

Anthony J. Thompson

Dartmouth college Oral History Program

The Dartmouth Vietnam Project

May 6 2023

Transcribed by Benjamin Gulihur '24

GULIHUR: This is Ben Gulihur. Today is May 6 2023. And I'm conducting this oral history interview for the Dartmouth Vietnam project. I'm conducting this interview with Mr. Tony Thompson. I'm conducting this interview in person at Mr. Thompson's lovely house in Merritt Island, Florida. Tony, thank you for talking with me.

THOMPSON: My pleasure. Let's start the ball rolling. All right.

GULIHUR: Well, let's start it off really simple. Just from beginning, when and where were you born?

THOMPSON: I was born in—on May 23 1942, in a small town called Cambridge, New York, just south of Manchester, Vermont, and east of Hoosick Falls, New York where my family were stationed. My grandfather had paper mills on the Housatonic Valley and was devastated or not devastated, but wiped out during the Depression, but he still lived reasonably well. And my father had been in the let me think, let me put this back. My dad met my mother in Rome with a place called La Bibliotek, which was a bar, not a library. It was actually a cabaret. And my father was skiing and Garmisch Partenkirchen, Germany, and broke his leg. And he was in Rome, with a friend and my mother was escorted by her cousin as a chaperone and with a male friend, but there were two seats at her table. And my dad asked if he could sit there and two years later, they were married in Budapest with the ambassador to Hungary as his best man and, and they that was 1938. And 1939. My sister was born in Hoosick Falls, New York, where my father and mother were living with his father. And the war came along and my dad I don't know if he volunteered or was drafted, but he was went to OCS and camp Benning, Fort Benning, Georgia, with my mother, and my sister and I. And he was on his way to overseas when a bus that he was dropped riding in with a group of fellow officers had an accident and he broke his back and never made it to Europe. Fortunately, he was eventually assigned to some sort of a camp up in Washington

state of. And from there, he, I gather had to find work. His family knew a gentleman in Manchester, Vermont, who owned a company out of Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, called Lee Tire and Rubber Company. And so my dad moved to Albany, New York with my mom and two kids to become the regional manager of Lee Tire and Rubber Company, which was really a small shop on Green Street in Albany, New York, where he changed truck tires. But occasionally, got in his car and drove through New England, trying to sell truck tires, in small towns, to people who would never buy them from him, because they bought them from their neighbors, but he enjoyed the trip and eventually he went to or I shouldn't say eventually he had been to Morrisville, Vermont a number of times. And trying to sell a guy named Wayne Burt tires Wayne had two truck heating oil company and dad had visited them and Wayne at a previous visit said why don't you think of buying my company and my dad said he didn't have the money And then another stop. Wayne was a little more persuasive. And he said go to the bank and my dad said, okay, and Wayne went out the back door and went to the bank, which he was president of. And my dad went into the front door and met with Wayne and they made a deal. Dad borrowed the money from Wayne's bank. And bought a company called Sweet and Bert, the time we were living in Albany. And that's when I went away to boarding school Taft school, and my family moved to Stowe, Vermont. And dad ran a golf jobbership that he bought from Wayne Burt. I think it was selling heating oil at a margin of four cents a gallon. And I think the heating oil was probably selling for 15 cents a gallon.

GULIHUR: For the record really quick. What was your father and your mother's names?

THOMPSON: My dad was George Smith Thompson. And my mom was Hanna, H-a-n-n-a Gaul was her maiden name, Hanna Gaul and Thompson. She was born in Hungary. And dad was born in the Hoosick Falls area. And 1917 She was born. They were both born in October. Dad October 23rd 1917. My mother, October 28th 1919. Want me to keep rambling? Well,

GULIHUR: Ah no no no I'll redirect you. So what was it? What was it like at Taft?

THOMPSON: It was a different. I had gone to a one room schoolhouse in Guilderland, New York, for the beginning of my scholastic career. And then I went to a military school called Albany Academy in Albany, New York. And my life at

that time was quite structured by predominantly Hungarian culture. Not that I spoke the language. But the most important part of our day was dinner around the table where my sister and I were welcome to listen to my mother, father and grandmother who was living with us as they discussed whatever. My grandmother lived with us. And I, in fact, in Albany, we had a townhouse so to speak. And I shared a bathroom with my grandmother where I learned to be impeccably clean, and neat and put things back the way she wanted [chuckles] to this day hasn't changed much.

