Edward Larner
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
The Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Jay (J.P.). MORTENSON ’21

MORTENSON 00:03 I confirm that this call is being recorded. This is Tuesday, October 27, 2020. I'm [J.P. Mortenson] conducting this interview for the Dartmouth Vietnam Project. I am conducting this interview with Zoom Video call with Mr. Edward Larner. I'm in Norwich, Vermont. And Mr. Larner is speaking to me from Boston, Massachusetts. Mr. Larner. Thank you for speaking with me today.

LARNER 00:35 Good to talk to you again JP. And actually, I'm in Concord [MA] Mass just outside Boston.

MORTENSON 00:39 Concord Mass. I stand corrected. Anyways, so yeah, let's start. Tell me when and where were you born?

LARNER 00:47 Oakland, California in July 1944. My dad was in the Navy station- that Alameda Naval Air Station.

MORTENSON 01:03 What do you remember about being out there in California?

LARNER 01:07 Well, I moved back when I was two. So my memories are more like pictures that I saw. And then when my folks lived in Berkeley—my grandkids and kids live out there. When I go to Berkeley, I recognize things and I think, Oh, I was here when I was little. I’m getting it from the pictures that I saw. Being there are really- my first memories really start when we lived with my grandparents. When we moved back right after the war.

MORTENSON 01:42 And so you moved back to New England, what part?

LARNER 01:46 Lexington [MA] For a short while, My grandparents lived in East Bridgewater [MA], we went back and forth. My grandmother got sick of having to do diapers and he had to

wash them and hang them out and so forth. In those days when my sister had been born so we would kind of give one grandparent relief. Those are the days when the housing boom really started in the 50s. So mt grandparents had a fairly large house with a barn in the back and then took the barn and turned it into a house. And that's where we moved until I was 10 years old. And that was in Lexington, Mass.

MORTENSON 02:24 And what do you remember doing when you were a boy? When you were younger? How did you spend your time? Tell me about young Ed?

LARNER 02:33 Oh, well I was a very difficult child. I remember being told that I got kicked out of five different daycares. Eventually in kindergarten, they put me in a separate room. And I was just kind of a free spirit, but I got in so much trouble. In first grade, they actually took me out of school for six months. And then when I went back, I was considered to be behind because I'd missed six months of school. I was in what they call it with three groups: an advanced group of, you know, intelligent kids, the average group and then the difficult kids. And I was always in the difficult kids until I was in fifth grade. And then when, my folks moved up in New Hampshire, where my grandparents had a farm, and they tested me and they wanted to put me in eighth grade after being with the stupid kids because I absorbed everything. So anyway, I thought it was really smart. So Junior High was kind of a pain. You know I reveled in the fact that all of a sudden, people thought I was smart. They ended up sending me to prep school where I learned very quickly that I was not nearly as smart as I thought I was. The main idea was that my dad was a Dartmouth grad, and he wanted me to go to Dartmouth. So, they sent me off to prep school to prepare me to go to Dartmouth, which I did. So that's how I got to Dartmouth.

MORTENSON 04:08 And so what do you remember about prep school? Was it a day school or a boarding school?

LARNER 04:16 Yeah, it's not like California. You had one weekend in the fall and one week in the spring where you could go visit home otherwise, you were under their supervision from September through June and you checked in everywhere. There was never a time when you really had time to yourself. We studied hard. There were a lot of sophisticated kids that seemed to know everything and how to make it work. And they were the ones that have gone to private schools most of their lives. And then I was the only kid from New Hampshire at the time. So, I was considered kind of a farm kid. In summertime when the prep school kids were going to Newport, doing the Bermuda round Bermuda race, and going off to Europe, I worked on my grandparent's farm. So, I was just a "farmie." A little socially, I don't know what to call it— inhibited, or just didn't quite fit in with everybody.

MORTENSON 05:22 So do you think it really was just a different experience with the farm that made it difficult? have you thought about that in the years since?

LARNER 05:35 Even when I was a kid in Lexington, my dad would go up to the farm every weekend. He would drag me along starting when I was about eight or nine years of age. And so instead of playing Little League, which in those days was just a weekend activity, you didn't practice at night, I wasn't able to do that. And as I got older, my friends when I was in high school, they would work on as caddies at the local Country Club and my but I still had to work on the farm. And I just felt I was ready to live in a more urban area. Where I was, we just would sit around and have nothing to do. The thing is what do you want to do? I don't know. What do you want to do? I don't know. What do you want to do?, Being a teenager was just a transition. You were just trying to survive that and get off to college.

MORTENSON 06:39 So I don't know if you mentioned— What was the name of the prep school again?

LARNER 06:42 Sorry. Deerfield Academy.

MORTENSON 06:44 Oh, Deerfield? Okay.

LARNER 06:46 We had 15 people come to Dartmouth. My senior class.

MORTENSON 06:52 Yeah, I mean, that name does ring a bell because there's still quite a pipeline.

LARNER 06:56 Yeah, yeah. And we were the Big Green at Deerfield.

MORTENSON 07:02 I guess I just have one more question about the farm. What exactly did you do when you helped on the farm? Like, what kind of farm was it?

LARNER: 07:13 It was—my grandfather bought it. He was an insurance company executive. And he bought it when he was 50. And was gonna be his retirement project. I think it was 150 acres. It was originally apple orchards in Southern New Hampshire. He went through various stages of trying to make money on it. We ended up cutting all apple trees down and then he bought Hereford beef to raise that and that, that didn't make any money. It was the days in the Eisenhower administration, they started these farm subsidies. So, you know--you wouldn't lose money making a farm but you weren't making much. We eventually became, we'd grow alfalfa and sell it to the dairy farm. So, there were lots of dairy farms around. The summers, by the time I was nine, they taught me to drive the tractor, which is very simple to drive, you don't have a gas accelerator, you just set the accelerator on it. So, I would stand up and drive very slowly, while they would throw the bales of hay up on to a trailer that was behind the tractor. I learned how to plow and how to turn over. My grandfather hired a tenant farmer that, you know, lived in an old schoolhouse that was on the farm. And he had, he worked for my grandfather, and then his two sons, and I were the farmhands for various things. So, I look back at it, it's all idyllic. But I just felt it was really old fashioned. It felt like I was back in the 19th century.

MORTENSON 09:03 And so did you like that? Or did you hate having to work there? I mean, it's probably somewhere in the middle.

LARNER 09:10 By the time I got to be 16, and I got my license, I didn't have to do that anymore. Actually, I had gotten serious about swimming. And so, I was on a swim team in the summer and that was like a vacation for me. The farm work was very tedious, each day sort of made, made an eight-hour day seem to go by very, very, very slowly, but I enjoyed working with the farm equipment. I had some, you know, we had, you know, we were raising cattle, you know, beef cattle. And, you know, one of the experiences I had when I was 13 was having to pull a bull off of a young heifer that the bull had gotten into the wrong pen with. That was exciting. It was always loose, we made it fun. We got paid, I got paid $1.25 an hour. So, my grandfather was upset when he had to start paying social security for me because he was paying the wages. By the time I was 16, I was able to get away from that.

MORTENSON 10:30 And did you have any siblings?

LARNER 10:32 Yeah, I have a younger sister and a younger brother who actually passed away a couple years ago. And I was the oldest of my cousins. One of the main reasons my grandfather wanted the farm is because I had I think, a total of 20 cousins. But on his side of the family, I think there were 10 other cousins and everybody came up on the weekends. And as the oldest cousin, I was kind of in charge of babysitting the kids while adults sat around and drank and gossiped. My cousins nowadays--we're all kind of the same age at this point. We think of how idyllic it was and how afraid of the chickens they were. They had a rooster and I used to chase them around. But summer for me was mostly work

MORTENSON 11:26 And you'd mentioned swimming. When did you start swimming?

LARNER 11:31 At Deerfield

MORTENSON 11:34 At Deerfield, got it.

LARNER 11:37 They had a coach there he ended up being inducted into the swimming Hall of Fame for his coaching. So it was, generally, the best swimming program in New England for prep schools. And he's quite inspiring. I was quite tall for my age. When I was in junior high, I was at six feet already. And I played basketball, so I assumed I was going to play basketball and swimming. But the first week I was there, at Deerfield—the teachers would actually sit with us for every meal for three meals a day. And this coach who I sat with the first time and I just was just entranced and so impressed with him. This guy, he was so good at being a coach and leader for the team, he was a Latin, he was a Latin teacher, because the coaches had to teach. And so anyway, he convinced me I should go for swimming. In prep schools in those days, you had to go out for a sport every term or semester. As I said I played football for the first two years. Then I started running track my sophomore year. The coach said it's good for your lungs. You know, it helped my swimming. I wasn't really a star swimmer. You said you started swimming when you were six years old. The first time I was really on a swim team was when I was a freshman in high school. But the good coach was good enough. And I was you know; I was on a relay that would have made all American but we had a better relay. So we didn't get the chance to do that. But when I came to Dartmouth, I was faster than any of the varsity swimmers. We had a brand-new pool and recruiting that year was real good. We had a real good team.

MORTENSON 13:53 And what was this coach's name?

LARNER 13:55 The Dartmouth coach?

MORTENSON 13:57 No, the Deerfield coach.

LARNER 13:59 Larry Boyle. In the summertime, These teachers in the prep schools make very little money so he had to have a summer job. He ran a swimming program in I think Mamaroneck, in Westchester County so, you know, he would recruit that way. New York was better for competitive swimming than New England, which didn't really have much other than some good YMCA swimmers.

MORTENSON 14:30 Yeah, I mean that was back in the days before as Cali kids were up and coming.

LARNER 14:38 Well the best swimmers were usually around country club places in the east. But the YMCA programs were real good. Indiana and USC and Stanford were up and coming swim schools whereas Michigan, Ohio State and Yale were the good East Coast schools.

MORTENSON 15:06 And so you'd mentioned something earlier. I also wanted to ask you about Deerfield. You said that you found out you weren't smart. Was there a shift? Or how did you figure out how to manage it and get to Dartmouth or figure out you were smarter than you thought?

LARNER 15:26 Well, I didn't realize how my earlier learning in elementary school when I was considered retarded, not developing disabled or anything like that. But slow— was just to listen and absorb. So basically, that's what I did at Deerfield, but I would get mocked occasionally, I would misspell a word. I think I remember freshman English. I used the word Pacific meaning specific. And I learned— My parents were well educated. So, I had a pretty good vocabulary. So anyway, the teacher mocked me for not knowing the difference between Pacific and specific. I had no idea what Pacific meant other than I knew about the Pacific Ocean. So anyway, I just and I was not a really good student at Deerfield. I mean, I was a B student. But when I did my SAT’s, I was in the seven hundred on my scores. I just realized I was smart, but not that intelligent. I just didn't have very great sense.

My senior year, we had what they used to call a post-grad year that some students would take like. And one of the guys on the track team, who was a good friend of mine, was a year ahead and decided to take that year. And he kind of led me astray all the time. We started sneaking out at night. We'd steal over to the infirmary and go down the kitchen there and eat strawberries. We'd go down and we'd walk down to where there was a drive-in movie in South Deerfield. And we'd go around and knock on the girl's windows and ask them if we can sit with them and listen to the movie together. And I was too shy, I would sit in the backseat and my friend would be in the front making out with a girl that sat in front. And I would be in the back not knowing what to do. So, he led me astray. His dad worked for the Kennedy family. So, once I graduated, we both graduated in 1962. And I finally convinced my dad that he didn't really want to, we really shouldn't live up in the country. So we moved into the city, Boston. And I swear, the only reason he wanted to live in New Hampshire, that I would get into Dartmouth. Because for New Hampshire residents it's easier than getting in from Massachusetts. But anyway—

MORTENSON 18:09 So he was your best friend?

