel.

Van Ells: Was that true?

HH: No, not with this man it wasn't. He was a nasty man. And he knew --

Van Ells: Was he hostile? Was he sexually suggestive?

HH: All of the above. Very sarcastic, very sexual. He knew I was scared to death of flying so he harassed me about it. Constantly, all the way. And when we got to

Nam, you know, when you flew into Vietnam, you didn't circle an airport to go in because you could be shot down. So you come straight in. And I don't look out windows; I pull the shade down. He's going, 'Look it.' You could see all the mortar holes and everything. And when we got really close to ground I do look. But, you know, we landed there and I'm like, oh my God; the intense heat and all these guys with the red boots, you know, that clay. It was like, now what did I do. And they're all looking at us. They're heading on our plane, we weren't even off of it, to get on it to go home.

Van Ells: They're going home, right?

HH: Big time. And it's like, 'See ya later suckers. Bye rookies.' It's like, oh, no. But I got to Bien Hoa and I stood around there for like five hours before they came and got me.

Van Ells: Just on the, on the tarmac I suppose there was a building or something?

HH: Well, I was in the office watching everybody fill sandbags. You know, everybody that comes into Nam, the first week you just stay right there and fill sandbags. Except, thank God, I was in a dress. Cause otherwise I would have been filling sandbags.

Van Ells: And you were there for how long then?

HH: One year.

Van Ells: No, I mean --

HH: Oh, five hours at that God awful place. And they finally came and picked me up. And they got me to the WAC detachment. I went to bed. That's all I remember. It was really, I won't tell you that part. But it was scary. My roommates, all 4 had gone to Hong Kong on R&R --

Van Ells: Just recently before you got there?

HH: The day I got there. And Sue was there, my friend. And so it was really hard 'cause I was like by myself. Of course, we had a lot of problems because there was so many lesbians. Out of 82 of us, 42 were lesbians.

Van Ells: You brought up the subject --

HH: I mean, I'm not going to get in trouble?

Van Ells: No.

HH: I mean, it's just between you and I.

Van Ells: Well, no. I mean there's a, historians will be able to read this.

HH: I don't care. That's fine, I mean.

Van Ells: Well, no one's going to get in trouble.

HH: The first night I was there I was attacked by one of them.

Van Ells: Attacked or --

HH: Sexually. She tried to.

Van Ells: Forcefully.

HH: Yes. And I won't tell you what I said. I don't think that should go down in anything. But she never came near me again. Matter of fact, none of them did.

Van Ells: I see.

HH: You had to learn to take care of your own very best. But we had our clique and they had theirs. There was forty of us that were really good friends. And see there, you got along really well. I guess because you had such a small amount where you're at. You're in a war. You're not there to fight each other. So our camaraderie was really great.

Van Ells: So everyone generally got along? You traveled in different circles --

HH: Those forty-two got theirs and us forty had ours. And some of them we got along with, you know. But all in all it was --

Van Ells: And so was this sort of thing more prevalent in Vietnam than it was, say, in Washington then? Or was it sort of military wide? How would you --

HH: Well, basic training we had them aced out. They had a large quantity thrown out at that time. But in DC, we did not see as much. I mean, we knew our roommate. But then again I was never confronted by any more. But then you get, you've got 500 girls, you know, so I don't know. In Vietnam because it was such a small area and everybody knew and nobody held it back. The only ones thrown out of Vietnam were the women that were pregnant. They have seventy-two hours to ship them out of Nam.

Van Ells: That was a common practice.

HH: When would come over and the other one got pregnant while on R&R. But, zoom! They're gone. It was great though. After I got there the 826 Ordinance right from Madison was there.

Van Ells: Oh, is that right?

HH: So a lot of my friends were there. Yeah.

Van Ells: So you were stationed in Bien Hoa, also.

HH: No, I was in Long Binh.

Van Ells: I remember that. Long Binh. Refresh my geography a little bit. How far away is that from Bien Hoa, where you landed?

HH: About 20 miles is all.

Van Ells: To the north.

HH: Right. Yup. Yeah, that was, you don't hear -- You know, we weren't allowed to ride in open vehicles. Women. Supposedly. Of course, we did lots of times.

Van Ells: Supposedly. But it didn't always work that way in practice.

HH: That's right. Don't do as I do, do -- No. But, and we had a bus that had just been hit. We lived at the ammo dump in the beginning, okay. Right across in tents. But it kept getting hit all the time so they build the WAC detachment over by, not that far from the Long Binh jail.

Van Ells: The famed LBJ.

HH: You got it! -- [LAUGHTER] --Infamous. Ooh. And so they built us, you know, hooches, we called them. And air conditioners. But it was really funny 'cause all the guys that were with the 826th Armored were at the ammo dump. Before we had Tet [The Second Tet Offensive of January 1969, ed.], my first month, the guys would come over in deuce and a halves and pick you up and you go. After we got hit in February of '68, or '69, I'm sorry, we were seven nights in February and eight days in a bunker. Now there is when the cat claws came out.

Van Ells: Okay, so this is right after you got here then?

HH: Yeah, a month. A little over a month.

Van Ells: Suddenly your base is being attacked.

HH: Yeah. They killed a hundred Vietcong right outside the WAC detachment. As soon as we had incoming, that was the heaviest fighting that we had that year. Long Binh and I can't think of where else it was, Big Red One?

Van Ells: Yeah. July? I can't remember.

HH: I've got it at home. It's a picture, I've got the article framed and, of course, I finally had it framed 'cause it was getting wrecked. Like I said, we'd bring in 200 GIs right over to the WAC detachment. 100 inside and 100 outside the fence and that night they killed, they said, approximately 100 right outside the WAC detachment. 'Cause they bombed the bank, right across the street. And, of course, I was in the top bunk. Well, I fell on the floor. I mean, we were just bombed right out of bed. And that's when we spent those 7 nights and 8 days in the bunkers. We were always told, keep your canteen full. Well, the women that didn't have then full, you know, wanted your water and you didn't know how long you were going to be there. Of course, you're looking out of the bunkers like this and they had all these helicopters that were just had the ladders hanging down because they thought they'd have to evacuate us. It's like, I'm not climbing that! They'll shoot me for sure in the back. I'm not doing it.

Van Ells: Describe one of these bunkers. It's something that's on the base. It's a --

HH: It's just a sandbag, it's board with sandbags over it. Just tons of sandbags.

Van Ells: It's not dug in?

HH: Not to the ground. It's above the ground. And the door is probably not even up to where it says 'Space Saver' [indicates a shelf, ed.]. It's just a little door, you have to duck to get in.

Van Ells: About five feet or so?

HH: Not even five feet probably. And just boards. You sit straight up on wood.

Van Ells: Does this afford much protection from artillery? I can't imagine it would be too effective.

HH: I think that the sandbags are probably like 4 thick. The only opening is there. Bombing, forget it. You're not going to, let's be real here.

Van Ells: Well, obviously though, you came through it.

HH: Well, the bank got it. Right across, you walk like from here, you know, you walk out the front door into the sidewalk across the street where the first car's parked. That's how close we were to the bank. But that was the last time we were bombed, like, that close. We went back to work and -- the binoculars and watched, they were coming through the perimeter, and we watching the gun fights. And that was like, oh my God.

Van Ells: And what did you think then? You already had apprehensions of it going there in the first place. You're there no longer than a week or two.

HH: No, I was there a month.

Van Ells: A month.

