

Joseph Schwimmer

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Webb: [00:04:31] Well, let me go ahead and start. Uh, we. If you're ready. Uh, we always kind of like to start with me. Just saying. My name is Thomas Webb. Today is December 19th, 2016. We're getting close to the Christmas holiday. Um. On behalf of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. Today I'm talking on the phone with Joseph H. Schwimmer, a Marine that participated in electronic warfare and aerial warfare during the Vietnam era. Um, so, uh, the first question that we always ask everybody, and we do a little bit of a background, um, just kind of, you know, your life growing up before the military. So the first question we always ask is, when and where were you born?

Schwimmer: [00:05:22] Okay. I was born in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York. Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York. [Webb affirms: Okay.] And, uh, it was, uh, in fact, if you go there nowadays, it's very built up. It's a very nice area. It wasn't too nice when I was there.

Webb: [00:05:47] Little rougher.

Schwimmer: [00:05:48] And, well, a little rough around the edges. But actually, where I was, it was it was kind of a mix. It was mostly immigrants and and Orthodox Jewish people. And Williamsburg. Uh oh. We would. Uh, we were right near the Brooklyn Navy Yard. At that time. The Brooklyn Navy Yard made ships during World War II. That's. That's how far back I go. I was born in 1938. Mhm. And, uh, so, uh, I can remember ships in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, actually in Brooklyn.

Webb: [00:06:34] Okay. And typical upbringing?

Schwimmer: [00:06:40] Um, well, we moved from there to. Over over to, uh. Let's see... to another part of Brooklyn. Flatbush. And then we moved to Trenton, New Jersey, because my

father got a bought a business over there with my uncle. So, I lived most of my, uh, um, junior high school and high school time in Trenton, New Jersey. Okay. Actually.

Webb: [00:07:18] Did you participate in sports or any kind of extracurricular activities?

Schwimmer: [00:07:25] Yeah. I, I was, um, actually, I was, uh. Oh, let's see, um, as when I was very young, when I was a kid, um, in New York, um, I had bronchial asthma, and I had, uh, um. Everything that people get shots for today I had. Things like mumps and measles and whooping cough and all that stuff. I had all that. So I was very sick kid when I was young and they sent me up. My parents sent me up to a farm in Parksville, New York, which is up past Liberty and Monticello in the mountains, because they couldn't afford to send me to Denver, Colorado, or any of those things in those days. People went there for, for that sort of thing. Rehabilitation. So, I went up to this farm where they had a relative lived up there. He had a farm, and his sons worked with him in the city, in New York City. And the farm was all horse drawn equipment. We went out, me and the owner's son went out, and we we cut hay and we, um, threw hay on a hay wagon. We cut it; we raked it. It was loose hay. We didn't even bale it. Years later we baled it, but we threw the loose hay in the barn and jumped in the barn in the hay. And it was great. So for all those allergies and everything else I should have had, and I probably did have, um, working on the farm and, and what most enjoyable times of my life, probably one of the more enjoyable times working, running the horses and hooking up the horses as a young kid and running the whole thing, milking cows, getting out, doing splitting wood for the first stove and all that stuff. It was really something.

Webb: [00:09:48] Well, it sounds like something. Uh, did that then help you kind of get over some of the asthma? Were you building up? Uh, yeah.

Schwimmer: [00:09:57] Build up immunity over the years. Built up an immunity, so that in high school. In high school, I started out, I developed a little bit more, and I was playing football in high school, and I was a shot putter and a discus thrower, and. And later on, in college. Years later, I did freshman ball. I wasn't that good. So, and I was wrestling and weightlifting and I got into weightlifting big time.

Webb: [00:10:32] Okay.

Schvimmer: [00:10:33] And I still do a little bit of it.

Webb: [00:10:36] Very nice. Well, is there a history of military service in your family? Were there people growing up that you kind of looked to? I mean, you talked about the shipyards and kind of seeing that activity, but was there another line of, um, maybe background in the military as far as family members?

Schvimmer: [00:11:02] Yes. In fact, there was, um, my Uncle Phil and, um. Oh, let's see, there was my uncle Philip Pestka, and he was in the [US] Marine Corps and my Uncle Abe. Well, there was my grandfather and my three uncles. Abe. Abe and Phil and Irving. Irving was in the [US] Army. Joined the Army during World War II. Or he was drafted, and Abie went into the Army Air Corps. Back then, the fledgling Air Corps. And Phil was in the Marines. Phil joined the Marine Corps. Years later when I was in Vietnam, I was in the 3rd Marine Amphibious Force, and then I was in the 3rd Division, which my Uncle Phil had been in years before. Kind of strange, but strange coincidence.

Webb: [00:12:16] A nice connection to talk about at holidays.

Schvimmer: [00:12:20] Yeah, it's kind of, it's kind of interesting in that regard, you know. Anyway, um, let's see. Um, I, um, I grew up in New Jersey and Trenton, New Jersey. And then I went away to school, but I joined the [US] Marine Corps Reserves and joined the 155 Howitzer Battalion, um, in the Reserves in Trenton, New Jersey. And you probably see it on the back of one of my discharges. Enlisted discharge. My enlisted number. Serial number was 1623 351. And I still remember it, which is everybody is one of those things that gets drilled into you in Parris Island. You don't forget these things that and a rifle number. Yeah. And I carried a BAR [Browning Automatic Rifle, squad machine gun]. Um, I didn't get shipped anywhere. You know, we went down to, uh, to Quantico in the summers. Um, and, um. And then in, um, I was going to school at the same time, I was going to Penn State, um, and I was going in engineering, and I was in, um, playing football and doing these other things, and which took up a lot of time. [Webb affirms: Yeah.] Um, so, uh. I finally all most of the way through there were I changed schools because engineering that point ended in 1958. There were no engineering jobs. And so, I went to Temple University to get an education degree. And then I started taking all kinds of

courses there purely for interest. And I loved it. I took physics and chemistry and philosophy and geology, all the geology I could find. I got really interested in that and all these other subjects, and I was interested in English literature. So I graduated in '62 and got married. I was dating a girl then, and I got married and went down to flight school and got permission.

Webb: [00:15:13] Can we back up just for a second and just kind of what was the catalyst for you joining the Reserves? Was there anything in particular that kind of motivated you to want to do that?

Schwimmer: [00:15:27] My Uncle Phil. He really got me to doing it. Yeah. Um, I, I was really, um. I didn't almost idolize him. Yeah, I liked him a lot. Yeah. And then. Then there was another guy in Trenton. I had a friend of mine, Barry Weiner. He had a brother who was in the Marine Corps and. And he had been in Korea during the war, and he had come home and was going to school, and he was an impressive guy. He was a very impressive guy. But. And um, and he kept saying, "Well, you want to go in the Marines, huh? You'll find out about it." And I kept asking him, "What's it like? What's it like?" And he said, "Well, you'll find out." And he left it out there as a challenge. Yeah. But, um. Uh, my Uncle Irv never really, didn't talk much about the war. I found out later when I was working on his, uh, benefits and such when he was getting older, that he had been with Patton in World War II, in, in the infantry. And he'd been in some nasty battles. Yeah. Huertgen Forest and the Bulge and all these various things. But he really didn't talk a lot about it. Phil had been in the island-hopping campaign: [Guadalcanal], Saipan, Tinian, Iwo Jima.¹ And the whole thing with the Marine Corps. And. When he came back after the war, he seemed like somebody to emulate until I got older, and we went our different ways.

Webb: [00:17:36] Yeah, we've done some interviews recently with some of those that were kind of with Patton and through to the Battle of the Bulge, and that is hard stuff to talk about even now. Uh, for those guys. So, yeah, I can only imagine, uh, when you first come back and. You know, as family members.

Schwimmer: [00:18:00] He never married; Irving never married. And in fact, he was caring for his father. Really, when his mother died, he was the last brother or the oldest. Well, not really the oldest, but he just never married. And, um, he got very, um, I, I would call him. Today, you

¹ Schwimmer finalized the battle sites when he reviewed the transcript.

would say he had PTSD. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Severe case. I mean, he was really very secretive about things. And somebody once said something about him. He got very sensitive about somebody said he didn't have enough money to get married and oh, God, that set him off. And from that point on, he just started investing and doing this and doing that and doing the other thing. And he built up quite a bit of money, but. And he said, nobody will ever say that again about me, you know. Very upset at people.

Webb: [00:19:12] Was there any reluctance by maybe some of your immediate family, you know, observing this kind of behavior, uh, from your uncles as they come back from World War II and, you know, Korea not being that far removed. Was there any reluctance, uh, from, like, your parents or anything of you joining the Reserves, or was that kind of a celebrated?

Schvimmer: [00:19:40] Now. Are you there?

Webb: [00:19:42] Yeah.

Schvimmer: [00:19:43] Okay. Um. My parents really didn't like the idea of me going in the military. They wanted me to be doctor, lawyer, Indian chief, you know, that sort of thing. Very European thing, very Jewish thing. And their particular experiences in Europe, like my mother came from Poland. Our family got out of Poland just in time. My grandfather knew what was going on. He saw what was happening and he got his family out. His brother stayed and his brother and their family died in Auschwitz, except for one child. And he survived and escaped, and he joined the Maquis. Got away and my grandfather [i.e. mother]² brought him over to this country. And he died several years ago, Henry Pestka. Um. Henry Pestka was in Grand Rapids, had a big business there. My grandfather was David Pestka. Um, and we had I've done a lot of genealogy work with our family. We go back in Poland, Pestka family, Kolinsky family, and we go back to the Spanish Inquisition. We were Sephardic [pause] on that side. My father's side was Hungarian, and things were very bad over there, of course. And, um, I had an uncle in... another uncle in- Actually, my grandfather, David Pestka's son, eldest son, Harry had been a corporal in the Polish army, and he got out of there just as the Germans were invading.³

² Finalized at review of transcript.

³ Schvimmer's grandmother, David Pestka's wife was Rifka Kalinsky.

Webb: [00:21:56] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [00:21:59] So he got he really got out of there by the skin of his teeth, as you say. Anyway! No, my mom and dad really didn't have much good to say about it. And my mother, I came home in dress whites one time and my mother said I was a doctor. [Laughs] But. I was in, uh, flight school and... I had a friend in flight school, Brant Davis, and the two of us would spend our downtime, sitting around time sharpening ourselves against each other. We'd argue this or argue that. Yeah. And I was there for his wedding. Years later, he and I were in the same squadron together and he died when his airplane was shot down in North Vietnam. Um. But I was in, I had gone through flight school, through the various stages of flight school, primary and then secondary. Primary was the T-34, secondary was the T-28B and T-28C. I was flying the T-28C, and one time I was on the way back on a solo and the engine quit. I mean, I blew a cylinder. Here I was, student pilot. [Laughs] Engine quit. And I dead stuck that back to the home base and made it. And I glided it, I had to glide path down. I saw where it was going. I had to glide path down and did a half circle to the airfield and then lost altitude with the half circle over the field and the, "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday", you know, the whole thing. Put the hook down and took the arresting gear, put the flaps down halfway, and then made it in. My instructor got upset at me because I didn't put the flaps all the way down. [Webb laughs] You know. So. You know, these weird things happen.

Webb: [00:24:57] Yeah. Instructors have a way of kind of overlooking the excitement of it. [Chuckles]

Schwimmer: [00:25:04] So anyway, uh, I, uh. I got to the point where I actually did. Um, fly out to do the arresting practice, arresting gear practice⁴ on the USS Antietam. But after that was formation flying, and I didn't do well in formation flying. So, they put me out, and I became an NFO, naval flight officer. Which I thought was, 'Hm' [noise of displeasure] have they given me?' I mean, I could have flown helicopters easily, which really, as it turned out, later on in my life, I did fly helicopters for the Army, but, um. And I became an Army pilot. But it was really strange that-- Well, it was funny. The pipeline was funny because there was no war. They didn't need people. So, when there was no need for people, they were very strict. When there was a need

⁴ Mechanical system which quickly decelerates an aircraft as it lands, needed for landing on small spaces such as ships.

for people, you could, you could just about run into a wall, and they'd take you. [Webb affirms: Yeah.] But I was at the time, I became an NFO [Naval Flight Officer], and they sent me some of my scores and whatever and sent me into, oddly enough, into this one squadron in Vietnam in 1963, VM CJ, which is Marine Composite Reconnaissance, Squadron One. I'm sorry, Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron Two at Cherry Point, North Carolina. VM CJ-2 or the-- There were three of them, VM CJ-2, VM CJ-1, and VM CJ-3. [VM CJ]-1 was in Iwakuni, Japan, VM CJ-2 was in Cherry Point, North Carolina, and [VM CJ]-3 was in El Toro, California.