LARNER 18:12 At the time, I had another best friend who was a nice kid. I had this kind of dual, duality where I would have loved to have been a wild and crazy person. But I was kind of shy, not very capable of creating it myself. I was a good follower in this sense. But we spent the whole summer between my senior year, before my freshman year at Dartmouth, working on the Ted Kennedy Senatorial Campaign. And we were driving the candidate around. We got in all kinds of trouble. We would go into Roxbury, the black neighborhood and they would chase us. We were in the car when they chased us. And we knew exactly where the line was and we wouldn't go very far. So, it was just foolish, you know, tomfoolery.

MORTENSON 19:05 I guess you hope that everyone has that friend that will create some adventures? I guess you could say. So, what else you mentioned, I guess like getting up to trouble but what would you do normally at Deerfield, like how would you spend your time?

LARNER 19:24 Well, every second of your life was scheduled. They'd check you in their class, you had study halls, study halls at night. You had five, 15 minutes to get ready, and you had 30 minutes after study hall, get out at 930. And then at 10 o'clock, you were supposed to be getting ready to go to bed so you had a half an hour to socialize. And we played bridge, things like that for half an hour. And then Saturday mornings, you know, we really had nothing to do so we'd go play touch football, something like that. Anyway, it was very regimented. The girls were not encouraged at all. We had social dinner dance things a couple times a year. And that was about it as far as girls—

MORTENSON 20:19 Yeah, because I assume it was an all-boys school back then?

LARNER 20:22 Oh, yeah, it was. Most of them were in those days. But there were all girls schools nearby too. And the idea was to get letters from these girls that would write you, you would have get some kind of relationship with them, and then they would write you letters, and if you were really lucky then they would put a little perfume in the letter. So, you know, reminding you what they smelled like. That was about it. Then people talk about how the divorce rate, especially among Dartmouth peoples is a lot higher. Because we just really didn't get to know women very well. And how to deal with the problems. Well, anyway, I'm getting distracted by Dartmouth's problems. But anyway, it was just cultural. And I believe, you know, when I get together with the fraternity brothers, most of us have been divorced. You know, the ones that had their girlfriends from high school are still married, or it seems more stable. But the later you got married, I think the less

likely you are to stay together. Is that that true or not? So, I'm giving advice now.

MORTENSON 21:40 Appreciate it. So, is there anything else you'd want to add about your time at Deerfield?

LARNER 21:52 I really liked it. I went there in 1958. So, to me, the 50s were kind of like the Deerfield years and then Dartmouth, and the military were the 60s. And then the 70s I mean, each sort of decade or time period, I got a little bit more freedom. The 50s were very conformist, and you really didn't—weren't encouraged to be different than anybody else. People that didn't do well athletically we're considered, you know, not unpopular, but it was the people who were athletic that were the school leaders. In fact, in our class I believe, because we were the later part of the war generation, we actually elected this English kid who was very non athletic, tall, gangly, and not too well coordinated. As he was very smart- he was elected as one of our class officers. So, this was considered very unusual, because he didn't have the same qualities of what a Deerfield man was supposed to be. It was Interesting.

MORTENSON 23:13 What else do you remember about the war and how I guess it affected your childhood? Or the wars that involve that were, like concluded? Or were to the Korean War,

LARNER 23:27 Our Heroes all war heroes, you know. even some of the Confederate generals were considered war heroes. We saw our history in terms of our American exceptionalism. You know, God was on our side, I wasn't particularly religious, but we'd never lost a war. And then Korea came along, and that affected me in the sense that I knew about it. I was in like, first grade. You know, actually, this was started in 1949. But anyway, I was quite young. My uncle had to go back into the service. He was a doctor, so they needed doctors So he went back into the service because of that. Luckily, or as far as he was concerned, he was sent to a hospital in Germany, rather than going back to a war zone. So, we saw war as a

heroic opportunity, a John Wayne kind of thing. So, I would say as an 18 or a 19-year-old, we thought. this will be in our future. Are we going to be heroes? Are you prepared to do what the sacrifices would have to be and that kind of stuff? We had no real-life experience. So, we really just were fairly brainwashed on what would happen in the military.

MORTENSON 25:06 And so I assume you, I mean, from what it sounds like you all of your friends, they want you as wanting to see combat one day of some sort or, or be—

LARNER 25:17 We expected to be heroic. And to do that you had to be prepared for that. Before we did lots of camping activities, you know, hunting was a big deal. People went out in New Hampshire and got their deer every year. There was a boy that was a little bit older than me on my grandfather's farm, we worked together, and he had planned to go into the Army. And when he was 16, he ended up out hunting a deer and shot somebody and killed somebody. And he was charged with manslaughter because it was automatic. And he ended up putting six bullets in the person, he shot before he could stop. So that that was the end of his military career. You know, I really looked up to this person because he was a tough, tough person. I remember when I was about nine, he tied me up in the barn, and closed the door on the bottom. So, when my dad opened the barn to find out where I was, I was stretched out. One thing I remember is that my dad was really upset with me for letting it happen. And every one of my uncle's was in the military, so you expected to be in the military.

MORTENSON 26:48 So yeah, why don't you talk about leaving Deerfield and going to Dartmouth? And what that was like.

LARNER 26:57 You know, I was telling you that I was considered slow when I was when I was in elementary school. And then in junior high, I was considered to be really brighter than anybody

else, right? They wanted to put me in eighth grade, they wanted to have me skip grades eighth grade they did that in those days. My mom said no, he's not mature enough to be dealing with older kids.

So then at Deerfield I realized—and at Dartmouth —that I was not as smart as everybody. And so, I went back into this kind of passive--I learned by absorbing rather than learning the way everybody else is. And I ended up as an English major at Dartmouth because I love to read. My original plan was to be a doctor like my uncle. And I didn't do very well and my grades were really poor in biology so I dropped that. I guess it will just be an economics major and then you go into business and then I hated all the people that I was in business classes with. So, I'm going, what did I like? What were the courses I liked in the first couple quarters? So, I ended up an English major.

MORTENSON 28:21 And did you have freshman trips?

LARNER 28:24 I had done a Moosilauke overnight when I was eight years, nine years old, because I went to Y camp and that was part of the thing was to climb Mt. Moosilauke. So, I didn't do that. And I had been working on this campaign- a campaign with Ted Kennedy. And it was coming to a head there. So instead of going to Dartmouth early for trips, I ended up just showing up. My roommates were guys I knew from Deerfield, and we all lived together the first year. They're the only roommates that—I had two roommates—three of us in the suite. And later I had two other roommates and they both passed away but my Deerfield roommates are still around, and we still get together every once in a while. I was social—but I I looked and I decided very quickly that my experience at Dartmouth was not going to be academic. George W. Bush was last in his class at Yale and when they gave him an honorary degree, he said "look at me, you can be last in your class and still turn out to be president." Yale didn't care for that attitude. It was called gentlemen C's in those days. Dartmouth didn't really flunk anybody out. Freshman year

was tough. If it didn't look like you're going to make it they would say probably not be able to do it. But if you can, you can get C's that would be fine. You just never really learned very much.

MORTENSON 30:01 Yes, C's get degrees.

LARNER 30:08 [laughter] Anyway by the time I get to my senior year at Dartmouth, I just realized, what have I done about planning for my life in the future? I'm going to go in the military in a couple years. And so, Dartmouth was undefeated in football that year, and the last game was in Princeton. And my fraternity brother and I drove down there. I took my sister's car, she had an old 53 Buick, it was kind of a family car. So, we drove down to the football game, and we headed straight down when we defeated Princeton, we were undefeated. We became East Coast champions and you know, the Lambert Cup. Usually Penn State, good teams won that—I think we split it with Penn State that year, but anyway, we thought we were so great.

So, we said, let's not go back to Dartmouth, to Hanover. It was the weekend before Thanksgiving. And my fraternity brother's grandparents lived in Pittsburgh. So we said, "let's go to Pittsburgh," and have Thanksgiving with your grandmother. And we did and we said, well, let's just keep going and not go back to Dartmouth. We did. We ended up on the west coast. We ended up in Long Beach near where I'd been that summer. We were gonna go—Our plan was we were going to get jobs or Christmas in LA, and then take a freighter out of Ensenada to Tahiti and we would live on the beach for the rest of our lives. This was our 20-year-old point of view. So anyway, my dad found out about the fact that I wasn't at school only because I was charging phone calls to my parents' home phone number, we didn't have cell phones or a way to charge phones. So, in the middle of talking to this girlfriend of mine in Long Beach, he came on the line and said "what are you doing?" So, we got back to Dartmouth the night before finals and we took our finals. We

were able to stay. I still have a telegram for the Dean of Students saying “we assume you are resigning from Dartmouth college.” So anyway, that's where I was. And then I just had to figure out for myself what I was going to do for the next few years.

MORTENSON 32:43 I mean, that's me right now, it's a little scary.

LARNER 32:47 Well, I think it's pretty typical. I've seen that my kids have gone through that kind of thing. My one son when he was 15 he decided he wasn't going to go to college. And he would work, he was living up in Morro Bay, you know, surfing and he spent the summer working on construction crew with his buddies. And they were certain you know, he said, I have a trade. This is what I want to do for my life.

MORTENSON 33:19 That’s awesome if he’s happy.

LARNER 33:23 So I ended up paying him for getting good grades, he went to UCSB. And now he works in tech up in San Diego, I mean San Francisco. So anyway, I think a lot of people go through that where they have some kind of—Life is, especially when you feel don’t not feel entitled, but you've lived kind of an entitled life. It's easy to sort of find the easy way through in life, but then all of a sudden, you're going to hit a stonewall somewhere. So that's where I did you know, I just realized I compromised a lot, I thought I had done everything my dad wanted me to do. You know, pushed back a little, but not really. And, I knew the war was going on, I'd gone through basic training that summer before. And while they were there, there was a big announcement that Johnson was going to increase the troop levels and we were going to actually go in and fight. We’d been advisors before that, then it became more of a global thing. In other words, the Russians were backing the Vietnamese. The Chinese, who had been the ones that had gotten us in trouble in Korea, were not behind the Vietnamese because they saw them as regional- not opponents, but you know, anyway, they always had these little wars. In fact, when we left there was a border

war between China and Vietnam. So anyway, we were all aware of what we were—once we got graduated, we were going to be going off into the military.

MORTENSON 35:12 And was this all coming in the newspaper, TV, radio? All the information about politics, and where—what were your sources? I'm just curious.

LARNER 35:22 Yeah. It's not like today where you have so many sources, it was more like people would tell us stories. They would tell us about throwing captive VC insurgents in Vietnam out of helicopters, burning down the villages, that became a kind of a, you know, scandal later on. The things that went on over there, and not just Vietnam, it was about the Philippines and how evil the Filipinos were, it was stuff like that. It took us a long time to get over trusting Japanese. We went through in the 80s, a time where the Japanese were the big rivals, you know, in economics and things. And of course, now they're our big allies. Vietnam is our big ally. But anyway, it was more like talking with people. And people would have these opinions, and you just try to decide whether you're that type of person or not.

My friend that I had run away with—when I came back to go on active duty after graduating. He and I had owned a motorcycle, we bought a motorcycle after we came back and survived for our last two quarters and graduated from Dartmouth. But we bought a motorcycle and he put himself in the hospital over it. I don't know if they have Green Key weekend anymore, it was like a spring holiday.