GULIHUR: Did you find that your father's military experience influenced your up his up his upbringing style was he very disciplinary?

THOMPSON: No, no, I think. No, I don't feel that there was much the only remnants of his military career that I remember. Were a duffel bag with a lot of his military gear in it that I used to play with. But no, he wasn't a disciplinarian. My grandmother was more of the disciplinarian. And it was a lot more respect for what they told us was meant to be followed. I don't remember ever getting hit as a kid for disobeying and I'm sure I did disobey. But uh, there was more. There was a pretty strong European influence being brought up by my mom and her mother, as well as my father.um so...

GULIHUR: What brought you to military school in Auburn?

THOMPSON: I think the quality of academics, [okay], other than going to Albany public schools,[ah Albany] it was a private school. That wasn't to my knowledge, had anything to do with an interest my family having an interest in a military upbringing, although I'm sure they appreciated the level of discipline that was attached to the to this, you know, to being a student in the school. We had kind of pretty much a West Point. dress uniforms we wore, coat and we didn't we wore a gray shirt and black tie and and [pause] wool pants with a black stripe. But as I recall now as a until you got into sixth grade, you were not wearing a uniform kindergarten to sixth grade you were civilian from sixth grade to 12th grade you were in, you were in uniform.

GULIHUR: And how did you find how did you get to Dartmouth is was at the

THOMPSON: I when we moved to Stowe to Vermont. I guess my dad thought that it might be a good idea to go to Taft school in Watertown, Connecticut where

he went to school. and for what reasons unknown, they accepted me and I graduated from Taft and was accepted, applied to two schools, uh University of Colorado and Dartmouth and the University of Colorado failed to send me an application so I was stuck going to Dartmouth.

GULIHUR: Aw too bad. [both chuckle]

THOMPSON: I would hate to try and get in today. Certainly wouldn't with the record I had at Taft, which was a high level of mediocrity, in terms of grades. But nonetheless,

GULIHUR: And you came into Dartmouth what year 61?

THOMPSON: 60 the fall of 60. I graduated from Taft in the in June of 60. And Dartmouth in the fall of 60. So, and my first room was in brown, if it's still alive with a young guy from equally young as I was from Texas, who was as lost in Hanover, New Hampshire as you could possibly be I forget his name, and I lost contact with but I had a lot of friends back as freshmen. You know, as we stumbled through

GULIHUR: Your early times at Dartmouth was pretty social.

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah. And especially because Taft is a school of higher learning. And whether I liked it or not, I uh I learned at a higher level than my, the average freshman at Dartmouth, so I could sit back and chill. While, they studied their butt off. And much to my surprise come my sophomore year, there was no place to sit back and chill and the kids that were from public schools, etc. Were doing just fine and I wasn't and I had some you know, I still felt that having been for four years in male boarding school that you know, this was a bit of freedom that I don't think I I took far more advantage of than I should have. Didn't spend a lot of time at Baker.

GULIHUR: [chuckle] Too much time at Tanzis?[Grocery/beer store on hanover main street]

THOMPSON: At Tanzis.

GULIHUR: yup.

THOMPSON: In fact, I even dated his daughter for, you know we went out together as uh

GULIHUR: oh wow

THOMPSON: Yes, and Gamma Delta Chi was the fraternity that I rushed with a couple of friends. And we had some Jim Paige, who was a wonderful skier captain of the ski team. Jim Jacobson from Idaho, was one of the stalwarts of the Dartmouth ski team. I was never a good competitive skier because I played hockey at Taft, not not, uh club hockey. So but I did ski at Dartmouth and had a great time with the ski, the instructional program that George not sure what the what the teacher, the the head of that program was up there the ski way, but it was that was a great or enjoyed the heck out of that. So And more so than studying.

GULIHUR: So I know Thad Seymour, Thaddeus Seymour, he was a big influence on you joining the military. Did you ever think about the military before, uh He brought you into his office and said, Hey, like this is a good idea for you to get out of here?