Schwimmer: [00:27:15] And [VM CJ]-1 later moved down to Vietnam when, in '65, just before I went there. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Anyway, while I was in VM CJ-2, I was in the electronic warfare area and, apparently, I had a knack for it. I learned navigation and, well, I already knew navigation and all that. But I learned electronic warfare and analysis, and apparently, I took to it really well. And. My instructors would have me go on a lot of cross-country flights with pilots and do practice analysis of different radar signals that I would run across. Or I would go to Army sites, Hawk [medium-range surface-to-air missile] batteries and all that anti-air things and call them and ask them to run up and we would practice against one another. And I would act as if they were SAM [surface to air missiles], which they really were. And they would practice on me, and I would practice on them. I'd be in the airplane, and they would be in on the ground. And when I was on the ground and did analysis [on the tape I would run]. I went to some of the Hawk batteries and watched how they worked. And, um. I figured out that the machine, the electronics of, of the of the radar and missile interface were such that the machine worked automatically. Um, you know, you didn't need an operator, but if the machine was interfered with, it was jammed, so to speak. Or if you used the chaff [small pieces of metal that made it harder for radar-guided missiles to hit the plane] or whatever, the machine would, would not function correctly and it would call for an operator.

Schwimmer: [00:29:44] And so actually, that's what I was trying to do. I figured out that it was basically I was trying to get the machine to quit working automatically, and I was trying to get an operator against me, and I could confound an operator a lot easier than a computer. And anyway, it became electronic chess to me. Uh. I was there in VM CJ-3, and we did analysis [autocorrects] I mean [VM CJ]-2 rather in Cherry Point we did analysis. We had machines there for analysis. We could do, look at pulse width, pulse repetition, frequency, frequency of the signals. And I memorized the emitter red book, which was a book that had all the

characteristics, known characteristics of gun laying radar, and missile, missile directing radars. So, I really got to understand that ASR or area sector scan radars [i.e., airport surveillance radar]. There are certain radars that are basically to figure out airport control, for example, and they have high control radars, and they operate a certain way and area radars like for air control for, for airport operate at a certain way. And, basically, you use one type of radar to figure out where everything is in the sky, and then another type of radar to pinpoint where something is that you want to find. And it is a smaller beam. That's the whole idea to run a smaller beam and to run it faster so that it determines exactly where in space the object is that you're trying to find.

Schwimmer: [00:32:13] So and I had those things figured out and I figured, 'Well, geez. GCI is ground control intercept, you know, like bringing an airplane in. Um, in bad weather, they use that kind of that kind of radar is used also by the missile radars to figure out where the airplane is [that] they want to shoot down.' So, you know, there are two motives for the same thing. You use the same radar one to bring an airplane down to an airport, or two to shoot at them. But it's the same idea, using the same type of radar. And then the final radar, that you use that as a final radar to -- before you shoot at them. So, you're not just shooting everywhere. Um. The 35, 57, 100 mm anti-aircraft guns in North Vietnam were following the same pattern as everything that the Russians, the Russians had and the entire, oh, and they're in their bag. Basically, everything that they had that the Russians had, the Chinese had, Bulgarians had. You know, it all came out of the same supply source. So, the Chinese and everybody else. Nobody really made anything totally different than anybody else in that in that area. Chinese, Soviet, whatever. So then after studying that, I went to VMCJ-3 in El Toro, California. We moved there and I was flying there, and I was flying the F3D-2Q [reconfigured for electronic warfare] in Cherry Point and in El Toro, California.

Schwimmer: [00:34:19] The F3D-2Q was the old night fighter Skyknight, Douglas Skyknight. And it was renamed EF-10B. And basically, it was the Douglas Skyknight, night fighter refitted with electronic warfare equipment taken out of, oddly enough, a P5M a Martin Mariner [i.e., Marlin] and it's all old type, hand-wired, two type equipment, but it was extremely accurate. And, um, I could I found that I could, I could work it. I'd put a hood over my head and look into a scope while we're flying. And I could put the directional finder way down low and do some accurate D.F.-ing or direction finding and take a series of cuts. What we call cuts or directions [are] as

you're flying along on a steady, a known air [speed] [and a known] direction...and I take a series of cuts and I could determine exactly where a particular radar was... and at the same time I could analyze the radar. I had equipment on board so that I could analyze that particular radar. And look at its pulse width and look at its pulse repetition rate. And we were taping the whole thing at the same time. And. So that later on when we come back, we could analyze everything we did and analyze the signals as well. So, um in that time we were at Yuma, Arizona, and I, I came across some guys, of course, being aviators, we were practicing and in Yuma, Arizona, and then this guy who had a, who was the captain in charge of a Hawk battery kept saying that, oh, he could take out all of us. You know, we were we weren't that good. And this, that and the other. So it got to be. Well, we bet a case of beer as to who could do what to whom. [Webb chuckles]

Schwimmer: [00:37:13] And while we, while we did this, organized some of the guys, you know, we did our normal missions, our normal looking around and DF-ing missions. And then I said, "Well, let's try an active mission against this guy, this Hawk battery, because it'd be good practice for us." And figuring we knew where his site was, there would be no excuses, no alibis. And he knew when we were coming. So, we told him when we were coming and what we're going to do. So, we did it. And I sat down with a couple of other guys, and I said, "Okay, we can start by a couple of guys starting in." And we took a couple of fighter airplanes with us and on this, and I came up with this idea of coming in from one direction and sending an airplane in from one direction, have him turn around part way, and then send another airplane in at a lower altitude while he was concentrating all his radars and everything else, and we were jamming them.

Schwimmer: [00:38:32] Just have this other airplane come in at low altitude and throw something at them. And it worked. We would, we attacked the Hawk battery, and we threw a bunch of chaff at it so it couldn't - it just clouded up his scope totally. And then he put the, the machine on automatic and, and I knew I could tell when he did that the machine was just going crazy because it locked on those guys who were at a normal altitude coming at them. And, and then just before they were in range to fire, he, I had them turn around. And at the same time, I had this other bunch come in, another airplane come in at very low altitude, and he dropped a water-sand filled bomb right near them with a bunch of ink on it or something. And. So there was no getting away from the fact that we got him. [Webb affirms: Yeah.] So anyway, it was an

excellent lesson to me as to the things that you could do against these kind of machines, these missile radars, and particular...that was a Hawk battery. But I figured, well, the question remained in my mind whether a Soviet SAM [Surface to Air Missile] could be treated in the same way. And the more I studied about it, the more I was convinced that you could, because the SAM missile itself needs, um, oh, maybe a thousand, uh, several hundred feet at least, because it's got a booster. It blows off, you know, goes off its ramp, and it's got a booster, though it's uncontrollable for a second or two, and then it gets controllable, and then it goes off and tries to find you....

The other thing that that -- We got to Vietnam in in '64. Oh, the other thing we're doing also is we got introduced to the EA-6A [tactical support aircraft]. I didn't fly it yet. I was starting to fly them, and we found there were a couple in VMCF-3, the [A-6E] Intruder [aircraft]. And that's the electronic warfare, Intruder. Which was called The Prowler, and the first ones were the model managers. Later on, for the Intruder and we flew the first ones, they came up with the EA-6B, later on, which had a lot more on it. They looked at what we said. We looked at some of the things on it. We wanted this, we wanted that, we wanted this, we wanted that. They made a lot of compromises. Put the antenna in the tail, which gave, blanked out the was blanked out by the nose. So, you really couldn't direction find off the nose, but you had to go sideways to figure out where everything was. So, um, anyway, um, we had gone on to, um, to Vietnam. We went on to Vietnam in 1965. We took our families home. At that time, they didn't let our family stay on base.

And then we went on to Vietnam in '65...in October. In fact, it was about a, oh, a couple of years. Let's see - about a year ago, I was sitting with a couple of friends that were in the squadron. We had a mini reunion and one of the guys said, "You know, it was October 31st, I remember, and Halloween and or, right around that time--" And he happened to mention, you know, "Fifty years ago today, we were, set foot in Vietnam." And I thought, 'Holy shit, all four of us were together.' And it was, it was amazing because all four of the guys who were sitting there were in Vietnam fifty years ago on October 31st, '65. And we came into Vietnam and. Uh, it was kind of an unusual thing. We started. We were thinking of taking the airplanes, but we left the airplanes from VMCF-3 at VMCF-3. The people from VMCF-1 brought the airplanes down from Iwakuni to Vietnam, and they were just there a couple of months, and we were going to relieve them. Squadron. It was kind of a scary proposition because a whole squadron left El Toro. was to leave El Toro in KC 135 about a week before we did, and they crashed into a mountain, killed everybody.

Schwimmer: [00:44:38] And I thought, 'Well, maybe we ought to divide up into a couple of airplanes.' And the skipper did just that. And so, one airplane, we went on a [Boeing] KC-135 [Stratotanker, aircraft] and with seats, with belt seats and. And half of us went to Japan and half of us went down to Wake Island and Hawaii, Wake Island and Okinawa and Vietnam. And we had developed some sort of engine problem in Okinawa. When we got over there and skipper got on top of those guys and he said, "No, we got to go to Vietnam. We have to report on board. They're waiting for us. They're waiting for us. You know, they need us there." So he got us. He energized everybody. They gave us another airplane and we just went on to Vietnam. The guys who were up in Japan kind of saw the handwriting on the wall and they said, "Well, you know, we take another couple of days, it won't hurt anybody either." [Laughs] So they took it easy, and they finally made their way to Vietnam, and they had a little more enjoyable trip, I'll put it that way. While we were busting our butt to get there. And when we got there, nobody knew that we were coming anyway. They couldn't care less. They said, "Oh, we knew you were coming. We didn't know when." But, um, you know. And so, then we took over and the guys who were there went home and we took over and, uh, the mission got, uh, a little harder, uh, a little hairier, because before we got there, they were doing surveillance, basically.

Schwimmer: [00:46:38] And then when we got there, they were starting to [Schwimmer searches for word] steel...Oh, what the heck was it? Iron Hand, Steel Fighter or something and all that. Oh! *Rolling Thunder*⁵[emphatically], that's what it was. Rolling thunder! Yeah! Rolling Thunder and Iron Hand⁶missions. Air Force missions. Iron hand, Rolling Thunder and then the Navy was starting with the Alpha strike⁷. And. Uh, so, uh, we were getting into North Vietnam every day. Um. And I was flying two and three missions a day. So that meant the missions themselves were about three hours, two-three hours. And. And preparation and downtime afterwards was report writing, so they ended up being four hour missions. So, I was running three four-hour missions a day; and day and night, all day, all night. And we were doing our own patrolling up there at the airfield, because once we got to the airfield, we were living in tents. We were living in little huts. Um, the Air Force was living in the old French barracks and there was no room for us, so we had to make our own way there. And we eventually moved

⁵ Operation Rolling Thunder was a US aerial bombardment campaign against North Vietnam, China, & North Korea.

⁶ Operation Iron had was a US Air Force and Navy intended to suppress SAM missiles in North Vietnam that were supplied by the Soviets.

⁷ Alpha strike is the Navy term to describe a large air attack by an aircraft carrier wing.

into what we called, "The Swamp" around the airfield at Đà Nẵng. We're at the Đà Nẵng Air Base and or otherwise known as Tourane.

Schwimmer: [00:48:35] And we had to, we had to build up tents. And. And little we made do with whatever we could find around. Took old beer cans and put them alongside as walls and flatten them out and made walls out of them and all that stuff. And it got a little. It was pretty primitive. Sand floors, you know. And then. And then later on, we found some lumber and we make a hard back [i.e., a wooden frame to hang the tent upon]. And then the. We take rocket containers. And they were Styrofoam rocket containers. With Styrofoam, we put them up on a roof to insulate the roof and lived in that for a while.