HH: And being the rookie, like, I want to go home, of course. But you get, you know. You have to, you have to. You saw so much at the hospital where we, we lived, we ate at the hospital. We had a path from, oh gosh, probably 100 yards that we walked. It was all jungle on both sides. And at the time, the 8th day they let us out of the bunkers, we had 2 women could go to breakfast at a time with 8 males surrounding them because it was all jungle and snipers. It's like, I'm not really hungry. Sue goes, 'Come on. Let's go. We haven't had anything but crackers and water for 7 days.' And we did walk, the guys walked us all over. But it was very, very, you were so scared by the time you got over there you couldn't even eat because you didn't want scrambled eggs with cockroaches anyway. You got so sick of that it's like 'C' rations started to taste great. And we got back safe. But every time you left the hospital you always saw something gory or sad, you know. And I met a guy that, I'll have to tell you this story. I've got to find, I have found him. I just have to have the courage to see him. He was from Beloit and he hit a mine and both arms, legs and half of his face. Jeff, I found him a year ago and I met at the hospital because we had to have our checkups.

Van Ells: Uh hum. In Madison here?

HH: No, no. In Vietnam. Every two months we had to have a checkup. I just happened to be there for mine and I saw this guy and started, the nurse said, 'You people from Wisconsin are the roughest, foulest most people I have ever met.' And when he came, he was not really coming to, but when he was kind of. Right, he was 18, was a quarterback in high school in Beloit she said. She gave me a history on him. Every other word out of his mouth was --

Van Ells: The big, bad one? -- [LAUGHTER]

HH: F - the big word. Oh, I couldn't believe it. I'm like, oh, she's right.

Van Ells: I wonder if maybe you could describe some of your daily work routine. Now, as WACs you spent a year over there just like the other troops, too. And you were an administrative, you were in personnel was it?

HH: Right.

Van Ells: Describe maybe your work place, your daily duties, who you worked with. That sort of thing.

HH: We had twenty-six people in our office. Major, there was a major, myself, another major and then, we had 3 majors in our office. And then the rest of us, the 23 of us, were E-2s through E-5s. 'Cause E-6s and the rest had their own little cubicles. We, basically, assigned E-1s through E-6s within Vietnam and anybody that wanted to be reassigned, everybody wanted to be a door gunner in Vietnam. Medics wanted to be door gunners. Everybody wanted to be a door gunner. So we handled all that. And then, for 6 months Gary and I had to handle all the statistics on the dead. How they were killed, when they were killed, where they were killed, who got their money and send it down to the escort service. Escort service, it sounds like, you know what I'm saying. Thank you. Please don't put it that way. And we did that for six months. It was really depressing so it's reassigned to someone else for six months.

Van Ells: Now, we spoke earlier and apparently that sort of duty you can only do that for a certain amount of time.

HH: Yeah, I did it for six months. Then I transferred to Usicap, engineer construction agency. And I worked in real estate.

Van Ells: This is on the same base? Or same post in the Army?

HH: It was across from USARV Headquarters in another headquarters building. But then I worked half the time out of their and half the time out of Saigon. We had a villa in Saigon and that was our office and I would work there like two days, two and a half days a week. And what I did was, and monthly I had to take all the checks that, we rented these, take these to jail because the people that owned the villas were all French and they lived in France. But the people that were there, what do you call them? I'm trying to think of the word. They managed them, I guess you'd say. They would all be in jail. So I had to go over to the jail in Saigon and have them sign for these hundreds of thousands dollars.

Van Ells: They were in jail for what?

HH: I have no-- I never asked. I'm not asking a Vietnamese anything. Very hard time even speaking to them today, which I don't do. I really liked Saigon. It was --

Van Ells: Why don't you go with that, as Dr. Hartley says. What did you like about Saigon? Did you get there often? What did you like about it? What did you do?

HH: I shouldn't say I really liked it. I, you know, Colonel Veisel took me to Cholon. We went down --

Van Ells: That's the Chinese section of town as I recall.

HH: Yeah. We went for dinner and god awful drinks. It was dirty, I shouldn't say it was dirty; it's smelly, it's the food hanging -- it's just unreal. I mean people just go where ever they want to to the rest room and there's no modesty here. But I also found it, the down town, down town, was beautiful. We, Sue and I, one day decided to walk to Saigon on Highway 1.

Van Ells: Which is how long?

HH: Oh, probably thirty, thirty-five miles. Not a wise idea on Highway 1. The major, big target. Well, we got out the door and an American citizen picked us up in a jeep.

Van Ells: Civilian.

HH: Civilian. And he got us, he took us right to Saigon. Now, Mark, we were from here, oh probably ten yards away, and we just came around a corner and boom! This guy had his head blown off right there. Some sniper. Sue and I looked --

Van Ells: American or Vietnamese?

HH: Vietnamese. Was walking down the street and the guy just -- Sue and I were like, oh my god. Take us somewhere for a drink. So he took us to the American Emba--er, Club. And we drank a lot. It, just seeing that. It could have been one of us. We kept saying that. And then we met some people and they took us to the country club in Saigon. What a place, beautiful. It makes some of them around here look tacky. It was just beautiful place. And we had a few more there. I can't remember, we had to get back to Long Binh. We've got thirty-five at least miles to go. So we walk to the Saigon Bridge. Now, you remember, when you get to the Saigon Bridge anybody on foot on the Saigon Bridge is shot immediately. Because just before I got there some Vietnamese had stopped his vehicle, jumped out and took off running and blew it up and killed everybody. So anybody caught walking on it or running, was shot immediately. Ask questions later. So we knew we couldn't get on the bridge. So we're standing there going like this. Nobody's picking us up. Pretty soon these two humongous Koreans, I mean big! They can't speak one word of English. We can't speak one word of Korean and we know we can't touch them.

You can touch them like this, you can't touch them with 1 hand. Superstition or whatever. And Sue's like, 'Sue, you're my best friend. I love you buddy. I know we're going to be killed. I know it. It's over with. Our lives. Why did we do this?' Know how fast we sobered up? Oh, gosh. Anyway, finally we saw a convoy coming of Americans. And we went. So, they stopped and we took off running back to the convoy. These guys are like, 'You girls are crazy!' We said, 'We know it.' We were also drinking. We thought for sure we were done for. We had, never again did we try anything quite that silly.

Van Ells: You learn from your mistakes.

HH: Boy, what a mistake that was. I guess you work all day, the things you saw, you know, every time the choppers came in with the wounded. You know, my second day in Nam I got up that morning, went to breakfast and my first thing I came out and the bus came and I got on it. I'm sitting there and this chopper came in and they pulled this guy off. He had nothing on but one boot and there was a doctor sitting on top of him. There was two doctors over here and three nurses over here and they're going as fast as they can into the emergency room with him. It was like, that was my second. You know, it got, there six at night. The next morning at eight o'clock, this is what I see and say, 'Oh, my god.' You know, reality just sets in. I mean, even though you're there, you haven't seen anything yet. It's like, oh my gosh. And then you have to go to that hospital. So it does make you grow up fast, or whatever. Get serious fast.

Van Ells: I'm sure. Uhm, perhaps you could discuss what you did for fun while you were in Vietnam. You mentioned going to Saigon once or twice. What did you do after work?

HH: Actually, we watched movies, drank beer. We couldn't leave the WAC detachment. After Tet, the first month I was there, after we got hit, we worked from seven until six and we had to come right to the WAC detachment. We could not go anywhere.

Van Ells: So you weren't allowed to visit with any of the guys on the base and that sort of thing?

HH: No one. We were in our own little world there. They could come to the WAC detachment and visit until ten o'clock. But we could not leave it. There was a couple of times you could get around that. A couple of times we got around that. Sue and I were very clever at things.