THOMPSON: No have never, never, never gave it a thought didn't know we had one. [chuckles] facetiously said. But yes, Thad was, was one in a million dean of men. He couldn't have been. He couldn't have been more, not so much influential, but I really felt that this guy was doing the right thing by telling me you're dismissed.

GULIHUR: Yeah. He he retired nearby here [Winter Park Florida].

THOMPSON: He he went from Dartmouth to become the president of Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. And we communicated and I could, I could absolutely read the disappointment in his letters. When he found out that I was on my way to Vietnam, and not on my way to Garmisch to teach skiing. You know, he certainly none of us had Vietnam on our you know, out there, reserve is even a possibility back when I joined the army or I, I volunteered for the draft. It's what I did. With no intention of anything of doing anything, but what they asked me to do, and I ended up being told that I'd make a great medic. So they sent me to radio telegraph school. So I became a radio RTO whatever that is radio, [radio telephone operator] from operator with the Morse code, and that gave me the skills necessary. And I had orders to go to Garmisch and they were rescinded. I spent an I

think I spent six weeks at Fort Dix you know, prison guard and whatever they had me do while I was waiting for what probably, or not probably but was definitely a change in orders to go to Vietnam as a [pause] a RTO I think with a job yet to be determined.

GULIHUR: So, at Fort Dix, did they train, Did they give you infantry training and then RTO training? [Tony shakes his head left to right] No. Okay.

THOMPSON: No, I had the standard basic training where I shot well and and did pretty well on that whatever it is your graduation from? I was always a hunter as a 22. Squirrel hunter [chuckles] up in Vermont.

GULIHUR: You said they You said they said you'd make a good medic, but you became an RTO.

THOMPSON: But that's Yeah, so what they said didn't you know?

GULIHUR: [chuckles]Yeah, okay.

THOMPSON: Didn't didn't gel. I don't know why my whatever the battery of tests that you take sends you to RTO school. But that's what they did. And when I got to Vietnam, I got orders to go to Quang tri with a couple of other new recruit not recruits, but a couple of new RTOs and we were stationed in I Corp Quang tri

GULIHUR: Mhmm

THOMPSON: And then I started my career in the army.

GULIHUR: So how did that make you feel getting your orders switched from Garmisch to Vietnam?

THOMPSON: Um Not not [pause and chuckles] amazingly, unimpactful [chuckles] I don't think I knew where Vietnam was. So that helped.

GULIHUR: What was the news and the conversations surrounding Vietnam at the time that you went?

THOMPSON: Minimal? Vietnam was I was in Vietnam when the 100th American died.

GULIHUR: So when what What date did you deploy?

THOMPSON: Well, you'd have to look at my records. It was April of 64. I guess I guess..

GULIHUR: I would feel...

THOMPSON: Would you would correct me on it

GULIHUR: I think it might be April of 63. Because March of 64 was when the first regiment was lost.

THOMPSON: Okay, Okay

GULIHUR: So it could have been April of 63

THOMPSON: And it would have been April of 63.

GULIHUR: So, so back backtracking a bit, how did you feel in November? Of 63? I guess we're going forward. But November 63, you were in Vietnam. Right. And that was when Kennedy was assassinated. Did you have like a big political attachment, like a lot of other veterans did to Kennedy?

THOMPSON: Um to an extent, I mean, the assassination of any president starts with a pretty big, wow, you know um, whatever the whatever the impression was, and I think we all thought Kennedy was a wonderful person. Not so much as might relate to the military. You know, that and I was out, I was out out in the boonies. Not all the time. But a lot of the time, and when I end one stage, I don't quite even know why, but I was with a fairly interesting, E-6 [Staff Sergeant]. That certainly wasn't an advisor. But he and I were the only two Americans at this miserable little triangular compound called, I don't know if it was Tabatt, or Aloui, in Lang Vei was the third

GULIHUR: Lang Vei?

THOMPSON: And it was, it was in line with the one I think, everybody what was the one that everybody knows of. Where the Marines had a hell of a stick.

GULIHUR: Phu bai?