And then one day the VC came on the field, and they were just shooting everything up. They were really after the helicopters. They weren't after us that much, and it got like a Wild West show that they got in close and were just shooting them with pistols and whatever, and they were trying to infiltrate and get into the where the helicopters were and blow them up because apparently, they were upset with them more than anything else. And it got pretty close in. And I tell a story of one guy. The skipper was in a jeep, and he's yelling, "Don't hit the airplanes. Whatever you do, don't fire at the airplanes." We're right next to the airplanes. And he said, "Don't hit the damn airplanes."

Schwimmer: [00:50:35] And meanwhile he jumps in the jeep and his driver backs up and hits one of the VC. And I said, "Great, you got a kill, by accident." And it was really, really something. So then I, I got one of my, uh, collateral duties in security and you don't-- The primary duty is flying. And then you [have] collateral. You have various collateral duties in the squadron or whatever. And I was doing security and patrolling at night or during the day, some days. Cam Lộ to Hải Vân Pass. Cam Lộ Bridge is in near Đà Nẵng and Hải Vân Pass is up a little bit north, a couple of miles north and. We're finding traces of VC, but they tracked us. We tracked them. We didn't have that much contact. Which was all well and good. Neither one of us wanted to see the other. [Laughs] And then I kept sending guys out. We passed this old French plantation, and I couldn't understand. I said, "This is a perfect place for them to--" We were taking rockets at the air base, and I said, "You know", I thought, 'This old French plantation up in the mountain here is a perfect place to spot. You know, where to where to bombard the airbase.' And I can't understand why we don't find any trace of the VC. And so I send people out and they said, "No, we don't see anything."

Schwimmer: [00:52:32] So. What was happening-- And I couldn't understand that. So I just went out myself one time and I thought, 'Wait a minute, I see some stuff here. There's like, um, food particles, of food, you know, that have been left there by somebody...Obviously, it wasn't our stuff. It was rice and stuff.' And I said, "What do you mean you didn't see anything?! There's stuff there." Well, what was happening is that the guys I was sending didn't want to see anybody. And... Probably the VC who were there didn't want to see anybody. [Laughs] So neither one reported anything. So, nobody saw anything and nothing happened.

Webb: [00:53:18] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [00:53:20] So that that was that one. And then, um, one of the odd things that was happening, we were going on Rolling Thunder and Iron Hand and flying most every day. Every once in a while, I'd get a break from it. I was there with VMO [Marine observation squadron]. There was a Marine reconnaissance, small reconnaissance squadron. By accident, the Marine Corps put two reconnaissance squadrons together...Also, we had RF4B, the photo reconnaissance airplanes. And being a reconnaissance squadron, VMCI, a composite reconnaissance squadron, we did electronic warfare, and we did photo reconnaissance. So. We were. Uh, we had our photo reconnaissance guys taking photos for big missions for the Air Force. And if a Marine outfit, a ground outfit was going out, and if they wanted photo reconnaissance of an area before they'd go, they could come on the base. Are you there?

Webb: [00:54:46] Yes.

Schwimmer: [00:54:47] Yeah. They could come on the base and come see us and put in a photo request, and we go run a photo, a series of photos for them, too. And but this other squadron, the VMO; is a smaller airplane, helicopters and they were things like...a single engine, high wing civilian airplane like the OV-1 or something like that...grasshoppers like they had in World War II, some of those old airplanes, and they would do reconnaissance. They were low and slow, and they could do reconnaissance and talk to the ground guys while they were doing it. And just for the hell of it, I wanted to take a flight in one of those airplanes just to see what it was like. So I got in with this guy, Pudge Gore, and I was in the back seat and he was in front and I was handling maps and then the engine started acting up. So we went down on the beach. We

were along the beach just north of Đà Nẵng. And we landed at the beach, and he starts screwing around with the engine and putting some wire and you know, or something, wiring something up and... then we ran the engine a little bit and all of a sudden, I'm hearing, "Ding ding ding." Holy shit! "Hey, Pudge. Somebody's shooting at us, you know, let's get the hell out of here." And he said, "Well, you got a rifle. Go shoot back." Which I did. So, I kept them off, and we finally got done with what he was doing, and we took off, and that was that.

Webb: [00:57:00] Any idea how many people it was shooting at you?

Schwimmer: [00:57:05] Uh oh. Maybe one or two.

Webb: [00:57:08] Okay.

Schwimmer: [00:57:10] Yeah, it wasn't a whole bunch. It was just one of those odd things that happened. Um, then, um. I was with another guy. We were, we were in the airplanes, and I see this white airplane land at Đà Nẵng, a Helio Courier white airplane with Swiss markings. And I look at this thing and he pulls in by the tower. And I looked at it like I asked the guy [background noise], I said, "What the hell is that?" And he said, "Oh, it's got to be CIA". And I said, "How do you know that?" And he said, "Well, no one else but them would do such a stupid thing. I mean, nobody else but them or World Airways would, would be out there in a white airplane with Swiss markings."

Webb: [00:58:12] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [00:58:13] So just for the hell of it, we had a little club, and this guy comes in that used to be in the squadron, and he was recruited, oddly enough, by CIA, and I knew him. And he said he was working as a civilian contractor for World Airways or whatever the heck they called themselves then. And I said, "Well, what did you do?" And he said, "Well, I go drop rice and guns off to the to the indigenous people, the Nùng over here in Laos." And I said, "Well, that's interesting." And then he said, "Well, you want to ride one day?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I'll have to talk to the skipper, see if he goes for it."

Schwimmer: [00:59:08] So I did, and he said, "Sure, go ahead." So I got in there with him. And at that time, it was kind of a strange thing.... there was years ago, when I was a kid, there was a cartoon in the newspaper called *Terry and the Pirates*. Did you ever hear of that?

Webb: [00:59:29] Mhm.

Schwimmer: [00:59:31] Yeah. *Terry and the Pirates*. Milton Caniff did it. It was around. It took place around just after World War II. And, you know, what was happening is that Laos was on the border. You had-- Laos was fighting a war with the Pathet Lao [People Liberation Army]. The Royal Laotian Army was fighting with the Pathet Lao, which was the Communist, trying to take over Laos. And we, the US, was on the side of the Royal Laotian Army, which was fighting the Pathet Lao. Now, once a year, the Pathet Lao, or [autocorrects] rather the Royal Laotian Army would go up to the hills and buy a crop, a cash crop that the Nungs and a lot of the tribes were growing, which was poppies, opium, whatever it was. They'd bring it down to Vientiane. And, um, and they'd sell it and whatever the proceeds were would pay the army. And along with whatever the US was giving them at the time. And, anyway, while they were bringing that down, they quit fighting the Pathet Lao and instead they were, they were fighting the bandits that were attacking them. Now, at that point, you had bandits from Burma. And bandits from leftover, oddly enough, from the Nationalist Chinese. From the Eighth Route Army. You ever hear that?

Webb: [01:01:28] Mmhm.

Schwimmer: [01:01:29] Yeah. Okay. And so, they were fighting the Eighth Route Army and all those guys, and they come down to Vientiane and whoever got the stuff sold it in Vientiane. And it was one of those things. And we went out and we went, dropped off the rice sacks and dropped off the guns and all that stuff. And then the guys would pick up a bag or something, and I said, "What's that?" He said, "Mind your own business." I said, "Okay." So, and then we landed in Vientiane, and he just said, "Sit here at a table," and we go into this concrete thing, like a little concrete shack, bar, whatever. And he goes in here, he says, "Wait here. Don't look at anybody. Don't ask anything. Here's a drink. Sit here with us and wait till I come out. Okay?" So, I wait till he comes out. And I swear to God, they reproduced that years later in that in that *Star Wars* thing in that bar, you know, all the different guys were--Very similar situation. You

didn't want to look at anybody starting anything, do anything. So anyway, we got back in the airplane and went back to Đà Nẵng and that was that. That was my experience. It was, it was kind of interesting.

Schwimmer: [01:02:53] And I saw all these guys in the bar who were leftover bandits and this and that and the other thing, and it was a real education that day.

Webb: [01:03:04] Yeah!

Schwimmer: [01:03:07] And then. Later on in my tour that -- I was getting five, ten...I was doing all kinds of missions for the Air Force, and, and the Navy came out and they were doing the Alpha strikes. And that's when Admiral McCain came out. We would go out to the boat, we'd brief them and tell them what we did, and then, of course, we'd escort them and try to keep the the triple A off of them and the rockets off of them. And they would come out with [Douglas] A-4s and bomb and do their thing and then go back to sea and we'd go back to Đà Nẵng. So McCain came out and we went to brief him and. He said, "Oh, you guys are who burn the radars." And I said, "No, we don't burn the radars. We well, we prevent them from from shooting you." "How?" "Well, we jammed [them]." And he didn't want any part of us. He said, "We don't need you. We can do this." "Okay, fine." So whatever happened to him, happened to him. And I kept thinking, you know, it was probably one of the dumbest guys I've ever ran into my life. Arrogant, dumb. What a-- And high ranking. What an awful combination.

Webb: [01:04:50] Yeah, that's typically how it goes, though, no?

Schwimmer: [01:04:53] Yeah. It was. It just struck me as so weird that the guy made it that far up, and he was so arrogant and that he thought he could get away with doing something like that when *nobody* took that kind of a chance. Well, he did. And, um. And, uh. Let's see. I was assigned to 7th Air Force. Um, part of the time I had done, I had gotten oh, about-- Oh, let me tell this back up one. I had a mission from the Navy. They wanted a photograph a-- They want to get photographs of a uranium mine in North Vietnam. And I was thinking to myself, 'Boy, this is a real set up.' Just like what I had practiced in Yuma. And I said, "Okay!" I suggested that they [background noise] I said, "Do you have any foreknowledge? Has anybody done any scouting of the area to see if there's any SAMS in the area where the Triple As [Anti-Aircraft Artillery] and

all this other stuff?" And they said, "Well, here's where the Triple As are. And we think and we don't know for sure, but we think and there might be a couple of SAMs there." "Okay." "And we want you to take them off our back." I said, "Fine. Why don't we do this, get together and run this, this way. "And... [I] became the tactical air officer aloft. Because what I was doing is pretty much the same thing I did in Yuma. I said, "I want two sets of airplanes, one set of A-4s bombing, A-4s, [although] not necessarily with bombs and one set of photo airplanes. And [to] the photo airplanes would [be like], "How low can you go and still take a good shot?" And you know and they gave me their whole deal and I said, "Okay, I'm going to hold you guys off. You're going to circle it such and such, and you're going to go in low after I send in the other guys a little bit higher at about 3000 feet and, and they're going to come in like they're on a typical bombing run. And maybe two, three thousand feet. But you pick your altitude," and they said, "Fine." "And then when I tell you to turn around, you got to turn around quick." He said, "Okay." And, um. And then I was up with them. We went up and it worked like a charm. I couldn't believe how well it worked. The... firecan is a gun laying radar, and one or two came up and I was jamming down and I was talking to them, and I said, "Okay, you guys in the bomber airplane, go in." And they went in and then and then I said, "Okay, the guys, the photo airplane, you are circling: Go!" Um, and then I dropped chaff did the whole thing, and worked on the radars like crazy and then told the other guys, "Go, go back and the photo planes got their photos and whatever." So, I got put in. Let's see. On that one, that was that was kind of interesting. Yeah. Let's see, they said, uh. Oh, yeah. That one went to the Secretary of the Navy. There you go. [Find and reads citation] "For heroic achievement in aerial flight while serving with Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron One in the Republic of Vietnam, 27 February 66th First Lieutenant Schvimmer with the naval flight officer and lead aircraft.

Schvimmer: [01:09:40] Flight of two difficult and hazardous assignment of escorting electronically supporting a Navy aircraft on a photographic mission deep into North Vietnam." And: "In the objective area despite the danger, Surface to Air Missiles, heavy anti-aircraft gun sites, First Lieutenant Schvimmer calmly and effectively monitored his instruments. Succeeding in suppressing the North Vietnamese missile and fire control systems for a period of half an hour."