Van Ells: Did you just sneak under the fence?

HH: No. We would say to our sergeant, 'Can we take off work early?' And we'd go to the NCO club and every time they'd have incoming. Well, you'd have to leave the

NCO club, right? We'd have to go to the bunkers which was across the street but the guys we worked with, the twenty-one guys we worked with, and of course we call our first sergeant and say 'We're getting off early. We're going.' So we had covered ourselves. But we, and of course, we never stayed in the bunkers because they had a beautiful bar and refrigerator and cold beer and we'd call our first sergeant and say, 'Haack and Shungle are, well we're at this certain area' and she'd say, and their sergeant would do it for us. Well you get them home as soon as this is over. Well, we never got home before midnight no matter what. We'd have a ball. But our guys treated us like sisters. I mean, there was so much respect. I mean, protected us. We still talk about them today. Some of them were just great guys. It's nice to be that spoiled by twenty-one guys. You know, 'cause some could say we don't like you, or we don't like her. But it wasn't like that at all. It was great. But we found ways around everything.

Van Ells: I was going to ask how the men and women got along. It seems, from your experience at least, that the guys accepted you women pretty much.

HH: Oh, true. I only had one person, Mikey Cox. I'll never forget him. He was an E-3 and I was -- at that time I worked for General Tar Box at Usicav. I was over at that headquarters. And, Colonel Hargraves, I was his Admin Specialist. I had 2 people under me in his office and Mike Cox refused to take orders from a woman. And of course, I never gave him orders. I asked him to do things. There, of course, we didn't have lovely electric typewriters.

Van Ells: This is the 'hunt and peck' type.

HH: Oh, it was just -- big time. And he just refused to. And he was busted eight times. Because he just refused to take orders from a woman. So it was like, just get rid of him for me. Which finally they had to do. I said, 'Mike you're so silly because you're sitting in an office. Now you're going to go up north.' And you know what happens up north. You're not sitting in an office, you're going to have a gun. He didn't care though. He just was adamant about not taking this.

Van Ells: Did he go up north?

HH: You bet 'cha. You buy or Fu Bai, we say in Nam. That's right. And Fu Bai was one place you didn't want to go. Quang Tri, Quang Tri City, Quang Tri Army.

Van Ells: Right on the DMZ.

HH: You bet 'cha. Yeah. We did that to every rookie that came in. We were bad. Take them to the NCO club and say, 'You buy or Fu Bai.' 'Where's that?'

Van Ells: You'll find out real quick.

HH: Don't get us mad.

Van Ells: When I was in the military; I was in the Air Force, and drinking was a big part of social activities. In Vietnam, whether it's accurate or not, the drug abuse is also a noted thing. Could you, do you have any experiences with that or comments on that? Did you observe any sort of thing in those two areas?

HH: The drug situation was, I've heard many people say, I've not said this but I've been told, that drugs were a lot of reasons they were killed, some of them were killed, because it's like jello and their reactions were slower. You know, when we had incoming to get down. It was a lot of marijuana. Marijuana was so easily accessible. You can't believe it. I mean, you handed momma san a pack of Salem cigarettes she'll give you back a perfectly packed Marlboro pack with all marijuana in it. It was, you'd never know it was opened. It was amazing what they could do. And it was so, I said fifteen cents for a pack of cigarettes and you got all that marijuana. Sue and I were not the drug type. We drank. I mean, we didn't drink every day, of course. When you work six days a week, seven to six, and then one day we worked seven till noon. We had half a day a week off. And that's when our fun was. And we had a pool at the WAC detachment. And I'm a sun worshipper so I liked to lay in the sun a lot. But the drugs, it was a shame that they were so free because I think a lot of the problems, even to this day with the PTSD could be somewhat with, you know, getting the easy access over there.

Van Ells: In your experience, was there a type that would get involved in that sort of, the drug activity and that sort of thing, that you noticed? Was it more prevalent among combat soldiers than administrative people, such as yourself? Was it more common among Northerners than Southerners? Any sort of thing you might have noticed?

HH: Uhm, how do I? Actually, I don't think there was much differentiation. Because of the fact that I know the combat soldiers did it a lot more because of the fact that they were out in the field. We were too close. We were administration in a building all day long. But I don't think, I think maybe, I can't even say that. I won't say that. And you can't say there was any difference between Black and White either. And there's a lot of people that went over there that didn't even smoke cigarettes at all that turned around and started smoking marijuana. But it was relief, a way of being able to cope with the situation at times. And actually, a lot of times it got them killed. Of course, it wasn't just marijuana. There's other drugs that they had, too.

Van Ells: Yeah, I guess heroin was very cheap as well.

HH: Yeah. Cocaine, hash-hash, whatever. I tried it once. But I'm allergic to it.

Van Ells: So once only.

HH: Yes. It almost killed me. I ended up in the hospital. Yes. And I really didn't get that big a thrill off it. And Sue tried it, we tried it together. You know, it was a curiosity thing. And it was our first and last time ever. But it wasn't worth it. Out the back of the old NCO club. And then you're as paranoid as hay because you know you're going to get caught. It wasn't worth it. And we paid twenty-four cents for, fifteen cents for beer, twenty-four cents for cigarettes.

Van Ells: So it was pretty cheap.

HH: Yeah.

Van Ells: 'Cause I know things were cheaper back in those days but you couldn't get a 6-pack at the quickie mart here for that price.

HH: Uh um. Well, we had such a kick out of our situation. We had a girl, Virna, who was nineteen. She was an E-6. She could buy booze at the PX but she was only nineteen. Sue and I turned twenty-one in Vietnam. No, I take that back, we were twenty. We turned twenty-one when we came home. We were E-5's and we couldn't buy it. You know, and she was just, had to be supposedly, but she was a girl. We got away with a lot. And she was very pretty young lady. So they tend to spoil us, too. We didn't have a problem. We had problems when they came out of the fields. Hadn't seen a 'round eye' for months. It was scary.

Van Ells: What sort of problems? The guys were scary?

HH: Oh, I mean, they would grab you and they sat us on their laps and wouldn't let us go and just sexually abusive to us. Physically and verbally. In the bar. You know, and finally the manager had to come over and let them go or we'll call the police, the MP's. It's like, we don't mind talking to you but, they were just brazen. Of course, you've got to understand that too. That's not fair of me to be that way but --

Van Ells: I take it that wasn't typical though.

HH: Wasn't?

Van Ells: Wasn't typical.

HH: Not that bad but it was to the point were you just, you know, I haven't seen a 'round eye' for six months. And a lot of them at least wanted to talk about their wives or their girlfriends and stuff to you more than being that way. 'Cause every, you had what the 9th infantry, the 4th, they all thought they were better than anybody else. You know, each unit thought they were the best. And you know that in anything. And so they'd brag. But you fell in love every day. There's 25,000 men at Long

Binh, so it was cute. When you're nineteen and twenty and fickle. But it was the greatest. I don't think, the only experience I had basically after that was when I came home eight years ago when my brother died. A Vietnam vet spit in my face because he said women didn't belong there. A Vietnam vet. And that's the scary part for me.

Van Ells: This was the era of civil rights and all that sort of thing. Now, I know after the 1968 Tet Offensive, race relations in the military got worse. You were there it wasn't that long after 1968. Did you, was there a lot of racial tensions that you picked up on where you were?

HH: Big time. Yes. We had, well the black women and the white women and we, the white women, could not, anything we did we would get in trouble for. Like swearing, anything over 'damn' or 'hell' was punishable.

Van Ells: From your superior CO or something?