MORTENSON 36:55 Oh, yeah, they do. Not this year, but yeah.

LARNER 37:01 So anyway, our fraternity rented a lodge. And we were supposed to go on this motorcycle together to this, this fraternity party. And he started drinking, and I said, "I'm not gonna ride with you, you're gonna be drinking." And he said, "fine" and just took off on the motorcycle. I didn't think anything about it because at this point, I was kind of anti-

social with the fraternity in a sense. A lot of things were—Anyway there were issues with the fraternity going on. As a swim team member I had, I had trained and taught freshmen swimming. We had several black kids that were recruited to Dartmouth, and I taught this one kid to swim and showed up for our rush in the fall for the fraternity. I'm getting off base here.

MORTENSON 37:55 No, you're not.

LARNER 37:56 Okay. Anyway. So, he rushed our fraternity, and we had the whole class that was in this learn-to-swim class over winter training, which is allowed to kind of have a beer blast for 18 year-olds. So anyway, he kind of liked us, and he liked me, and he met all the other fraternity brothers. And we thought he was great. And so, he became a pledge. Then eventually the national found out we pledged a black kid and there were no African Americans in the national fraternity. This is Phi Kappa Psi, which is a big national fraternity. And he got blackballed when it came time to turn the pledges into brothers. And we had to fight with the National on this—and this was all going on in the spring of my senior year. So I just was mad at the fact that this national would be— would exclude somebody just because of the race. And so eventually, they did accept him and he became the first black member. And now he owns his own law firm in Dallas and has done very, very well. But he still hasn't kind of, you know—I can tell he's not that happy with what the fraternity put him through. And that's why my fraternity became Panarchy eventually. So, they all left the National [chapter] and then after a few years, they created their own co-Ed fraternity—when Dartmouth went co-ed we went who needs another fraternity here? Let's have a co-ed association. I don't know if you know much about them—they live off campus and they think of themselves as the independents. Even when I was there, we used to go to a laundromat right around the corner there in the middle of the night, and this is mostly English majors who would hang out and read our poetry—it's like we were beatniks in the 60's.

But anyway, I was trying to explain why I was- oh the motorcycle right. He crashed the motorcycle and ended up in the hospital. Long story, but he was in the hospital about six months. And by the time he got out of there, I'd already been to England for six months to work. And then I came back and I was in what they call advanced training for officer training down in Virginia. So he fixed up the motorcycle, and he said, I'm gonna bring the motorcycle down to you, and bring it in. And you know, I feel responsible, but I just started—it cost us $300 in those days for a motorcycle. So, I feel responsible for that. So, he brought it down, and he came down that weekend with this long talk about how evil the military is. How nuclear weapons are going to destroy humanity. And he was going into the Peace Corps. And so, this was a different kind of view than I was seeing when— I think half of my fraternity brothers were ROTC, we were mostly Navy, but you know, quite a few were Army. So anyway, it was like, all of a sudden, I had this crisis of conscience about: what do I really believe about the military? We've been hearing all these things, stories that people would talk about. So, your question was, was the media affecting me? There was an army doctor, who said that he would refuse to treat- he couldn't be just treating American casualties, he would have to treat any casualty of war due to his Hippocratic oath. There was a big media that was in the news, whether they were going to kick him out of the military or what they were going to do.

So that gave me the idea. Well, I'm just not going to get into that situation. I'll do what he does, which is to say I would not go to Vietnam if I was ordered to go to Vietnam. So that leads me into that long story about what I did when I told them that I wouldn't go to Vietnam. I mean, we had to read the New York Times every day in high school. And that was part of the deal at Deerfield you had to subscribe and read. So we believe that the York Times was not fake news. Now we're on the other side of that coin, which is I don't believe the New York Times is different than it was when I was

reading it, and we thought it was like the Bible. But it's just because you can't have an absolute, in these things.

MORTENSON 43:10 There's always going to be some form of bias no matter what. Let me ask you—We'll get into your shift on your views of war. But I had a couple other questions about Dartmouth first. So you showed up obviously having thought that soldiers were heroes? And did you hold that view when you got on campus, that going into the military was something you wanted to do? Or was it something that you had to do? Talk about joining ROTC and all that.

LARNER 43:46 Well I was telling you about my friend in high school who kind of led me astray and how I needed I liked that. But on the other hand, I liked having my friends who were more straight, who would never do things that would, you know—we were just doing pranks. But my freshman year I roomed with two guys from Deerfield. And then at the end, we decided that we weren't all going to stay together, we all went our separate ways. And in order to teach swimming, which I did, I got paid like $28 a month usually to teach swimming. But you had to pass a water safety instructor course, which they held in spring term. And I made friends with somebody else who wasn't on the swim team, but he'd been on the swim team in High School. And we ended up getting to like each other, and he had a way to get into Streeter. I mean I don't know if Streeter still exists, but it was in the fraternity row area. down you know, down. It had suites where you had a separate bedroom. Where I was in South Fayerweather we just had one big room with bunk beds and a single bed. And when we kept switching around, every term we had to go and have a different bed. Right? So, it's like, I never got comfortable in that place. He was the really gung-ho person. And he was on the pistol team. So, he convinced me to join the pistol team because when I was at Y Camp they taught me how to shoot and all that kind of stuff. So that spring term, he signed up for Air Force ROTC and convinced me to do the same. So, and we're going to be roommates, it seemed like, okay, I'll just do this. So, I was

easily led astray again. The next year when I realized that you're required to have four years active duty through the Air Force, whereas the Army was only two years of active duty commitment. I switched from the Air Force to the Army. And we roomed together for two years. And then my senior year I was supposed to live in the Fraternity, which I planned to do, and he planned to do, because he was in a different fraternity. You know, we stayed friends. He died about 10 years ago, and he was a farm kid from Illinois.

MORTENSON 46:41 So you've mentioned it a couple times now. Why don't you talk about your fraternity and how big of a part of your life at Dartmouth was it?

LARNER 46:53 Well, in those days, there was no social life other than fraternities and 80% of students joined fraternities. I thought because I was on swim team and I had friends and I had different friends and was a Deerfield preppy versus the SAE or BETA or PSI U, you know, they were like, they were kind of the preppy fraternities. I know you're in SAE. Is that right or not?

MORTENSON 47:20 Yeah.

LARNER 47:22 So anyway, I went out to those. On the first nights. You waited to see if they would want to see you back the next night of rush, right. The only one who wanted to see me was my dad's old fraternity which was Phi Kappa Psi, which is now Panarchy. So, they were my only choice. I got in there, basically, because it's the same reason I got into Dartmouth because my dad had gone.

MORTENSON 47:49 Like Animal House

LARNER 47:51 It turned out to be like an animal house! We had this one guy who had gone off to the military and came back, and he was about 23 or 24. He was the ringleader of causing problems. He wasn't the leader of the you know, the guys that were in the graduating class were the leaders. But he seemed to

organize chaos, and we had these incredible parties where everybody had different punch, and everybody would get really drunk and there'd be live bands. It was a pretty good social life. And I had another swim team friend who was like me, kind of not socially aware, he didn't get into a fraternity. Our fraternity was not well respected. So we were short, we knew we needed about 65 because the maximum allowed was 65 members. And we were about 55, so we had a second rush and he got in. We were on swim team.

Back in those days, the swim team didn't go off to Hawaii or Florida or anything like that. We just had to be back in Hanover the day after Christmas. But we would stay in the fraternity house because the dorms were closed. It was good. And we would get in trouble. We'd go out at night and throw snow snowballs at streetlights. We wanted to see if we could break the streetlights. The next day our coach would be mad at us because our arms would be sore from throwing snowballs for hours. We'd go down to the golf course—three or four of us got toboggans and would go down the hills on the golf course. One time we ended up flipped it—we were going straight at a tree, and I was in the front of this toboggan So anyway, these are pranks and antics that still go on at Panarchy. I talked to one guy who was there in the 90s and he used to sit on the roof and hit eggs with golf clubs and try to hit the cars that were parked. They are not allowed to go up on the roof anymore. But that's where, you know, people go up to drink and stuff so.

MORTENSON 50:12 I'll be back in 10 seconds. I have to grab one thing. [runs to get a new pen to take notes]

LARNER 50:17 Sure no rush. Let me ask about that picture on your wall that Kobe or?

MORTENSON 50:41 Uh no, that is not Kobe. I do have a Kobe picture on another wall. That's a rapper I like. His name is Young Thug. anyway, uh, so you, you also mentioned this a little bit earlier. But, I believe when you were in college, that this civil

rights was going on amongst other social issues [meant to ask the question I believe that the civil rights movement was the most prominent national issue but misremembered.] How did that affect campus life?

LARNER 51:10

Let's see, as far as ROTC was concerned it was the mothers, faculty mothers, who kind of organized Mothers Against Nuclear Weapons (WSP) and they would protest. We would have Armed Forces Day and we would have to get in uniforms and march up Main Street and stuff like that. So, I was kind of aware. But the military people said, "Oh, this is just a bunch of wives with nothing better to do". There were real Civil Rights things going on back in the early 60s. Martin Luther King—the right-wing people, the FBI were telling not necessarily lies, but they were distorting the truth about what was really going on. He was considered a communist. You know, Nelson Rockefeller was a Dartmouth grad, and he was running for president in the 60s.

And I had always been a Democrat, even though my parents were Republicans. When I was eight years old, I told you I was kind of a weird little kid. So my best friend from Cub Scouts had joined this gang, and they were having some tug of war. And he was the middle of the tug of war. They were tugging back and forth. I just didn't want to get involved in that. So I went over to where the girls were in the hopscotch or jump rope or something like that. I asked them if I could play. And they said, "We don't play with boys." Okay, so I went over to the jungle gym, and I was by myself and I was climbing through the jungle gym. And these two older kids came in, they had Stephenson buttons on, it was 1952. And the election was going on. So they asked me, who are you going to vote for? I was eight. So "Stephenson," I said. So I became a Democrat then. And then when I was in prep school, everybody was Republican at prep school. But I was a Kennedy, I was a Kennedy fan, my best friend was talking about his dad, [who] worked for the Kennedy family. He was a tax lawyer. So he got me involved in this campaign when we moved to Boston. He lived in New York City. And so he

came up to Boston for the summer, because his dad was doing the accounting for the campaign. And we just had a great time. I just saw how well organized the Kennedy family was for politics, they really ran good campaigns. As a freshman, they were trying to organize students for Rockefeller who was a moderate Republican. And so we all went down to Manchester for a meeting there, and the people were so disorganized and just didn't have a clue compared to what I was used to. Then I realized that [the Republican party] wasn't going to work very much.

