

# George Havelka Oral History Interview

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MARRAPODE: So, it's March First, 2012. We're here at the Pritzker Military Library, my name is Nick Marrapode and I'm here with George Havelka. Just to get started, when and where were you born?

HAVELKA: I was born in Chicago Illinois, South Side, March 10<sup>th</sup>, birthday's coming up, 1947.

MARRAPODE: And did you grow up in Chicago?

HAVELKA: Yeah, I grew up on the South side, my whole family is from the South Side, married the girl next door, literally, and now I live in LaGrange Park.

MARRAPODE: Ok, can you tell me a little bit about what was going on in Chicago and the U.S. while you were growing up?

HAVELKA: While I was growing up, living on the South Side it was not what you would perhaps picture the South Side of Chicago was like now. The neighborhood that, Sheryl's my wife, Sheryl and I grew up in, it was a working class, blue-collar kind of community, most of the houses were frame, but I don't ever remember at any time being afraid or concerned to be out in the neighborhood, out on the street, going to the parks or doing anything like that. My father was a cop, Chicago policeman in the district

in which we lived so you definitely did not want to get into any trouble when your father is a policeman in that district. We were always told, “I better never have to go get you at the station. If I have to get you and Andy”, my brother, “at the station”, he says, “It’s going to be a big problem”. And it never happened, so we never got into trouble. But, in Chicago, growing up there really wasn’t too much going on, very stable, you know as far as I knew a very quiet place. We both went to public schools and there weren’t too many problems there until probably second or third year of high school and then there were kind of racial problems. I went to Lindblom High School, 62<sup>nd</sup> and Wolcott and for the last couple of years there would be racial problems at times at the high school.

MARRAPODE: What was the role of your father in a law enforcement role in those kinds of events? Did he have much of an opinion that you heard?

HAVELKA: No he never really much talked about work. He never brought work home unless it happened to be something that was kind of humorous. So we never really knew too much. We actually had a radio at home where my mother could listen to the police calls, at that time they were broadcast in the clear, so to speak, and you could listen to the police calls. My father’s wagon was 266 so you would hear him on the radio at times and you kind of knew what he was doing, which probably wasn’t a good thing, but you could listen to dad on the police radio. We never heard anything too exciting anyway, actually.

MARRAPODE: So, at the start of the Vietnam War what was your life like then? Kind of when you heard about the outbreak of war.

HAVELKA: That, I would have been in high school. I graduated Lindblom in June 1964, and I think the first real ramp-up in Vietnam was probably in '65. I think the Marines had an invasion force, literally landed on the beach. But at that time, in that age, I was 17. I graduated kind of a year early. My big interest in life was playing baseball and ice hockey. I mean that was it I wanted to be a professional baseball player, and there's a little vignette on that later, but that's what I was trying to do. My friends and I, we all played baseball all summer long, we played in probably three or four different leagues at times and that's what we did. So what was going on in the world and particularly the world outside of the United States wasn't really of interest, it wasn't anything that we talked about or really were even interested in. I don't think there was really very much of an awareness at that time of the Vietnam conflict.

MARRAPODE: Can you tell me a little bit about the baseball and the baseball league?

HAVELKA: Oh yeah, well it was, I still see the guys to this day. We start playing little league baseball at 47<sup>th</sup> and Damon, there's a big open field there and that's where the backyards little league played and that's where most of my best friends, I met them playing in little league baseball. And we found out that we were pretty good at it, and after little league and pony league, which was the following league, there was a guy that came over, Marcy Reese his name was, and he was king of drafting some of us for his team. It was

an independent team, he just put it together and he selected the guys that he wanted to play and fortunately for me I was one of them and, it was kind of a travelling team. We would travel around the area, We used to play the prisoners in Statesville Penitentiary. There was another one in Indiana, I can't think of where it was, we'd play the prisoners in Indiana, we'd go to the prisons and play. And we'd play in Michigan, Indiana, we'd play all around in the Midwest and we'd also play in, like I said, three of four different leagues on the, North Side, South Side, West Side, wherever we could get some games. I mean wherever we were undefeated. An interesting thing is, out of all those guys, we had some really good ball players, I was the only one that ever signed a contract. Some of these guys were really, I mean they were really good, and I signed a contract with the Washington Senators?

MARRAPODE: So this was a paying baseball...

HAVELKA: Yeah, it was professional. The Washington Senators, they don't exist anymore.

MARRAPODE: Oh, I read a little bit about it, but I'm not a huge baseball person.

HAVELKA: They're the Minnesota Twins now.

MARRAPODE: Ok.

HAVELKA: They moved from Washington because there wasn't a lot of support for the team from the fans, so they moved to Minnesota and became the Twins. I signed a contract with them and at that time I was working for the Chicago Police Department, well I wanted to be a policeman, I thought

that was a pretty good thing to do. My father loved it, loved being a cop and so I thought maybe I would do that and I did get hired as a police cadet right out of high school. So, 1964 I was working for the Chicago Police Department at the 10<sup>th</sup> District, 23<sup>rd</sup> and Damon, which was West Side district, kind of a rough place, an interesting place to work. Part of the requirement of being a police cadet was you had to go to college, you could either be a part time cadet and part time college, or full time cadet, which I chose, and part time college. So, as a result of going to college I had a student deferment, so at that point I was exempt from the draft. My status I think was “S” for student.

Well, in 1965 is when I got an opportunity to sign with the Washington Senators so obviously I took that, but by taking the contract with the Washington Senators I had to stop going to school so therefore I lost my deferment. So, then the following year, 1966, is when I got drafted. So, as they say as I had been released that year by the Senators, and I always say that The Senators released me, but Washington’s big team called me up and not the big leagues, the US Army called me up. So, that’s how I ended up being drafted.

MARRAPODE: Baseball led you to the...

HAVELKA: Yeah, baseball led me to the military.

MARRAPODE: So, how did you and your friends feel about the war at that time?

HAVELKA: Actually, when everybody was starting to get drafted and every one of them ultimately either joined something, the Air Force, Marines, Navy, or

the Army, everybody ended up in the service in one way or another, one place or another. It was just a fact of life, being drafted into the Army because at that time the Army was the only one that drafted, on rare occasion the Marines would draft. But it was just a fact of life, if you were single and you weren't going in to school, chances are you were going to get drafted and that was the end of it, you just accepted it as that was something that was going to happen, there was nobody that was being a draft dodger, as we would call them, at that time, and you just went in. You went into the service and you did the best you could and you got out and that was kind of the end of it, so it was just an accepted fact of life. You were going to be drafted and end up in the military and perhaps you'd go to Vietnam, perhaps you didn't.

MARRAPODE: Yeah. So there wasn't the same kind of controversy surrounding it that maybe later on, or?

HAVELKA: No, no, not at all, I don't think there was the bitterness and the throwing stuff at soldiers and that until later into the war. Probably even after I got out is when it really started to go downhill as far as the view of the population of the United States public. And it's a shame. I'm happy to see today that the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen and all that, they're applauded. The war may be unpopular but it's like, don't blame the messenger. You know the people in the military that are going there, they're doing their duty, they're carrying out their mission, they're carrying out their assignment, don't get mad at them, they didn't start it.

And it's nice to see that they are respected, applauded. We came home it's like, you didn't talk about it. Today I'll probably talk about things I've never talked about before. You just, you didn't talk about it, you didn't run around saying, "Oh I was in Vietnam", you just didn't do that. As I said earlier, my friends, all of us, with few exceptions, ended up in Vietnam. We never discussed it. I got out in 1968, that's what, 44 years ago? We have never discussed it. I said that to my wife not too long ago, I said, "Sheryl, when we get together with the guys" I says, "Nobody ever brings up the war", we just don't talk about it. That's probably why I don't talk about it, it was just something you didn't do, everybody knows it's there and you don't discuss it. And I think that's what it stems back from is at the time it was so unpopular. I never denied it if somebody asked me, but you just say yes and that's the end of it, there's nothing else to talk about.

MARRAPODE: So, coming back a little bit, can you tell me a little bit about your reaction when you first found out you were drafted, that you were going to enlist? How you felt about that?

HAVELKA: At that time I was expecting it. You just were getting to the age, it's like, you know it's coming, you just knew you were going to be getting in. There was some way that you could call, I forget how it worked, but you could call somewhere and could get an idea when you were going to get your greetings. That's the way it started, "Greetings". "Your neighbors have selected you to be drafted", basically is what it said. You could call

and get an idea when you were going to get your greetings, and I called and I found out that it was imminent and it was within the next week I got drafted, I had my greetings. And that was it, you had, I don't know how much it was, maybe a week, two weeks, to get whatever your affairs are to be settled, but when you're 19 years old you really don't have a whole lot of affairs to settle. I mean it's basically quit your job if you're working and that was the end of it. I worked for the police department so I just applied for a leave of absence and I left and it was the end of it, and my father died when I was in grammar school so one of my neighbors, my friend, drove me and my mother down to the induction center at 600 West Van Buren and that was it. I just said goodbye, gave her a kiss and I left and got sworn in and I was in the army.

MARRAPODE: So what was the reaction of your family to that?

HAVELKA: It was just an expected thing. It wasn't, "Oh my god" or any of that. Of course it was the "Oh my god are you going to end up going to Vietnam?", the answer is, "I don't know", but when you would get drafted it was just part of being a teenager at that time. There is just, kind of like this specter of Vietnam, being in a war, but the percentage of people, I don't know what it is, that would actually get sent to the war would be somewhat low, and the percentage that actually would end up in combat obviously even lower, and the percentage of getting killed or wounded was lower than that. I mean, in 10 years I think there was 56,000 deaths, that's kind of a, comes out to I guess over time something like 100, plus or minus, a week



in deaths. Any death is a tragedy, but when start thinking about all these probabilities it was relatively low. Well I ended up being in one of the lower probability groups, I ended up going to Vietnam and having some combat time as well.

MARRAPODE: Can you tell me about your expectations entering into the army, what you were expecting to experience?

HAVELKA: My brother went in a year ahead of me, Eddy went in the year before, he went in '65' he got out at '67. I went in at '66 and got out in '68, so I had some feeling of what the Army, being in the Army, was like from my brother. He didn't paint it overly bad or overly good, it just is what it is. Don't expect to be treated well, don't expect to have long conversations with any of the sergeants when you first get in, they're there to make your life miserable, they're there to make you a soldier, they're there to kind of knock the individuality out of you so you're just part of the group, part of the team and you do as you're told. So that's what I went into expecting, that you're not going to be treated very nice, they're going to yell at you a lot and the sooner you figure out how this thing works and how to keep them happy, cooperate, the better your life is going to be. And there were two categories of people, there were those who joined and their serial numbers started with RA for Regular Army and then there were people who were drafted and our serial numbers, service numbers they actually called them, started with US and the joke was it stands for Unvoluntary Servitude, but I don't think that was true. And the people that were the

US's, the draftees, I think we all had that attitude of don't expect much, you're not going to be treated nice, you're just going to be another brick in the wall, and just do your time, do the best you can, and get out and go home. Where those people, I think, that had enlisted for the military had a different view that this was going to be a career, it was going to be an adventure and you would see these RAs trying to have a conversation with the sergeant and it was just ridiculous. One guy went up and he said, "Yo Sergeant, what do you do if it's physically impossible for you to do the number of pushups required?" I still remember that, the serge looked at him, he said, "Get down and give me 20, boy" and he walked away. That was the conversation, that was it. These guys thought they were going to have some kind of a conversation with them. No! They were there to [make] life miserable and turn you into a soldier. I was in basic for three weeks and the platoon Sergeant was calling role, "Here Sergeant! Here Sergeant!" and he says, "Havelka, who are you? Raise your hand." And I raised my hand and he looked at me and he goes, "Oh, ok." I don't think he knew who I was, because I could mingle with one guy and disappear. I wasn't the best, I wasn't the worst, I was just, I was there, I didn't stand out, and so that was a good way to be. The really good guys or the really bad ones would get picked on mercilessly and I was kind of there and he didn't know who I was, which was good. So, I don't know if that answered the question or not.

MARRAPODE: Yeah. Yeah and just to elaborate on that, when you think back on basic training, what experiences from that stand out the most in your memory?