HH: Yes. Our CO. And when it came to the black women, some of the words that came out of their mouths you wouldn't even believe. And they, we'd be standing next to our first sergeant and she would choose to have to ignore it because there would, they let it go. And of course, we'd say something about it to her and she'd just say leave it lay. So we were at the point, everything was unfair to us. And of course, they'd yell at you. Yeah, it was big time. I felt. I mean, Sue does too. We both feel that way, that we were treated unfairly because you had to walk on egg shells not to. And I don't know about the field because the black guys I worked with were great. Actually great. I had no problem with them. In the field there'd be more a combat situation. As far as that goes, you know, my brother type of thing. He never says anything about it. I really, it's hard for me to talk about except for what I went through myself. It made me very bitter.

Van Ells: Did it get worse over time? The relations, or is pretty much the same demeanor or temper the whole time you were there? Did it change over time?

HH: Yeah. I think when I left, they were there, we were here. It was just it got to that point where I think we, the Blacks stayed there and the Whites were here. We just didn't have a friendship. We tolerated each other and hi and good-bye. I was just glad I left when I did. At the time. Yeah. I don't think it got any better. I mean, that's my feeling.

Van Ells: Yeah. And so WACs were rotated in and out of there like the guys were. Like the combat units. So there was a constantly fluctuating group of people going in there?

HH: As far as, I'm trying to remember. I think it was months before, after I got there, there was months before we had any new people. A lot of it was the same women

were just re-upping and coming back. Cause you got such a big, fat chunk of money. You know, if I'd have re-upped. I missed it by one day. I just well, I'm going to re-up for six more months which will get me \$15,000, \$25,000 tax free. I went in and my first sergeant said, 'Oh, Haack, you missed it by a day.' So I couldn't come back which I wasn't sorry for really.

Van Ells: But some people were able to extend their tours?

HH: Oh sure. Women, some women were on their second tour. Oh yeah. Big time.

Van Ells: Consecutive?

HH: Uh hum. They'd get a thirty day leave, come back, spend another year.

Van Ells: I see.

HH: And I was, when I left, trust me, that last week I didn't think I was going to make it. I really didn't. It was just, I was whacking out. That's a pun there, but it was bad. Cockroaches. You'd wake up with them on your face, in your bed, on your pillow, on your body, and you had mosquito net and still they got in. Those little lizards. It was just like, I couldn't take it anymore. You'd open up your toothpaste drawer and you had it closed in a cover, you still got inside. And I was like if I don't get out of here. Maybe it was fate that I went a day late 'cause I'd probably hate myself, I'm going back to that?!

Van Ells: Perhaps. So you spent a year in Vietnam. Did you get out in the countryside much? Did you have any impressions of the country? You mentioned some things briefly when you got off the airplane. Did you find the jungle scary or romantic or whatever the case may be? Relations with the Vietnamese people, that sort of thing. Do you have any comments on that?

HH: We had a lady that we worked with, Miss [Hung?]. She worked in our office. And of course, the girl before me, when I took over as the 71 Lima Admin Specialist, Angi had it. And she was a black girl. We got along great. She married an Australian. But her and I used to sneak choppers all the time.

Van Ells: Sneak choppers?

HH: Well, we'd get on choppers.

Van Ells: Oh, get on choppers.

HH: Yeah. We'd get on a chopper and fly to Saigon and you see a lot of countryside. And we went to Foo Loi and Cu Chi. They always invited the WACs everywhere.

They all wanted to have them there. Girls, 'round eyes.' So we got to go, and our first sergeant went a couple of times which ruined it. No, I'm only kidding. But, I'll never forget. I was flying up to Foo Loi and I had a slide in my hand. I was looking and it went like that and of course I, silly me, I never wear a seat belt when I got on a chopper. I'm brave. And I saw that slide go slowly out and I thought I'll buckle up today. Oh, Mark, it was like, why did I do that? All those times I rode those. And then I found the guy that was door gunner next to me, he was from, had gone to the University of Wisconsin-Madison. So there I am, on this plane, stepping out of the seat, out of the chopper, around the corner into the door gunner's seat to sit with this guy. And to this day, why did I ever do something like that? And then my first sergeant, and we're talking away and he goes, 'Want to hold my gun?' And I'm like, no, 'cause we fly low. And my first sergeant goes, 'Haack, get your back here now.' I said, 'I can't. I said look, I'll have to walk back outside.' I had to step around. I said, 'I can't. I'm afraid of heights.' 'You got over there. Get back.' And then Bill, the guy we met from Wisconsin, was like, 'We're going to land in about five minutes, Sergeant. It's okay, I guess.'

[END OF TAPE 1]

HH: I met a guy out in San Diego who wrote a book called "Men in Green Faces". He is the author and he was in the book. Michael Jackson has it right now. I'm letting him --

Van Ells: Your copy of it?

HH: Yeah. I'm letting Michael read it. He autographed it for me. Michael's also got my book he's in.

Van Ells: He's in a --

HH: Michael Jackson and Terry Musser. Yeah. Those guys are in a book.

Van Ells: Really?

HH: Uh hum.

Van Ells: Oh, I didn't know that.

HH: Yes. I'll have to bring it to you sometime, let you read it. Just look it over --

Van Ells: Get the title and we can get it from our library here for the gift shop.

HH: Oh, yeah.

Van Ells: As long as I have a title, that's just fine.

HH: Terry will probably donate one. He's a state legislator. You know Terry Musser.

Van Ells: No, I don't know him. I know Michael Jackson but I don't know Terry.

HH: Terry's a Vietnam veteran, two tours. State legislator. I told him --

Van Ells: His name does sound familiar.

HH: Yeah. Ray Boland knows him real well.

Van Ells: That would be interesting.

HH: Yeah.

Van Ells: Okay, where were we? Your last days in Vietnam, you're about ready to wig out.

HH: Dinky Dow. I was Dinky Dow.

Van Ells: Okay. So, you had a specific amount of time you were going to be in Vietnam. Did you find yourself counting the days? When you got short, as they say?

HH: From the first day you're there you start counting.

Van Ells: I mean literally.

HH: The short timers. The stats in Vietnam you know that you're either killed the first month or so you're there or when you get to be a short timer, you get careless again 'cause you know you're going home. And that the stats say is you're either killed early in the war or later in the war, you know the end of the war. And if you read books, you know, you find that out. Just like about, well, Sunday, Bob Jauch was in the paper. Remember reading about that? That kid was coming home in February, well he got there and he was killed in August, I think it was.

Van Ells: I can't remember off hand.

HH: Yeah. I was thinking that came to my mind, he wasn't, hadn't been there that long. Like a month and a half. And he was gone. And that's basically they say is all true, too.

Van Ells: And did you find that from your work, when you were working with the statistics?

HH: You know, that's really hard to remember. That's really hard to remember 'cause you handle, sorry to say, so many a day. And then you had flights that came in. One night they got us at ten o'clock at night. Everybody, Sue and I, they came in and woke us up and we had, they liked the planes that come in at night 'cause, you know, it's not as easy a target as day time. So, they had 165 at a time coming in so with two planes at midnight that we got in. But see, there's so many numbers you worked with. I love numbers but it was like you can't remember everything.

Van Ells: Yeah.