So I was just always a Democrat in name, in a sense, without understanding the difference. But this was Camelot, the second year of the Kennedy administration. And they had all these plans of what they wanted to do. And bills— but they weren't able to get anything past. We even had the Cuban Missile Crisis. This was all secondary to our lives in a sense, but I felt a strong pull for the Kennedys. But then George Wallace, who was a governor of Alabama who was notorious for standing on the steps of a high school and not allowing blacks to come in, came to Dartmouth to give a speech. And I was like, you know, I thought I was gonna go out and protest, but my roommate who was just a bad influence on me again, was this very right-wing person. And he said “Oh, you got to listen to what he says he's, you know, he's not a bad person.” And I said “he's a terrible person.” I mean, who would stand there and enforce a rule to keep out a little girl from going to school. So I went to the speech, and sure enough, all he talked about was state rights, and the southern conservative opinion on this thing. And I go, Well, that's not what I expected. I expected people— and there were protesters outside, but Dartmouth was a very conservative place. It is still. I think Dartmouth basically—when I brought my kids up there to see whether they were interested in going there, one of the parents in this group says, “Is it safe for someone to be conservative at Dartmouth?” And this is the time when the Dartmouth Review, I don’t know if it still exists, but it was a very right wing kind of publication that was exposing professors. There

was this jazz professor, you know, they would go to this class and tape things and they would try to show that he wasn't a good teacher. And like that, some of the students had built shanties to protest the apartheid in South Africa. And the Dartmouth review, people went down and burned one in the middle of night, burned the shanties down. So Dartmouth has had always had this kind of conservative bent to it. The Tuck School Business School is fairly conservative. It's not like Chicago business school—but it's not like Harvard or Yale or anything. So, anyway, my point is: I tried to be exposed to things, I went to see Robert Frost's last actual public appearance as he came to the college. And there was a debate between the head of the Corps of Engineers, and David Brower, who's head of the Sierra Club in California, and they debated environmental issues. And Brower just destroyed this military guy. We expected them to talk about all their achievements, or flood control and things like that. And so I considered myself to be liberal, but my roommate who was kind of a balance to me, but, we were such good friends, we would sit there and, and drink beer and play cards, and just never do never debate political things. Dartmouth had a program called ABC and it was called A Better Chance. Right? So he renamed the ABCD—a boon which was a derogatory term for a black person, comes to Dartmouth. And thought it was a joke, right? And I don't know whether his fraternity brothers thought it was funny—but I could just ignore it. I didn't care. I just stayed with friends. And he ended up with an attorney and then a prosecuting attorney. But anyway—it's like you lived your life in this entitled bubble and you didn't really realize that life isn't always a bubble. So anyway—that was my political leanings. Civil Rights at Dartmouth really was moving. I mean, at Deerfield, we always had one black student that came there, and then when he graduated, they'd say "wonder what the black student was going to be like next year." Sure enough there would be just one black student next year. So there were quotas, you know Jewish people had quotas. It was terrible back then. I lived in LA so long—I

just realized there's no difference between people. It's a melting pot. I really like that part of LA.

MORTENSON 59:53 How did your political opinions change while you're at Dartmouth? Did the environment make them stronger? What were you going to say there? Sorry I cut you off.

LARNER 1:00:12 No, no, I was just saying I stayed a Democrat. Even though Johnson was not a Kennedy-style Democrat, he was a Southern Democrat. But Johnson, I realized, after a while, he was able to pass all initiatives that the Kennedy administration proposed. He was a master politician. He was the one brought in Civil Rights and the Voting [Rights] Act, right. And all the things that Martin Luther King wanted to do, but he took a price from Martin Luther King. They'd slow down a lot of the protests that were going on, it was like a civil war by the time it was 1968. Your microphone might be off.

MORTENSON 1:01:15 Yeah, that's really fascinating. So let me change gears a little bit. Tell me about your ROTC training at Dartmouth.

LARNER 1:01:27 Well, it was once a week, you had to take a military science class. They were considered history classes, but basically, they were getting you ready to be in the military. The really cool guys were in this mountain winter warfare unit. You know, cross country skiing and camping out and stuff like that. So are you going to show me your picture of Kobe now?

MORTENSON 1:01:58 Oh, I'm sorry, just moving

LARNER 1:02:01 But anyway, I just—I was not academic. I got better grades in my military science classes that I did in my English classes, which I really liked. Then you had to drill once a week, I think it was on Wednesday. And that was it until you went to basic training in between your junior and senior year. And when I got there, I again was just left footed. I couldn't do anything, right. I could March, and we have these war

drills but I'd get all flustered. My idea that I was going to be a hero, I gave up on that. I don't know when I gave that up, but I realized that I was not cut out to lead men in the charge or to shoot people- or to do all the things that war heroes are supposed to do. But I realized I still wanted to be in the military. Then, when I ran off to Tahiti, which was aborted, when I got back, I just stopped going. You get demerits for missing meetings and that kind of stuff. So, I didn't go to the meetings. By the end of the year, you were supposed to have like 80 points on a zero to 100 basis, and I was like minus 25. But they still let me get in, you know, they still commissioned me as a lieutenant. [crosstalk]

Mortenson 1:03:44 So you got a gentlemen C for being a lieutenant?

Larner 1:03:46 Yeah! A little worse! I got a D minus. My classwork was okay. It was just being military. I had one of my fraternity brothers who was really into this mountain winter warfare thing. We would do exercises, we'd go off to the golf course and try to navigate the compass and stuff like that. But it was very minimal. And then basic training—everybody—basically tears people down in order to build them back up again in a military fashion. But I didn't think of it that way- I just wanted to get through with it and I did. And then I ran off to California right after that.

MORTENSON 1:04:34 So where did you do your basic training?

LARNER 1:04:39 Fort Devens here in Massachusetts. So, I was like, 15 miles from my folks house

MORTENSON 1:04:48 And how long did it last?

LARNER 1:04:51 I guess it was eight weeks- So June till the beginning of August.

MORTENSON 1:05:00 What do you remember about it? Other than you just tried to get through it?

LARNER 1:05:05 Well, I was good at the physical stuff. You were required to do so many pull ups in order to go into the mess hall to eat. And there were people who couldn't do the number that you required. Each day we were supposed to do more and more. My running was good, I passed all the physical things. Military wide, it was the same everywhere. You had a test every year with running, and throwing grenades, and shooting and stuff like that. You had to qualify for all these and I would always get a top score on those sorts of things.

As far as being—I remember one Saturday morning,—you had to stay on base unless they gave you a pass. One weekend, I got a pass to come home. So we get down to the PX and we're not in uniform, right? So I thought I would impress my friends by chewing out some of these other cadets that were in another Training Unit, right by pretending that I was an actual officer. I looked a little older than 20. And I was totally unable to do that. They just laughed at me when I was telling them to straighten up, you know. So anyways, I could be a goof off, I guess. But anyway, the worst was the captain pulled me in and said, “you know, I don't think you're gonna make it.” And I was going, “I want to make it.”

The physical in order to get in there—I always have had high blood pressure. So, they made me lay down for 30 minutes in order to pass the physical, and I did. I probably could have gotten out of it. But when I went to Korea to fly to my active-duty station after the training in Virginia, there's a place called The Wedge down in Newport Beach, I don't know if you've ever heard of it, it’s a body surfing place.

MORTENSON 1:07:22 I've actually gone there. Yeah.

LARNER 1:07:24 Okay, so anyway, I crashed and my head strained my neck really bad. And I probably could have gotten out of going off to active duty with the neck injury. But I just hid it from the military. Anyway, I always just wanted to do what I thought what was right. I think I told you last time we talked that I had

friends that I've met hitch-checking in Europe, from South Africa, and they were trying to convince me to not go back to the United States to go in the military. actually, they would help me get settled in South Africa. Which I just gone to some protests about Rhodesia in London, protesting apartheid there. But these were— I always got along with people, whether they're right wing or left wing. Today, with Trump and all this kind of stuff, all these friends of mine just—they get mad at me because I won't take their side on some of these things. I'm kind of feeling isolated politically, right now. I'm in the Green Party, which is really not a party in a sense, but they're the ones that came up with the Green New Deal. I consider myself progressive, but I don't consider the tactics and the politicians to be very good.

MORTENSON 1:08:57 So why don't you walk me through the process of, I guess, being this kid who—I mean you mentioned it, but I guess the chronology of a kid who really wanted to be a hero, to someone who didn't want to go to Vietnam, and how that happened? I believe you mentioned going to Europe and a letter, but why don't you walk me through that process?

LARNER 1:09:20 The problem for me was that I had opportunities. I was living in Europe, I mean I was living in England, which is not really Europe. But I was living outside of the United States I could have stayed there. But I was already in the military, and I just felt like it was my duty to do my duty. Right? So I'll spend my few years and then do some active reserve time. So, I went back. But my fraternity brother who was going into the Peace Corps

MORTENSON 1:10:00 The motorcycle one?

LARNER 1:10:02 The motorcycle one. He drove the motorcycle down and we spent a whole weekend kind of talking about all this. And I just got through a training based on chemical, biological and nuclear warfare. And it was basically saying that we would use these weapons if we had to use these weapons. And I thought that was so immoral. You know, the politics about

Vietnam were already becoming exposed. So the media was exposing the fact that the people that we were supporting in the south were just corrupt officials, kind of like some of the countries in wherever they are in the world now. But we're basically paying them we're, using dollars to win this war that was going to stem the tide of communism, supposedly. There were people saying “oh there’s oil off the coast of Vietnam, the old argument was the rubber trees, we needed rubber for the tires. But these economic arguments had nothing to do with this insurrection that was going on, that had been going on since the Japanese had been in Vietnam. So learning more about the history and realizing that there's no reason that we run this war. You know, we won the war against Hitler, basically, on the premise that Hitler was an evil, evil person. And then in Korea, we didn't win the war in Korea it was kind of a stalemate. It was more like MacArthur had this idea that he would invade China, and we would be able to return China and Chiang Kai-Shek would had been isolated in Taiwan. So anyway, all politics seem to just be—it was immoral that we were fighting these wars. I still think were immoral— I mean we have what—military presence in 58 countries in the world right now?

Anyway, I was convinced that I—if I was going to be ordered to go to Vietnam, I would refuse. That's where I drew the line. So, I wrote that letter to my training company commander, you know, saying that. So then I got cited---they said I did the wrong thing so I had to wait until I got a letter, saying that the orders will come down when you were done with training. And so, I pushed to make my statement and I was fully expecting that I would get arrested and put in jail. But rather than fight this war, I think I told somebody that, you know, if we lose this war, we'll have Nuremberg trials here. And the people wrote who lost the war will be the ones that pay the price. But that was kind of wishful thinking.

MORTENSON 1:13:31 When did you submit this letter? At what stage?

LARNER 1:13:39 It was about a nine-week training program, it was about into the fourth or fifth week of that, and-

MORTENSON 1:13:46 Can you walk me through the training real quick, I guess the process.

LARNER 1:13:53 When I graduated, I was assigned to the transportation for, which is, you know, you were supposed to sign up for combat type, but I was such a bad ROTC student they would never want me in any of those. So, I thought, we'll see, transportation sounds cool. The transportation school was down in Fort Eustis, Virginia, which is down near Williamsburg, Virginia Beach, and it's a nine-week advanced training. It's the base where they were training, the helicopter pilots. The army doesn't have jet planes, like the Air Force or the Marines or the Navy. Its flight wing is all helicopters and fixed wing. So that was the main thing on base, but they also trained the transportation corps because those helicopters were part of the transportation Corps. and We still, you know, we did—We didn't do things like we did on basic training. We were mostly classroom, classroom things. We officers, but we also did parades. On the weekends, we had our we were much freer than we were in basic training. And then you were given a couple weeks to get yourself to the west coast to go fly off to Asia. So anyway, I made the statement that I wouldn't go, they then dismissed my commanding officer's complaint against me that I was disrespectful for sending this letter to him and asked me if I would if I was a conscientious objector which I wasn't. Because you had to have a religious affiliation to do that. And I just said, I think it's an immoral war. And they said, well, would you go anywhere else? I said, Yeah, I'm just against the war in Vietnam. And it was 1967. And there wasn't a lot of protest yet. It was 68 when it was all kind of blowing up. And by the time, by the 1970s rolled around, it was full-on protest. John Kerry threw his medals over the wall of the White House and stuff like that. People weren't burning their draft cards and stuff. So they sent me up to Washington. And they said, well you go to Korea, so I was

allowed to go to Korea instead and avoid the possibility of going to Vietnam

MORTENSON 1:16:51 So what—Obviously your Officer, your Commanding officer was not happy. But what was the backlash for you writing the letter?