HAVELKA: When you first got there you were sworn in at 600 West Van Buren and you did some processing and paperwork and all that stuff when you're first in the Army. Then they put you on a bus and drove you to probably Union Station and put you on a train and by now it's dark. I don't remember what time it was, we'd spent a full day in processing there and you were just on this train, they didn't tell you where you were going they just put you on a train. We were on the train for hours, everybody was up all night, nobody could really sleep because you're excited and you're apprehensive and scared, I guess. And when we got to wherever it was, there was a Sergeant standing on either side of the doors to get off the train. They had these Smokey-the-Bear hats on, they were the drill sergeants and these are like, not real nice people, and as soon as you, I'm sure they were schooled in this, as soon as you put your foot on the last step before you exited the train they both would just start screaming in your ear, giving you orders, conflicting things, telling you to do this. Guys were getting down, they were falling down and then they would be on top of you while you're trying to get up, yelling at you, "Get in line! Get in line! What the hell's the matter with you? You must be stupid!" And then you finally got in line where you were supposed to be and it's like, what just happened? I mean it was a shocking introduction, and then you were afraid, you were disoriented, you didn't know where you were. You've

made some casual acquaintances on the train, you didn't have any really friends to stand with for support and that was really, that was your introduction to basic training. And they were just screaming and screaming and screaming at you, and then we just got in line and marched away as best we could to some place and started getting processed and uniforms and all that stuff. When we were getting our first haircuts, which is always kind of like the big thing in basic is getting your hair cut. The haircuts take a matter of seconds, they're barbers, but all they do is the clipper and they just take all your hair off, I mean you [have] about maybe a quarter inch of hair left, you're not bald because you have to have hair but they cut you down. One guy says to me, "If you jump the Sergeant, I'll help you". I actually laughed. I think, I said, "What are you crazy?" And we were all kind of having fun in the background watching the long haired guys get their hair cut because they look so different from seeing them with the long hair. My hair was in a crew cut anyway so I didn't really care, didn't make much difference to me, so some of us were kind of enjoying it and this guy wants me to jump the Sergeant. Well that just wasn't going to happen! You know, it's like, "You jump him, I'll watch!" You know? And that was it. Then we just continued marching on and they continued yelling at you.

MARRAPODE: So what were the subsequent days of basic training like?

HAVELKA: Physically, most of us were in good physical shape. You know we were 19 years old, 18 years old, 20 years old. There were some guys in the group

that were chubby, they were big, and they had it very bad, very difficult. They would have to sit at a different table and eat because they couldn't eat what we ate, they would be on some restricted calorie diet, and if they couldn't cut it, if they couldn't really get into the program they would ultimately ship them home with like a physically unfit discharge. It wasn't a dishonorable discharge but they were discharged as physically unfit. But for those of us that continued on it was physically demanding because even though you were in decent physical condition you were doing things you didn't do before. You didn't go on long runs, you didn't go on hikes that were miles and miles and miles long, you didn't do exercises lifting up and down an M-14 rifle, which is heavy. You didn't have gym shoes or shorts I mean you exercised in your regular pants and your boots, your combat boots, so it was physically demanding and also it was mentally hard to see this for what it was. I mean these Sergeants, they couldn't hit you, no one's going to hit you, but it was all mental. They'd have you do goofy things, if you didn't do something properly you'd have to do gorilla jumps, which means you squatted down, jumped up, squatted down, jumped up, well you do about a dozen of those your legs are rubber then they started screaming at you to run, well you'd fall down because you couldn't run. Well, they're screaming at you to run. They didn't hit you, but they made it physically unpleasant for you. You'd have to do a bunch of pushups or you'd have to go after hours to do some fatigue work, fill sandbags, something that was physically demanding and that is the

way that you were physically beat up was with that kind of stuff in addition to the normal fitness things you had to do. As the weeks went on, it was eight weeks at basic training and you became a soldier, you could march, you could turn, you could do the manual of arms, right shoulder, left shoulder, forward arms and all this stuff. They would ease off somewhat, because now they kind of had you where they wanted you to be, you were looking and acting like a soldier, you knew how to react when they said things, you did what you were told. If you had a particular dress that day, you had a field pack a canteen and a pistol belt or whatever you had to do, you got to the point you had that, and when you would fall out in the morning they'd do an inspection and god forbid you didn't shave right or you didn't have the right equipment on. But it got to the point we knew what the equipment was to wear, the rifles were clean, your boots were shined, there's no mud on things and then they ease off on it a bit and there was a little bit, not much, but a little bit of respect that you were kind of a soldier now. I got sick in basic training, I ended up in the hospital for few days, I was pretty sick. They tried to make you work even in the hospital, they told me to mop, I had bronchitis, I had a fever, I couldn't talk, I couldn't breathe and I was mopping the floor. The nurse came in, they were officers nurses they were all at least a Lieutenant, and she came up to me and had to (??) and she says, "What are you doing?" And I says, "Well I'm mopping the floor ma'am", but I couldn't talk, but I just kind of whispered it. She says, "Get back in bed, you know you

shouldn't be doing this", I says, "You better tell him", you know, the Sergeant. She says, "I'll tell him, you get in bed". So I did get out and I didn't get set back, if you became sick and missed a certain amount of time they would take you out of your group and put you back a week or two and you had to make up those two weeks. So, fortunately I wasn't sick enough to be set back, so I did finish with my group and then I was still sick when I went on leave and went home and it was around Christmas time of 66' that I came home and I survived it and everything was fine, but they did ease up on you after a while when you could shoot and you could do things together and all this. An example, one time we were on the rifle range and they had these picket sticks go up and down holding the targets and it was like a group, team fire and you were all supposed to pick a target and you were supposed to shoot at that target and then they would look and see how you did as a squad shooting at the target. Well, we decided amongst ourselves that we weren't going to shoot at the targets, we were going to shoot at the holders. So what we did is we blew up the holder, the target was untouched, but we all shot at the picket that it was on and we demolished the picket. So the Sergeant he actually thought that was pretty cool, and he says, "Well, y'all didn't hit the target, but at least I can see y'all can shoot together" and he just let it go. So, that was the kind of thing before you would have got pounded for, you didn't do what you were told to do. Well we didn't' do exactly what we were told to do but we showed him we could do what he wanted us to do, that we could do an

accurate team fire, so he thought that was pretty neat. Thankfully we didn't get it now, but he didn't care, but he just said, "Y'all did it together", so that was good.

MARRAPODE: So how long did you get to spend at home when you were able to go back after basic?

HAVELKA: It was a few weeks, I don't remember exactly. It might have been three weeks because it seems I got there before Christmas sometime and then I had to report back. That's when I went to Fort Carson, Colorado and it was after the first of the year so it might have been three weeks, something in there. It wasn't just a week or two, it was probably three weeks or maybe even 30 days and then you went on to what would be called AIT, Advanced Individual Training, and that's when you would start to be trained in whatever it was you were going to do. When I was leaving basic training, my father was an MP, so I thought I'd work for the police department, they let me be an MP which I thought would be a pretty cool job, so when they were, the guy, the clerk in the company headquarters when we were leaving, if you went in there and if you schmoozed him enough he'd tell you what your job was going to be. Well an MP is 95-b10 so he told me I was going to be a cook and, forgive me cooks, I admit you need a cook, I'm going home now, I don't want to be a cook, I want to be an MP, I don't want to be in Infantry but I don't want to be a cook. And he says, "Oh, wait a minute, I read it wrong you're going to be an MP". So then I was relieved I was going to become an MP.



MARRAPODE: So after you went back to the Army after your leave, to Fort Carson, and that is that where you received your MP training?

HAVELKA: No, as it turns out it wasn't. When I got there I had a whole bay of probably 50 bunks to myself. I was the only one in there. When I went down and I talked to the company clerk I kind of said, "What's going on, where's everybody at?" He's like, "Oh we're going to have our own MP school and it's going to be starting any day now". Well the days went by and I was still the only guy in the barracks so finally they decided they were not going to have an MP school at Fort Carson and they gave me some orders and I went down to Fort Gordon, Georgia, which is the official Military Police school. So then I was in Fort Gordon for about two months, eight weeks, in formal military policeman training, which was good.

MARRAPODE: Can you tell me a little bit about that training?

HAVELKA: Yeah, that was, it was good, it was interesting, a lot of it was fun. There was not a lot of harassment anymore, you're a soldier, you survived basic training, you were OK. You couldn't act up or anything, but as long as you acted like a soldier they pretty much left you alone, you just had to go and do your training. And your training involved investigations, security, physical security, the weapons, 45's, shotguns, convoys, escorting convoys, map reading, night operations, compasses and the military law and rights and taking notes and investigating accidents and placing vehicles. So MP school actually was pretty good, I think everybody I was

with, we kind of enjoyed it and the story with MP's always was MP's don't walk anywhere, you drive, that's (??) and that's not true. But I think everybody pretty much enjoyed MP School. It was fun driving jeeps up and down these hills and in these gullies and it was a lot of fun and not a lot of harassment and you did your job. You did what you were supposed to do and they pretty much left you alone.

MARRAPODE: So do you feel like the training prepared you well for what your duties would eventually be?

HAVELKA: I'd say yes. I think they did. I mean, there's nothing like actually being out in the field, being out on the street, being out on MP patrol or on a gate, you don't know what's going to happen. But I think it did, it gave you a good view of it and the motto of the Military Police is, "Of the Troops and For the Troops" because MP's have sometimes have not such good reputations. Sometimes earned, sometimes not, head-knockers and all this, some are, but that was always my philosoph; I'm not there to make anybody's life miserable as long as they're not making anybody else's life miserable, including mine. If you're making other peoples' life miserable and you're making my life miserable, it's a problem, but as long as you're not, it's ok. We would have one of our responsibilities when we were on the gate was to stop the buses coming back from leave, going to town for the day or night, and making sure they had a pass. Well, one thing everybody had was a lot to drink. And you would actually go in there, and you got a bus full of drunks, and when we would get on the bus we would

just announce to everybody what we were going to do and everybody behaves, everything will be cool. We don't want to hear any comments behind our back, and we're just going to check your passes and we don't care how much you had to drink as long as you're behaving and that's what you'd do. Every once in while you'd find a guy that didn't have a pass and you're like, "who cares," and you'd in fact give him a pass, no pun intended, and you'd let him go. If they were behaving it was ok, you get somebody that starts getting stupid and rowdy on the bus, well, they're going to get off the bus one way or another, but they kind of figured out that if you cooperate with us we'll cooperate with you. So, most of the MP's that I worked with were not out there to be big shots and pound guys and all that stuff. We wouldn't do that.

MARRAPODE: And was this taking place back in the states or after you'd been deployed?

HAVELKA: Well, this was in the states, this was at Fort Carson.

MARRAPODE: So, while you were training to be an MP, part of that training was actively doing those duties on base?

HAVELKA: Well, yeah. You didn't actually go out with somebody else, for example you didn't go out with an experienced MP and actually do patrol or gate guards or security or anything like that, but once you got back to wherever you were going to be, I went back to Fort Carson, then you would work with an experienced MP for while so you'd learn the ropes and how you do things and all that. The couple of guys that I worked with, that's where I got that attitude, it's like, we're not here to beat guys up, we're not here

to fight every night, we're here to just do what we're supposed to be doing and then if they act up they get it, if they don't, don't start anything. And that was the philosophy.

MARRAPODE: So, Fort Carson, was that your first assignment after your training was completed?

HAVELKA: Yes.

MARRAPODE: And after Fort Carson, where was your assignment?

HAVELKA: Well, after Fort Carson, that's when I went to Vietnam. When I was looking at my paperwork before I came to the interview here I was looking at the dates, I was trying to refresh my mind for the dates, and I got drafted on I think it was October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1966 and I went to Vietnam around the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, 1967. So, I think I got on a levy, a request for troops, reinforcements, whatever. I think that they looked to see, who has about a year left and then if you were on that you were going. So theoretically if I would have stayed my whole time in Vietnam I would have got out just about when my two years were up and I would have got released. So I think that's how you were selected, there's also I think, a need for MP's, they were finding out, as they're now finding out in like Iraq and Afghanistan. That a lot of the work that infantry was doing, MP's were better suited for it. You'd have infantry, you know, doing security on the fire base, you'd have infantry doing patrols around the base, escorting convoys, going through the villages and that stuff. That really wasn't the best deployment for trained, experienced, infantry; they should be out in

the field chasing the bad guys. So I think they were starting to learn that lesson in Vietnam and there was a demand for Military Policemen, because when we got there, you weren't just a gate guard, I mean, yes that's what you did we had to man the main gate and the bunkers around the main gate, but we also had to go out and patrol the village. We had to go out and patrol the patties, escort convoys, escort single vehicles, search people, look at IDs, you know people coming by and that so, it was more of a field MP, an active kind of duty as opposed to staying at a gate for your eight, ten hour, twelve hour shift, whatever it was and just checking vehicles in and out, in and out and then you're off duty you can go and do something else. So we would have to go out on, as I said, you'll hear a little bit more about MP's don't' walk, well I walked a lot. Because you would be going out in the village and the patties and patrol and that kind of thing, which is something I didn't expect to do as an MP, but that's what the occupation in the military was evolving into. It wasn't as static, or you weren't just going to do town patrol and go into bars and look for drunks and that stuff. It had more of an active, I think, combat role than I had thought it would be.

MARRAPODE: Can you tell me a little bit about your departure for Vietnam and your deployment there?

HAVELKA: Yeah, when you were going to go to Vietnam you got a 30 day leave, so you got to go home for 30 days. Some of my friends were home, some of them weren't, some of them were in Vietnam already, some were in other

places. When I came home my brother wasn't home yet, Eddy was still in Germany. He was in the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in the Signal Battalion and he never was deployed anywhere to the local guest houses, saloons, so he never went anywhere other than Germany and he loved it, had a great time, thought it was a tremendous thing, travelled around Europe and all. So Eddy wasn't home yet, so when I went to Vietnam it was my mother was home, so when I went it was hard on her.