HH: You just remember sad cases. Working with the escort service, one sergeant, this really bothers me, you know. He was eighteen years old. Escorted his body back to his parents, and they were divorced and they were sitting on the couch and he had the, the body was in the driveway, and she said, 'Well, I had custody of him so I get the money.' And he said, 'Well, you had custody but he's lived with me since he was 14 because he didn't want to live you.' And she says, 'It doesn't matter. I had legal custody so I get the money.' And the sergeant goes, 'You two make me sick.' He said, 'There lays your 18 year old son, outside, in an ambulance that we brought back and you haven't asked once about him, where we should take him, or made any arrangements.' He said, 'You two make me sick.' And he walked out the door. He just found the local funeral parlor and -- I mean, things like that that are so hard for us to take. You just want to smash these people. I mean, you're so hurt, you can't believe people can be so cruel over fifteen lousy thousand dollars. A body that's gone. Didn't have a chance to enjoy life.

Van Ells: So, do you remember getting on a plane to leave?

HH: You bet 'cha.

Van Ells: Why don't you describe that. How you felt, what you did.

HH: Oh, at midnight we left Long Binh. There was a bus full and you could hear a pin drop. We were all so afraid that we weren't going to get on that plane 'cause, you know, it was just scary. I was more afraid, I think, then than any other time I'd been there because it's like I know I'm not going to get home. Something's going to happen. But we stood, it was 110 degrees and we were standing there in the tents in this big open field. This airport, and it's just a tent, and it's all open, no sides on it. It's like, is that plane ever going to get here. And, of course, when it finally came in, I was, it's such a flash back because you're thinking, and you're yelling at these guys, 'Hey rookies. Bye suckers.' It's exactly what they were saying to me a year ago. It's like, this is rotten of you. No it's not. But you know, it was, you did the same thing. It was a flash back, I'm doing exactly what I got a year ago. And it's like, but in your mind, you're going, oh god, I pity them. I feel so sorry for them because they have no idea what they're getting into. And they're all so clean and fresh in their

little unis and there you are in your old dirty fatigues and worn out. It's like, if you only know, you'll want to stay on that plane and come back home. You just want to take all of them and just put them back on the planes. Say, don't do it. But you can't do it. But, when we took off, it was just like, until we got up far enough where we knew, it was just like the tension, you could cut it with a knife in that plane. Nobody said a word. We got up, we leveled off and then the whole plane just went, we just went bananas. Every one of us screaming and hollering and crying and hugging. And a few of them had cocktails. They weren't supposed to have. But it was so funny because we were all friendly but they all kept saying, 'Oh, god. I want to see a woman, a round eye, not in these kind of clothes.' So we're sitting on the plane and this woman walks out of the cockpit, now she's probably about 6'2" if she's an inch. She's got this big fat cigar in her mouth, not just, and we could smoke then. She's smoking this big, fat Harvester cigar. And one guy turns around and he goes, 'Gosh, she's not looking that bad after all.' It's like, thanks guys very much. But you know, after I got back to the States, we landed at two o'clock in the morning --

Van Ells: At San Francisco?

HH: Oakland. It was like, I wanted to go back to Vietnam. I still did.

Van Ells: Really?

HH: Yeah. I mean, even though I thought it was like hell on earth coming back to the States.

Van Ells: Why was that?

HH: Well, at 2:00 am they took me to the WAC detachment. And I am tired. Twenty-one hours of flying, I'm beat. I said, 'I'm just back from Vietnam. I need a room for the night. You're supposed to give me one.' She goes, 'Okay. Well, we're standing inspection at 6:00 am. You have your ass up and ready for it.' I said, 'Excuse me, it's two o'clock. I just flew in from Vietnam. I'm tired.' She goes, 'You're an E-5, I'm an E-6. You will do what I tell you.' I said the "f" to her and I went to the room. And she said, 'Don't take a shower. They are ready for inspection.' And you know how you can't do that. I took a shower. And I got in bed. The next thing I know, all I heard, I woke up. It's like, 'Who's in here?' She goes, 'This is a WAC that came home from Vietnam last night and I told her to have her butt up for inspection, ma'am.' She goes, 'For God's sake, let her sleep.' And I'm like, thank you, thank you. There is a kind person on this post. So I got up anyway and I was processing out. And processing out was fine. Got all my big bucks and I came out and I met this light colonel and I saluted him. He was in his car and he goes, 'Young lady. Did you just process out of the Army from Vietnam?' And I said, 'Yes, Sir.' And he goes, 'First of all, don't ever salute me again.' And he said, 'Don't call me a Sir. You

don't have to, you don't deserve that.' I said, 'Okay, Sir.' And he goes, 'What did I say?' So he gave me a ride back to the WAC detachment to pick up all my stuff. And these women at this time are my comrades, flipping me the bird, swearing at me. You know, they haven't been to Nam. I think there was just jealousy, whatever you could consider calling it.

Van Ells: Because you're getting out.

HH: Well, no. Because I was a Vietnam vet.

Van Ells: Oh really?

HH: Oh, yeah. They were viscous. Like a 'baby killer'. You know.

Van Ells: Fellow WACs?

HH: Yes. Fellow WACs. That viscous. I mean, flipping me the bird and saying that word to me again. It was like, wow. And of course I'm at that time like, this is the beginning of hell. Okay. So I'm like, not letting it bother me. And then I get to the bus stop. And I have my suitcase and I have my duffle bag and I have got my GI coat. I've got my ex-pair of combat boots. I couldn't get them into anything. And I am, and my purse. The bus driver comes up. Well, I didn't know that you had to have the right amount, right change to get on a bus. And I had a dollar bill. He goes, 'I'm sorry. You can't get on.' It was thirty-five cents I think. I said, 'Oh please, please let me. I just want to get back to Wisconsin.' He goes, I said, 'Take the dollar. I don't want any change, just take the dollar.' He goes, 'You're not getting on this bus, okay?' And this time I'm like, where am I going, I'm out in the middle of nowhere. Where am I going to find -- Little old lady, probably about eighty, I think she said she was eighty-two, she goes, 'I will pay for her.' He goes, 'No.' She said, 'I have that right.' So she put the thirty-five cents in and he had to let me on. So he drops me off at a taxi stand. Now you've got to remember they're lined up there. And my turn in line comes, I get in the cab, I threw my stuff in the cab, I get in the cab and the next thing I know I am being physically picked up and thrown out of the cab onto the ground.

Van Ells: By who?

HH: By this three-piece guy, whoever he was, with his briefcase who said, 'There's no fucking WAC from Vietnam that's going to take a cab before me. Bitch doesn't deserve one.' And the cab driver said, and I'm bawling. I'm hysterically crying. I'm like, 'No let him have it. Let him in.' He goes, 'No way, lady.' He said, 'You were in line, it's your cab and you're taking it.' I said, 'Please don't argue with him. I'll take the next one.' He goes, 'No.' He called into the office and he said, 'We have a problem here. No one's moving until this lady gets her cab.' And I'm like, please, I