LARNER 1:17:06 Just actually the friends that I'd made in this training unit we were in. There were about 50 of us in this one class. And, you know, they were saying, why did you do this? You know, you seemed to be ready to be a good officer. I think one guy said "you could be you know, you could get you can make a career out of this." We reserve officers. So you really, if you wanted to make a career, you would have to become part of the regular army. This kind of weird distinction. But the point is, "why are you ruining the possibility of making a career out of this?" And I go, "Well, I have no plans on being in the army for more than the two years that I did. They just wondered why I did it, I think. "If you really were going to do it, you should wait to get an order to go." And which I didn't. And my folks were all worked up. I remember, you know, talking to my grandfather thinking he would be on my side. He was like, "I can't understand why you're doing this." My mom—I thought I would be that they were going to send me to Vietnam despite what I would say, as punishment. But it turned out really well. And after that my career, my two years, went really, really well. So I think it was the right decision to do, but it limited me. So a lot of the people that kind of looked at me, as well, why would he do this? Why is he being so odd? You know-

MORTENSON 1:18:58 So it was more of a not understanding than animosity?

LARNER 1:19:01 Yeah. And the officers we dealt with— it wasn't like basic training where they were training us. They basically made sure we went to class and they did administrative things. I even signed up to do jump school at the end. But they said no, you're not assigned, you know, you're not assigned to a

unit that's going to require you to have that training. I guess maybe not realistic enough about what life is like.

MORTENSON 1:19:43 Are you—So many years later? Do you look back on that? And are you proud of that?

LARNER 1:19:49 I think it was the right decision. And time in the military was so good for me. Because I did really well. I got promoted. I got to be a company commander, I got to be the guy that takes care of the dignitaries, the Protocol Officer, I was the Protocol Officer at Kimpo Air Base. And then when I got out and started to look for jobs, I had this kind of can-do attitude. I understood the chain of command. You have to, you know, kiss up and kick down. I learned—I do much better in the real world than I did at Deerfield or at Dartmouth. Even the company that I worked for in England, I was the only American there. And when they, when they asked me where I'd gone to school, I said, I just graduated from Dartmouth College. But in England, college is what they call high school over there. They looked at me, as a 20- 21-year-old, and thought “he’s just awfully slow just to be getting out of high school right now.” So they put me in a pen with a bunch of people, we spent all the time calculating insurance premiums. And we weren't allowed to use a computer and it was pounds, shillings and pence. But I just ended up having a really good time over there, because I made friends and stuff. All of a sudden, I wasn't doing exactly what I was supposed to do in life. It was nice to be having my own path. I felt like more of my self-confidence, you know, went way up after being in the military. So standing up for myself, I thought, was probably a good thing. I was always kind of going along with everybody going to see George Wallace and accepting his theories about why the federal government is always coming down and giving them a hard time.

MORTENSON 1:22:11 So it was kind of a moment where you learn to advocate for yourself, it sounds like?

LARNER 1:23:27

I think it was the times. In the 50s, when I was growing up thinking about all this, and the early sixties even—up until about 1964 or 65 people were really conformist. I was telling you in our fraternity, a couple of us would go to the laundromat that was on this little alley that's not even there anymore by the fraternity because it was open all night. We'd sit in there and we were [inaudible] — and we weren't really doing anything other than just talking about ideas and stuff. I think there's a great divide even today, between Biden, who was born during the war, and Trump, who was born during the baby boom. Their morals are completely different. In other words, everybody loved John McCain for standing up to Trump—about the Affordable Healthcare Act. I think of him as the exemplar of doing his duty all the time. He was not just trying to promote his career as a politician. He was dying when he did that. So he was exemplar of duty—although I don't like any of his policies or his ideas. But I just think that if you are in a position where you're required and you've committed yourself, especially if you volunteered, you have to follow through on the whole thing. Better to follow through and maybe do the wrong thing, than to back out and be kind of like a coward, I guess, is what you would look like.

So by '67, being, people would maybe thought of me "well you're just afraid to go to Vietnam." And at the time, I thought, well, I'm gonna lead a truck company. I didn't really think about that at all. I didn't realize what I was going to be doing in transportation. I thought maybe I'd be flying around somewhere, you know. But anyway, I just think that duty is an important thing. And I think Dartmouth teaches that. And I think definitely the prep school I went to, they were always talking about that sort of thing. The big hero of the whole school was this legend of this guy Tom, anyways, he was a hero in World War One. The prep school in those days, they only had eight or nine students at the time. He went off to World War One and was a hero, and then came back and went to Amherst and stuff. So anyway, I think that duty is something that is important in life. And doing the right thing. There's always some kind of back side to the right—life is

never black and white. But when I think about the 50s, it's all black and white, TV was black and white. So, we would dream in black and white. And, and I think we're better off in a world where things— people are allowed to be themselves, rather than just being some kind of a stereotype. And people still say, “Oh, well, you know, for a woman just to get married and raise kids and stuff like that.” That's just the stereotype. But for some people that's the right thing, for other people it’s not. In the 50s, they really didn't have a choice.

MORTENSON 1:27:25 And do you think that was because of the military culture or society that was behind the conformist culture? Or is it just something that was ingrained in everybody? It was a different country, obviously.

LARNER 1:27:41 Well just for this country, I mean, I lived in Oceanside for eight years, right next to Danville. And I would see these young guys, and they were—they were at this big base for basic training on the west coast. And you wouldn't see them being trained, but you'd see acting out on the outside. I remember watching two or three guys on motorcycles 100 miles an hour, up I-5 up to San Clemente. And they were standing up on their motorcycles going 100 miles an hour. It wasn't that they felt invulnerable, but basic training taught them that you’ve given your life away right now, you probably won't survive, we're going to put you in a situation where you know you're not going to survive, but you do your duty anyway. So that that kind of thinking is necessary for the military. We used to think that having a strong military is what makes us a strong country. But the truth is we use our military to promote, you know, things that really weaken our country. Does that make any sense?

MORTENSON 1:28:52 Yes it does

LARNER 1:28:56 So I'm kind of anti war right now. I do these peace vigils and stuff like that. I’m not really big on the social aspects of the Green Party. But one thing we do know that war is not good for the planet..

MORTENSON 1:29:14 So I’m gonna pause right there. [pause]

[Insert a bracketed statement here indicating that the recording was paused, and the approximate length of time.]

What was your first deployment? Which unit and where did you go?

LARNER 1:29:28 After I got through the officer training program, I went to Korea and I was assigned up to what we've called I Corps. But it was just south of the DMZ attached to a truck company called the 60th transportation company light truck. And our mission was to support the supply—We were part of a Supply and Support Battalion attached to I Corps. And we supplied our troops up on the DMZ, which was the second and seventh infantry battalions. And so, I was just a motor pool officer and I had captain who was 22, 23 years in and who was very strict. And I was used to this. And we also had I Corps staff officers, usually Majors, and who would come by and enjoyed harassing us lieutenants.

But there was another second lieutenant who was a little bit more senior than I was. The two of us basically were the motor pool officer and supply officers for the Truck company. And he had gone through officer candidate schools, OCS, after being an enlisted person for maybe six or seven months. He was very, what we call strack, he was very strict himself. You knew he knew how to be a good soldier. We got along pretty well, we would be you know, we were, it was just the two of us with this company that socialized. And so he pretty much straightened me out on how to get started. But I spent most of my time on the motor pool. The captain who was so strict was a Mormon. And he did not allow any black soldiers to be in the unit. He was one of those types of Mormons that didn't believe black people were even the human race. And so every time a black student came into the unit, are you okay?

MORTENSON 1:31:54 [coughing on mute] Yeah, I just choked on water. I'm okay.

LARNER 1:31:59 Anyway, so about four months into my assignment there, the Eighth Army came down with a surprise inspection and relieved him of duty, and they relieved— we had sister company that was about a mile down the road that we shared—they came to our mess hall. And they were a smaller company. We had—in the 60th transportation—we had about 100 Koreans that served with the American service. They were called KATUSA, Korean army training with US Army, right KATUSA. Whereas the other company just had Republic of Korea soldiers, and they had their own command structure. So the captain of my company and the captain at the other company—which is the 514th light truck company—were relieved of duty. And I went over the 514th, this company commander and Gary, the other guy, went and became company commander of the 60th transportation company. And so all of a sudden, I was in a position of authority, rather than just being kind of a slow footed, slow minded, Second Lieutenant.

MORTENSON 1:33:31 And what was that, like, being in charge for the first time?

LARNER 1:33:36 Well [inaudible] when I was in the 60th transportation, I was trying to figure out how to, you know, tie my shoes and that kind of stuff. Whereas all of a sudden, when I went to the 514th, I actually was given 60 days in order for us to pass a reinspection. The only reason I got to be in that position was that the American numbers in Korea were reduced from 50,000 to about 35,000 because there was a surge going on to Vietnam. And so they really took those troops and sent them there. And there was a shortage of anybody that could do anything, you know. So I ended up—It was a challenge. So I feel that that was like a prime change from this business of just being kind of a goof off to being somebody that would actually get something done.

MORTENSON 1:34:44 And why were the company commanders relieved?

LARNER 1:34:50 Well, the main reason was they failed to pass this general inspection. Usually you had a scheduled annual and general annual inspection. But this one, they did this basically because— the military had been integrated for over 10, or for just about 10 years, did the integrated services kind of thing. My company commander was refusing to take them. The other company commander, I didn't know very much because I wasn't assigned there. And from what I just sort of saw in hindsight, that he was just not very competent. The Mormon retired. And the other guy went back to noncommissioned officer status, he was reduced in rank. It was called a RIF, which is a reduction in force. So, and a lot of that happened when the Vietnam War was over. That happened to a lot of officers. But this was—this was just unusual. It was only done to officers that weren't performing properly.

MORTENSON 1:36:03 And, what was it like? What were your responsibilities?

LARNER 1:36:10 Well, we had about 200 Korean soldiers that were on this small camp. They had, they had their own command structure, they had their own mess hall and everything. And we ran the maintenance facility. And we were responsible. In other words, they reported to us. And it was a little bit embarrassing, because the Korean company was had a captain, usually captains that are company commanders probably had 20 years of service, and probably served in the Korean War. And he reported to me for orders. In other words, we told them we were supporting the divisions up on the DMZ for supply. And so I realized that I needed to be more professional with my dealings with the Koreans. And as far as my dealings with our unit, I had a warrant officer who had over 20 years. And warrant more officers were kind of specialists with, you know, in the army, they were mostly pilots for helicopters, but he was more of a supply person. And so he'd been in for a long time. And I just sat down with him. And he was so glad to get rid of hisCaptain. The captain, that was his commanding officer, was treating him like, you know, he wasn't giving him enough respect. And so

my view was that he knows more, a lot more than I do. So I'll just listen to him on how we're going to try to pass this inspection that we had in 60 days. And he just organized everything, and we got through and we passed the inspection without a problem. And my friend, next to the other one, we both passed so we both were company commanders, as I was still a Second Lieutenant, the other guy had been up, you know, promoted to First Lieutenant. All you needed in those days is one year in duty as a Second Lieutenant, to be eligible to be promoted.