MARRAPODE: Yeah. What about your arrival in Vietnam, can you tell me about that?

HAVELKA: Yeah, you just, when you got there you went to the replacement depot. We flew over, I think it was flying Tiger Airlines, and when you got halfway across, the plane would have to land, halfway across the pacific, the plane would land and they'd refuel and all this stuff and there were these, what they call, you could buy liquor and it had no import duty on it, so it was relatively cheap. I didn't buy anything, but it really didn't matter, there was enough on the plane anyway, I mean nobody was bothering anybody. Stewardesses were sitting on guys laps and it was like really weird, but then when you got there the pilot said, "Look out the port side," which is the left side, he said, "you'll see the coast of Vietnam". It was dead silence. It was a big party, until then everybody's drinking and yelling, but when he said that it was just silence, because that was it, you were here. And then you went to the replacement depot and that was where you just were sent to a unit. One of the guys I met there, his name was Furman, can I use names?

MARRAPODE: Yeah.

HAVELKA: Furman Martinez, he was from Texas. I met him there and we just, for some reason we just kind of buddied up. He was an MP also and we kind of hung around together. And the Sergeants in the [repot] depot would try to make you work, clean the barracks, I mean but you had been around, you knew how the stuff worked and you would just disappear. Whenever they'd tell you to do something, you'd go. I wouldn't do anything anyway, nobody was going to bother you. So Marty ended up going to where I went, the A Battery, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 56<sup>th</sup> Artillery. When it came time to come home, his plane left two hours either before or after mine, so he was the only guy that I was with the whole time. Marty, he was a good guy, we had a lot of fun. His daughter was born while he was there, so he didn't see his daughter until she was eight months old, but yeah Marty was a good guy. We sort of spend the whole time together, and he's one of the guys in that picture there.

MARRAPODE: Ok. Can you describe kind of the base and the post that you were deployed to?

HAVELKA: Size, I would have a hard time describing the size of it I guess.

MARRAPODE: Yeah.

HAVELKA: Diameter it would have been, it wasn't enormous, what you'd expect of a military base. It wasn't big, it was probably, trying to visualize like relative to a football field, maybe one and a half to two football fields across, so it wasn't big. Then it was a circle and it was a HAWK Missile

base. There were four batteries, A, B, C and D that had missiles and then there was a headquarters battery and we were the only one that was not at (??) Bin-Lan, Tan-Sun or near an airbase. We just ended up in, I can't remember that, Cha-Din district or something, Cha-Din was around Ton-Toy-Yi (??), was the village, and we were just there. They had a platoon of MP's that provided the security for the HAWK missiles, and there was, I think, three sets of launchers and we also had some mortar pits, which we could provide indirect support, indirect fire if somebody needed it, help with the mortars. When I first got there, there was nothing going on, it was a pretty good job. And that was it basically, as I said earlier we would just watch the gate, you'd be on the line, on the perimeter at night and you'd patrol the villages, the rice patties and just see what was going on, if you could picture anything. We would look in the wells and see if there were tunnels and sometimes there were and we'd send one guy, a small guy, down and he'd have to throw in teargas and smoke grenades and stuff and see if we could flush anybody out. We never did, so I'm sure if anybody was down there they had another way to go, because if you look down in the well and you'd see this hole going off. Now why would you have a hole going off in a well? They were tunnels, so these guys were digging tunnels around there at night and you wouldn't even know that they were doing it, so that's what we did. And the Hawkers as we called them, the people that just serviced the HAWK, ran the missiles. They would also have a rotating shift where they would cover some of the



bunkers on the line as well, but the MP's, we were responsible for the main gate and there was four bunkers adjacent to those that we also had to man and be responsible for, so we had one whole side of the perimeter. If you did it in quarters we had 25% of the perimeter and the rest of it the Hawkers would just rotate and do that, so you were right on the line almost every night and that was your job and during the day you'd be doing sandbags or improving bunker or doing concertina wire, barbed wire emplacements and stuff like that. So that's basically all that was there, some supply support service. We didn't have a doctor, we [had] a medic. Basically your medical services were provided by a medic, that was it. If you got sick, well you'd have to go someplace else.

MARRAPODE: Can you describe the living conditions?

HAVELKA: It was actually, it was pretty good. I mean, we had the barracks, hooches we called them. The hooches that you lived in were pretty clean, they were pretty nice, they were cement floors and they were relatively weather-proofed for the most part so the rain didn't come in. Mosquitoes did of course, and we had house-girls that would come in and clean the barracks for us and a guy that would come in and tend to the latrine and burn the stuff and that was his job, we didn't have to do any of that. When I first got there when everything was quiet we had all these support services and we provided employment for the people from the village. The girls would come in and clean the house and all that and help out in the kitchen but they would have to leave at night, before dark they had to leave. They

couldn't be within the perimeter at night, for security reasons. They could be just as well VC, too and you'd never know it, so that was a hard and fast rule so anybody that had any designs on any of the house girls would say, "Well, wait until tonight". No. They had to go and they had to check out and, you know make their mark and sign out and there was a head count and you had to make sure they were all gone.

MARRAPODE: And as an MP were you responsible for that kind of security operation?

HAVELKA: Yeah, because the only way in and out was the main gate, which was one of our primary functions was the main gate so we'd have to keep track of the girls. Even the labor that was done, the girls were cleaning up the grounds, there was one man, only one guy that worked there, and he's the guy that burned the stuff from the latrine and I guess, we were told he was a big Vietnamese war hero. He had all kinds of medals and had been in the war for a long time and he was basically retired and that's what he did, so he go this job with the government. But we provided a lot of employment and income for the people in the village and the wages they received were the wages at the local economy level, so I mean people were getting a couple bucks a day. It wasn't like, "Oh, two bucks a day, you've got to give them more than that." No, they were paid at the level it was because you didn't want to risk starting an inflation. If you started overpaying people in the village then you're going to, economically you're going to create an inflation where people are now giving everything up because they have more money. The people that did the work, they weren't kids,

they were all adults, young girls and that, but they were like kids because most of them had never been any place in their lives other than the village. If you would have taken them and put them in downtown Chicago, for example, they wouldn't have known what to make of it. They probably had never been to Saigon, Bien Hoa (??), none of these places. They just lived in the village, that was their whole life so they were very childish in a lot of ways. But I mean, they did good work, they were honest as far as we know, occasionally things would disappear, but not too often.

MARRAPODE: How easy was communication with the local people that lived in the village and around?

HAVELKA: Well you had your pidgin English, you know number 10 was bad number 10-pow was the worst possible, number 1 was good and you just had like, kind of, I guess Pidgin English is what you would call it. You could communicate with them to some extent, enough that they understood what you wanted them to do. And you could joke with them, you had little ways of joking with them that they would understand and you'd laugh a little bit and all that stuff but, as far as I know, I mean having all these young girls walking around with a bunch of men, there wasn't anything that was inappropriate going on. I don't know anybody who ever said anything to me about, "Guess what", as far as I know there was nothing like that that ever happened. Everything was above board and in the open and done the way it should have been done.

MARRAPODE: Ok, what was it like adjusting to kind of the local weather conditions, the local environment?

HAVELKA: When I first got there I thought I was going to die, I mean that was it, I just thought I was going to die. When you first got there and you were eating and at the time of the year we got there it was the dry season, not the monsoon, it was the dry season and I remember sitting there trying to eat. You didn't want to eat because it was so hot and just sweat was literally dripping off my head onto the food and I thought, "there's no way that I'm going to be able to live in this heat," but your body has a way to adjust itself. Your blood I guess thins out and you become more tolerant of the heat and you can deal with it, but when I first go there it was horrendous the heat was just absolutely unbelievable, I couldn't believe it. I don't know what the temperature was, 120, in that range and then you remember it was a jungle. At that time it was dry so I don't think there was much humidity that I remember, but just the heat was intense. Smells were not so good when you're going through the village and sanitation isn't what we would expect it to be and there's animals and the animals comingle with the people and all that. It's like, "wow, what did I get myself into?" But it's all things that ultimately you adjust to and you get used to it and the odor isn't bad anymore. Your body adjusts to the heat, although you're still hot, I mean if you see some of those pictures the shirts are all wet with, perspiration, said one, "time, is work, sweat is real work." So I mean you were wet with sweat, it was hot and you'd still be

sweating, so even though you'd adjusted it was still uncomfortable. Monsoon was kind of a different thing. It would rain every day and it wouldn't rain all day, but it would rain all day and it would go from OK, to just an intense downpour, back to no rain. So we would actually go out and shower in the monsoon because it would be a nice cool rain, you would go out, nobody around, in your birthday suit and have a shower in the rain. But you had to be out when it started and be done obviously before it stopped otherwise you were full of soap and there was no conclusion of the shower, and when new guys would come they learned that real fast. They'd get out late and they'd be all soaped up and it stopped raining, well now what? You're not going to waste water, sorry, you've got to wait until the next rain comes. So the monsoon, I mean muddy, sloppy, and everything pretty much slows down because transportation is bad, the roads, the dirt roads, they're all mud. During monsoon it's a slower pace just because the weather conditions make it difficult for anybody to move around, transport things, especially for us, the United States Army. Things are mechanized, with the VC it wasn't as mechanized but it was a lot of foot and bicycles so they still had difficulty getting around because of the conditions, so things would slow down during the monsoon.

MARRAPODE: How well was the post supplied?

HAVELKA: Under normal. Well, there's actually two things; there's normal and then there's Tet Offensive. Under normal conditions you just have trucks going

in and out. We had a water truck, a guy named Grimple was the driver of the water truck and he would just go, when we needed water, he would just go Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut and fill it up and bring our water and fill that up and everything else came in, ammunition, food, drinks, beer, would just all be brought in by truck.

MARRAPODE: Was there anything that you wanted, but you had difficulty getting on the post?

HAVELKA: There was a PX but it was very basic stuff, sometimes you could get a bottle of whiskey, I didn't drink whiskey so it didn't matter, but you could get candy, gum, cigarettes. Mostly I'd smoke so you could get your cigarettes, but again it would be somebody going out and just getting the stuff. It wasn't anything that was, I mean, it was bare necessities, it was just basic stuff that you could get. You couldn't go in there and buy a shirt and a jacket that said, "I Was in Vietnam", you had to go someplace else if you wanted to get something like that. It was just very basic kind of stuff.

MARRAPODE: And PX is?

HAVELKA: Oh I'm sorry, Post Exchange, that's the military name for a store. You know PX can look like a Jewel, it can look like a Walmart, something like that. You could get anything there. You could get stereos, you could get civilian clothes if you wanted to buy it, it was like going to a regular store. But Post Exchange, the PX on the base was just very, it was probably about as big as this room maybe and it was staffed on a very strict schedule because whoever ran it also had another job, it wasn't just that.

Well we also had an officers' club, there was the EM Club, enlisted man's club, an NCO club for the Sergeants and that. So it was like three separate clubs there where you could go and get beer and micro, or not microwave but toaster oven kind of pizzas and sandwiches and stuff like that and that would be open after hours. Even though beer and that stuff was available, if you were supposed to be on duty you really didn't want to do that. That was not considered cool. So there was some recreation stuff like that.

MARRAPODE: So, pre-Tet, how did you spend the majority of your time on the post?

HAVELKA: Usually you were doing some kind of work. You were, with the MP's you always had something to maintain. You had vehicles to escort, you were doing the checkpoint, you were making sure things were stocked, you were maintaining the perimeter. In the perimeter we had concertina wire, which literally looks like concertina and barbed wire so we had rolls of barbed wire out there. Then we had what was called tangle-foot which would be stakes in the ground and around it would be run just straight barbed wire so it was literally tangle-foot. If you tried to run through it you weren't going to get very far. We would have trip-flares so if somebody came in unseen they'd hit one of these wires, pull a pin, and the trip-flares would go so you'd know something or somebody was out in the wire. We also had claymores, which are, you know what a claymore is?

MARRAPODE: Explosive mine?

HAVELKA: Yeah, explosive mine, command detonated, which means you set it off, it isn't booby-trapped. You had to sit and let it go and we had those out

there. So a lot of stuff had to be maintained, you had to make sure the little detonators were in the claymores, that the pins were right on the trip flares, that all the concertina wire, the tangle-foot, was all still in place. So you're doing maintenance making sure the bunkers sandbags were fresh and solid and were, you know, because they'll start to rot in that kind of weather. So we had to keep making sure that the perimeter was good and the gate was good, the locks worked, patrols you had to go on, so there's always something, but other than that the main recreation was volleyball. We had a volleyball court and everybody played. The officers played and it was jungle rules, which means the only rule is the ball actually had to go over the net, other than that there was no rules, whatever happened, happened and it would happen between the officers, the men and the NCO's and it was taken in the spirit of volleyball. There was a Ping-Pong table, a pool table, movies, assuming the power was working, that the generator didn't die on us, they had movies in the evening.

MARRAPODE: What was your, let's start with your favorite kind of duty or job if you had to pick one that you actually enjoyed doing on the base?