Webb: [01:10:10] Wow.

Schwimmer: [01:10:12] "His actions contributed significantly to the success of the mission without damage to any of the aircraft or injuries of the crews, etcetera, etcetera in keeping with the highest tradition." Well, the whole idea basically was to keep our guys from getting killed. [Webb affirms: Yeah.] And that's what I felt was my mission is to maybe we could screw up the enemy's radar or whatever. But if I could do everything without anybody getting hurt, we were really ahead. And went on to that. Then I went on Christmas Toy Drop. [Webb laughs] Present. Yeah. Present. Oh, we had the Air Force. Got some of these crazy bugs up there. Bumpy air. They had this photographic drone, which was really a fire bee drone with a photo attachment on it. And they were using it. They were sending it into North Vietnam and trying to take photographs with it. They figured, 'Well, if they lost it, what the hell?' It wouldn't be a big loss. It wouldn't be like losing a manned aircraft like an RF-4... Anyway, um, here, hold on a second...My wife's talking...Um, hold on a second, I'm going to move my position.

Webb: [01:12:00] Do you want me to call you back?

Schwimmer: [01:12:01] No, no, that's all right. I'm just taking the phone with me. Okay. I'm going to change rooms. And here. All right now. So anyway. Um. Okay. And. So there we are. Oh...I went to the briefing with the drone people, and I asked them, "Well. What do you want us to do?" And they said, "Well, we want you to keep the, keep the radar and the and the fire control, or the 37, 57 mm guns off the off the drone." I said, "Fine, I can do that. I can fly along at about 3,000 feet and the drone can fly his mission and we'll take care of one another." Okay. And they said, "No, I want you to fly alongside of it." And I said, "Wait a minute, you know. You want us to get hit instead of the drone?" He said, "Well, pretty much, that's pretty much what it is. If you, by the way, if you're as successful as you say you are, it won't be a problem." And I said, "Yeah, well, you regard the, the drone more valuable than you do us." [Laughs] And, and they said, "Well it is." "Well." I said, "Thanks a lot. Just as long as we got that out in the open."

Webb: [01:14:07] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [01:14:09] So I flew a bunch of those missions, you know, flying a stupid drone, [autocorrects] alongside the drone. And then we had - the one I thought was the funniest was escorting the Christmas Toy Drop and. And the president decided he was going to drop toys on Hanoi and so we got this job of escorting the C-130 that was dropping the toys. Now they were

going to drop these toys out of the back end of a C-130 with parachutes or something, and some drogue chutes or other configuration. And they wanted to make sure that the C-130 didn't get hit. And and the guys on the C-130 weren't too happy about the whole idea either. But, um, anyway, uh, because although President Johnson wanted to drop toys on Hanoi, Hanoi hadn't really given their permission to go drop toys and anything that showed up. So we're out there and, um, and we're two EF10Bs escorting a C-130. So, we meet up with the C-130 and towards Hanoi, and I'm looking at the, at the electronic warfare atmosphere in that area and [pause] it's normal, heavy, whatever. But it's not a lot of rockets. Not too much in the way of SAM. It was mostly on, uh, on on. Uh, wasn't Fan Song radar. It was, uh, um, it was a gun laying radar fire team and, um, and, um, so I did pretty well on that. That was pretty easy.

Schwimmer: [01:16:20] So, uh, they had made up to, go on a descent on a shallow dive, and that way the, the C-130 could keep up with us or keep up with the C-130. Slow down for the C-130. And we were flying along with the C-130...If you can imagine, one EF10B can be on one side and one EF10B be on the other side. He wanted us tucked in. And there was another case where the guy said, "Well, if we get hit, you get hit." And we said, "Thanks a lot. You know, we could do this by standoff." And they said, "No, you're going to be right along with us." So we did. And we're going along and uh. And then I said, "When are you guys getting ready to drop this stuff?" And he said, "Well. We're just about ready." Now all of a sudden, a big red light comes on in the C-130. I could look over in that thing, and I said, "What was that?" And he said, "Well, that's our loadmaster light and tells them to get ready to, to throw out the stuff." And I said, "Is that going to go green when he, when he's supposed to drop it off?" And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "Break it. Do something. You know, all you're doing is shining a big beacon out there, and there's nothing I can do to stop anybody from shooting at that."

Schwimmer: [01:18:06] And they said, "Well, there's nothing I could do. You know, I can't do anything." I said, "Take your boot off and break it." [Laughs] So finally, that went out and and they dropped off everything and we took off. So and we were okay.

And then during that tour, I was assigned to Saigon for 7th Air Force headquarters to do a tour at 7th Air Force, writing the night frag, the night fragmentary order, reconnaissance for Rolling Thunder '66. And it was kind of strange. Um, I had, uh, I had a desk in there and I took a map of, of Vietnam, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and put it under plexiglass. And I worked with grease pencil, and I would get all the missions for the next day and plot them out. And then I

would see what electronic warfare assets we had and photo assets we had, and distribute them accordingly, but the Navy would not give me their missions through the Air Force. The Navy had their own little office in the middle of the building, and they would come in. They didn't want to talk to the Air Force. So they would come in early in the morning, lock their doors, stay in their little air conditioned place and stay there all day and then communicate with the fleet and then leave after the Air Force had left.

Schwimmer: [01:20:03] So I had to go into the Navy office. I was the only one. As a Marine, I could talk to both the Air Force and the Navy, and I'd plot out the Navy missions and plot out the Air Force missions. Now, if I didn't go there and figure out what the Navy missions were, the Air Force would never know what Navy airplanes showed up. But I had gone in, picked up the Navy missions and put them down, and then written out my distribution and I showed it to the Air Force guys. And I gave it to them to print for the Navy for the next day's bombing missions. And that was it. That was the only way they knew what was going on with it. But anyway. After that, I come back to the US...Well, they had lost me for a while. Um, I was out there with 7th Air Force, and I called back to the squadron one day and, uh, and I said, "You know, you sound like somebody I used to know in California, in VMCI-3." And he said, "Yeah, that's me." And I said, "Well, what are you doing here?" And he said, "Well, we-- all of us, the cadre had had come out. And I said, "Well, what happened to the guys I came out with?" And he said, "Well, they all went home." I said, "That's funny. They all didn't go home." And I said, "I'm still here." And the guy said, "Well, we don't know what you're doing, so stay there till we figure it out." And I said, "Well, I'll tell you what, you send me an airplane, don't shut down both engines. You shut down one engine and I'll explain to my replacement in five minutes what I'm [doing] [Laughs] I'll give you a briefing so brief you wouldn't believe it. You know, we... all know what goes on here." And he, and he said, "Well, that's all right. You know, we'll send someone down." Well, several weeks later, you know, okay. They send somebody and meanwhile I'm going into '67, and I got there in '65 - I'm going into '67, and then I get back to the squadron in Đà Nẵng and someone asked me if I wanted more missions. I'm walking down the path and a guy cleaning a gun goes off and it shoots a bullet between my legs. And I said, "I think this is a sign I got to get out of here."

Webb: [01:22:58] Well, I wanted to ask you about that, actually, because at some point, um, they changed it so that. What was it, a hundred missions and you could go home?

Schwimmer: [01:23:10] That was Air Force.

Webb: [01:23:11] That was Air Force.

Schwimmer: [01:23:13] Yeah. I ended up at the end of the war. Um, 450 missions.

Webb: [01:23:13] Wow.

Schwimmer: [01:23:22] And I'm listed in Wayne Whitten's book *Silent Heroes [& Their Aircraft. U.S. Marines and Airborne Electronic Warfare, 1949-2019]*. Four-hundred and fifty missions. And I had gone back to North Carolina. I was reassigned to VMCI-2. And then I went to VMCI-2, to the group and I spent '67, '68 I was at the group. My family was with me on base and, and I was an assistant operations for the air group MAG-14 [Marine Air Group-14]. And. And. So doing pretty good, hopefully. And. But the oddest thing - it was, the house was a nasty old house, but it was in a beautiful place and two kids, and we were the last house on the base, right next to the water and the woods. It was just a beautiful position. The house itself was eaten by termites, but it didn't matter.

Webb: [01:24:45] Yeah, you spend all your time outside anyway.

Schwimmer: [01:24:48] Right, right, right, right, right. And but it had a downside in that at that time we were in the middle of the war. And of course, anybody who retired demanded a retirement parade. Which they did. And. Since I was living on base, one of the few people living on base, they'd say, "Hey, there's a parade Saturday. Joe, you're assigned." I said, "Why am I assigned?" "Well, you're living on base. You're the only one there. You're the only officer there." I said, "Holy shit. I worked myself into a box here, didn't I?" Well, the other officers were, by that time, the guys I knew that were captains were now majors. And they were too senior to do the parade and I was captain now, 1st lieutenant or captain at that point. And no, I was captain and so I was doing the parade company and every Saturday morning. God, that was... But the good side was I had a nice place and I started picking up on the RF-4. I was flying the RF-4 now, the reconnaissance version of the Phantom. And as well, as the EA-6A. And I was flying all three airplanes the EF-10B, the EA-6A and the RF-4. And there was one change of

command, and I took a picture of all four airplanes. And that's the...In fact, that's the signature photo for the Marine Corps Reconnaissance Association. MCRA has the picture of all four birds. I took that picture.

Webb: [01:27:08] Oh.

Schwimmer: [01:27:09] Of all four airplanes in formation and at the change of command. And I did it with a handheld camera. That's what's even funnier. So, um, after that, um. Oh, I had a, um, a situation that that kind of led me into this, um, industrial engineering idea, um, or manpower analysis. As a training officer, I had several ideas. Um, they would, um. They would offer senior enlisted people if they, if re-up, if they're, you know, signed up for another four years, they would get B-schools or which, you know, to some of these specialists was like going to college, you know. So um, I called the, all the different schools. I figured, 'Well, I'm in charge of the schools.' Okay. Um, I found that all the different schools that we were sending people to--and I called all the schools, and I said, "If you have an empty seat in a class on a Monday, call me and I'll fill it by Wednesday or Thursday." And they started doing it and they found out I meant it. [Webb affirms: Yeah]. And, um. And I did it. And one of the things especially I found out that B School, had some of the schools had empty seats! And I said, "No, that can't be. I mean, we are having people sign up for four years to get one of those seats and you're letting them go empty." So, I said, "Well, I'll tell you what?" I told all the senior NCOs, "If you sign up. Um, don't go for the B-School. If you sign up, go for whatever other option you can get and I'll get you the B-School. I'll just throw that in for nothing." And that's what happened. I said, "You just hang on with a bag packed. You want to go to that school? You hang on with a bag pack. And if there's an opening, I'll get you there." And I did, and that worked out. That worked out really fine.

Now, one of the things that. It happened early in my career to kind of got to me [was] one of my collateral duties. In VMCJ-2, when I first got there in '63, the, uh, even though I was going to school in electronic warfare, I was assigned a collateral duty of legal officer. The C.O. was upset. His legal officer had retired and literally left. And he just said, "Well, here comes your guy. You ought to be a lawyer." So I said, "Thanks a lot." You know. "So, I got my own Jewish lawyer." So, I started looking at some of the stuff and I... I had never done a court martial before. I never knew anything about it. Started reading about that, too. And, um. And I got together with

the...The skipper, said, "You know when we have office hours, I want people to be, to the point where they knew that if they came in to see me, they're going to lose a stripe."

Schwimmer: [01:31:29] And I thought, "Well, why don't we just work it so that they don't see you normally? And we get non-judicial punishment, you know, the minor punishments administered sort of ad hoc and not on anybody's record." He said, "That'd be perfect." I said, "Okay, so I worked out something with the with the 1st sergeant." And I said, "Look, when these guys come up, you know, like if they were drunk or something or late on duty or did this or did that, or, you know, it was always something minor. [Webb affirms: Yeah.] I slept in and I said, "He doesn't have to go see the skipper, does he? Why don't we give him a choice?" He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, you got that horseshoe pit down here on the side of the hangar. He [unclear] can dig out the horseshoe pit." "Yeah, that's a great idea." And I said, "Well. And then. Um, maybe you can paint the volleyball court down in the hangar deck." So that's what we did. The guys washing the-- you know, painting the volleyball court, washing the volleyball court, digging out the horseshoe pit, and doing all kinds of things "voluntarily", quote, unquote to keep from seeing the old man. Because once they knew, once they saw the old man, they'd lose a stripe. Yeah. So anyway, that was that. And then I got sent back to Vietnam again.