So then, all of a sudden, we could run things the way we wanted to. That's when I was smoking pot with the guys. Not very good things that I shouldn't be doing. But we were a fairly tight group. And we had our first black soldier show up. And everybody was, like, we knew this is the reason why these other guys get removed. So we embraced him into our group. And he was kind of surprised, and this is 1968, when this black power thing was really starting and happening and stuff like that. So everything was very what I would call copacetic. Everything was going, very well. We thought things were great.

MORTENSON 1:39:14 So what did the supply unit do? You were in charge of weapons, food and what were the logistics that you had to take care of?

LARNER 1:39:25 I think we had about 50 trucks. So we did the maintenance on that and then we did the driver training because in those days, Koreans didn't have cars and stuff like that. They didn't grow up with a car to drive around in—so they all needed to learn how to drive. And we supported the Korean company in whatever they needed, but they had their own mess hall, they had their own day room and things like that. So we weren't very involved in that. The big deal was that the commander would send trucks out to help the local farmers, the rice farmers who were all surrounded by rice paddies. And so when the harvest came in, they needed help—they would normally pay the officer who was in charge of the

company. So these trucks, which were American trucks, driven by Korean drivers, would go out and do this. We had to turn a blind eye to these kinds of activities. Another Illegal activity was somebody was sneaking into the compound at night and stealing diesel fuel out of the tanks of the trucks. And that was really controlled by—So I had like an MP detachment that would spend his nights running around trying to catch these guys that were coming in through the fence to steal the gasoline. I mean, that was the level of involvement. And we started the day together. We always worked together with the Koreans. We would have formation, raise the flag, somebody had a recording of the American and the Korean national anthems, and we would salute the flag and then we would march a mile over to the other base to have breakfast, and they would go off and do their things during the day. And then we would run these convoys up to these missile sites on the top of mountains because we were supporting the US troops that we're up there as anti-aircraft fighters. So, we had a real mission and it was going really well. So we didn't get into trouble with anyone.

Another change that happened is they took us out of the Supply and Support Battalion that we were in, and the two truck companies became part of Eighth Army support commands down in Seoul with the 25th transportation battalion. There were several other transportation units up in I Corps and they all consolidated them under this 25th transportation. So all of a sudden we were being supervised by people that were 20-30 miles away from where we were. We considered them down in the south, anything in Seoul was considered— wasn't near the DMZ or anything like that. So it was fairly safe. And it all—not blew up. But we had an incident where the US Navy's ship—I told you about this earlier— was taken by the North Koreans, seized, and they were a spy ship. Because of all the information on there, all the communications went down. And the North Koreans at that same time sent commando teams into South Korea to attack the Presidential Palace right on the north end of

Seoul. And the fear was that they were going to try to assassinate the president of South Korea. All of a sudden in the middle of the night when this all happened, we didn't know exactly what had happened. We just knew that something had happened because all communications were down. So, all of a sudden these Korean officers showed up and said we have to have your trucks because we need to move the troops. And we had no way to confirm what was going on. But the other Lieutenant and I talked to each other and said, Well, this is what our main mission really is, to support the Koreans, not just to support our American troops there. So we went out with the Korean troops—and the commandos were caught. I don't know what role we played in that, we just sat on our trucks in the middle of the mountains while the troops went out and searched and searched for the commandos. And when they came back, we drove them back to their base. But we did this without orders, which we probably wouldn't have done if we had been more in the military, in the sense. If we thought we were going to make careers out of ourselves we wouldn't have done that. We would have waited till orders had come for us to do that. So we were all proud of ourselves for having saved the world.

MORTENSON 1:45:27 And what was the political climate in Korea like? I'm not sure when the war ended. But it had been over a decade since any conflict that happened, right?

LARNER 1:45:39 Yeah, they had various governments. We tried to make it like ours with the power of parliament and so forth. But when I was there, the President was a general who got a coup—in fact his daughter was recently the president also— but it was a very authoritarian government. In other words, there were curfews at night and the military was in charge. And in the springtime, the students would always riot. They would have protests and there would be suppression of the students because they were trying to make changes. But when I was there, it was a very authoritarian government.

MORTENSON 1:46:23 And was there anxiety that more conflict could happen anytime or were things generally stable between North and South Korea?

LARNER 1:46:32 Oh nothing had happened. This incident was the first thing that really had happened since 1953. But, but before they were always, Panmunjom is where the armistice was signed- its the border where Trump met, what's-his-name Kim Jong Un, um, you know, just a couple years ago.

MORTENSON 1:46:57 What was the parallel, that the DMZ was on?

LARNER 1:47:02 38th Parallel. And that was where the line was divided. When the Japanese fell, the Russians and Americans divided Korea in half. And then the Russians installed their own, we would call it a puppet, but he was chosen by the Russians to set up a communist country in the north. And we assigned an activist who had been living in the United States hoping to bring democracy to Korea once the Japanese were kicked out. I can't remember his name. Not to give you a boring you know, lecture on the history of it. The economy was the big deal in South Korea. The North was always known as the industrial part of the country and the South was agricultural development, rice mills, and so forth. So they remade their economy. And they were basically trying to catch up with the Japanese. The Japanese economy in the late 60s—it was nowhere near what our economy was, but they had moved out of kind of basic agrarian society to an industrial one. And Sony and all these things were the successful companies. The South was still recycling everything. If you would drive at night through neighborhoods, and you would hear this tink tink tink where they were taking batteries and removing the lid. Basically, the economy—there were no roads that connected cities, there were railroads. But you couldn't really drive from one city to another. It was very 19th century there. Then 10 years later, they were where the Japanese were in the late 60s.

MORTENSON 1:49:19 And so—What percent of the men you served with were drafted rather than volunteers do you think?.

LARNER 1:49:32 I'm sorry are you saying drafted?

MORENSON 1:49:34 What percent of the men you served with were drafted rather than volunteers?

LARNER 1:49:37 Are you talking about Koreans or Americans?

MORTENSON 1:49:39 Americans

LARNER 1:49:41 Oh, I would say the officers were volunteers and the enlisted men were all drafted. Well, not all—If you were drafted, as an enlisted man and you had a two-year tour. If you volunteered--you had a three-year tour. So you could tell which was which.

MORTENSON 1:50:06 And this is a question I had planned before, but I didn't really have an opportunity to ask yet, which is, how big of an impact on your outlook with the entire war was the draft? I know, this is something we talked a little bit about last time.

LARNER 1:50:23 You know, I registered with my draft board. And it was in Boston [MA], because we lived in Boston when I was 18. And then my folks moved out here to Concord, and it was more suburban. But by that time I had a deferment, because I was in ROTC. The burning of draft cards hadn't started or anything like that. As a kid, I remember that Elvis got drafted. So, we figured if Elvis could be drafted, you know, then anybody can be drafted.

MORTENSON 1:51:07 And do you think there's a very big disconnect in the way you viewed the draft versus the way that the baby boomers viewed the draft?

LARNER 1:51:18 Well there was a draft during World War Two. But the draft worked is that each community had a quota. And that quota, if you met it with volunteers, you didn't have to draft

anybody. So, if you, you know, big cities like New York and Boston would have these huge draft numbers—I mean recruitment numbers, and so they had to bring in huge numbers of draftees. Whereas places like where I'm from like Concord, their high school logo is the Patriots. Everybody just expected to go in the military. And I remember we'd see these guys, and they would be in high school and they'd be goof offs, and the police would always be chasing after them. Then they'd go in the military and come back, and they would join the police. And they'd be the ones chasing the high school guys. So it's just part of our non-urban society. The suburbs were still kind of agricultural. I mean, they were just being built out. Yeah.

MORTENSON 1:52:40 And so, back to Vietnam - Sorry, I'm jumping around the timeline. So did you finish your deployment out In Korea with that same unit?

LARNER 1:52:55 No, I was getting close to my year, where I would be rotated back to the States. And it's not that Vietnam—that I was thinking if I go back to the States, oh, they'll still have enough time to send me to Vietnam, which was true. But I really liked being in Korea, I really enjoyed it. I had this total freedom that I was a commanding officer, I had a Jeep, I had a driver. We'd go to temples and spend the weekend there. Sometimes, my driver was married and I would drive him to his house and I would let him off. And then I would drive off and I would pick up Korean friends who weren't even in the military, and we'd go off. We went down to Jeju Island. And I mean, I had a great deal. But then what happened is that, when we were taken out of I Corps, put to this battalion that was part of Eighth Army support command, there was a movements office that was at the railroad station in Uijeongbu, which was where the I Corps was headquartered. And the lieutenant that ran that and was a part of that same Battalion got meningitis. And I thought to myself, well, why don't I take his job? I'd been almost a year and coming into this company. And we really welcome the first black guy that came in, but then one time, we had like three or four black

guys came in all at once. And they started mocking him for being part of the white group and they were indoctrinating them into black power and all that kind of stuff. And so it was like a political thing. And I realized I kind of lost control of the whole vibe that we had. Where we'd all go out to, you know, the bars and the whorehouses and drink and smoke pot, which only happened once. But it was very loose.

And then my First Sergeant left, I'd had a Warrant Officer and a First Sergeant that really ran everything, they knew how to do it, and I wasn't going to tell them how to do it right or do it any differently. But then all of a sudden, the warrant officer left and I got a Second Lieutenant who was from Indiana. And, you know, we got along pretty well. And my First Sergeant left and the new First Sergeant and I were transferred over to the movement office where we were responsible for the rail traffic, and we were responsible for organizing the movement of supplies up to these missile sites that were up in the mountains. I thought that'll be interesting. So, I applied to extend my tour, till the end of my active duty which was about another year. And I went to this office for just a short time, maybe a couple of months. And then at the airport, the officer that was also part of the same Battalion, he rotated out and that position became open. And that was a pretty good position, because you provided all of all the air traffic, this was for the air traffic control officer. And he was responsible for the flow of troops in and out, but also the use of space available on flights. And whenever anybody went on leave, they would come down to the airport, and he would sit there and wait to get a free flight because they couldn't pay. The pay was so low for soldiers in those days, it was like a little bit over $100 a month, and they couldn't afford a flight back. But they can fly for free. People would be sitting in the waiting area, hoping to get on these flights. And there always was a small amount of space available. All these charter flights that were going to Vietnam, they were also coming to, to Korea for the soldiers. Plus, any kind of cargo ship, there were always a few seats on the cargo ship, so there was lots of space available. I was in charge of the

space available list. And I became the protocol officer because I was the ranking army officer on this airbase. It was a great job. I thought that I talked my way into that one, and the colonel really liked me.

And then all of a sudden, the prisoners, the naval prisoners that were captured by the North Koreans were released and they flew into this airbase. We had to do their flights back to the United States. And they were all put on these military aircraft. But then, all the Defense Department of Defense people that had come to negotiate and arranged, make the arrangements to get, I think it was like eighty-something Navy personnel, that had to be moved. They needed to be put on commercial airplanes, and Northwest Airlines was the only airline. And I was big buddies with the manager of Northwest Airlines there. I talked him into putting all these Department of Defense guys into first class when they flew back, which meant free drinks and it was just a nicer way to fly. And so, the battalion got this nice letter from the Department of Defense, and the colonel was really, really happy about all this. It was a feather in his cap. I don't know if he got a citation or anything like that. But he, you know, he really liked me, so everything was good.