don't want to make a scene anymore. I don't want to cause trouble. I just want to go home to my, by this time I'm saying my Dad. My Dad and I were, you know. I just want my Dad. Pretty soon I'm standing there and the guy is in my cab now with my stuff, refusing to get out and let me have it. And he says, the cab driver says to the guy, he goes, 'Look behind you.' Six cab drivers are coming up to physically pull him out like he did me. And I'm like, oh my gosh. So anyway, he finally said, 'Let the bitch have it then.' And then the cab driver, you don't know me, I said, 'Well, where are you going?' through my hysterical crying. He said, 'The airport.' I said, 'So am I.' He said, 'Well, I have to get there.' I said, 'Would you like to share my cab?' He said, 'No.' The cab driver said, 'That's fine. You're going to wait awhile then.' He jumped in my cab, with me, to the airport. That's how kind I am. Idiot that I am. And anyway, we got there and he set his briefcase right between us and he just kept this disgusted look, like you make me sick, and I'm like I didn't do anything. And we get to the airport and, of course, the cab driver opens my door quickly for me and takes my stuff out and he jumped out. I thought he was going to make me pay. And I think he must have had a little remorse because he said, 'I'll pay for the cab.' And took off. Of course then everything's fine. We got our tickets. There was, oh, I met some of the guys from my flight. Six of them are leaving at eleven o'clock, three were leaving at eleven o'clock and six of us were leaving at midnight to go to Chicago. Well, we totally, totally drank in the airport. You know, the crying and the laughter and, of course, we never shared, you never try to share the sad parts. Okay? It's just not a thing. There's a later time you might but we were just telling funny things. Can't wait to get home to this and how silly your sister, whatever, you know. Never really touching on Vietnam anymore. And we were just totally smoked. Get on the plane and I hate to fly, I said, the stewardess was great. She goes, we hadn't even taken off, we're on the ground. We haven't even moved. She goes, 'Would you like a drink?' I said, 'I would love a double Scotch on the rocks.' I was a Scotch drinker then, right? Of course, after a year in Vietnam, a beer. I took two sips out of it and the next thing you know, it's like, 'Miss, we're in Chicago.' It's seven thirty in the morning. That was the best flight I ever had 'cause I hate to fly. So then, low and behold, we're sitting there and they said, 'The plane going to Wisconsin, to Madison from Chicago, is not ready. Now, we'll take a vote. Do you want to take a cold plane and go now or do you want to wait for an hour and a half and let it warm up and then go?'

Van Ells: So this is in March or February or something.

HH: This was January 7th, the morning of January. Oh, actually it was the 8th because I had left Vietnam the 7th. And everybody said, 'We'll leave now. We'll take a cold plane.' They said, 'We'll give you coffee, tea, hot chocolate and blankets.' So, everybody's getting on the plane. I get to get on the plane and she says to everybody in front me, 'Do you want one blanket or two?' And they said one or two. She'd say, 'Coffee or tea or hot chocolate?' And they would take it. The guy in front of me got two, he got a blanket and he got a cup of coffee. And I walked up and she goes, 'Go

find a seat.' That was it. No, do you want a blanket? Do you want anything to drink? No. I'm crying again. I just can't take anymore. So I'm sitting there and a guy, and he goes, he gave me his blanket and he gave me his coffee. And he said, the stewardess came by and he goes, 'Ma'am, could I have a blanket and a cup of coffee?' And she goes, 'No, you gave it to that bitch. You don't get any more.' So this guy, you know, I'm like, no, no. I don't know if I can handle it anymore. So he, he was an exec, in his suit and everything. Very nice. I can still see his face. And he goes, 'I'm writing a letter. There is no reason for that.' So I'm sure he, I want your name, to her and me. I'm sure, I just wanted to get home and forget it all. But I'm sure he did take some steps to have that cured. I mean, and it was like hell. I couldn't believe people could be so cruel.

Van Ells: You think it was because you were in uniform and they know where you were coming from?

HH: Oh, yeah. I'm sure. You know, you've got your patches on from Nam and you know, your boots are. You see, no one wore cami fatigues unless, women didn't unless they were there. And we did not wear the --

Van Ells: So you were in your fatigues through all this?

HH: Right. Yeah, I was in fatigues all the way through it.

Van Ells: I see.

HH: That's what we had to wear. That was our uniform. And no civilian clothes. So, that's the reason I couldn't, until after I got on the plane, after I got my plane ticket, then I could have changed into civies. But what's the sense, you know?

Van Ells: Yeah.

HH: I mean, I only had the flight to go on from Chicago to Madison to what's the sense in changing? Just hurry up and get to the bar.

Van Ells: So you landed in Madison, then? Folks came to pick you up?

HH: My Dad was there. Took me home, "What do you want? Anything you want is yours today." I said, "I want a bowl of tomato soup." I took two bits and said, "Dad, I'm too sick to eat it." He said, "Well, you go take a nap and I will, I'll be back home from work at about five o'clock." So I laid down and the next thing I know my stepmom's going, "Hey, sleepy head. Are you going to get up pretty soon?" I said, "What time is it?" She goes, "It's four o'clock." I said, "I've only been sleeping since one o'clock." She said, "One o'clock yesterday afternoon. It's four o'clock the following day." I slept a long time; didn't hear a thing all that time.

I couldn't believe it. You know, it's really weird but I was just exhausted from everything.

Van Ells: Jet lag and --

HH: Emotions and, yeah, yeah. It's really, but it takes you a long time, too, after you get back to, you see things that are so funny. You see somebody that's standing outside, I'm like, 'Daddy, that man's peeing on the road.' He's like, 'Susie, you're in Wisconsin.' You forget 'cause you're so used to seeing the things these people did. And then, we seen hundreds of those little monkeys, mean little, they were outside the detachment all the time. I had a friend that caught one of those and he had it for a pet. Oh, gosh.

Van Ells: Was he tamable?

HH: No. They are mean! Viscous! He had that bugger locked up. You know how he let him go. He was from New Jersey and was a lieutenant. How he let him go was he said when he opened up the cage and turned and went like -- and then he ran in his bathroom and closed the door. He just waited until he heard it leave. He said there was no other way he was going to get that thing even into the room. It was as big as your cubicle here, his whole room. It was right there at the door and it would just go -- at the cage. If that breaks lose, I'm gone.

Van Ells: I'm interested in your experiences the first couple of years after you got out of the military. Did you use any GI benefits or anything like that? A lot of Vietnam vets for example complain that the benefits that they were offered weren't even worthwhile. I'm wondering if you have any insight into that sort of thing. Did you go to school after, did you use any GI loans to like buy a house or anything?

HH: Yeah. I went to school on the --

Van Ells: G.I. Bill type?

HH: Right. I used that for a year. Unfortunately, only.

Van Ells: Did you go to school here in Madison?

HH: I just went to MATC because I, you know, I went OJT with the Pentagon and I had all those years of, you know, took shorthand at a 110 and type at eighty-five words a minute. I kind of really, I took business law type of thing. I didn't do it till a couple of years afterwards 'cause I actually, I came home, I got married in February to another Vietnam vet.

Van Ells: February of ?

HH: That year. '69. I had met him in Nam and I always swore I would never get married while I was in the military. That was one thing I said I would never do. And I did it. I didn't do it. But I married a mistake, of course. He got into heroin in Nam and, big time, and six years in the Army and he got thrown out. But then by that time I had a daughter and so I just went back to school. I haven't got any complaints.

Van Ells: Did you have trouble finding work? 'Cause it seems to me that your military training helped you in your later occupations.

HH: Yeah.

Van Ells: Whereas a lot of vets complain that they were discriminated against in finding work and those sorts of things. I'm wondering your personal experience. Did you have trouble finding a job after you got out?

HH: Actually, no I didn't. I guess I really lucked out. I got, as a matter of fact, I got a very good job. It's just that if he wouldn't have embezzled twenty million dollars I might still have the job.

Van Ells: The boss of the place?

HH: Yeah. My boss embezzled. I was making some nice money, Mark. I typed two books for him and Al Gay, well it's the Churchill Building now isn't it?

Van Ells: Which one?

HH: The Churchill Building that Scott Klug's in. Used to be the Gay Building on the Square.

Van Ells: I don't know that one.

HH: Right across the street from here.

Van Ells: I've only been in Madison six years now.

HH: Oh, yeah. You wouldn't even remember that then.

Van Ells: I just found the Lorraine Building the other day. I kept hearing references to it and I finally, I've gone past it all the time but I never knew what it was before. I'm still learning my new environment. New for six years that is.