Webb: [01:33:16] This was in sixty---?

Schwimmer: [01:33:20] Nine. [i.e. 1969]. And I was flying the EA-6B, [autocorrects] EA-6A, rather. Sorry. And and the EF-10B and the RF-4. And, um. I flew the last EF-10B out of Đà Nẵng to [Naval Air Station] Cubi Point in the Philippines. And because I had the most time in it. And it was a little bit of an honor and a nice little trip to Bolton for a day or two, and. Then I came back and--

Webb: [01:34:14] Did you notice a a difference in oh morale or attitude between the time you left Vietnam the first time and then being sent back the second time? Or because of your kind of special squadron or, uh, group that you were with, was morale not really an issue?

Schwimmer: [01:34:37] Not really. No. We were pretty highly motivated because there were more SAMs the second time and we had a much better, well, supposedly more powerful

airplane to deal with it. We could see the war starting to wind down later on in '70. Some of the things that I saw, though. I. I was assigned to the group now as collateral duties, and I was flying with the squadron, and I wasn't flying quite as much, but I was doing a lot of collateral duties in the group, and I picked up all these different jobs. I had. I took on mess hall officer, industrial relations officer, which meant all those civilian workers worked for me. What was that? Currency control. They wanted to change currency...What is the -- oh, Vietnamese money to MPC? And I could do it. And you know, I was the only one that could do it. We built a, we're building another airfield and and to the start with the engineers came by and they started digging an area. And I said before they did that, there was a line that went to the airport side, a phone line... a communication line, so I made sure that was dug under the area that was going to going to build the airfield. And then I had. We had the local workers breaking up oyster shell and burning oyster shells to make concrete to make cement. And we didn't have a lot of it.

Schwimmer: [01:37:03] So we broke up an oyster shell, burnt it and made some cement until we got some industrial cement somewhere else. We got the Seabees and Seabees had a little coffee mess. They wanted to trade some of their Vietnamese money for, for regular money and I needed their cement. So, I worked their deal. They worked mine. And we got cement down for the tents. The tents were now on concrete bases. And the whole base looked more solid. I mean, when we were there the first time, it was like tents, you know, on the ground and a mess hall and a swamp! An honest-to-God swamp that had just been drained a little bit. And then this second time when I got there, um, it, we had a Freedom Hill, Hill 327. When I was there the first time, we had gunfire going on Hill 327. We were shooting; people shooting at us. We were shooting at them and that sort of thing at the time. And are you still there?

Webb: [01:38:36] I am, yeah.

Schwimmer: [01:38:38] Good. Um, so that that was going on and then the second time I'm there, it looks like there's a big hill and a PX on top of Hill 327. I thought, 'My God, you know, they made it into a parking lot.' It was just unbelievable. They took a battle site, made it into a parking lot. [Chuckles]

Webb: [01:39:10] I'm not sure that's what Joni Mitchell had in mind, but --[Chuckles]

Schwimmer: [01:39:14] Yeah. I thought, 'Holy shit.' And, um. Then I had several other things. I had security and I had some other. And so, I was out in security one time, and I like to go out every once in a while, on patrol. And so, I went out with one of the patrols and, and I took a five man patrol out, and we were out in the bush. And I see a bunch of guys coming our way, walking our way on one of these paths at night, and it didn't look good. They were all about twenty, twenty-five people in black pajamas and rice paddy hats and here we are, five of us. They're following me. Single file. And I told them, "Okay, you take follow my lead. Keep your hand near the trigger. And if I start shooting, you shoot. If I don't shoot, you don't shoot." So those guys are twenty, twenty-five people walking towards us. They don't look up. They walk right by us, and we walk. And I'm looking at them and watching them as I'm walking by them. And neither one of us started with the other. So, it worked out very, very nicely. We all survived.

Webb: [01:40:59] Are you still there?

Schwimmer: [01:41:00] Yeah.

Webb: [01:41:00] Okay.

Schwimmer: [01:41:03] Do you hear that?

Webb: [01:41:04] Yeah. I can hear you now.

Schwimmer: [01:41:06] Yeah. Oh, you couldn't hear that?

Webb: [01:41:08] Well, I heard, uh, up to the point where the guys were walking by.

Schwimmer: [01:41:13] Oh! Well, they walked by us, and I walked watching them, and all the other guys were. My guys were watching me. And and we walk by one another. And that was it.

Webb: [01:41:38] Wanted to ask, I guess both times that you were in Vietnam. Um, how able were you to communicate back home with your wife and family?

Schwimmer: [01:41:53] Um, the first time I wrote letters and wrote and sent tapes, that sort of thing. And the second time I found that I could get in one of the airplanes. Oddly enough, the RF-4 had a low frequency radio, and I could at certain times I could use it. I could get in one that...had power to it. Or I could be flying and using the radio and it would skip. I could get a skip to a radio amateur in in the United States. And I could get a cross to a landline to my wife, and I could actually talk to her on the phone.

Webb: [01:42:54] That's, that's remarkable.

Schwimmer: [01:42:56] Yeah, that was remarkable. It was really odd. And and it was just atmospheric. It depended on the atmosphere at that particular day. And I figured it out then it happened. Anyway, they, um, they called me in and then said, "You have too much exposure. We have to give you another job. Take you off flying." And I said, "Like what?" And they said, "Well, we'll make you a forward air controller." [Spoken to another party]"Oh, great." So that that was kind of an interruption there. You were asking something else?

Webb: [01:43:52] No, but what does that entail? Is that more of a, "We're putting you on the desk kind of, uh, situation or--"

Schwimmer: [01:44:02] No, actually, it was better than that. It was. Um. They were taking me out of the field and putting me in the field, taking me out of the airplane and putting me into into the infantry. [Webb interjects: Oh!] Yeah, that was more fun. So, I ended up...around Con Thien and they had a major battle going. I got int Con Thien just in time for this battle and the 3rd, 3rd Division is up there fighting a battle and the battalion commander attached to battalion and battalion commander got killed, and every officer in that in that particular battalion was wounded. Including me. Yeah. And the company commander I was working with was killed, and I took over. And, you know, here I had thought all these infantry guys, you know, they went to infantry school. They went to this. They went to that. They must know their craft. And they were attacking what looked like a regiment of Vietnamese dug in right by the river by the Cửa Việt. They were being reinforced from across the river, which is a shallow river from North Vietnam to South Vietnam that forms the border. And they're being reinforced across the border by people just wading across the river. And and they were attacking from the south, uphill. And threw three companies of people into it and got chewed up.

Schwimmer: [01:46:22] And. They were saying, well. They wanted me to get into it too. So they called me and said, "Okay, bring your troops in." And I said, "Well, I'm going to bring them in from the east. I'm not going on. I'm not going to go assault them from from right, right, right where you went and got yourself chewed up." [Webb affirms: Right] So I came in from the east where the the defenses weren't set up to be attacked from the east. And I kind of figured that out because they, they were around, you know, semi-circular defense. And the biggest part of the semicircle was in the middle, and they were attacking right up the middle. And I just went on one side. If you figure half a circle, you know, with the flat part being the river, um, I was attacking from the right side. So we achieved our, our objective, and we came across all these machine gun nests and everything else, bunkers, and took them out one by one. But we did it a lot more carefully than they seem to. I lost people, but I thought the objective at that point was they're going to end the war soon anyway. I was trying to keep from losing people.

Webb: [01:47:55] Yeah. And you say you were wounded in that as well?

Schwimmer: [01:47:57] Yeah. So anyway, I had a couple of. Uh oh. A couple of...things happen later on also. I. I was in the air group. And before this I was still in the air group. And we had we had this thing. One of these things happened: We had a TA-4 and there was a, uh, a gun in Xépôn, a 100-millimeter gun that was shooting at a lot of the supporting aircraft. He had come down from North Vietnam, and he was in Xépôn, Laos, and he was shooting right alongside the Ho Chi Minh Trail, coming south in the northern part of I Corps, northwestern part of I Corps. And I said, "Well, I'm going to try to get him out." He said, "Well, they, he kept hiding and they had no way of finding out where where the gun was." [Phone rings.] Hold on a second. [Son says: Dad, could you get that?] But anyway, I had no way of finding out where the gun was. And I said, "Well, we've got a TA-4 here and a TA-4 has got two places. So, I'll ride in the back and one of the guys ride in the front. We got two cannons, and we have rockets. We can do smoke and we can come across in the TA-4 and and stir up the area that we think he's in. We got the carrier and if it comes out to shoot us, we can shoot rockets.

Schwimmer: [01:49:58] The smoke rockets at them. And then we have an A-6 orbiting on top. He can come down and bomb on the smoke. Which, you know, sounded like a good idea at the time. One of these things I call sounded like a good idea at the time. So we go out and we do

our thing, and we start shooting up the area and all that doing our thing. And he comes out as advertised and takes one shot and he is good. He knocks us right out of the sky. One shot hit between the two cockpits blew us both out. [Webb exclaims: Wow]. And next thing I know, I'm in a parachute coming down. And the other guy I knew said the same thing. I mean, it was weird. And I cut down into a dry riverbed. And meanwhile, late afternoon, the A-6es have gone, you know, that didn't work out. And then we called. I called on the rescue radio and call for Sandy, and Sandy comes along, and they said, well, they couldn't send a helicopter to get us because it was getting to be dark. It's getting late. So they come get us the next day. Uh, great. That's fantastic. The guy I was with, he landed. Now, we had these cords. We figured that we'd land in the trees, you know, the tree cover? [Webb affirms: Mhm.] And we, a lot of us had sewn these parachute cords about 100 feet of parachute cord into our rescue vests.

Schwimmer: [01:51:57] And, um. And he did. And he must have landed in the 150-foot tree because he let out his 100 feet, and he fell the last 50 feet. And he broke his hip or something. But he started a small war with the guys. With the North Vietnamese and meanwhile, I was back there and hiding along the along the road, line the river, the dry riverbed. And I was hiding and. I had to. Well, somebody is over there, but they didn't, they didn't catch me. I figured out - I put myself into the into the dirt and if they caught me, they got a nice souvenir. So if they were a small group of them, they'd be in a small war. But as it turned out, there weren't too many that ever saw me, and the only one that did, I had to dispatch. And I killed him with a knife. And that kept things quiet. The next day that came and Sandy came, and the helicopter came and all that, and I asked him to pick up the other guy. They picked up the other guy. And then I said, "Don't even don't land. Just hover, come into a hover about one foot hover, and I'll run up the back of the helicopter." And I did, and that was that...

One other time we're in the RF-4. Is Gary Seeger and myself. And then we're doing photo missions in Mụ Giạ Pass [between Laos and Vietnam].

Schwimmer: [01:54:15] Um, a lot of the photo missions that we got were cast offs from the Air Force because they didn't want to do them. Mụ Giạ Pass was up in North-- [Speaks to a third party: Yes!]. Just north of the Cửa Việt. It was the beginning of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, I call it. And you know where it is?

Webb: [01:54:43] Sure.

Schwimmer: [01:54:43] Yeah. Anyways, two, like two hills and they wanted pictures in the middle, so. And there were guns on both hills. So here we are in RF-4, and I say look at Gary, and I say, "Well you know the only one thing left to do." And he said, "Yeah the hills are how big?" "Oh, they run around what, four, five-hundred feet, something like that." I said, "Well we'll go 300 [feet]." [Laughs] So we flew under the hill. And. And we did three lines... [i.e., Three passed with the RF4B photo plane at Mu Gia Pass.]

So there's one flight north to south. Another flight south to north and another one after that north to south. And off we went. And the picture you got, you got a picture of me and Gary that I sent. And, um, uh, Gary's Jewish, I was Jewish, and, uh, it was, um, funny situation that time because we had, painted the Mogen David, the Jewish Star on the side of our airplane since we had flown on it. Uh, and we considered it ours. So while we were flying, our photo missions, they really gave us some shitty missions.