But then he rotated out and the next guy came in, and he didn't like me at all. So, we had this kind of battle that was going on, but I thought I could do what I wanted. People were coming to me, as the protocol officer. All the colonels and above would call me and ask me to arrange their travels on the space available to get out. And I knew what the schedules were, and I would say, “Come in, come with your family,” because the people at Eighth Army Command had their families over there. Everybody else there was no family housing or anything. So, they’d need four or five spaces on a plane, and I would say just show up here, and they’ll be a flight, you'll be able to get on. And I would put them on the list, you know, a week ahead of time, so that would be the top of the list when it came up. You’d go out in the waiting area and there'd be some guy, and you could tell he's really

upset. Then I'd talked to him and then he'd go "yeah, my mother's really sick. I'm trying to get back." So, I would bump them up into like an emergency status and stuff. So, I was like playing this game and other people found out that I would do this. They would come up and say "what do you want to get me home on leave." And I said, "well, you're a supply company and you get steaks." I knew all these things, because I've been working with the supply company on the DMZ. And so, our little unit of enlisted men, we had it made. We were on the Air Force Base, we were the only Army people there, nobody was overseeing us, and the battalion was 10 miles away in Seoul. We were South of there. It was great—I really enjoyed it.

This is where I did lots of—I even bought a motorcycle, and it was an off-road motorcycle because the roads were so bad. I took leave and went off for about 10 days, just traveling around, staying in these inns going to temples and stuff. Some of the soldiers that I had made friends with in the first unit, these guys that were assigned with US troops, these were usually the rich kids. And, and they were already out, and one of them was working at the airport. He was an air traffic controller, and he came to me. And we were, you know, we'd been good friends. I used to go to the barracks and the Koreans like to talk about the Bible and all this kind of stuff, because they and then I grew up with all that stuff, so I would tell them Bible stories and stuff. So this one guy, you know, came to me. He said, one of the other air traffic controllers was getting married, would I come to the wedding? And I said, "Well, I'd love to do that'd be interesting to go." And he says, Well, yeah, but do you have cameras? I had a movie camera plus a stills camera because you'd buy those things in Japan. And we went to this wedding. We took a flight to the south of Korea. We took a cab to a ferry, and took a boat over this island, and the wedding was on an island. And this frat guy was marrying a woman who lived in the next village from his family. But he only met her once it was an arranged marriage and stuff. So I thought it was really interesting and stuff so I took all the

pictures and stuff, and we walked to the bride's village and had a banquet there. And then we—everybody walked back to the groom's village, and they had the marriage ceremony with another banquet. Then the bride and the bridegroom went into this special room. And both parents sat outside to make sure that everything went well on the first night together. And the fun thing for me was that they didn't speak Korean. I picked up enough Korean so I could easily communicate. But they spoke Japanese because this is an island between Japan and— they had been more assimilated into the Japanese culture up until 1945. So I would have to kowtow with my head on the ground and my friends would whisper in my ear, what I was supposed to say in Japanese to these people who were greeting me and stuff. It was really fun. And I was having a great time, so I just stayed there until I got out. And then I decided I would just stay. I got out over there. By this time I didn't have a Jeep anymore, I had a station wagon. We've been upgraded to a station wagon. My driver, I kept my driver because he was in the Korean army. He wasn't even in the United States Army. And this is getting kind of an involved story here. But—

But after about two weeks, this commander who didn't like me very much called me up to come into the office and he says “You can't be driving around. You're not in the army. You know, you're not. You've been separated from the army.” So, I had to go back, so I went and I flew to Guam on space available, and then flew Continental Airlines down to Palau which is in the west of Marianas and where my buddy from the Fraternity was in the Peace Corps down there. And that was my return to civilian life. And visiting with him and his Peace Corps friends, they all thought I was a Mormon. Because I got off the airplane with a coat and tie on it because we were taught that if you go out and you're not in uniform, you’ve got to wear a coat and tie. [inaudible] It’s a long story.

MORTENSON 2:04:41 And so what did you do? So, you went to Guam. Um, how long were you there for before you went back to the state?

LARNER 2:04:50 Probably about two weeks. I flew from Guam to Palau. He was teaching at a high school on this island. And I really did have some culture shock with the other Peace Corps guys. And he was telling me that “you're acting weird, right.” They lived in a Quonset hut, which is a military place. It looks like a half of a tomato [can], big enough to put people in. And they were sitting around. In those days they had tape players with reel-to-reel tapes. And they had the whole musical ”Hair.” So there, they were sitting around listening to this anti-Vietnam music. And I just didn't feel very comfortable, so my friend said, “Why don't you go out to one of the outer islands, I have a friend, a Palauan who comes in every once in a while, you take the boat out there.” So, we took the boat out there, for about a whole day to get to this other island. And it was just totally rural, there was no electricity. The people were really, really nice to me. I really enjoyed it. I always loved swimming. I was out in the coral reefs and doing that every day. In the evening, they would do some kind of entertainment for me because I was the American guy. And I stayed there probably about two weeks and then I flew back to Guam. With my orders, I still was eligible to travel back to the United States. I flew into Travis Air Force Base in California, and then went over to San Francisco and got on a flight back to Boston. But in order to get a military discount on the flight, because it was like $300 to Boston, but we got half fare if you're in the military, I went around and found somebody who was in uniform, and I got him to give me his uniform to be eligible for the military discount. And that's a crime nowadays. So, I guess I have to admit that.

MORTENSON 2:07:11 Did you give him his uniform back?

LARNER 2:07:13 Oh No! I just went to Boston. He when he was getting out too. Yeah. And he had all these—And the thing is, it was intelligence. He was in the intelligence, you know, division. Not that he was a spy or anything like that. But anyway, I got

half price. So, this scheming and things that I was doing, you know, got a little bit out of control. But I was back in the United States, I didn't really suffer a lot of the harassment that some people did when they came back in 1969. But it was definitely different with things going on. And I get hired, my friend from Northwest Airlines got me job with Northwest and that's why I ended up in Anchorage. I was glad to go back to Anchorage. The reason I wanted—My friend was about ready to retire. He was a lot older. And he said, ``I know, you've had this experience here in Korea". And I really thought Korea was going to really boom economically. I'd seen what had happened in Japan and I said it's going to be just like Japan. And I thought it would be a really good opportunity. But anyway, long story is that I didn't get the job in Korea that I wanted, but I ended up in Anchorage. And I did all my reserve duty up there and got out in 1973. And the service promoted me to Captain when I got out which they could do. I never figured out why they did it. The FAA put me in the Department of Transportation's defense executive reserve, so I still stayed working doing government reserve kind of stuff.

MORTENSON 2:09:17 So it sounds like your whole war experience out in Korea was a little different than you had anticipated. Did it exceed your expectations, would you say? Or was it—

LARNER 2:09:31 It just seemed like an adventure rather than any kind of hazardous experience. I remember when I flew into Korea, I knew absolutely nothing about it. But as the plane came in a whole bunch of cranes took off from this rice paddy that was right next to the airfield, right? And I thought: that's pretty beautiful. I had my bad moments when I was supervising these missile sites up in the mountains. A general came and said he wanted to inspect one of them and he went up there. And I hadn't really spent much time up there with these guys. And it was another one of these—The sergeant that was in charge of the unit up there- well yeah, we were responsible for these guys that were up there. And so, the general pulled up, and he went around and found a fly on top of the

refrigerator and chewed me out for about 20 minutes for not doing my job, and I'm going “I'm a hero here.” That’s how I saw myself for my one day of driving troops up the hills as heroic— So this isn't right, which is one of the reasons I moved over to the airbase. I tried to get myself in positions where there was nobody really over me, because anybody that was over me was 20 miles away. And so, then I learned how to negotiate military life.

MORTENSON 2:11:10 Yeah, sounds like it. So you had mentioned something a little bit back, which is in Guam, why didn't you vibe with the Peace Corps people. Have you thought about why that was, why you just couldn't see eye to eye with them after your experience— or not see eye to eye with them. You just didn't?

LARNER 2:11:29 Well, it's just seemed like- I mean my friend, who's now a neurosurgeon, he's 75. And he's still teaching, goes around the world, and he teaches surgery in Third World countries. He took me downtown in Palau, or Peleliu was the name of the town, and we sat in there and a bunch of people from the State Department came to this bar, and it was a very small place. And he says, “you know those people will have nothing to do with us.” And he was reveling in the fact that he was a teacher. Some of the girls were sneaking into the Quonset huts at night, because it was much freer. You know, he's saying “this is a matriarchal society out here.” He was a really smart person. And we would talk about what was going on, but the other guys, they were just kind of passive. We would call them hippies nowadays because they resented the economic structure, which the State Department people that lived there were getting great salaries. Meanwhile these guys were making maybe 100 or $200 a month for living expenses and living in a Quonset hut room. A typhoon came through in the middle. We didn't know that it was coming. The quonset hut almost blew apart. They had to use an outhouse for the bathroom and stuff like that.

So they were having a different experience than I had in the military, where they were not trying to make things happen for themselves. They were just trying to enjoy, you know, what was going on. And they weren't happy to go in the military, because this was in place of their military requirement.

So when I went to work for Northwest, they put me in San Francisco for a couple of weeks, and one of my fraternity brothers came out and we went to see “Hair,” the actual musical. I’d been listening to the music. And my friend, he just loved it. I think he was two years younger than I was, and he was desperate. He'd graduated from Dartmouth and he wanted to go to law school, but he was going to have to do military duty before that, so he was not happy about having to do this. So he looked at Hair the musical, which one of the subplots is this guy's trying to get away from being drafted. We came out of the theater, he goes “oh, wasn't that wonderful that was the greatest thing,” and I go “I hated it.” I love all the music now. It was the whole freedom thing, because there wasn't, that wasn't me then. So 10 years later, I was in a punk rock band and we had much wilder times than the people in “Hair”.

MORTENSON 2:14:45 And do you think, and do you think that's just a misconception that a lot of people who weren't in the military at that time have of what it was like to be drafted and involved in the war?

LARNER 2:14:57 Yeah, when people don't— you know, I think what you're asking is the people that came back, they faced a lot of harassment and a lot of negative feelings, with people calling them baby killers and stuff like that. You know, 90% of the people that went to Vietnam never saw any combat at all. So they were just serving their country, I mean, and doing their best to survive. So the people that really wanted to be heroes and stuff like that, like my roommate, they get involved in kind of special forces or intelligence, you know, things going into Cambodia when you weren't supposed to

go to Cambodia, and all the things that will go on in a war. The thing about a war that I always remember is that the first casualty of the war is the truth. And this is why I have to be careful not to blow up all the things, but your understanding of what I'm saying maybe a little different than what I'm trying to explain. If I were a really good English major, I would be better at explaining—

MORTENSON 2:16:20 That's why were doing this interview!

LARNER 2:16:23 But for somebody that's, you know, fearful of being drafted and spending- I had a fraternity brother who—he spent years before he could even go to law school. He'd gotten into the University of Washington. But his military draft status was such that he had to find some way to fight going in. And so, it took him four or five years. And finally, in 1973, he was at Fort Devens [MA] out here. And when I came back to visit my folks and stuff like that, and he was just doing his military duty. And he finally got out of law school about 1973 or '74, or maybe it was '76, or '77. And he graduated [from college] in 1965. So he spent over 10 years dealing with the military requirement basically. So, everybody had a different experience about how they did that. Not one of my cousins who were all five, six years younger than I am ever had a military background, even though all of my friends, all my uncles did serve. There was a family tradition, but alas, I'm the last one. It used to be you couldn't even run for congress if you hadn't had some military experience. And now, it's not positive.

MORTENSON 2:18:03 Well, I don't know about that being not a positive, it's not necessary. I think.

LARNER 2:18:09 It's just not necessary. I agree. When I lived in Oceanside, I liked being around the marines. I love to body surf, so I'd be out surfing and the local surfers would really diss the poor recruits. They were on a pass. They were there for basic training and they wanted to go surfing and they're out there just being bullied, in the way and stuff like that. And I would

talk to them and say “hey, go here, do this and do that.” I just felt like- I feel very at ease with military people. And then when the riots happened in what, 1994? With Rodney king? Like you weren't even born right?