HAVELKA: What I actually liked to do—I said earlier there was no going to the village there was no place to go, you could go to the village but there was nothing there anyway—was to escort convoys or escort individual vehicles because it got you someplace, you could go somewhere. When they would go out on the convoy or with the trucks that pick up supplies to pick up whatever they had to pick up and you would be escorting the



vehicles, when they were loading it up and all that you could go somewhere else. We found some places where you could get a steak dinner relatively cheaply. We found on Tan Son Nhut base one time another place where you could get a mixed-drink for a dime, that was run by the USO. So you could find these places but you couldn't be getting stewed, of course, and you had to be back to meet the truck for the return trip, so you couldn't really get into too much trouble. You had to behave, but it would get to out where you could do things and that's how you could get to the PX. I never really bought anything much at the PX come to think of it, but guys would be building stereo sets for themselves or speakers and all this and every chance they got they would try to hop a vehicle and they were off and go and get another component for whatever it is that they were trying to do or they'd go out and bring in whiskey in bottles and that stuff, which I didn't (??). But that was the only way you could get any place was to escort a vehicle or hitch a ride from one of the trucks that was going out or bringing back supplies or water or something. So I liked that, that was fun, and initially when it was quiet going on patrol was nice because you'd get out to the village and you could see the country side. There wasn't anything really going on so it wasn't like too big of a deal or anything. But before anything really started to happen you could just go out and walk around and see the village and see the countryside, so it was kind of like getting out and seeing something other than just looking through all the barbed wire and that stuff and seeing

nothing. So going on patrol at that time was always something that was nice, when you were on the gate that wasn't any fun it was very boring, check in anybody and checking them out. And then when you were on the line at night for this perimeter security at night that was really boring, because obviously you could[n't] sleep. You didn't do that, that was high risk and you didn't want to do it anyway so it was just boring. You couldn't smoke, I mean you start lighting a cigarette out there and BANG, that wasn't good. It was just tremendously boring, there just was nothing going on. You'd hear a helicopter going around once in a while, that would be about it. That would be something that I really didn't like to do.

MARRAPODE: (Page Turning) Could you tell me a little bit about the attitude of the other soldiers on the base or what some of the other people on your post were like?

HAVELKA: Most of the guys were really ok, I mean there was not a lot of conflict. There was some conflict and usually it was more personalities than anything else, "You can't tell me what to do, who are you, what's what." A couple of guys would drink too much and get aggressive and start wanting to fight other people. There was one guy, some American Indian chief, Big Chief we'd call him. He was one of those guys, he would drink and he'd get really goofy and he'd want to fight everybody and you'd have to, somebody'd say "Hey chief, come on, cut it out" and he would get aggressive and he was kind of a problem. And then later he had actually what I would describe as a religious born-again experience. He

stopped drinking, he became hardworking and people said, “Chief, what happened?” and he just said, “I just had this born-again experience, I’m with Jesus now,” and he was like a different man, it was just absolutely amazing. The guy completely converted. It got to the point when he was going to go home he couldn’t find his canteen, now a canteen I think actual cost was like 15 cents and the supply Sergeant didn’t want to do the paperwork for 15 cents, he says, “Chief, just forget it I’ll just write it off ‘Combat Loss’”. “Nope, Nope”, he said, “I gotta pay for it, I lost it,” and he wouldn’t give it up. The guy said, “Ok, give me 15 cents,” and he put it in his pocket and that was the end of it. Just a totally strict adherent of the rules, never drank again and that was the end of it. No one knows really what the heck happened to him, but he just had this complete turnaround, so that was one of the strangest things that I’ve ever experienced there or anyplace else, this guy just turned around. But other than that it was just kind of the usual problems I guess you can have with a bunch of guys living together and sometimes not a lot to do and not a lot of recreation to do, but everything would get sorted out in its own time and it was not any big problems or nothing racial. We never had any problems with anything of a racial nature, it was a pretty good group.

MARRAPODE: Was there anyone that you particularly admired?

HAVELKA: There was one guy, that’s the cook, now we get back to the cooks.

MARRAPODE: (Laughs)

HAVELKA: I can't think of what his name was, he was a little, he was a short guy, kind of a chubby guy, he was just a happy go lucky guy and initially we didn't know, he was just a cook. Well he was a highly decorated infantryman and we didn't know that. He had served his time in combat and they put him with us as a cook, but initially we didn't know that, and there would be times when the area would be active and there would be shooting and getting rounds coming in and he'd be walking around, his rifle on his shoulder, and we'd be all ducking inside, he'd be like, "What's a matter with you guys? This is ok today, this isn't bad!" And he would just expose himself and walk around and be like, "Yeah, this is ok," and he made everybody feel better, that everything was OK. And then that's when we found out what this guy's history was; he was a highly decorated infantryman. For him this was, well this is nothing, but he made you feel like everything was going to be ok, and that was cool. And the guy was *just* the cook, but he was in charge then, we found out, of the mortars because he knew how to do that stuff. Yeah he was a good guy, friendly guy, everybody liked him and then it's like, wow, when we heard all his decorations and all this stuff, that he was the man.

MARRAPODE: Sounds like a valuable guy to have around.

HAVELKA: He really was, he really was. Him and I were walking, I think this was in Saigon. We went out with one of the trucks and we were down walking around and all the sudden somebody let loose with a string of firecrackers. Well I was immediately, I'm hiding, he looked at me and he just laughed

and he said, "What's a matter with you?" Didn't even flinch. I mean the guy was just solid, of all of them, everybody, officers included, that was the guy that I really admired him, he was a good man.

MARRAPODE: So, can you describe your first contact with an enemy?

HAVELKA: Well, yeah, it would have been with the Tet Offensive when that started, lunar New Year in January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1968. We didn't know what was going on and I think when it started anybody really had an understanding of what was going on and what the magnitude of the offensive was. It was just these bits and dribs and drabs of information was coming into what we called the CP, the command post. And all the sudden we're on alert 24 hours, 100%. Nobody sleeps, everybody's on the line all the time, nobody's nothing everybody's on the line, "What's going on?" And nobody really knew. Then you would hear this stuff, "Oh there was a big assault on the Bien Hoa," the big airbase, "and Tan Son Nhut and Saigon is under fire" and it's like, "How could this be?" There was never any kind of an engagement like that before. Then all of the sudden we found out that a lot of it was actually true, and then one night we got shot at. We were taking some rounds, and that was the first time, it's like, "What the hell is this all about?" So everybody right away gets on the communication sitting there calling the CP's saying, "We've got rounds coming in, we've got rounds coming in, all over post, we've got rounds we've got rounds, what's going on?" And he goes, "I don't know". So that was the point when we found out we were surrounded, we were

surrounded and cut off. No one could get to us. And the word came out through the Captain and he said, “We are cut off and we are surrounded, there is no help, there will be no help on the ground. We might get some gunships, we’ll get some artillery, but we’re cut off, there will be no infantry or armor support. We’re alone”. I said, “Wow”. We ran out of food, we ran out of water, we ran out of soda, it got to the point, I said earlier about drinking on post is not cool, well that’s all we had a few cans of soda and beer. So they would drive around and you’d get a beer, and they would kind of ration how often you got it so that nobody would be getting **posted**, and you didn’t want to do it anyway. But I knew the guy that ran the club by then so he would be shooting extra cans out the back of the truck for me so that I had a stash of beer, but you were discrete about it because this was real. And that would be it. There were times, it was mostly at night, sometimes you’d get a sniper who’s shooting, and they weren’t very good shots. I don’t know what was the matter they never hit anybody, but you know you had to watch where you were walking and stay kind of low because if you popped up too much then there’d be BANG and there’d be a puff where the bullets hit. So there would be snipers, but I always thought that these were just guys that were being politically correct on the other side, they were like, “Ok I’m shooting at the Americans,” but they weren’t really too interested in hitting anybody because either they had crappy weapons or they didn’t know how to shoot. So you’d experience that during the day, but most of where you really had

rounds coming in would be at night, although sometimes during the day too somebody'd start shooting and sometimes it might be a matter of somebody had an ambush patrol out, an ARVN, Army of Republic of Vietnam. They were on our side, so they'd have an ambush out and they'd hear something and they'd start shooting so then they, at times, would end up shooting us up. So you would have ambushes shooting us up, our own, or we got shelled by our own artillery at times, we got shot up by our own planes and helicopters at times and sometimes they didn't know we were there. So it was mostly at night, but during the day also there would be times when they just started shooting us up. They never really made an assault on us, there was never a time when it was like they were actually trying to get in the perimeter, but we were surrounded. We were theirs, they would just fire at will and sometimes you couldn't even shoot back because you didn't know where you were going to shoot. It isn't like it is in the movies, everybody just starts shooting all over the place, that never happened with us. You had a pretty good idea of direction in which you would shoot and then they would tell you, left front, whatever, right front, clear front, but you just don't automatically start shooting, you have to have authority to shoot. Where we were, there's areas where that would be allowed and we called that "injun country", a free fire zone. If it moves you can shoot it, but that's not where we were even though we were surrounded you still just couldn't fire at will because you still had villages out there with regular people in it, so it was more of a controlled firing

than anything else. Something else that the bad guys would do is they would fire rockets from behind our perimeter and they would fire across. They weren't shooting at us, but they would fire across, because rockets sound different than an artillery round, a rocket is propelled, an artillery round was fired, and you knew that these were rockets and they were big and we didn't have any rockets like that. Well what they would do is they would shoot from behind our perimeter, so if somebody's going to call in a fire mission on them, artillery, we would be in the way. So they were using us like a shield while they were launching these rockets, and sometimes I thought that's why we were getting friendly fire from our artillery and jets because they were trying to go for a strike on them, but they would be coming in on us, so that was scary. Then the command post, the CP, would have to call around and find out who was controlling that strike and tell them, "We're here, this is where we are, you're shelling us" and then gradually they would figure out who it is and try and convince them that they're just not a Vietnamese guy who speaks good English. So they would have to go through our authority to their authority to tell them to stop and it wasn't just a matter of, cause who's firing? So those were very weird times too, when you're getting shelled by your own artillery and that. Am I talking too much?

MARRAPODE: No, no.

HAVELKA: 'Cause, you can tell when artillery rounds are going over and when they're coming down, the pitch changes. You just know this, after a while just



experience tells you, you know this. The first time this happened I was in one of the bunkers with a guy named Jim Schaeffer from Pennsylvania and we're just in our bunker. We're talking and listening to the rounds going over, and all of a sudden just one of them changed, and Jim and I had been in country long enough that we knew the change. And I looked at him and he looked at me and I just said, "F". And we both got down and the rounds started falling, you know the pitch changed, somebody called in a fire mission and they ended up calling it on us, and then the CP had to find out who's controlling it and we probably weren't on somebody's map and we were getting shelled because of these rockets. That stuff happened more than once. I mean that was always scary because it seemed like it was worse when it was your own, because I remember sitting one time, thinking, "My god I might get killed today by our own artillery". It was worse when it was own then when it was... you expect them to shoot at you, you don't expect your own side to do it, but it happens. War was a very uncontrolled thing. As much as people like to think it's controlled, it isn't. When it starts it's like up for grabs, nothing ever goes the way it's supposed to go. Somebody said one time, after the first shot all the plans go to hell, and you just do what you can do. So...

One time there was somebody called Dreadnaught, it was some armored unit. I called the CP and I said, "Who is it? What the hell's going on?" He said, "I'm trying to find out, I'm trying to find out!" And then he called me back later, he says, "It was somebody called Dreadnaught", I

still remember that, Dreadnaught. I said, “Who the hell’s Dreadnaught?” He says, “I don’t know, some armored unit had our coordinates and they were shelling us,” he says, “it’s cool, I’ve got it, they’re done, they want to stop”. (crinkling noise from a water bottle being handled) So I think anybody that has really been in some degree of combat has had that experience. Friendly fire, it’s at least a peril, it’s nobody’s friend.

MARRAPODE: So how long was your post cut off from support?

HAVELKA: It was three weeks.

MARRAPODE: Three weeks?

HAVELKA: Three weeks. We didn’t know it at the time, but headquarters was referring to us as Fort Apache, they didn’t even say A Battery anymore they just said Fort Apache. And everything had to come in by helicopter, I think I’ve got some pictures in here with the Chinook, the big helicopters, with the water tank hanging underneath it and that was when we first got resupplied that we had water. But ammunition, food, medical supplies, everything, what we called POS, trolling oil, lubricants, had to come in with the helicopter. Just one thing, this is actually kind of a funny story, Raytheon was the maker of the HAWK missiles and periodically the Raytheon technicians would come out and do something. I wasn’t a Hawker, I had no idea what they were doing, but you could always tell these guys were civilians. Somebody’d fly them out, the helicopter, Hueys, would land, these guys would get out and either they’d stay or they’d leave and the helicopter would come back later and get these guys.