Schwimmer: [01:56:13] Might as well fly what we want. And that was that with that one. There was Dave Lavine. Oh, um. Oh, God. It was an interesting thing. We were, the first time I was there on the first tour in in Vietnam, we're flying North Vietnam and this colonel from the Marine Corps said, "Oh, we've got to escort." [Autocorrects] I'm sorry. That was the second time. Second time I was there. We've got to come out and we've got to escort you guys because we're Marine F-4s and. We should be able to escort you and maybe we'll shoot down a MiG. So, they come out. And we're flying on a flight of the EF-10B, and we separate ourselves from these guys because they are not really very experienced at being in the North. And it was I think it was 513, VMFA--513 [Squadron]. And I remember two of the guys in it and they're flying along and they're talking about turning their lights on. First of all, they flew up in formation. There was like four of us in formation. Squadron Skipper and O'Donnell, I think it was Colonel O'Donnell and a couple of others; 513 533 I think it was 513. And they're flying in formation for six airplanes escorting two, I mean, the F-10Bs. Well, we sort of made ourselves. We said, "Oh, we're slower than you are, so we're going to have to go a little further along the way from y'all."

Schwimmer: [01:58:33] And basically, I didn't want to be anywhere near these guys. [Laughs] They they had turned their lights on and at night, and they're flying along in a formation with the lights on, and then they suddenly realize they're in North Vietnam and they should have

their lights off. So they turn the lights off and, and they're flying along and they're going and doing this and doing that. And then, uh, but they still had their, their blinking lights on. Um, they turned the navigation lights off once, like in that second. Oh my God, if there's a MiG up here, he's going to, he's going to see them quick and sure, you know, they're talking to each other and they're saying, "Hey, how many guys are out there?" And I said, "Is everybody up here in formation?" They said, "Yeah." Well, they flew a loose formation, a tight formation. Then they would go into thinking they should fly a loose formation again. And then we were going home, and they said, "Okay, we can tighten it up now." And then all of a sudden, one of the guys says, "How many airplanes are here?" And the guy said, one or the other characters, [unclear name] or another says, "Hey, wait a minute, I'm counting five airplanes." And he said, "Nah, it can't be. There's only four." And "Well, wait a minute." "What?" "There's one, two, three. Wait a minute. That's a MiG!"

Schwimmer: [02:00:09] It was a MiG in formation. He was flying in formation with him. [Webb exclaims: Wow.] And they all ran all over the sky and he didn't hit anybody. But it was really embarrassing. It was funny, I thought. And...so then I, um. Let's see. I came back. Oh. There was another guy that I knew that...Oh, Dave Lavine and Art Bartell. That they were in 513 also. They were. They were pretty hot, F4 drivers. Dave Lavine was - he got a R & R flight and went off and and got himself a job in Israel after the war and then told everybody and told the CEO about it. And the CEO said, "I don't want to know. I don't want to have to ground you. I don't want to do anything that's for anything." Because he was one of the better pilots in the whole place. So, he ended up flying for Israeli industries and was the test pilot in Kfir years later in the '70s. And, but he was killed later on by an accident. Near accident. Anyway, so I get to go home in '70. And. Let's see. In '70, I got attached to the Fleet Intelligence Center. And I was there and doing really, really enjoying my work. I was a secondary Intel officer. Electronic warfare. Recon systems, electronic, and all that and intelligence. And I was doing beaches landing, amphibious warfare.

Schwimmer: [02:02:43] Anyway, I was doing everything attached to amphibious warfare, and I was creating or putting together information that the fleet was sending in about beaches and harbors and, and oh, landing sites. So that is we're putting together packages so that our helicopter landing sites as well, so that if in the future there any requirement to land at particular places, we had already scoped out places to make the attacks. And Papa Doc Duvalier

[president of Haiti] was on his deathbed, and I had reason, you know, we ought to have. I'm sure that once he dies, that place is going to be unstable. They're going to send a fleet down there. So we ought to have some product. So, I had people working and putting together packages and sure enough, he died that night. And there was a character that I was working for...Well, we add all the products we had, all the photos put together and everything else, and Papa Doc died and the guy I was working for was [a Navy officer whose previous experience was on] a destroyer. And his location, intelligence rotations, you know, they made him head of the division because he was a Navy commander doing this rotation. But basically, he took the credit for having the product all done and everything else, and then he chided me for putting people on overtime unnecessarily, without an order. I said, "Well, you got to take, you know, individual responsibility some days." But he wasn't ready for that.

Schwimmer: [02:04:59] But then he got into my people and got upset with one of my enlisted men. And laid hands on them and got into a whole thing, and I reported it. I got cited for being, oh nothing loyal, [clarifies] for being disloyal to him. Well, which when translated comes down to I should have let the guy assault an enlisted man. No, that doesn't happen in the Corps. [Webb affirms: Yeah] so. So anyway, that, um, the, uh, the command sent a speed letter to my... And at the same time the major's board was meeting, and so I was turned down for promotion because they had interfered with that. So, I appealed to the Navy Board for the correction of records, and I won. I had them brought in under sworn testimony and they backed off [and admitted to lying]. Navy Board for the Correction of Records said, "No, I was not disloyal." That fitness report was removed and everything else. But by that time the Marine Corps and service was into what peace dividend ⁸ and they were getting rid of people left and right. Dismissed. I was teaching at the Fleet Intelligence Center. I was teaching at the Naval War College and Amphibious Warfare, and I was teaching at the Landing Force Training Command. I had courses in intelligence at the Landing Force Training Command and [unclear name or word] for four or five years. And until about '75. Then I was let go. So! You want to keep going?

Webb: [02:07:18] Yeah. [Clears his throat] Excuse me. Absolutely. What did you do after those three or four years and after you left?

⁸ Peace dividend is public money which becomes available after defense spending has been reduced.

Schwimmer: [02:07:27] Right. Then I, I actually, I had a, was working for a dredge company and Norfolk Dredge as a supervisory engineer and I was working all the sites there, and then I was working in the food business I was selling. I got the idea that frozen food should be a salable commodity, and nobody was doing it. I was taking frozen food that hospitals weren't [sic] were ordering and weren't using and reselling it. Just selling it and that sort of thing. And people weren't ready for non-brand. Famous brand label stuff that frozen foods at that point. But it was selling a little bit. But then anyway, the distributor [Sam Sandler] called me one day and he was talking to me..." You know, if you want to get in the food business, I'll get you in. You can cover my investment in the restaurant. So, I did that." Because basically he was the only reason I was succeeding is because he let me. [Laughs] So I got into a restaurant business with this other guy, and we were in a seafood restaurant business, and I was several other businesses, and I thought I was working myself to death, and. I was coming in at ten and I'd leave at three in the morning and working every day. Every day. So then and I finally, I saw I had the ability to go to civil service, and I put myself on the civil service registry. And sure enough, I got hired at the Navy Manpower and Materiel Command in Atlantic and Norfolk Naval Shipyard, and they went around and at the Navy School of Work Study.

Schwimmer: [02:09:58] And I went through there, and I went GS7/9/11 on a training agreement and on Payment 11. And I was doing work studies for them. Like, how many people do you put on a new ship? Or how do you make the ports and harbors more efficient? And how many tugboats should you have in a certain place, or how many people do you have on a tugboat? And I rode tugboats for God knows how long, and until I figured out how many people were more efficient in the tugboat. And and the harbor, the interface between the harbor pilots and the tugboat. Because the harbor pilots picked their next harbor pilots out of the ranks of the tugboat people. And I did all sorts of stuff like that, and then I got fairly good at it. To the point where they would, if they had a problem in a place, they would send me down and ask me to concerning staffing or manpower, they would send me down to either do a study or determine what was wrong. And in many cases, a lot of things were basically because it wasn't that they didn't have enough manpower, they just weren't listening to the people who were working. Uh, like in one place in the Navy, a training device center in Florida, in Orlando, Florida.

Schwimmer: [02:11:40] Um, they they had a situation where the engineer, they had an engineer who came up with ideas for devices, and then they had a draftsman who drew the device, drew

plans for the device, and then they had a model maker who made models of it. And. So the engineer quit, and the draftsman was doing all the work and the model maker was doing the that stuff and other stuff, and, and they asked me to figure out how to, how to fix this. And I said, "Well, actually, you could fix it with the same staff you got." And they said, "How?" And I said, "Okay, upgrade everybody one position description." [Chuckles]. Yeah, because everybody was one step. You know, the model maker was a GS-9, no, [GS]-7 and... Or [GS]-8 and the the draftsman was a GS-9 and the engineer was a GS-11. And I said, "Well, the GS-11 left is entirely consistent since this other guy's doing his job. Make him the 11 and make him vital engineer and there you go. All solved. And everybody was happy. All the workers were happy because they had a future. [Webb affirms: Yeah.] And so, I look at that. How about that? Makes sense. So then. They I went on. And I worked there, and then I worked for um, oh, let's see, I was doing some more studies and, and in Norfolk and while I was doing a study on resupply, um, like, their ships were going out and supplying the fleet with stuff.

Schwimmer: [02:13:56] Most boring stuff in the world. But then they were coming back with what was left over, what was not used, and it was going back to the warehouses. And I did a study of that. You there?

Webb: [02:14:11] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [02:14:11] I was doing a study of that and came to find out that some of the stuff was going off the base. They were taking too long to get to the warehouse, and I followed them, and it was going off the base into the into the trucks of the people who sold it to them in the first place. So I made it to, I became a security officer [Laughter] by accident. [Web inserts: Yeah.] And I was working in the security business, and I went up to Washington, D.C., moved up to Washington, D.C. for the Navy manpower, materiel NAVSEA Naval Sea Systems Command, and started working for them. And we were losing a lot of guns and stuff in the various Reserve stations because the places they had them locked up were very insecure. So I had a new standard for, um, uh, what do you call them? Uh, God. Uh, we keep the arms and arms locker. Um. Oh, geez. And arms and munitions storage facility had a new standard and wrote all that for locks and whatever [i.e. construction standards for armories and magazines] and I worked on that.

And then I went over to Admiral Rickover.

Schwimmer: [02:15:58] And meanwhile, I had been, um, I went over to the [Army] Reserves at the same time. I started working for Admiral Rickover as a security inspector for the shipyards. And he was, he was really good. Now he scared the hell out of me when I first worked for him. I went up to work for him and there was the receptionist, and. And I'm sitting there waiting to be interviewed by Rickover. And all of a sudden, I hear somebody [say] "Get the hell in here, you son of a bitch!" And this Navy Captain running by the desk. And I said, "What was that?" And he said, "There's your new boss." I said, "Oh, man, what am I letting myself in for?" But it turned out that he was really good in backing me. And he said, "I want you to go out and I want you to inspect these places, and I want you to report back what you find." And, you know, with all these work studies I used to do, I'd be all these studies, I do a lot of work. And it was up to the-- In many cases, people who requested these studies didn't want to [follow through.] I would do all the work. And they said they didn't need as many people as they thought they did, and they didn't accept the study. They just use it as a doorstep. And I said, "Well, you know, are you going to do the same thing?" He said, "No, I'm going to back you every time you tell me exactly what you find, and I'll do the deciding."

Schwimmer: [02:17:51] And he did. The naval shipyard commanders never gave me any problems after that. I would go there. They would try to keep me from seeing things and finding-- Like, I found on most of the shift workers at night, you know, would all have chrome, chrome wheels. Because the chrome shop has to operate all day and all night anyway. The chemicals are there whether you use them or not. They have to keep operating. So if you're going to, you can't just turn it on for half an hour and then turn it off. It's got to be on all day, so might as well use it. And I didn't give a darn about chrome wheels. That wasn't a big deal. One of the things I used to say was in Norfolk Naval Shipyard, I said in the town of Portsmouth, if you played the *Star-Spangled Banner* in the town of Portsmouth, half the houses would stand up and salute. Because the shipyard was right there, and they were they were letting people park in...the [ship]yard. And ...at night I noticed there was something going on there. They had lost their diesel fuel stock, about 80% of their diesel fuel stock. And I said, "What the heck's going on here?" They said, "Well, you know, it's not a lot considering this, that, and the other thing." I said, "What are you talking about? You lost 80%."