MORTENSON 2:19:00 No. I was born in ’98.

LARNER 2:19:02 So anyway, I'm driving back, I was working both in LA and in San Diego and living in Oceanside. I'm driving back about six, seven o'clock on a Saturday morning. And there's a whole convoy of Marines going up to LA to quell the rioters basically.

MORTENSON 2:19:23 It was 1992 actually.

LARNER 2:19:25 Was it ‘92 yeah? Again, the earthquake was ‘94. LA is the greatest place for disasters. It's a disaster movie in real life. Yeah, you live there. So—

MORTENSON 2:19:44 Yeah, oh trust me. I know.

LARNER 2:19:49 Do you have earthquakes? You don't worry about having an earthquake, right?

MORTENSON 2:19:53 You can't. I mean, if you do, you're going to go crazy because it's inevitable. If it happens, It happens. That's the attitude. And they've long said we're overdue. But the scale is hundreds of thousands of years. So a couple hundred years is nothing in terms of [an earthquake] overdue, so I just got to hope. I mean, we've experienced small earthquakes, but I've never been around for anything very serious. And so yeah, I just have a couple more questions. What was—so what was the most difficult part about transitioning to civilian life?

LARNER 2:20:28 What was what? I’m sorry

MORTENSON 2:20:32 Transitioning to civilian life. What was the most difficult part?

LARNER 2:20:37

Most GI's feel like they're going to go back, you know, they count the number of days before they can return from their duties and stuff. And everything has changed. And it really was changed. I was telling you a little bit about how I decided to do work in Anchorage, basically, because it was a very military situation. Half the people in Anchorage are military people. It's like 100,000 people in the city and 50,000 of them are either in the Air Base or on the Army Base. And I was very comfortable there. And I ended up servicing all the aircraft that went across from Europe, to Japan. And then from New York City, and from the east coast, to Japan. And then we serviced all of the military charters that were going to Vietnam. So even though here I am all anti-Vietnam War, I ended up spending four years sending people over there. But it was I felt I just respected the military guys for their duty.

But what I noticed, and towards the end of ‘72-‘73, this was the time of “Don't be the last man in Vietnam,” right? These people were coming back—this wasn't the military that I remembered at all. The drug use was so high that we had people who would get off an airplane in Anchorage and disappear into this town in order to find heroin, because they were addicted, you know that long flight was just too much for them. And they were coming back to that. Now, this is kind of a stereotype. It really only happened a few times. But I just felt the military was so different at the end of that war, we really did get defeated. And then the whole political class would just refuse to accept the fact that we'd been defeated in a war. And so, I remember when the Tet Offensive happened, and I was still in Korea at the time. For months, the US had been saying the war, “we're seeing the end of the tunnel,” the numbers say we've killed almost every single citizen in North Vietnam. And then all of a sudden, they just appeared all over South Korea [Vietnam] and, and took over cities. And it was a political statement. It was a military action, but it was much more powerful as a political thing, because people realized the military has been lying to us. The military is set up to lie about what's really happening in

the War. I thought we deserved our [defeat]. But then for 10 years, it was not so good. And by 1977, I was in grad school, and I kind of gravitated to the punk rock scene in Hollywood. And we were fighting and we even have a song about “my Uncle Sam second in command in Vietnam,” and “made to fight, but we didn't have the right.” So, I still have that kind of attitude that we have to pay a price for what we've done. And we really did. We were having an economic crisis and we ended up with Reagan. It's like we ended up with Trump.

Here’s a non-interview question to you: did we deserve Trump? Or was it just because Hillary didn't know how to run a campaign. Was there something going on with our selfishness and our economic inequality and our racial disparities and all your other social events that we have. Was the result that we ended up with this authoritarian buffoon?

MORTENSON 2:25:06 Probably a combination you know?

LARNER 2:25:09 Is it still going on—Vietnam—the attitudes that got us into Vietnam—still going on?

MORTENSON 2:25:16 What do you think?

LARNER 2:25:18 Yeah, were still defending our economic interests all over the world, and our love of the Saudis and their oil and all that kind of stuff. That guy Khashoggi—yeah.

MORTENSON 2:25:35 So at what point did you know the war was lost? As someone who was involved in military circles, obviously, but even if you were on the ground in Vietnam, I suppose you there was no way of knowing because you had a very, you can only have the scope of your experience. And the news—

LARNER 2:25:55 I remember hearing that, I did say that if this little war is lost, the military officers that had caused, not us to lose, but had lied, covered up and did all these things that just got worse

and worse. I wasn't saying I wanted us to lose or that I wanted things to go badly. But when they did go badly, I felt, I knew that we were wrong. I didn't feel all of a sudden unhinged with my belief that I have American exceptionalism.

MORTENSON 2:26:38 Was there a point you knew, like, you understood that? Just from the military side, this wasn't going to happen? After Tet, I believe you said, you know, Tet was what kind of woke a lot of people up you said—

LARNER 2:26:53 Well, that to me it was this strategic move. That guy, what's his name? The general in North Vietnam was really brilliant. But the other side of it —we had these policies, making strongholds out of villages then protecting them, and then we couldn't do them and then we would leave. We'd fight a battle for a hill, thousands, not thousands of people, but hundreds of people would die. And then we would evacuate the hill. I mean, there was no there was no strategic value in what we were doing, we were trying to fight a ground war when it was a guerrilla thing. I live in Concord, where we fought a guerrilla war against the British here. We stayed behind the bushes and trees and chased them out of this town.

But, I'm not happy that we lost Vietnam, but I just see the price of it still. And the price of our arrogance, believing that we are still perfect and God’s on our side. Well, there's an awful lot of other people, and if you believe the Indians with their multiple Gods, they have a lot of Gods on their side. But it doesn't work. We were the generation that believed in Star Trek, the Federation of Planets and Moloch everyone was going to get along. It wasn't the ideal. And the space program is still kind of sputtering along.

MORTENSON 2:28:40 So tell me about Duncan Sleigh and your involvement with that?

LARNER 2:28:48

Well, Duncan was another fraternity brother who I got very close with. We did lots of crazy things, running off to Skidmore to see the girls because we could drink over there. He was one of these guys who was a Latin major because he really didn't know what he wanted to do. He was quite religious. We had lots of arguments about the idea that he was not—he didn't believe that this world was where he was meant to be. And I'd go "you mean you're suicidal Why don't you kill yourself?" He goes, "Well, no, I'm Catholic, you can't kill yourself. And so we had this religious thing. But he was a lot like me. In other words, he was enjoying his experience. He did a lot of drinking and a lot of—all our fraternity brothers really loved him because he was just a fun person to be with. The ladies, even now when I talk to his cousin, they keep thinking there are other cousins of theirs out there. Because he never got married or anything. He graduated, went to Spain for a little while. He did a-- what's the name of the Catholic social service group on campus, Newman society or something I think. But anyway, he spent time every summer down in Mexico City helping build schools and churches and stuff like that. He was a really good person. He was very, very popular. They named the square after him and the junior high school [was] named after him down in Marblehead where he grew up. So all these good things, right, I'm trying to say about him.

But the last time I saw him I was ready to go to this training program down in Virginia. And he was ready to go in the Marine Corps, as soon as he graduated. He was a year behind. And so he was ready to go. So we were at the Fraternity house drinking, doing the goodbye stuff. Then I go to him "you need to watch yourself because if you don't, you won't survive this war. Look out for yourself rather than looking out for everybody else." He got a Navy Cross and died because he protected, dragged two soldiers that had been wounded to a helicopter evacuation spot landing zone, and they came under attack at the landing zone. A grenade landed near him and he covered it up. And supposedly five

people's lives were saved for that. And that's why he got the Navy Cross. But the question in my mind always is, did he do that on purpose? Is that why he went to Vietnam?

People will ask—So we raised a bunch of money. So there was lots of correspondence. [People ask] What were his plans? What was he going to do? He maybe was going to be a teacher, or they said I could see him living out in the forest and being a forest ranger. But it was all very vague. He just felt that he had a purpose in life. And it wasn't on this planet or in this life. I don't pray very much, but every time I go to church, I always pray for him because he really believed. And then the idea of creating a endowment for veterans that have come back to Dartmouth, we developed that after a lot of discussion about what we're going to do. We were going to build a fancy fire pit barbecue at the fraternity house because he liked partying, you know, and let the kids there now use that. Or they were going to build a deck on the side of the fraternity house. They’re not supposed to go up on the roof, but they go up on the roof now and just go crazy.

But anyway, we really came up with something that was good, I think. I got to meet the assistant dean for veterans. And I can't remember the last name, but anyway I met three veterans and they all are not too happy about being at Dartmouth. One was staying there after graduating. That was the one girl she seemed to be doing okay. There's one guy that was living in the dorms and he was not doing okay. He must have been a junior or a senior and he hadn’t really made any friends while he was there. Another guy is married and is just living in Norwich. His wife works for the VA in White River Junction and he's just trying to survive. You know I met these guys and girl back in February. So, I don't know what's happened to them. But the idea that there needs to be some funding available for veterans, for emergencies for helping with job placement, all that kind of stuff. Not that Dartmouth doesn't do that. But my impression is that they weren't really getting much help when they had a family emergency. They wouldn't have the funds to get home

or if they went home, they didn't come back after that. So it's just a different experience when you've been in the military for years. So yeah, I'm not recommending that you go in the military just for that experience. Dartmouth, it's really good for four years after high school and then. I told you my fraternity, we had this one guy that had gone into the military and then come back. And he was a great guy. But he was not part of—all his friends were all gone. So, he made new friends, but it was just late.

MORTENSON 2:35:13 Yeah. I have a few friends that served before coming to Dartmouth and they've all had it. Yeah. And like you said, it's been a mixed bag. Some of them do really well. Some of them have a little harder time. But I guess that's really awesome, at least that Duncan is being remembered in that way and helping others.

LARNER 2:35:40 Yeah, that's maybe what his purpose in life was. So I know a few politicians in Massachusetts, maybe we could put him up for the Medal of Honor. His family tried to do that a few years back. But I think, I think we'll set this up, we got kind of cut short because we were planning all to get together at the college. We put a bench up in front of the old fraternity and stuff. So we wanted to get together about what we should do. One of the guys is a multi-millionaire, billionaire type. So the one guy that everybody made fun of because he was a math major. The possibilities are there to do more than what we did. But then maybe the best thing to do is to increase the amount of funding that’s going on. We only raised $75,000. But that to us was a pretty good amount of money.

MORTENSON 2:36:50 Well, are there any reflections or anything else you'd like to add?

LARNER 2:36:54 Just that I had a lot of fun in the military. I enjoyed my career, I'm not sure anyone else would ever have that kind of a career. I wouldn’t recommend it if you can’t do all the things that I- but it was really good for me because Dartmouth was not good for my self-esteem and self-

confidence. I wasn't ready to be a good officer when I left Dartmouth. But I was ready to be a good civilian when I [left the military.]

MORTENSON: 2:37:25 Thank you so much

LARNER 2:37:32 Well, thank you, JP. I still think of you as JP Morgan [laughter].

MORTENSON 2:37:38 Hopefully. All right, well, have a lovely rest of your day and week. I'll probably be in touch with a little bit of follow up, but thank you. Thank you so much for your time.

LARNER 2:37:49 Sorry I took so long.

MORTENSON 2:37:54 No, no, that was perfect.