Well they dropped them off and they were doing something and this, I don't think we were surrounded, I think that was broken by then ,some armored units, some US armored cavalry came in and broke the sea, so to speak, and they flew these guys on helicopters because everything wasn't as secure as it should be so they didn't want to bring these civilians in on the roads so they flew them in with the huey and the huey was sitting kind of off the the front by the main gate. SO these guys get out and after they get out of the helicopter they're going to do whatever work they were going to do and we start taking some rounds. Well a helicopter on the ground is a sitting duck, you've got a couple of machine guns, it can't fire rocket pods or any of that stuff, so these guys had to get out with the helicopter without the guys from Raytheon. (Chuckles) So it wasn't like a big firefight or anything going on it was just some rounds coming in, so we were like ok with it. Well the helicopter gets up, rocks back and takes off and these guys are just standing there, the look on their face was just like, oh my god, we're stuck in a battle here! It wasn't a big battle, it wasn't much of anything. And so they got them and they came in the bunker, the big bunker with us at the main gate because that's kind of where they were. So these guys are just all nervous and you'd expect, well one of the dog handlers comes in, the guy in the picture Tom Wolf, comes in with his dog and the dog's muzzled 'cause you don't know what the dogs are going to do, so he comes in, this guy turns around and the dog jumps at him and hits him between the legs. So now he's doubled up, his

helicopter has just left and he thinks he's in the middle of a battle, which he wasn't. So he was all tense, and so we were playing along a little bit with this guy saying, "Yeah we're going to get down, it's going to be tough, just going to be a tough one," and the poor guy was all nervous. Then, I don't know, 15 minutes later the helicopter came back and took the guy away and I always wonder about when this guy got back to the office, he probably had this big story he was telling everybody, how he got stuck in this big battle when he was out there to look at the rockets, and it wasn't a big deal. That was funny, he didn't appreciate the guard dog being there.

MARRAPODE: Can you tell me a little bit about the HAWK missiles, because that was what your unit was primarily guarding, correct?

HAVELKA: Yeah, the HAWK missiles, just what I know about them, they were antiaircraft missiles. So it wasn't anything like a ground to ground missile, they were antiaircraft missiles. As I said there was four batteries, headquarters battery, A B C and D batteries. They had ways to test them without firing them. You could run a test and aim it and when you really launch it you could see if you did everything right. Once a year they would go, they being the Hawkers, would go somewhere and they would actually fire their missiles. This was in Vietnam someplace they would go, on the coast I guess and they would actually fire the missiles at a drone or something and that was their big readiness test of the year and I guess they did OK with it. So they'd have a target come in and they'd have to plot it,

direct a missile, launch it and get within a certain distance of it that would be disabling. But the idea was, the Viet Cong, the VC, had no airplanes so I thought it was a strange deployment, that if they ever got anything from China or Russia, jets, that they would have something and they were around Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut and Saigon to protect the big airbase at Tan Son Nhut and Saigon, that's what they were there for. When I left, when Marty and I left actually, the unit was moving to the DMZ, it was going to be attached to the Americal division and go up north. So apparently the decision was made that there really was like zero risk of any kind of airplanes from the communists attacking Saigon or Bien Hoa or Tan Son Nhut or any of that. So they sent them up north where it was more likely from North Vietnam there would be jets for the communist side to have to deal with, so that's why they decided to deploy the whole, not the battery, but just the whole battalion, north to the DMZ, hook them up to the Americal division and they would be a shield for the DMZ if any planes ever came to go to the south, an incursion from the north. I don't know that ever really happened but it made more sense to do it that way because of course you had the Migs that were going after the B-52's and the jet fighter-bombers up north so that was the more sensible deployment to have them go up there.

MARRAPODE: So you're guarding the HAWK missiles with your MP unit? That is your primary role on that fire base? During Tet did that role change at all?

HAVELKA:

No, actually it was enhanced because then it was like everybody was on the line all the time. It wasn't like you took turns and you took your duty and then you could go watch a movie at night, I mean all that kind of stuff ceased. There was no more MP brazzards and MP helmets that said "MP" on it. You were just in field gear, combat gear and your ammunition and all this stuff, that's all that you were doing. Something else that we did once the, I'll call it a siege I guess that's as good a word as any, was broken then we would also serve as a firebase for American artillery. One night, this was scary but it ended up being humorous, one night everybody's on the line, the siege has been broken now we had an American armored unit come through and ARVN armor and all that and one guy starts calling the CP saying, "I hear tanks". The guy says, "There's no tanks around here". He says, "I think the VC has tanks". "They don't have any tanks, get off the phone". He says, "No, there are tanks out there tonight!" And we're wondering, "What the hell's this guy talking about? They don't have any tanks, there's not American units now in the area that have armor," and this guy's getting mad now and he's saying, "There's tanks out here!" So the First Sergeant says, he's like, "Leave him alone, I'm going to see what's going on". Cleo Wilson was the First Sergeant, he was another guy I admired, he was a good man, he was tough, but he knew when to look the other way. He knew when it's like, "eh, leave them alone, you know?" So he goes out, and he calls back and he says, "There's tanks! You know that Kachink-Kachink-Kachinky

noise?”. He says, “There’s tank’s out there!” Then the guy on the radio wants to find out, who’s out there. Is this really something, because there were tank battles in Vietnam, I can’t think what the name of it is but some Special Forces base was overrun by North Vietnamese tanks? So there was a possibility, but they wouldn’t get that far south. So finally the sun comes up, we look and there’s this American Armored unit out there. They never announced themselves that they were in the area, and I mean it’s a funny story saying, “Yeah I guess you were right, they had tanks out there.” You know APC’s, it wasn’t just all tanks, but the scary part is picture on the other side, what if we had started shooting at them? Now we’re going to have a battle with some armored infantrymen? We would have got wiped out. I mean thank god nobody started, see that’s why you couldn’t just shoot. You know you had to get authorization to open fire because if somebody would have started on those tanks they would have just taken us apart. So anyway, they were out there and then they just formed a shield around us and it was good news having tanks around us, but we would have artillery come in and set up and they would shoot from our perimeter. And there’s pictures of that in there too that I brought. That they would be firing, then we in turn would provide, we’d feed them and provide their security so they could just concentrate on their fire mission and we would take care of their security for them. So they would come in and out different times and use us as a fire base.

MARRAPODE: So the role of your unit stayed pretty consistent, but during Tet the role of that base actually changed a little bit, with the armor with the artillery?

HAVELKA: Yeah, I guess it did. Yeah I hadn't thought about that, but yeah it did. Good question, yeah it did. We were then serving as a fire base for artillery and tanks and they would come and lay up outside. (sound of paper rustling) They couldn't come in, but they'd lay up outside and they also had the added benefit of our mortar pits and our machineguns and perimeter support.

MARRAPODE: Can you maybe tell me a little bit more about the action that took place after the siege of your firebase was broken and what was going on around then?

HAVELKA: Well there were still a lot of battles going on. There's helicopters would be going on fire missions, you'd see them coming in. There's one that's called, the name of the helicopter is a Cayuse. It's a little bulby looking thing and they actually had them at Wisconsin Dells you take a ride in the thing. When the first time I saw it I says, "There's the busy bee!" And the guy goes, "What?" and I told him the story; these things they were scout helicopters and you would see the busy bee come around and he'd be just flying around. I think they had like one gun and it's a one man helicopter, they were scouts, and he's just be flying around and buzzing, and then all of the sudden he'd leave and then all hell would break loose 'cause he saw something. And he would get out of the way, just drift away, he wouldn't be like *swish*, he'd drift away and then the next thing you know he called



in a fire mission or he called in an airstrike and then you have these planes coming in and dropping napalm and bombs or you'd have a bunch of gunships coming in and start firing or artillery and all that. So we start calling him the instigator, we stop calling him the busy be and start calling him the instigator because it was good they were out there because they would see things going on outside the perimeter that you didn't know was there and they would provide help in that way. Also the helicopters night, they would be coming around flying, they'd be checking your external perimeter out there. So that was a big difference, you would have all of this support where the area was quiet in the early stages when I got there, but afterwards it was a genuine war. There was a war going on and you would have all this support. There was one night, and it was really kind of cool, it would be something out of a movie almost. You had this helicopter gunship flying around the perimeter just kind of making lazy circles, looking for, and it was really low—I mean it was so low if I saw the door gunner in town I would have recognized him that's how low this guy was—So he flew over and he was just banking to make a turn so the door gunner was just leaning out, and I looked up at him and I just, I went like this and then he just went like that to me. He saw it, and then they just went off in the night and then a couple hours later he came back again because I recognized the markings on the helicopter, that he had some kind of rout or a pattern that he was flying and part of it was he was supposed to over us as well. So it was really nice knowing that they were

out there. To this day I think a helicopter is a nice sound. I like the sound of a helicopter and that's what it stems from. It was a very friendly sound, they would watch you, they would feed you, if they got hurt they'd take you out, so helicopters I think are pretty cool. And I've got some, I've got pictures in there of helicopters in there firing at night, so that's pretty neat because you can see all the tracers coming out of the helicopters and the one above is dropping flares, so he would light the area and then these guys would come in on a gun run.

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MARRAPODE: So there was a lot of firepower on the side of your base?

HAVELKA: And, Puff the Magic Dragon, C-130s. Are you familiar with those?

MARRAPODE: Yeah, yeah, with the...

HAVELKA: Mini-guns.

MARRAPODE: The weapons mounted in the side?

HAVELKA: Yeah. Solenoid fired guns. They would come around and they were mostly at night as I remember, and when they could come it sounded like an outboard motor out of the water, just that grind, and when you see the tracers it would be a solid line coming down, and a tracer is only one in four. Out of five rounds, one lights, so you see a solid line coming down and there's four times the amount of shells with that, and it would be so solid that it would actually bow as the C-130 was turning. Just amazing, the amount of lead that they could put out was just staggering, just amazing.

MARRAPODE: And those would just circle a target area, correct?

HAVELKA:

Yeah they would just circle it and they would fire out of one side. The doors was on one side, the left side, and they would just fly in circles with the left side facing it and then just put out, just this incredible amount of lead, it was scary. And then at the time, too, was our first experience with B-52 strikes. And, you didn't see them, you didn't hear them, they flew so high, all you would hear would be sudden explosions and then the ground would shake. It was literally an earthquake when these 52's would let loose, and you never saw them. Twice I saw B-52's and they were about, up in the air they were probably the equivalent of a half inch, there were just three of them, they were way up because they were all, I don't know, computerized bombing, but they would drop so much ordinance that it would be, the ground would shake, you'd be in like an earthquake. You wonder, how did these Vietnamese people keep fighting? And you had to give them credit. I mean, everything was against them. We could collapse their tunnels with these B-52 strikes, we had all this firepower in the world, and they didn't quit! They just toughed it out and eventually got their own way. It's amazing, I mean you had to give them credit; those people did not give up. I guess that's what it is when you're fighting somebody who is fighting for their country. They didn't really want to be in the war, but they were fighting on their turf, this was their country and we were in effect the invaders there and they didn't quit, they just stayed with it until they just tired us out and we quit and they won.

MARRAPODE: So what was your opinion of the military capabilities of the North Vietnamese?

HAVELKA: Their military capabilities were probably, relative to ours, was a C, we were at A+. But what they had was, they had heart, they just didn't quit. From what I read they actually lost the war after the Tet Offensive, it was over, they shot their bolt, it was done. They gave it everything. they aggravated the countryside because of the way they conducted themselves, the destruction that was inflicted on during the Tet Offensive, the casualties and all this stuff, and just when we won, we quit. It was over. They were done, that was their final hurrah was the Tet Offensive and if we would have just stayed the course longer we probably would have won, and I don't know if that would have been necessarily a good thing, I just don't know. But when they lost is when we decided that it was time to go home, and as a result, they basically won the war. So their capabilities weren't great other than they had a cause and towards the end of the war we didn't have a cause anymore. You know, nobody saw it, that it was pointless, where is this going? And we didn't have the cause and you'd have to say the Vietnamese, they had a cause. You could have disagreed with it, but they had the cause, they wanted to unite the country. And it probably worked out ok, I guess economically and that they're probably doing fine. I get these fish that come from Vietnam and I cook them on the grill! I can't think what they're called right now but I get them at Jewel and I put them on the grill. You see shirts and things that are made in

Vietnam. I showed something to my son one time I said, "Look, this is made in Vietnam!" and he says, "Does that bother you?" I says, "No, that's a long time ago". That's old business and I suppose maybe they're allies now, I don't know.

MARRAPODE: What was your opinion of the enemy that you were having contact with or in the area with at the time?

HAVELKA: At the time I think I thought they were despicable, because the people in the villages in the area, maybe they were playing a game, I don't know, but they would rather have us than them. Maybe they would rather have us than them because they could have a job, they could make money, everything was secure. You know, America spent a lot of money in Vietnam, it was good for the economy and all that. And I also think that if you weren't on their side, the NVA or the VC, mostly if you weren't on the VC side, then you too were part of the enemy so there's no such thing as being neutral. So if you didn't want to go along with them you too then became the enemy. That was my understanding of it. So I don't think they were regarded in the South anyway, I don't think people were too interested in being subjugated by the North Vietnamese and you know they didn't want us to leave because we were good for the country in terms of economics and all that. So, no I didn't respect them, I didn't like them, I didn't feel sorry for them. You know, when we would go out after a battle in the area and you'd see the bottles and that all over the place I didn't feel bad, seeing the bodies they didn't bother me. You know some

guys it did, some guys would get sick, some guys couldn't stand the fragrance, but it really didn't bother me to see the bodies. It bothers me more now than it did then. You know when you look back now as a middle aged and older man it's like, "wow, some of the stuff we were doing was pretty scary" and it bothers me now when I reflect on it, but at the time seeing the bodies didn't bother me. I don't know why, but it just didn't.