Schvimmer: [02:19:44] Where did it go? And by the way, how come all those pickup trucks got tanks in the back?" You know what is what is Number One Diesel? Number One Diesel is kerosene. And like heating oil or Number Two Diesel is heating oil. And what do you think these people are heating their houses with? Your fuel. [Laughs] So yeah it went into that. About the same time...it was '79." Um, one of the things about being in the Marine Corps, I had been in the Marine Corps, I came on as a Reserve officer, and I see among my papers are discharged from being enlisted and commissioned in the Reserves. And then there's another one that's a discharge from the Reserves. And then getting picked up as a regular officer. They had a board and I reported to be a regular officer and brought on board as a regular officer. But at that time and unfortunately, I didn't realize it, um, the regulations were such that if you were let go as an officer...as a retired Reserve officer; excuse me as a Reserve officer, you could still stay in the Reserve. Now, as a regular officer, you could not. You could not because you were not a Reserve officer any longer.

Schvimmer: [02:21:30] You were a regular officer. And you had given up your Reserve commission. You either had a Reserve commission or a regular commission. You couldn't have both. In the Army and Air Force, you could have both. Nowadays, I think he can. But anyway, unfortunately I tried going in the Marine Corps Reserve and they couldn't take me, I even. They said, "Well, you'll have to go back as an enlisted man, go back to your enlisted rank." And. And they offered me that. And I said, "No, I'm not going to take that." In the command, the last command I was at. And so I went in the Army, oddly, a Marine I had helped, one in the Marines under me, I had [helped knew] ...that was looking for advancement. I told him, "You know, you're a warrant officer, but after the war, they're going to take all these temporary warrants and they're going to remove them. You're going to go back to being enlisted." So he said, "Well, what could I do to become a permanent officer?" I said, "Well, let's see if we can get you into an MOS where you stay as a permanent captain or whatever, you get promoted or warrant." And we figured out loadmaster or some damn thing, and he did that and he got a permanent commission, and then he switched over to the Army, oddly enough. And I met him as an Army recruiter.

Schvimmer: [02:23:25] He was an Army captain when I met him. And he said, "Why don't you join the Army Reserve? And I said, "Well, why would I do that?" And he said, "Well, you've got seventeen years. All you need is three more years and you can pick up your retirement." And I

said, "All right, I'll do it." So I joined on in the Reserves and I ended up with a-- I started as a sergeant. I went to summer camp one year '79, and I started working on nobody knew how to do [an operation] plan. And in war planning, or a strike plan or anything else, or an amphibious or a intelligence annex or an operation plan, and I had just been teaching all this stuff. I did it for the colonel, who was in charge of the 29th Division and the colonel for the 28th Division, Pennsylvania Division. And next thing I know, I'm a warrant officer and warrant officer two and three. And and I was had my own intelligence, photo interpretation platoon. And I was involved in Marine Air Ground Intelligence System. I came up with a system for interpreting photo interpretation, MAGIS [Marine Air Gound Intelligence System. Or TIPI MAGIS [Tactical Imagery Photo Intelligence System MAGIS]. And about oh previous to my, in '70, I had put in the beneficial suggestion to the Navy and Marine Corps to put TV cameras in the photo aircraft. And years later, you know, here it was. A couple of years later, I was working in NAVSEA and I went over to NAVAIR SYSCOM [Systems Command] and said, "You know, whatever happened to this thing I suggested?" They said, "Yeah, we had record of it."

Schwimmer: [02:25:58] And they sent back a letter saying they couldn't do it because they were working on some kind of system or something. "Yeah, but your system is way too involved. You know, it would have been much simpler had you put a TV camera in there," and they said, "Well, we didn't think it was so useful", you know. "Yeah, it is, and it's still feasible." I knew because I had an uncle that had built TIROS [Television Infrared Observation *Satellite*] for RCA. He worked for RCA, and he built satellites, and he was project manager on the TIROS satellite, Abe Schnapt. And he put a TV camera in a satellite. "So don't tell me you can't put a TV camera in an airplane!" It was a vidicon tube. Anyway. You could put a vidicon tube in there. So, I have a whole series of them on me. Finally, Jim Webb became Secretary of the Navy, and I wrote to him, and I said, "Hey, look, you know, this is bullshit." And he agreed. And he went back to NAVAIR SYSCOM, tell[ing] them you [Schwimmer] tried to do something. So, they gave me a coffee cup for the whole thing out of the whole [thing.] I was looking for...really, what I was doing is trying to get them to do something like that, you know? And by the time, they figured out that I was right, and they were wrong, that it didn't matter anyway, because they were going to satellite photography and things had advanced that far along. But I said, you really missed them. However, I still have those letters and I have them here. And if somebody ever gets interested in seeing that, I can send them the whole conversation. It's really it's really kind of humorous when you think about it. And what it was is a couple of Navy guys, Navy

commanders, who were resting their career on one program. And anything else that came along was to be assaulted. But anyway, that was there. So.

And then I was going to Europe with the with the Army. Some as an Army warrant officer in charge of an Intel platoon and photo Intel platoon, a readout platoon. And I went to [RAF] Alconbury [RAF Station in England] first, and we were doing readouts on the on the photos from the [Lockheed] U-2 planes and from the Air Force, RAF Force. And then the next year, they tried us out and they found that we knew what we were doing. And I recruited a bunch of guys we were meeting in Dower House Road in Washington, DC. It was a 223rd MI Battalion [223rd Military Intelligence Battalion] And. And. Instead of going to one of these Virginia forts, went out in the field one year to Virginia.

Schwimmer: [02:29:40] And and it was just bug infested and, and whatever, you know, and we had our photo interpretation. Trucks and stuff and shelters in trucks. And we were supposed to operate out in the field, and we did, but. Anyway, um, so we went in, and I worked with the [Naval Air Station] Patuxent River, with the photo lab at Patuxent River and got the guys to at least live in the in the barracks at Patuxent River and eat them rather than going out in the field and that sort of. Then we got sent up to, um, to Europe. They saw our value, and I was recruiting guys from DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency], guys who were photo interpreters, DIA, um, because they were they were pretty expert at what they did. And DIA had a local Reserve unit created to keep them in town, and they didn't want to stay in town. They wanted to go somewhere else. And tell them, "Hey, we're going, you know, join my unit and we'll go to Europe." And and we did. So and we went there in the summer and we went on to Zweibrücken Air Base, Air Force Base. And we were working with the Air Force. And in fact, they took us to the photo derby, and we were ringers for them. We would do, [autocorrects] they would do the photo flying and we would do the interpretation. And everybody thought it was one big unit when it was really two units. But they won the photo derby.

Webb: [02:31:46] Did you get any kind of recognition?

Schwimmer: [02:31:50] Uh, yeah, I got a couple of nice letters and all that sort of thing. That was it. And but. And we got invited back. That was the best part.

Webb: [02:32:02] Yeah. Okay.

Schwimmer: [02:32:04] Yeah. Oh, yeah. They loved us. And one of the, one of the funniest things is that while we were in Europe, we were working with the Army where, you know, our parent unit was the Army 66 MI out of Oxford and a local Army unit in Zweibrücken. And so, the Army would go running in the morning and they said, "Okay, you guys, join us at about 6:00 in the morning." We'd get up and go running and we at that time I was a, I was running a lot and the guys I had with me were some good runners. I had a couple of really long-distance runners with me and the CEO of the parent unit, said, "Well, we'll take it easy on you guys. We know you're Reserve, you know?" And I said, "Oh, that sounds nice." And we got up the first morning with them and started, you know, running with them, a little jog. And then I said, "Hey, Mort, take the guidon and meet us back at the base." He takes off. This is the guy that...this guy was a long, long-distance runner, and he up and ran five miles and he was back to the barracks...

Schwimmer: [02:33:35] The CO of the unit said, "Oh, a bunch of ringers. I should have known." So anyway, yeah, we had a decent time there and I did a little research on on things like, uh oh, the Maginot Line. We did photographic analysis of the Maginot Line, go over in France and that had us going into France and, and the physically look at it and look at the photographs and practice and all that stuff. We did see some moving target stuff and analysis and was pretty, pretty interesting. And all this was going on about the same time I was working for the [Navy Nuclear] Shipyard. And, you know, the Navy needs their shipyard. And then I got a job with--Oh, 'bout the same time I went on to Army, helicopter schools--

Webb: [02:34:51] Okay.

Schwimmer: [02:34:52] When we were in Europe several times and... we've been there in the '80s and all the whole time of the '80s it was called REDTRAIN and We've done several things there, and. And it was sort of running out. The whole program was sort of running out. And so, I went into a helicopter school, and I became a helicopter pilot in the Army, and then I transferred over from Naval Sea Systems Command to the Department of Energy.

Schwimmer: [02:35:38] And as an inspector with the Department of Energy Security Inspector. And because I had the helicopter training, I became. I was working in the nuclear portion of the

Department of Energy and inspecting the various nuclear production sites. And, and then I also became a helicopter safety officer and then head of the helicopter security operations of the various nuclear production sites. And that meant that we had helicopters running security. We had. So, security helicopters in in Oak Ridge [Tennessee]. We had them in in Hanford [Washington]. We had them down in. And. South Carolina in Las Vegas, Nevada, in the test site, national test site. And Savannah Rivers, where I was thinking of it. South Carolina and Idaho. Idaho engineering site. And that's where we had large facilities. And we had an anti-terrorist response team that was supposed to get within two minutes. Respond within two minutes and overcome any kind of terrorist operations. We had that going and we were disbanded around 1996. I got into a big hassle about that when President Clinton's people came down and said there were no more terrorists and they disbanded us. [Laughs] And I got into a whole big hassle. And then I retired in '98.

Webb: [02:37:56] Okay.

Schwimmer: [02:37:57] And they, they sort of we got into a hassle, legal hassle with one another. And then they finally said, you know, "You can come to work", or [autocorrects] "We'll pay you not to come to work this next year." And they did.

Webb: [02:38:13] Yeah. [Laughs]

Schwimmer: [02:38:16] And I said, "Well that's great." So, there it is.

Webb: [02:38:21] Right, Sir. That was a very storied military career. It's not at all what I was expecting, but, uh that's fantastic. You made my job very easy during that interview, um, I did. I was talking to one of my coworkers. He used to help me with the interviews sometimes, and he just got out of the Marine Corps a couple of years ago, and he was interested. It was the one question I had that I don't feel like we covered, uh, already. Uh, he said that they put similar jammers into some of their vehicles in Afghanistan that you guys had in the, uh EF-10A or--

Schwimmer: [02:39:09] B.

Webb: [02:39:11] B. That's right.

Schwimmer: [02:39:17] You're thinking of the EA-6A?

Webb: [02:39:20] Uh, yeah.

Schwimmer: [02:39:21] Yeah. Oh, yes. Well. That's squadron. You see that's the that's where we had the mini reunion and in Cherry Point. I can give you background on that. They developed, you know, we had the E-6A. We monitored model managers for the EA-6A. They [adapted] the EA-6A into the EA-6B by adding two more positions, three more positions in the back.

Webb: [02:39:55] Okay.

Schwimmer: [02:39:56] And they expanded the airplane and they got into communications and listening, and they got into a whole bunch of other things. They broadened the whole thing from electronic warfare, considering electronic warfare of anti-aircraft stuff. And they went on to electronic warfare of conversations. Electronic warfare can, in anything going on and in the airwaves to the point where it does that EA-6B does, as you can imagine, an enlarged Intruder. Does what the AWACS [Airborne Warning & Control System] airplane does. You know what the AWACS airplane? Air Force AWACS?

Webb: [02:40:56] Sure. Yeah.

Schwimmer: [02:40:57] That huge, you know, that that bomber with that huge round thing on it?

Webb: [02:41:04] Right.

Schwimmer: [02:41:05] With like fifty people sitting there at console?

Webb: [02:41:09] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [02:41:11] Yeah. Well, those five people were doing the same thing.