HH: Oh, well. But, yeah. But I had a really good job with him so I typed a couple of books for him, you know, at night after work. So it was, I can't say that I really had

bad luck getting a job. Knock on wood. It's just that I guess, I don't know if it's the, Vietnam vets either hold jobs for ever or they're constantly changing jobs. And, you know, they say that people that have to rearrange like their furniture a lot are insecure or jobs a lot. Maybe I'm insecure because I rearrange, I'm very meticulous, perfectionist. Okay? Don't use an ashtray 'cause I have to -- And I have to admit I probably stay with John Stone for a couple of years until he went to prison. Silly him. But then, I work at Burlington Coat Factory now and I've been there two years. Otherwise, I was pretty flighty. I worked at MATC, I went there, you know, and stuff. And then I worked for a lawyer. But I, I'm never, I guess I'm always looking for something. I don't know what it is.

Van Ells: I'm asking the question because a frequent complaint of a lot of veterans after all wars, it's not just the Vietnam, but of all of them, is that they come back and they have trouble finding work. It didn't seem to be too much of a problem for you.

HH: I guess not. At least I can say for me it was, I know a lot of them say it. But actually it helped me more than anything, Mark. Being a woman Vietnam veteran. I'm two; I'm a woman and I'm a vet. And that helped a lot. You know, I'm not saying that's fair but it--

Van Ells: Oh, you're thinking in terms of Affirmative Action programs and that sort of thing.

HH: Well, yeah. I mean that came across for me a lot. Oh, you're a Vietnam vet? Wow, I'd hire you. And places, Oscars or someplace like that that get paid a certain amount for hiring --

Van Ells: A vet?

HH: Yeah. I think they're, yeah.

Van Ells: I'm not familiar with that.

HH: Yeah, there is. Minorities and vets.

Van Ells: I've got just two more things, two more topics I want to cover. First is, your experiences in the Madison area after you got back from Vietnam. Madison is a noted anti-war hotbed place. I'm wondering how you felt when you got back from Vietnam then. What, some of the protests that were going on in Madison. Did this sort of thing get off the campus? Did you, how you felt, what you did, your reflections on that period.

HH: Well, that's really hard because I chose to ignore it because of the fact that I was so bitter about it. I'm afraid, I have a terrible temper. And I'm very bitter to this day as I can say about our mayor. You know, one of the biggest protesters of the war.

Very bitter about him. And so I chose to go to Dane, Wisconsin. Well, you know where Dane is?

Van Ells: Yeah, I was going to say. Now you were, you didn't get down to the campus area very much I take it?

HH: No, I chose not to for myself, for everybody's safety. I'm afraid I would have lost it. You don't know me very well. I could throw things really well. We only had one grenade in Nam that we had to use. I didn't take it back with me. But no, I'm a very bitter person. I was so "God, Country and Apple Pie". I still am to this day, you know. Taps, the National Anthem, I still cry. And that's just the way I am. And guys in uniform just are my weakness. I mean that, not as far as love, but respect. It just crushed me to know, the hard part about it, I think, more so that bothered me when I was in Vietnam and reading the "Stars and Stripes" about all the protesting going on in Wisconsin. It's like, my state, my town. How can they be doing this? You know, it crushed you. And a lot of the veterans, I think, from what, the ones I talked to said, yeah, it's really sad to know that we're over here fighting a war and they're over there doing, back home, not supporting us. They're protesting this war. Send us cookies, send us letters, don't be doing what you're doing. And that hurt us. And I was more bitter, that's a terrible thing to say, more bitter. I was very bitter there about it, that's why I chose, when I got home, to just ignore it because I would probably be --

Van Ells: Was it a topic of discussion much while you were over there?

HH: Big time. Oh, yes. Everyone. As soon as we got the newspaper. And of course you know the media can build up a lot more than but obviously I don't think they built up too much, I mean Madison was what they said. You know, to me. But it was a lot of talk about it over there. Big time. The guys were very upset that I knew of. I mean you have some that say 'what the hell, we don't care, we don't care one way or the other.' Or they just ignored it at all. Or they were illiterate and didn't choose to even read the paper and know about it.

Van Ells: Or couldn't read the paper.

HH: Couldn't, yes. Thank you. And so, but it bothered me more over there. That's why when I came home, I forgot completely about Vietnam I think after a while. I never came out of the closet as far as being a vet until probably, what is this '94? '82? So 1970, when I came home January 1970, so it was twelve years before I ever told anyone again, except for employers, that I was a Vietnam vet. I just blocked. One time my brother and I and four other guys went out, we talked about the good times. And that's what we still do a lot. 'Cause I belong to Wisconsin Vietnam Vets.

Van Ells: This was the last topic I want to bring up. Are you involved in veterans' organizations at all? So let's just go with that.

HH: Big time!

Van Ells: Vietnam veterans.

HH: I'm with Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans, Chapter 3. I belong to WACVO, Wisconsin Area Concerned Veterans Organization; the VFW. I was the first woman commander in the State of Wisconsin of a VFW.

Van Ells: At a Madison post here?

HH: Sun Prairie post. And I belong to the American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary. Kind of trying to be active in all. I go to a lot of reunions, which we all do.

Van Ells: Of your wartime units?

HH: Of chapters. I've been to Kokomo, Indiana, this will be my fifth time. And we have around anywhere from 30,000 to 50,000 Vietnam vets there. Melbourne, Florida last year there was 100,000 Vietnam vets. And the camaraderie is just the most spectacular thing you've ever seen.

Van Ells: That was one of the things I was going to ask was what attracts you to these organizations? 'Cause you seem to have joined quite a few of them. How come? I mean they cost dues money, don't they.

HH: Yeah. True.

Van Ells: With the number that you're in, it sounds like a substantial investment so there must be something that you really get out of your activities.

HH: Well, I guess, we're like a family. You know, WACVO is up north so much that I'm not really into that yet. Ray Boland comes and speaks there. A couple years ago he was up in Point but. Chapter 3. I think 'cause of the healing process, too, for a lot of us. You said, I didn't come out, and then, of course, you said, the first time I'm a life member of the VFW, and the first time I used it in Florida, after my brother's funeral, my sister-in-law and I went to the VFW and the guy spit in my face. I was like, but I didn't let that get the best of me because he's a jerk. But the thing was, to me it's a healing process. We have each other to talk to. We understand. You know, I have a very good friend, Tricia, who says, 'Sue, oh god, I understand what you're talking about.' Tricia, you will never understand what we've seen, what we've done, how we felt. I mean, I love her for saying it but you're never going to have

that feeling. Or know, so it's definitely, to me. New members we get we say you don't have to talk about Nam. Or we talk about the good times. And if somebody wants to talk about the bad times, we're there to listen. But it's never pushed on anybody to do anything they don't want to do because, when you're ready, you know, we've all done it to each other, too, for that fact. And we've all been one on one with somebody, or on our bus down to Fire Base Indy two weeks ago. You know, first we were laughing and joking and then all of a sudden somebody wants to expound on a story about an incident that they had. And you can hear a pin drop, everybody's there. It's just that kind of camaraderie you have with the organizations. And we do a lot for community because we're still proving ourselves as Vietnam vets.

Van Ells: You think so?

HH: Yes. Big time.

Van Ells: I was going to ask, in a group like the VFW, you have vets of all different wars. You know, World War II, Korea, even the Persian Gulf now I suppose. Do the veterans of the different wars all get along? Do you think the Vietnam vets are different than the others or special in some way or do you think it's just generational? I'm just interested in your comments on how the different generations of veterans get along.