MARRAPODE: Did your interaction with the local civilians and the local villagers change after Tet?

HAVELKA: No, we always had a good relationship with the people from the village, so it just remained good until I left, so it didn't really change at all I don't think. I mean, it certainly didn't get any worse, it certainly didn't feel bad about it at all, or bad towards us because of what happened. They realized it was an offensive by the other side it wasn't anything that we started. It isn't like we started the offensive that caused all this damage we were just reacting to it and fighting it off, so to speak. So no, that stayed pretty much the same. It's... let's see, I don't know it's just interesting the way you feel about the war when it's over and you look back on it. I mean there was one time, there was this guy Willy, he's in this picture here, he's one of the guys. Him and I were on top of the bunker, the main bunker by the gate was a searchlight and had a relatively small area that was enclosed in sandbags, you'd get up from the back. Well, we were on top and I was sitting on a chair and Willy was sitting on the edge and it was quiet,

nothing was going on, and all of the sudden we started getting rounds or getting shot at from the back and I could see the tracers. Tracers are bad, you see them coming, you see them going and you hear them when they pass, tracers I always thought were very scary. The other ones you just hear them but you didn't see them, tracers you see them, and these were close. I think they were trying to work on the other side but of course they were crossing our perimeter and coming in from our back. So Willy was sitting there and this is an enclosed area and he didn't move, and I just grabbed him and I says, "Willy they're shooting at us you've got to get down!" And I just grabbed him and I threw him down, so he's here and I'm sitting on the chair, well I can't, there's no room. So all I could do was, I had to lean down like this and then we had to, the bullets are going by from the back, and we had to figure out one side at a time to get the chair out and throw it over the side. Well we finally made it and it settled down and everything was like OK. So I told my wife about that once, I guess, years and years and years ago. Well it was a few years ago, way past that time. I happened to mention it again and she said, "I always thought you saved that guys life". And I said, "I don't know, we never thought about it that day". She says, "Well what did he say?" I said, "Nothing." she says, "Well what did you say?" I said, "Nothing." She says, "So you just pulled this guy out of the way, and you probably saved him, and nobody said anything?" I says, "No. It was just like, one event among many, it was just like it was a nothing." And we never talked about

it again, it was just a nothing, it was just something that happened and you just did it. I look back on it now and I think that, yeah maybe Willy would have got killed that day, because he was all exposed, he was sitting up there, he couldn't get down there wasn't room and I just kind of unfroze him and I got him out of the way, and I wonder if Willy ever thinks about that. If he ever thinks, "Imagine that day George grabbed me and pulled me down". It was just one event among many. You don't talk about that. You did what you were supposed to do, you covered him, he would have done the same for you I suppose, and that was it. But you look back at this stuff now and you think, "wow, that was kind of scary," but it was just like "*phew*, oh, that was alright," it was over. It's strange, the relationship amongst us, the soldiers in the unit. There was another time, same bunker, that was like the main bunker for the MP's we had the M60 machine gun in there, we had rocket launchers, M72's in there we had hand grenades, we had all kinds of stuff in there. And there were three of us in there, one guy, black guy, Riley, was on top and I was in the bottom with a guy named Davis and he was a black guy. You know once again we start getting it from the front, so it was coming in this way and, Willy his name was, uh, Davis. Davis was on top. So we were calling to him, "Are you ok? Are you ok?" and he's not answering. Well, now what? Did he get hit, or what? So I was closest to the back door so I says to Davis, I says, "I'm going to go see if Riley's ok." So I started going out climbing out the side of the bunker and it was kind of high and while I was climbing up there



was a lull and everything stopped. So I kept climbing up to see if Riley was ok and then it started again and startled me and I lost my grip and I slid down the side of the bunker and I hit my side on a nail and I got cut, it was a nail that cut me. So I'm sliding down the side of the bunker and I said, "Damn!" and I grab my side and Davis looks at me so now he thinks I'm hit, so now he comes out and he says, "Are you ok?" and I said, "Yeah" I says, "It's just a nail" I says, "I don't know about Riley!" And then Riley stuck his head over and he said, "I'm ok, I'm ok, just shut up and go inside!" So he was OK, I was OK and then we went back to where we were, but the point is that here's, Riley's black, I'm white, I thought Riley was in trouble so I went to see if Riley was ok, and then Davis, who's black, thought I was in trouble, and I'm white, and he came out to see if I was ok. SO that's what I mean, there was no, you know, racial problems of any sort, that everybody kind of had everybody else's back and that's the way it should be. You have your arguments, but it's like family arguments. So that's what I meant when I said there were no problems that I remember in that regard. You look back on it now and it's scary and when you were in it it's adrenaline and excitement and fear you know, all mixed in to one. They all counteract each other I guess, I don't know. So yeah, it's scary, and then you just talk to people, a lot of people say the same thing. It's scary now than it was now when you look back on it.

MARRAPODE: So when you're looking back on it are there any other events that really stand out in your memory from that time?

HAVELKA: Yeah, one. Me and Marty, my friend Marty again, him and I were in the bunker, same bunker, one night and it's the middle of the night and we look out and here's some guy climbing the wire. Well, actually probably could have shot this guy and there wouldn't have been any questions asked. You know it was during the Tet Offensive, afterwards when things were more calm, and here's a guy climbing the wire. So we're looking at him and we realize it's one of the Sergeants, he must have missed his truck coming back so he's climbing the wire. So he gets in, he gets all down the road, through the tangle-foot and all this stuff and here's me and Marty. This is a guy, the Sergeant, was somebody that used to like to harass people, he used to play rank and act like a lifer and all that stuff, he was kind of a jerk. So here he's a little drunk, more than a little drunk, climbing the wire in the middle of the night. So he walks up to me and Marty and I'm saying, "Marty, what are we going to do with this guy?" He says, "Wait." So he comes up, he says, "Oh, I'm glad it's you guys," he says, "you guys aren't going to turn me in are you?" And Marty says, "Nah Serge, we ain't going to turn you in." He says, "Oh thank god!" He says, "Cause you're going to turn yourself in." He says, "Go to the CP and tell them what you just did and I'm calling in 10 minutes to see if you did". So Marty made the guy go turn himself in (Laughs) he did it too, the guy actually did it. So that's really kind of, that was kind of a funny thing.

But, I don't know, one other thing too is, you know the kids. You always, maybe you don't, I do, you always figure this relationship between the local kids and GI's. First World War, Second World War, Korea, Bosnia, any of them, there's always this, supposedly, a bond between the kids and the GI's and that was true with us, too. You get your care packages from home, cookies, gum, candies, whatever, we would always share those with the local kids. If we had food left over, which we always did, the kids would line up and we'd feed them. So we always took care of the kids. I thought everybody was really good with the kids, nobody would ever mess with the kids or play stupid pranks on them or anything and I always felt good about that. There was one orphanage, I had a friend, Arthur and Art spoke French, and the second language of Vietnam is French, anybody who's anybody in Vietnam speaks French because of the French occupation, 40's and 50's, Dien Bien Phu and after the Second World War and all that. So French is a common language so Art was a good guy to go with because he could speak to everybody. And one day we found a French, or it's a Catholic orphanage, I forget where it was, probably outside Saigon someplace, and the nuns that ran it spoke French. So you know it's fun, they're showing us around and I said, "Oh, that's pretty cool". So we started going back and forth and bringing the orphanage food and gum and candy and things like that, so we had a good relation with them. Then they got mortared one night. I still feel bad about that. They mortared the orphanage. So we stopped going because we

thought maybe it was our fault. You know because they were getting lined up with the US, with the Army, so we never went back again. But, that was something where I think the best of intentions came and didn't work out very well, but that was probably one of the worst experiences that I had over there. So that's something of course that's sat in my mind. But going home, we came home, Marty and I got released six weeks early because the unit was moving up to the DMZ and First Sergeant Wilson came over and he said he didn't want to screw around with us. He says, "We're going to the North, we're going to be busy, we're going to have stuff to do, so as soon as you two can get your stuff together and close out everything you can go home". So they let us go home six weeks early. They released us, got home, got back to California and Marty's plane left and my plane left and went home and that was it. So, I actually got an early dismissal, we used say in high school I got an ED, got out early. That's why when you get those papers it shows I served like, one year, ten and one half months because they let us out six weeks early.

MARRAPODE: While you were in Vietnam did you keep a journal or write letters home?

HAVELKA: I wrote letters home and I didn't save the letters. I'm sorry I didn't, but I didn't have any place to put stuff I guess. That's really just an excuse, but my mother saved all of my letters, she saved all of Eddy's letters too, my brother, when he was writing. So I have those and I've never looked at them, I've never read one of them. When I was looking to get stuff for this meeting today I found the letters and I just pulled one out at random and it

was a letter that I had written during basic. I mean there's a whole line of them, my mother saved every letter that I had ever sent home and I had never, maybe someday, I always say, every time I run across them and it's every several years, "Oh yeah there's the letters". I always intend to read them and go through them and I never do that.

MARRAPODE: Who did you write to the most?

HAVELKA: My mother. I didn't have a girlfriend or anything so, I wrote to some of the guys, you know some of my friends. Other relatives I wrote to but it was just mostly my mother, I just wrote to her.

MARRAPODE: Do you remember what you wrote the most about?

HAVELKA: I think the letters I wrote were pretty, just, factual and what was actually going on, whether it was basic training, Fort Carson, MP school or anything. Pretty much what was going on, just what was going on at the time. And then she'd write back about something, what was going on in the family, what aunts, uncles or my cousins or that would be doing. It was probably just stereotypical letters from somebody in the military overseas writing to the family. You're telling them what's going on here, although I guess I did lie a couple of times now that I think about it. I'll tell you about it, and then you know she would be providing support and what's going on in the family. What I did lie about actually, one thing was, it was during the, I can't remember the timing. I think it was before the Tet Offensive, but it's a war there's always something going on and my brother was home by then and my mother had a map of Vietnam and

she was always, “Where’s all this stuff going on?” and Eddy would always tell her I was at a different place and she’s believe him because she wanted to. “No George isn’t here, he’s here, he’s here, he’s here” and she knew it, but she wanted to believe it. So that was kind of funny that she had her map of Vietnam and she’s be tracking everything that was going on, it was kind of weird. But then I would tell her what as around us, which was a lie. I would tell all these big base camps were all around us, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne and this one and that one and they weren’t there, but it made her feel better so, you know, why not?

MARRAPODE: So there were things that you avoided writing about when you wrote home?

HAVELKA: Yeah, you wouldn’t write about, I mean one time, my mother’s dead now, but a few years before she died we were talking about something, there was something in the news about a friendly fire incident wherever we happened to have a current going. She was bemoaning the fact that it’s friendly fire and all of that stuff and I said, “Mom that kind of stuff happens all the time.” I says, “Well, look at the times that we were shelled.” And she says, “What?” I says, “Well, you know, the times that we were shelled by our own artillery,” and she starts, “You never told me! I didn’t know that!” I said, “Well there was a lot of things you didn’t know, I just thought I told you, but it’s all ok it’s like old business” I says, “and most of the stuff I probably forgot about anyways so there’s nothing to tell you anymore”. And then she just said, “You never told me that”. So

I said, “Oh yeah, there’s a lot of things that I didn’t tell you”. You know, you can’t tell them everything or **I** would be really bad.

MARRAPODE: How much time were you able to spend away from your post?

HAVELKA: The only way you got away is if you were escorting a vehicle or, I mean that was it, that was the only way you got to go anywhere.

MARRAPODE: What about leave?

HAVELKA: Well, well yeah R and R, I guess. I went to Taiwan, Formosa, and I went there with another friend, Mickey, an MP. I think we had seven days. It was interesting, I found the orient just interesting in general because it’s so different from the way it is here. It wasn’t anything spectacular other than you were away, it was nice to be away. We behaved ourselves, a lot of guys would go on R and R and get in trouble and get locked up by the MP’s. You didn’t want to come back under those circumstances where you got literally kicked out of a country because of you acting up. (Coughs) So we didn’t do anything we just, we weren’t angels about anything, but we pretty much behaved, didn’t get into any trouble, came home sober and all that and it was ok. But that was it. You would get an R and R. Guys would get an R and R and they’d go to Australia. And Australia, I thought, why’d you want to go to Australia? It’s like going to the United States except your family isn’t there, it was a long flight so you’d actually have less time, although they’d give you an extra travel day, but you had less time there because of the distance instead of just going to like, Formosa or someplace like that. And it would be, “Seen

enough of the Asian, I don't want to see anymore". But, you're in Asia, you might as well see something at least when it's a more secure area. I would never have thought to go to like Australia or New Zealand or something like that. I wanted to go to an Asian country and see what that was like. So that was the only place that I ever really wanted to go, but some guys would be just begging to try and get an R and R to go to Australia, but there was only so many spots, as I remember anyway, that were available. You just couldn't have like a whole mob going to Australia at one time, there would be so many positions that would be available for R and R in Australia. I think probably because the Australians or their people didn't want a whole mob of goofy GI's coming into their country all at once. I think they, too, just like any other country, want to kind of structure how people come in so they just don't have a big influx all of the sudden and a potentially bad influence.