Webb: [02:41:16] Yeah. Well, my coworker was saying that the similar jammers that they now are putting in in the vehicles, the ground vehicles, when you would leave that vehicle that you would just feel something weird about your person. And I just wondered if you had any kind of, uh, experience similar to that, like after you were done flying around in some of these planes, whether you, you felt anything weird about your person or if that was just something that he experienced.

Schwimmer: [02:41:51] No, he's talking about the radio battalion. But they were short. Um, they were, uh, line of sight, pretty much jamming. And no, I didn't really feel that much about it unless he was thinking about the, um, the electronics of it or the radio waves and all that.

Webb: [02:42:12] Yeah. Okay.

Schwimmer: [02:42:13] Um, so that stuff...One of the things that that I concentrated on and taught other people to, to look at when they were doing their jamming and such: see, there was, um, you have an array of instruments and you have a scope, one scope for the direction finding, and you have another array of instruments for analyzing signal you're looking at and where in the frequency he is. And first of all, you have to capture, the first item is to look at is: Where is this guy and is he a threat? You know, if he's the same, the same signal, like a fire can radar is a radar attached to a series of 37, 57-millimeter guns or 100-millimeter guns. Okay. Now, they had a way of laying these things out. They'd lay them out in sixes [like a Star of David]. They have a junction box [in the middle]. Electronic junction boxes. And this something that the Russians did, they. They'd run their junction boxes in sixes [like a Star of David], and they would attach that to the to the main radar. Now, that radar could be right underneath you. And he's a threat, right? Because he's attached to all these guns. Or he could be five miles away from you, and he's not a threat because the guns can't shoot five miles. Now one of the things that they used to do. Um, and they, they were playing a game. I consider this whole thing electronic chess. One of the things they were doing is that they would take their antenna and stop it and point it right at you.

Webb: [02:44:26] Okay.

Schwimmer: [02:44:28] They knew where you were, and if they were five miles away from you, they would do that particularly. Now if you were a new guy or a nervous about the whole thing, you would concentrate on that strong signal, right? Or if it was automated equipment, especially if it's automated equipment. Automated equipment is key to home in on signal strength first. So the automated equipment would really jump to the signal that's five miles away and ignore the one that's sitting right underneath it which is not firing, you know, right on you. You know, the weaker signal is sitting right under you. Now, the one that'll kill you is the weaker signal, not the stronger one.

Webb: [02:45:17] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [02:45:18] So the automated equipment would center on the stronger signal and would be the wrong thing to do. That's why you need the operator in a lot of these things to make that judgment. Um, to make that sort of a judgment call. Now, one of the things that I also found is that the SAM missile itself, you've seen pictures of SAM, haven't you, like the six-pointed star?

Webb: [02:45:53] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [02:45:55] Okay. You know why it's like that?

Webb: [02:45:57] No.

Schwimmer: [02:45:58] Okay. Remember I said the sixth? The sixth connection junction box?

Webb: [02:46:06] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [02:46:06] It's six wires coming out of a junction box. And six wires go to six launchers. Okay. Each launcher has two missiles. Or one missile depends. Each launcher is either has either one or two missiles. With SAMS, it started out with one missile. Okay, so now you've got six launchers with six missiles, and you have one truck resupplying them. Now, how would you go if you were resupplying and reloading each one of these launchers? How would you travel?

Webb: [02:46:53] Uh, I'm not sure.

Schwimmer: [02:46:55] Well, you go, you start in a circle and then you'd count to one, and then you go back to another. And after a while, what you're looking at when you're looking at the SAM missile sites, are the tire trucks of the of the resupply vehicle.

Webb: [02:47:16] Uh huh. Okay.

Schwimmer: [02:47:18] See. So, he's supplying them. Yeah. He goes across and every one of them is the same. You end up with a pattern that looks the same because the resupply trucks were going to six different points. You arrange six different points and that's how you end up with a star and a circle around it. Right?

Webb: [02:47:43] Yeah, I would have. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

Schwimmer: [02:47:47] So anyway, they, um, they had something else also that I was, I kind of discovered in looking at it and working against them. Um. And that was called a[n optical] fire director. Now the fire, the radars that were laying the 37, 57 guns had a fire director and right by the junction box and it was called Puazo, I think, P-U-A-Z-O. That was their name. Um, and the fire director is a choice of optical versus electronic type. So they could look at you, if they could see you, they could track you with the optics. And. Um, and instead of shooting at you with what the radar information gave them, they could actually fine tune the whole shooting operation with the fire director. You know, it's like a fire director in an old battleship. You know what I'm saying?

Webb: [02:49:01] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [02:49:03] Yeah. And that same operation. Well, one of the things that I came up with is the initial SAM fired radar only. Now that radar was an advanced radar. It was a switching radar. It would. It was small pieces. It was like a thousand small, tiny micro radars all in one big train, and it switched from one to the other. So it would. It would sound when it was switching, it would sound like what I call a rattlesnake in a tin can. You know what I mean?

[Webb affirms: Mmhm.] And. And when it went high pulse repetition frequency, when it was really looking for accurate shots, it would go faster. So it was actually like a rattlesnake. And I used to say, you know, "Just listen for the rattlesnake. You could hear it." And, um, it would just go, you know. [imitates noise] Dapetty, dapetty, dapetty...and then pedetty, pedetty, going to shoot right then. And if you could jam them now and get it to quit. Or get it to go off automatic. If he was on automatic, it would shoot right then. If he jammed them right when he went there, it would go back to the old, to the low PRF, low pulse repetition frequency. The jamming. The Air Force had this [Douglas] RB-66B [Destroyer] or C [another model], they had a B, and they had a C, and they experimented early on with jamming, and they would jam. And the B, let's say the B, the RB-66B was all passive. It knew where every emitter was, but it couldn't do anything about it. Didn't have a jammer. The RB-66C had all jammers and they jammed all the frequencies. Except that when you take jamming power, let's say you have 1000 Watts of jamming power and you distributed over a thousand megacycles, so that's only one watt per mega cycle, isn't it? [Webb affirms: Okay] o that's very weak. What you're doing is putting up a. A beacon for somebody to home in on pretty much.

Webb: [02:52:05] Mm hm.

Schvimmer: [02:52:05] So. That's the wrong way to go, I felt, and I kept saying, "Look, we have terrible little jammers." I started in the EF-10B with a maybe a, oh, a five-to-ten-megawatt jammer, you know. Very small jammer. But I put all the power on two megacycles. You know. You see what I'm saying?

Webb: [02:52:45] Yup.

Schvimmer: [02:52:46] So whatever power I had; I would find an enemy emitter. Uh, like a, um, uh, let's say a fire can, its frequency, its nominal frequency was 3105.

Webb: [02:53:00] Okay.

Schvimmer: [02:53:01] Um, I would put that jammer on 3105. Period. 3104 3103 [autocorrects] 0306. Maybe, but most of the power went on 3105. Now, depending on. There was another

interesting thing that I found that depending on the characteristics of the radars. One of the things I find is that the magnetron that powers the radar, you know what magnetron is, right?

Webb: [02:53:41] Right.

Schwimmer: [02:53:42] Okay, the magnetron that powers the radar is tunable within a certain limit, maybe ten megacycles one way or the other...or five megacycles whatever. And I found that all...the emitters within a bicycle ride of San Juan are all tuned to the same frequency. All the emitters within a bicycle ride of Vinh were all tuned to the same frequency, not necessarily the same one at Bien Hoa. [Laughs] And each city had every emitter within a bicycle ride or car ride, the small car ride, it wasn't that far away.

Webb: [02:54:36] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [02:54:37] All of them within a certain circle were tuned [to the same frequency]. So it told me that the same mechanic was tuning all those, all those machines.

Webb: [02:54:49] Yeah.

Schwimmer: [02:54:50] And the same thing with the pulse width. You analyze the pulse width. And on the right hand corner, if the if the magnetron wasn't kept in good shape, it would drop off. Okay, so you'd have. You know what I'm saying?

Webb: [02:55:14] Yeah. Kind of.

Schwimmer: [02:55:16] You know, like you have an eight by ten sheet of paper. That's what the pulse width signature looks like. The outline of an eight by ten sheet of paper comes out square like a rectangle, you know. [Webb affirms: Okay.] Now, if you bend that right corner of the paper, that's what the magnetron drop off looks like.

Webb: [02:55:39] Okay.

Schwimmer: [02:55:41] You know, that means that the magnetron itself is not working at full efficiency. And that gives you an indication when a whole bunch of those magnetrons are like that, that tells you there's no there's no repairs being made. So now the, yeah, that's squadron that's down at Cherry Point is VMAQ. What they did with them. They took VMCI and we were a composite reconnaissance squadron. We started off with the EF-10B and we and we went to the and we had the RF-8 photo airplane and then we had the EA-6A, a electronic warfare, better airplane. And then we had the RF-4B photo airplane, better airplane. And then they separated the photo birds away and gave that function to the Navy and Air Force. And then the EA 6Bs became two squadrons. One at Whidbey Island, moved up to Whidbey Island, Washington, and one stayed at Cherry Point, North Carolina. They called them VMAQ, now, much like the Navy, which I thought I didn't like. VMAQ-2 and then they took them all back in and they stuck everybody on all the ships. They were on ships all over the place. They were one squadron, but they hardly ever saw each other.

Webb: [02:57:43] Mm hmm.

Schwimmer: [02:57:44] And, um. And they are in Cherry Point, North Carolina now. And I think they're retiring the airplane. Totally retiring the airplane. They're going the to the Navy went to the F-18, EF-18. And. They're going to the F-35, and they're saying the F-35 is going to do what the EA-6B did, but it can't. You can't put all those electronics in there, and it's not going to do it.

Webb: [02:58:23] Okay.

Schwimmer: [02:58:26] Anyway, there's where we're at.

Webb: [02:58:28] Well, Sir, it's a fascinating story, and I certainly appreciate you sharing it with us. Um, I know that you were already in the museum and library once. I, I think that's how you became aware of this oral history program, you know?

Schwimmer: [02:58:46] Yeah!

Webb: [02:58:47] Sorry that I, I missed you, uh, you know, if you are ever back this way, ever come through for our next exhibits or whatever, I'd. I'd love to meet you and put a face to the

story, but I really want to say thank you for taking the time today to tell us all about it. It's, uh, like I said, a fascinating story.

Schwimmer: [02:59:09] Oh, thank you.

Webb: [02:59:11] Was there anything that you thought we would cover today that we didn't?

Schwimmer: [02:59:17] I don't know. I was trying to think: is there something? Some of the grittier aspects of patrolling. But then I don't know whether you're interested in that.

Webb: [02:59:27] Yeah. Well, it's it's up to you. Uh, you know, there'll probably be several things that come to you after the phone call is concluded. And that's always the way that that I'll probably think of a dozen different questions as well. Um, if there is. Oh. Go ahead.

Schwimmer: [02:59:45] Yeah. I said call me [Laughter]

Schwimmer: [02:59:49] Well, I was going to say if there's ever anything that you'd like to add, then maybe we could schedule a part two. And that may be, uh, even more evident, like I said at the beginning of this call. Once we transcribe and get you a copy, you may think of other things you want to add.

Schwimmer: [03:00:07] Okay. Thank you.

Webb: [03:00:10] But if there's nothing else today, I think, uh, you know, we're about three hours in, and, uh, maybe this would be a good place to conclude it for today.

Schwimmer: [03:00:21] Okay.

Webb: [03:00:23] I just want to again say I really appreciate it and enjoy that warm weather. I'm certainly jealous sitting in negative ten today in Chicago. So. Oh and that's that's before the wind chill. So yeah, a little bit of yeah.

Schvimmer: [03:00:40] My granddaughters just escaped. She came East for a vacation. She's going to school in Columbia in Chicago.

Webb: [03:00:51] Okay. Well, she got out at the right time because it's supposed to warm back up. So, uh. Well, sir, I will go ahead and conclude, and we will be in touch later on.

Schvimmer: [03:01:06] Okay. Thank you.

Webb: [03:01:06] All right. Have a great afternoon.

Schvimmer: [03:01:08] You too. Thank you very much. Yeah.

Webb: [03:01:10] Bye. Bye. [Schvimmer at the same time: Bye.]