HH: Uhm, actually the World War II vets, I don't see a problem with. But, you know, one is we have, I guess, are the Korean vets. They feel a little, what word? I'm trying to find a word as far as are they jealous of us because Vietnam vets have gotten out, we do parades, we do community work, we get recognized because of being such bad people and they do get very, some of them, get very upset with the fact that, well we could have done that but you know. And, there's other comments they make but they're, I don't like the word "jealousy" but for lack of a better word at this point. And I don't see that from the World War II because, I think, they could have been our parents.

Van Ells: And oftentimes were.

HH: Bingo! And just like we were parents of the Persian Gulf. You know? And that's why when, you know, those were, when the Persian Gulf came along, the Vietnam vets the staunchest supporters you can find. Because we remember the hell we came home to. And we were never going to let that happen to those kids. And that's a big thing. But, yeah, we're always still trying to prove ourselves, I guess.

Van Ells: Prove yourselves to be what?

HH: Well, we're not the baby killers that they always thought we were and the mean mouthed and bad things that we are. And, you know, there's still people out there

that we have a problem with. I get a bigger kick out of people going, 'You're the first woman Vietnam vet I have ever met.' Well, I'm no different than anybody else. Maybe I have my PTSD once in awhile. I had a very, very bad experience in Vietnam that I'm still getting some type of help for. I had to go get new dog tags made 'cause we went from our W-8 numbers, WAC numbers to social security numbers. And this is my original with my WAC number on, by the way. But I had to go over to the morgue and you've got to remember the guy's sitting there with his brown bag with his feet on the desk with this growth of beard. And he, he sat there and I said you need new dog tags 'cause General Tarbucks had sent me over and he's like, okay. So he got up and he came over and he grabbed my arm and my neck and he took me in and opened up the storage where you keep all the dead bodies and he unzipped the bags and stuck my face in these dead bodies and then after he did that to like four bodies he threw me on the floor and closed the door and left me in there. And I am just hysterical trying to get out and I can't get out 'cause he's got me locked in and, of course, I just, you know, Sugimoto, my driver, was outside and he's like what's taking so long? You know, there's other people in there. And of course he can't hear me screaming. And, of course, I went back to my office immediately. General Tarmacks had the men, this was his third tour as a mortician 'cause he's saying to me, 'You bitch. I do babies. I do Vietnamese. I do Vietcong. I do Charlie. I do Americans. I do all of them.' And that's when he took me in and he just took me in and --

Van Ells: Was he flipped? Was he trying to be mean?

HH: Oh, big time. Well, he was just bitter. He was drunk, I think. And mean. It just had it's toll on him. Three years was too long for him first of all. Any mortician. I went back and told General Tarbucks and they had him, he was taken out immediately from Vietnam. Big time, going fast. But you know, I never let that bother me for years and all of a sudden it came back and I just couldn't sleep. I'd cry, at the drop of hat, I'd cry. Close my eyes I'd see that first body he put my face into. You know, that kid, he was a Ranger. And it was just like all of a sudden here I'm coming back to this hell. Why was it gone for these years and now it's hitting me? And that was another reason, you know, that I think that joining the chapter and stuff was a healing for me. And I never told anyone, anyone about it until after I became a chapter member, I guess, and they said I think you should have more help than just letting us hear about it. Because, I said, I mean I got hysterical, just crying bad. So I guess, I guess it's time Sue gets help. That was really my biggest --

[INTERCOM INTERRUPTION]

Van Ells: Oh good, it's not for me. Okay. One last little thing, just for detail. When did you start joining the vets organizations? In the early '80's?

HH: '82. I joined the VFW in '82. I joined the American Legion I think in '88. And I joined the Vietnam Vets in probably '88. Yeah.

Van Ells: And -- before that. Okay, is there anything else you'd like to add? Those are the questions that I had for you.

HH: It's probably going to be hours. They'll say, 'That woman talks a lot.'

Van Ells: I had a guy, I had a World War II vet that filled up three ninety minute tapes. You did very well to stay on one tape.

HH: Gosh. I feel good now. But you know it's so great when we go to these reunions. Have you ever heard of Sammy Davis, the white Sammy Davis?

Van Ells: It sounds familiar but I can't, there's no face or anything.

HH: -- recipient of Congressional Medal of Honor. Just the most wonderful human being. He has the most awesome story. We were in Kokomo two years ago. I have a friend whose a movie producer, director. He's Airborne. Roger was not into this yet but he came with the guy that made my dog tags. Was a Vietnam vet. And Sammy was on stage with this little short guy. And we're like, who the hell's on stage with Sammy? Well, he told his story about he, Army, 9th Infantry with my brother Artillery, and he was across this river and he was, saw these three guys that were wounded on the other side. And he was scared to death of water but he blew up this rubber raft. After he fought off the Vietcong, he had a broken back and a wound. He blew up this rubber raft, went across that river. One guy had a hole in his head. The other guy had his foot blown off. The other guy had a hole in his chest. He was a non-pulse, non-breather. So he thought. So he gets the guy, one guy over his shoulders like this. The other two he's like this with. He had to drop them twice to fight off Vietcong. Got them across the river, kept vigilance on those guys all night long. I have cold chills. Now he's telling this story and he's getting detailed into it. And he said they always take the ones they know, on the chopper, that aren't going to make it. And the guy that had the hole in his chest and his head, that was it, he had not a big one here but his chest was the big one. He was in, said I never had a pulse on the guy all night, I couldn't find a pulse. So the next morning they took him in the second chopper 'cause they figured he was a goner. And he said and there's this son-of-a-bitch right tonight standing right next to me. He lived!

And 30,000 Vietnam vets just, and all their partners, wives, girlfriends, everybody, everybody was just tears bawling. And we were all, just everybody, was holding hands. You didn't care who. It was just emotional charged story. It was just awesome and he's standing up there telling it. And he goes and the guy, they were crying and hugging and it was, it was just awesome. But everybody finds someone. You know, walking down, all have our original names off our old tags, and people-

Van Ells: It's one of the things you see in the vets magazines all the time. Locator service.

HH: Right.

Van Ells: Everyone's always looking for something.

HH: At Firebase, Indy two weeks ago all women vets on stage. You're too young but remember the music by the Boxtops? You ever heard of the Boxtops?

Van Ells: I've heard of them. I don't remember them though.

HH: That's good. I knew you were too -- but they played at the reunion at night and they said all women vets please come to the front. And then they sang a special song to us. I think we stood in the receiving line for two and a half hours. All these men are walking by going thank you, thank you girls. You know, hugging us. Some I don't prefer to kiss. But it was like, oh god. But they just, every one of them, just can't get enough. They're just like, all weekend the first hour we went, see ya with these shirts on but they never. And when they put you on stage, they're coming back and they're picking you up and throwing you around, and hugging you, and kissing you, and crying. And the next day when they see you there's so much different respect from them. Not once have I ever encountered a bad situation at a reunion of that type since I've been going for the last five years. So that's something to talk about. And like I said, that's to me a great healing process. The friendship, the love, the respect, caring that we have of each other. And then you see, and then we have the big balloon, the POW MIA balloon, and all the wheelchair recipients all get a ride in it.

Van Ells: Oh, is that right?

HH: Yeah. We only go up 100 feet and everybody mans the ropes. They go up in it. Only wheelchair recipients get to go in it. There's about twenty guys around putting them in, taking them out.

Van Ells: I never heard of that before.

HH: Oh, it's great. Yeah. So those are just special things that we do.

Van Ells: Good. Excellent. Thanks.

HH: Well, thank you for I guess listening, too. Poor guy.

**[End of Interview]**