MARRAPODE: Is there an experience from your time in the Army that you feel exemplifies your service?

HAVELKA: Yeah. When the area would be active, there would be fighting going on in the area, I was a PFC, I would end up with the main gate and sometimes two or three bunkers that I would be responsible for, I'm only a PFC. There were people that were in these bunkers that were graded higher than me, they ranked higher than I did, and it was kind of like unofficial but the command post would put me in charge, and some of the other guys would get upset about it because they had higher rank than me and the answer



was basically, “Just shut up, Havelka’s in charge and don’t say anymore,” because I was a good soldier. I did what I was supposed to do and I think that they trusted me enough that I was allowed to be in charge of people that outranked me. And the good news with that was when there was not much going on the other guys got to be in charge of the bunker, which means they were responsible for all of the B.S. Making sure everything was clean, making sure everything worked, inventory on equipment and ammunition and all, which I didn’t particularly have to worry about because those things would have been checked on, on an ongoing basis at other times. So when it was real I would be in charge and when it wasn’t real, so to speak, these other guys were responsible for it. When somebody’d come by for an inspection well it wasn’t my bunker it was his, but when something was going on then I was in charge.

MARRAPODE: Then it’s your bunker.

HAVELKA: Then it’s my bunker. A couple of times I said, “Come on,” and somebody said, “No, you shut up, too, you’re charge, that’s it”. And they would only want to talk to me when there was something they had to communicate, so even though I didn’t have the rank they respected me enough as a soldier that I could be in charge, then I would have to make sure ammunition’s there and everything’s ready, but it was real, it wasn’t for silly inspections. So that, I would say, exemplifies my time in the military. That I was a good soldier and even though I didn’t have a lot of rank that at times I was given a lot of responsibility. I even ran the enlisted man’s club for a while.

MARRAPODE: Really?

HAVELKA: Yeah, this Sergeant Wilson, he says “You’re supposed to have some sense, so you want to run the club?” I said, “Ok I’ll try running the club”. But it got to be too big of a thing. The guy that ran it before me, a guy named John, that was is only job, he ran the club. Well I had all this other stuff I had to do as well as run the club and finally I said, “Look it’s either one or the other. Either I’m going to do the club or I’m going to be an MP here” and he says, “Well you’re an MP”, “Ok, whatever you want to do”. (Coughs) So I didn’t have a long term job as the club manager. I didn’t particularly want to do it anyway because people would get into the club after hours and steal the beer, I wasn’t one of them but I just... So one night I said, I told Tod, “I’m going to sleep in the club.” He said “Why?” I said, “Well guys are stealing beer and I’m going to sleep in there with my gun, my rifle”. And he says, “You want to shoot somebody?” and I says, “No, but I want everybody to know that I’m sleeping in here with my rifle so that maybe they’ll stop breaking into the club” and then they did for a while and then when I wasn’t in charge of the club the other guy actually moved in and that’s where he lived was in the club so it kind of went away. Then I was an absentee kind of manager because most of the time I would be on the line, I wouldn’t be in the club, but it was kind of fun for a while to be the club manager.

MARRAPODE: Ok. So when were you shipped out of Vietnam, when was your time there up?

HAVELKA: Well actually, my discharge date was September 9<sup>th</sup>, 68'. So I probably left 24 or 48 hours before that, so I probably physically left around the 7<sup>th</sup> of September and I remember it was two days because it was like one day of 48 hours just to be checked out and get your tickets and get everything turned in that you had to turn in and all that. So getting out on the 9<sup>th</sup> I probably physically left the country around the 7<sup>th</sup>. And the 9<sup>th</sup> as it turns out is my Son's birthday, except he was born in 75', so seven years hence was George's birthday.

MARRAPODE: Sounds like a good day.

HAVELKA: Yeah! He was born in September, daughter was born in September, we were married in September, our other granddaughter she was born in September, we've got another one on the way and her due date is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October, which means she could potentially, he or she we don't know what it is, that grandchild could be born in September, so it looks like September is the month of gifts for us. So...

MARRAPODE: Can you tell me about your experience of coming back home?

HAVELKA: When I came home I just, I didn't let anybody know, they knew I was being discharged but they didn't know exactly when so there was nobody to meet me at the airport, and I wanted it that way. So when I got home, I landed at O'Hare, and just got a cab and came home. I was telling the guy where I lived and where to turn and that, but in the two years or so that my service had been, I'd been gone, the neighborhood changed. I mean, buildings were gone, 'cause I was looking for a building to tell him like,

“Oh make a right over here by the cleaners.” Well, the cleaners was gone. Just in that two year period it just seemed to me that there had been a decline in the neighborhood that buildings were gone and I mean before when a building was gone somebody would build a building and now these buildings were gone and it looked like there was nobody that was going to be building anything. So, yeah so I just took a cab home and got home and my mother was at work and Eddy was at work, my brother, and Len, the guy, we lived in a three flat, there was a tavern here, the owner of the tavern, which used to be my aunt, lived here, but now this guy Lenny owned it so he lived here we lived here and these other people lived here. So my welcome home party was Leonard. Leonard loved me because he was a World War Two veteran, when Korea started he joined again, and the other people that lived in the apartment across from us, I mean these guys probably couldn't get into the army because of their record and whatever, so Leonard thought me and Eddy were just the greatest because we were Veterans. So Leonard, that day when I came home, he just happened to be there and he said, “You're home!” I went, “I guess.” So I just waited until my mother got home from work and that was it. She just opened the door and there I was sitting at the kitchen table 'cause she didn't know I was going to be there. So she was all surprised and she ran back downstairs yelling, “He's home! He's home! He's Home!” And she called Eddy 'cause he worked later and she let Eddy know that I was home and that was kind of it. Then you had to make the rounds and see all the

relatives, which that was a chore. I just, it's like, can we just start over again like the two years didn't happen? I'm just back and that's it and no questions and all this stuff, because they didn't ask a lot of questions, which was good because I didn't want to answer a lot of questions, I just, I'm home that's all. That was kind of a weird transition period coming home, it was just awkward because I didn't want to answer questions and I think they didn't want to ask questions, so once we got past the awkward stage, which probably took a few months then everything was cool, everything was ok.

MARRAPODE: So it took some time to settle into being home?

HAVELKA: Yeah, being home, and they're not used to me being home. I'm ok, I'm sane, everything's fine, I'm obviously not crazed and so it was good, but it was just very strange. Going to school, because then I went to college, I was the first one in my father's side to graduate from college, I was the second one in the whole family to graduate from college and I was the first one to get an advanced degree. I got an MBA from DePaul, so going to college wasn't kind of like a family thing, you just finished high school and you got a job, that's why I probably would have been a cop. But when I was going to the University of Illinois that was when they were having the protests and the hippies and all this kind of stuff and there were times you literally had to fight your way to get into class because the people who were protesting didn't want anybody to go to class and it's like, ok now I've done all this stuff already I just want to go to school and get finished,

get a degree, get a job and get on with my life. They would try to block you from going in, they wouldn't open the door so you'd have to push guys aside, kick guys. It was really uncomfortable, but I was not going to let them stop me from going to class. It wasn't just me, there was a lot of people that felt the same way and they weren't necessarily veterans, but they felt the same way about, "I'm here to get an education, I want to go to school, you want to protest that's fine, but don't interfere with my right to get an education if that's what I want to do". So that kind of went on for a while and that was weird. And then I didn't go to my college graduation because the year before one guy was dressed up like Captain America, another guy was shooting balloons around, just everything like disrespect was in, so I just didn't go to my graduation, I just had them mail me my paper and that was the end of it. So then all my aunts were mad at me for that because, being the first one, they wanted to make a big hoopla about it and it's like, "No. I don't want to go to this ceremony and have a bunch of guys acting foolish." And it was always guys more so than women were more prone to do this. So I didn't go, so they were mad at me and they didn't give me anything for graduation either, but that's ok.

MARRAPODE: So how aware were you of some of the, kind of the political events and turmoil at the time of your arrival?

HAVELKA: How did I feel about it?

MARRAPODE: And how aware?

HAVELKA:

Oh, you're very much aware of it. It's funny, before I went out and graduated high school baseball was "the thing", that was it, it's all I ever paid attention to is baseball and in the winter, play ice hockey. And afterwards you were just very much aware that this, you were just sensitized to it and then my feeling about it for the most part was, "These people don't know what they're talking about, they really don't know. Yeah, war is bad, war is not a good thing, I know it, I've experienced it and it's not the best way to solve problems, but you don't know what's going on, on the other side." I mean, then you've got this Jane Fonda business. God, if that was the Second World War they probably would have shot her as a Traitor, but it was ok to do all this stuff, sit on an anti-aircraft gun and point it at the American planes going over. So I just couldn't accept that. I mean I didn't walk around wearing a hat that said "Vietnam Veteran", but I just couldn't accept that kind of behavior, it was wrong. I mean there's people over there dying, getting hurt. Now the soldiers, the troops get support whereas we really didn't, it was an unpopular war therefore we became unpopular, that's why I didn't talk about it or say anything. It was just wrong, that's all. I had no sympathy for them or their views, now I look back on it I wonder what it was all about anyway. Maybe they were right, I don't know. I always thought that the more I think about it, and even then I thought about it then, what the war was about. It wasn't about uniting the north and south, it wasn't about good guys and bad guys, communists, democracy, it was about Vietnam is

the rice bowl of Asia and I believe Vietnam is one of the few places in the world where bauxite is. It's a mineral, as far as I know, that's used in the manufacture or some process of aluminum. So Vietnam as a piece of land is pretty valuable, and maybe that's what this what about more so than the domino effect and communism and all that stuff. That's what it was about was who feeds Asia and who gets the use of bauxite, more so than anything else. So we propped up Diem and then before the war really started to that extent, I think it was more economics and natural resources than it was anything about democracy.

MARRAPODE: So after you returned to the States, you went to the University of Illinois?

HAVELKA: Yes.

MARRAPODE: And then after you graduated with your degree?

HAVELKA: After I graduated with a degree I worked a big savings and loan, (??) 1:52:38 you've probably never heard of the name, they've been gone for a long time, but it was one of the biggest savings and loans in the country and I worked there and while I was working there I went to graduate school and they paid for it, bless their hearts. Then I just left and went to some other banks in the meantime, so basically I was in banking for the 37 years after being in the military.

MARRAPODE: So you decided not to continue your police work?

HAVELKA: No, the police department, City of Chicago, is a lot of clout, I had no clout. I got into the program on my own merits. My father is what I call a patrolio, he was a patrolman, out on the street doing what he was doing,



all those years working the wagon, and I wouldn't have, if I thought it was fair or I would have an opportunity to advance then maybe, but I also thought, "I think I can do better than this," and I did. I did ok, I retired three years ago at age 62 and we're fine, we can do what we want, we don't live a crazy lifestyle, but we can do what we want. The house is paid for, we don't have any debts and it's good. So in that sense I did ok, a good family, and I think that was a wise decision because the way that the City of Chicago is going in terms of the crime and what goes on and all that, I could even see that 30 some years ago that, "Is this what you really want to do?" And I thought, "No, I don't think I want to do that." So I got into banking and I think I did good by banking and I think banking also did good by me. So I had a nice career there (coughs) that I retired on my terms and I'm just very satisfied with that. I'm still involved with some organizations, the Neighborhood Housing Service of Chicago, Southeast Organizing Project, and they're housing related, immigration, voting, education, safety and they're all on the south side, which is where I grew up, and I've been involved with NHS for probably 25 years and swapped for eight (coughs) and it's good. That's one of the things I do is I volunteer here. As a matter of fact tomorrow I'm going to run the office, because the guy that runs it scheduled everybody for vacation, including himself, for the same week. So he asked me if I wouldn't come in on Friday because he's got the whole week covered if I would just answer the phones and greet people when they come in and I said, "Yeah, I'll do that". So that's

what I do and it's very rewarding, it's a good organization and they do good things with housing and foreclosure prevention, education and all of that stuff.

MARRAPODE: And what's the name of that organization?

HAVELKA: Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago and the other one is Southwest Organizing Project, which is an umbrella organization of 27 member organizations, NHS being one, and it's churches, a Jewish synagogue, Baptist churches, schools, police, businesses, Holy Cross Hospital, they're all involved in it, caring about the neighborhood and all that and they do good things and it keeps me busy. As well as watching grandchildren.

MARRAPODE: And do you feel like your military experience has prepared you for civilian life?

HAVELKA: Yeah I do. I absolutely I do, because growing up sports was always, where I grew up not just me, everybody, sports was very important. I played baseball, I played football, I played ice hockey, we never played basketball, I don't know why we didn't. That was always very important, that was kind of an identity, if you were good in sports that was status that was a good thing and, like I said with the baseball, we had some good teams and all that, but that wasn't going to get you a life and fulfill a life. But in the military what I found out was I can do a lot of things, I can do other things. Like I said I was in charge of the main gate and three bunkers, when it was serious. That gave me a lot of confidence that I can

do things that I hadn't had, that I can react and that I can lead if necessary and follow when I should and I can make a distinction on that. I know when I should follow and I know when I should say, "This is what we need to do". I think that helped me a lot in getting an education, a higher learning education, and also in work being a manager and I was a commercial lender and a calling officer, which means I went out and did business development work in the community. I did a lot of that, I did a lot of adversarial kind of work where community organizations are mad at the bank, they don't think the bank is doing the right thing. Well I was the guy that had to go out and deal with them and meet them and have meeting[s] with the community where they're upset and they hate the bank and you're the bank, so it helped a lot with that. (Coughs) Sorry, dry throat. That seemed to start really with the military, where I guess I just saw a different side of me that I didn't know existed before. So in that sense I think that the military was good, it's an experience I wouldn't get rid of, there isn't anything in it, including Vietnam, I would change. I think it was something that added to my life and added to me, it enhanced me and my view of things and my life.

MARRAPODE: What do you think younger generations can learn from your experiences?

HAVELKA: Of the military?

MARRAPODE: Mhmm

HAVELKA: I don't know what the military is like now, I don't have a sense of how they conduct themselves, how they train, how they deal with people, I

think the military is looking for a higher level person. I mean when I went in it was, they were willing to take pretty much anybody, it was (???) very rigorous as a selection process. But I think in the military you learn discipline, you learn respect, you learn that there's way to do things and that's the way you have to do it. It doesn't mean it's the right way, but at that time it's *the* way instead of being against everything and, "why do I have to do this, I don't understand, what's that all about." It's just, you learn how to do things within a system and again it may not be the best system, it may not be rational, We used to say the difference between the Army and the Boy Scouts is the Boy Scouts have adult leadership, but you learn that you have to work within the system. If you're going to fight against the system you're going to lose. It's a sad thing in life, if you're going to fight against the system you're going to lose, and what you have to do is either change the system if you can or go find something else that better accommodates the way you want to do things. If you're not doing well with your job, you don't like it, you go get another job. Don't just moan about it, go and find something that's more in line with what you like to do and I think that that's a lesson that can be learned in the military. You don't have to agree with the way they want to do it but you have to suck it up because this is what the people in charge want you to do.

MARRAPODE: And now that so much time has passes, when you think about the country of Vietnam, what comes to mind?

HAVELKA:

I just thought it was an interesting place, even with the war, the whole package there I just found it interesting. The way that people lived, the way they do things, what I understood of their culture and it was just a very interesting place, it was so different than what we were used to in the United States or Western Europe or something, just our culture was so different from the way that they do things over there. You watch the guy watering his plants and he'd have like a bucket, instead of having a sprinkler can like we would have, he'd have a device that he would hold and it went down and opened up in like three prongs and there would be reeds meshed in there and in effect was the sprinkler head, that's how he sprinkled. He'd just be walking around, that's how he sprinkled. I'd say, "Hey, you ever see a watering can?" Yeah, that's it, that's the watering can, that's the way he did things. There were houses that were made out of flattened beer cans, they'd have beer cans that they cut the round ends off of, cut them, flattened them and they would use it as siding. And it was such an interesting place. The people in the village you would say they don't have anything, but they didn't seem to be in squalor. They were clean, they had these goofy brooms that they used and they would be sweeping, I always laughed and called they were sweeping the dirt, but they would be sweeping the dirt cleaning up whatever debris was there, so they lived what appeared to be a clean life. And watching the way they fish and the net would drop and they'd wait till the fish swam on top of it then they'd pull it up. So just the way they did things, I thought it was

interesting. Just fascinating, the architecture, the little buildings that would be on the side of the road where people would leave offerings of food and a travelling monk would take the stuff and he would say a prayer for them, it was just all part of the culture.

MARRAPODE: Have you ever thought about going back?

HAVELKA: No. (Chuckles) No, I don't. My wife said that to me, she says, "Would you ever want to go back?" And I said, "No, I don't think I'd want to go back there". I think it would be too different from what I remember. I just have a vision, and I dream about it sometimes, what does the base look like now? And I don't think anybody would have built anything there, maybe somebody lives there. (Coughs) But I don't think they would have disassembled the perimeter, why would they do that? So I would imagine the barbed wire is still there, and the tangle-foot, some concertina wire. The village is probably there, maybe they used things for storage, I don't know. There's probably whatever grass or weeds grow have taken it over, and I'd just look at it and it would be like, "So what?" (??) 2:02:47 I don't have any interest in that.

Oh this is something I didn't tell you, this is an interesting story, too. Some guys used to grow marijuana in the perimeter. The first time I saw it I was like, wow, I said, "Is that what I think that is?" And he's like, "Yeah," and I said, "Well is everybody ok with this?" and he says, "Well nobody says anything". I think the officers had to be aware of it, everybody knows what the stuff looks like it, I never smoked it, I'd be

with a guy smoking and I'd drink beer. The officers had to know it was there. They'd pick it and dry it on the bunkers, they'd lay it out on the sandbags and dry their grass and nobody ever said anything. That's [what] I thought was interesting, everybody was kind of ok with it, as long as you did your job, that was good. That guy Mickey that I went to Taiwan with, he ended up diverting from the beer-drinking crowd to the smoking crowd. There was two groups, guys that would drink beer and then there were the guys that smoked. And then there were guys that didn't drink at all, so there was three groups, I guess, and he ended up going with those guys. One night there was a big artillery barrage going on and then the day it all settled down, so I saw Mickey, we were going back after getting off the perimeter and I said, "Man that was really something last night." "Well," he says, "Hey, I had smoked man." he says, "You ought to try that!" I says, "You were having a smoke while this was all?" He says, "Yeah! It's really something." So this guy is smoking grass, I mean that's a guy you don't want to be with, I mean you need him to do something, this guy's all, "Wow man." Yeah, so I suppose Mickey [had] a plot growing someplace where he was growing grass in the perimeter, it's weird. So that's another use for grass I guess, it enhances your inner war experience.

MARRAPODE: Do you keep in contact with people that you served with still? (Coughs)

HAVELKA: I did for a while. We'd write letters back and forth for a period of time. A couple of them actually came in the banks.

MARRAPODE: Really?

HAVELKA: Yeah. One guy walked in, Dan Smith from basic, and he had a beard and big bushy hair almost like a fro, he was a white guy but he had a fro and bushy beard and I come up to him I said, "Dan Smith." And he could never remember his service number, and I always had to remember it for him, I was US 54810878 and he was, I don't remember it anymore now, but I always had to remember it because Dan never could. And then when I walked up to him and he looked at me and he said, "George?" I said "Yeah!" I said, "How you doing man?" he says, "Look at me!" he says, "Guys do this to hide, they get their big hair and beards man and you know me as soon as I walked into the door!" I said, "Yeah it didn't work, Dan!" He had his hair totally different with all that but it was still Dan. So he used to come in the banks so I'd see him once in a while and actually one time a son of one of the Drill Sergeants came in. The Drill Sergeants name was Battle, James Battle, and this guy came in and he had a question or something and they told me that there was this Army guy out there that has a question and all this stuff and I looked at him, I saw the name Battle. I thought, what are the odds, you know? So I was talking to him I took care of whatever it was I said, "Let me ask you a question, was your dad in the Army?" He says, "Yeah why?" I said, "Was his name James?" He says, "Yeah!" I said, "He was my drill instructor in the 60's." This was the guy's son. So we had a bit of a chat and that was it. One time I went up to Sheridan, Fort Sheridan, Illinois, one of the guys was with, he was assigned up there so I saw him a couple of times. Art, the guy that spoke



French, the guy I went to the orphanage with, he came to the house one time and my Mother made me chicken dinner and all this stuff and he hung around for a while. He and I stayed in touch for a while and then all of the sudden I didn't hear from him and Art was a little bit older than me, but not a lot, and I wanted to stay in touch with him and the letters they weren't coming back, he wasn't answering them and that stuff. I finally wrote the department of the Army and I said that we served together and put enough information in there that they would see I knew what I was talking about and I said, "I'm trying to reach him, so even if you would tell him to write me that's fine or if you can give me his address that's fine," and they sent me a letter back saying that the guy died. And I wrote back and I asked them what happened and they never answered the letter, all they did was they sent me this letter saying, "Arthur A. Maltese is deceased." So I don't know, that was a very weird thing. And another guy that I was an MP with, Tom, Tom Wier, he got shot up pretty good in Vietnam, he was the First Cavalry in A Shau Valley, and he called me out of the blue one day. I said, "How'd you find me?" He says, "I just talked to your nephew." So he called my nephew and asked if his father was in the Army and he said, "Well yeah but he was in, whatever," and he said, "Well this guy was an MP," and he says, "Well I think my Uncle George was an MP". So he stopped by, so we stayed in touch for a while. Well he was in Colorado, so we would try to get him a Christmas card or something and that's about it. I think the Vietnam War was different

because people are coming and going all of the time. Marty and I were unique that we got there at the same time, we left within two hours of each other, we were there all the time, it was guys were always coming and going, it was always disjointed. After a couple of months you're a veteran. You've been there then the new guys come and you're working with them, whereas in other wars and even Afghanistan and Iraq now they go over in units. So you're going with guys that you trained with, you're always a unit, you know all these guys. With us, for the most part, you're always coming and going, it was a one-year tour and that was it. So in that sense you didn't have, I don't think, the cohesion that you had in some of the other wars where you would tend to be closer with your comrades than you were because guys were just always coming and going. So that kind of hurt it a bit. I mean you see some of these stories of people from the Second World War or Korea that they have reunions, they're going to reunions all the time and they've been going to reunions for 50 years and I don't think you'll see that with people from some of these wars now because of the transient nature, I guess you could say, of the members of the unit. Also, I don't know if I mentioned this, but one of the things, you know the guys that I played ball with that we never talk about it. I mean we just don't even talk about it, the War, the Military, in any way. And that is also, I think, is a way that breaks that bond, because we had a different bond; the bond is baseball, we played baseball growing up and went to each other's weddings and all this stuff, but the bond isn't the

Military. So we didn't have that, [the] bond of the Military isn't that strong because of the transient nature of the assignments.

MARRAPODE: So even though you've got the somewhat shared experience, the bond isn't there from it?

HAVELKA: Yeah, it's just like the bond isn't there. Now if we would have went there and spent the whole year with the same group it might have been different because you would have had a whole year of experience instead of anywhere from nine months to a couple of months because guys are always coming and going. I don't know, I always thought that that was critical, that you didn't develop that close bond because you weren't together all that time. And that's, Charlie, my one friend, he keeps together an email book of 400 people, he's a member of the Disabled American Veterans, American Leagion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Battalions and it's like, "Charlie, what do you... is this what you do all day?" So he's retired and yeah he's always sending stuff around about what's going on and different things and votes and that coming up, so he's very active in and he goes to these reunions. So he's a guy that kind of defeats that block, I think, in his union, which is 11<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion in the Marines, they stay together. They went as a unit, they stayed as a unit, when the deployment was over they left as a unit and went on to other things and I think he was with the same group of guys for an extended period of time and that's built more of that bond. I think that's important, that we don't have that now, or we didn't have it back then, I

mean maybe they have that now in Afghanistan, Iraq and that kind of stuff, possibly.

MARRAPODE: So have you been involved with any veterans' organizations?

HAVELKA: I was in the American Legion for a while after I got out I was in it for a few years, but then you start getting kids, then you're going to night school, then you're working, and it was something had to give. I mean you can't do everything so that was something that was kind of easy for me to shed. And when I was going to it I think the average age was probably 60, you know here I am like 20 something and these were all guys at that time [were] World War Two veterans and there was nobody there my age because it was Korea and World War Two and you didn't fit in. I don't know it was just wasn't the same thing. They were ok and respectful and you're a veteran and all that, but it just didn't click, so I just stayed in it because I thought it was a good thing, but then I finally, it had to go I couldn't keep going to meetings and they want you to come in and do things like that and I just couldn't do it.

MARRAPODE: Well is there anything else that you'd like to share or any questions you'd like to answer that I didn't ask today?

HAVELKA: (Coughs) No I don't. Yeah, yeah I guess there is. How is this then accessed or stored, if somebody wanted to know information that might be relevant to what I just talked about, how do they access that? Is it indexed in some way?

MARRAPODE: We can get into a little bit more of how this information is going to be distributed after the interview, but for now is there anything else about your experiences that you'd like to...

HAVELKA: No, I think that's pretty good. I think it pretty much covered it, it's got a good range of information, I think, and I hope it was useful and I hope it will contribute to the body of knowledge that you're accumulating here.

MARRAPODE: Well thank you so much for coming in. We really appreciate you sharing your story. Thank you.

HAVELKA: Ok, thank you very much, I appreciate it.