THOMPSON: No Phu bai was an airfield up on? Oh, it's the it's the A Chau Valley.

GULIHUR: Okay.

THOMPSON: Anyway, these little camps, I don't know if this is the place to go the direction to talk. But these little camps where we had about 100 Vietnamese soldiers, we had a moat, a moat around it with punji stakes, Claymore, and we were more terrified of getting overrun than anything else. We were there to prevent infiltration down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

GULIHUR: Right.

THOMPSON: So when the Vietnamese went out on these eight man patrols, they had their radio blaring, and

GULIHUR: Yeah.

THOMPSON: With hopes that if there was any Vietcong around, or North Vietnamese, they would hear the heroes coming in leave. Yeah, I mean, it was that we had a couple of outposts that we, depending on what the I don't know, what the, what do you call the number of men in a group the, the

GULIHUR: Size of the element?

THOMPSON: Yeah, depending on how big the element was, we had to go. We went out to these and I didn't, I'd stayed in the camp, but groups went out to these outposts. And sometimes they had to take them by force because they couldn't relieve somebody who they couldn't relieve a team. That team commit had to come in because we were lacking manpower or whatever it was, we got, we were frequently mortared. I went the first time I was shot out, I was taking the leak up near the fence. And I got I didn't get hit. I said, well, and that was probably I'd been in Vietnam, maybe. I don't know, maybe a week or whatever. Been in Quang Tri. So there wasn't a lot of contact there.

GULIHUR: Right. But it was the first time you heard a crack [finger snap] go of your head. Oh, yeah. Yeah. And do you remember how that made you feel? [Tony shakes his head left to right] No.

THOMPSON: No, I think it made me say wow. And you know, it's maybe my memory fails me. I remember far more. Bodies coming back on ponchos. I will vary and I don't quite know how this would work since the, the hood should be down at the bottom. But with bodies sitting in a pool of blood. So you know, maybe that's

GULIHUR: And this was bodies being returned from the outposts or the patrols?

THOMPSON: [inaudible] or whatever.

GULIHUR: Right.

THOMPSON: There are a couple of things that happened to me that were pretty frightful. One of which was we had under underground bunkers or semi underground, mostly underground. With sandbag roofs and poles, keeping the sandbags and everything. And I was sleeping in a hammock I, I think I spent the entire year in Vietnam in a hammock. But it was everything we had was [gear from] World War Two. And this, surprisingly enough, had a mosquito net that you could tie the four corners up on whatever you can tie them up to and it had velcro sides, which I didn't know they had Velcro and the second world war I didn't think about it. But we got mortared one day and I tried to get out of the hammock and I was in it like a cocoon. So that was a disappointing event in my life.

GULIHUR: Yeah.

THOMPSON: But you know more with a smile than with a real scare, but it was awkward not being able to get out of your hammock. And the other one was, there was a post in the middle of the bunker. And there was this beautiful eight inch long, 10 inch long snake on it. And I went to pick it up and one of the Vietnamese cut it with a knife it was a coral snake, which I didn't know a coral snake from whatever. And they took it outside and threw petrol on it and burned it up. And the next day they threw a earthworm in the bunker that was the size of my thigh probably four feet long. absolutely terrifying.[sarcastic chuckles]

GULIHUR: Your relationships with the Arvon sounds pretty affable. Pretty good. Oh, yeah.

THOMPSON: I had a we had we Lieutenant Mowrey and I had a bat [battalion] boy [named] Bua. Who was just, you know, wonderful. We had a great relationship with him. And with the rest, not that we really had too much. Shoulder to shoulder with, with the ARVN soldier, we ate. We ate with the officers of Vietnamese food. I actually became modestly fluent in Viet-, in speaking Vietnamese. But I'll never forget, Bua made a trunk for me, out of 155 shells [artillery shells], of the cases that they came in. And he he had no tools. And that's what I shipped my gear home in. And it's now in my son's somewhere in my son's house is a chest. But yeah, we didn't, we really pretty much kept to ourselves. In terms of—I don't recall that we did. I whenever I went out, whenever Lieutenant Mowrey went out, I would go with them. Right, because that was the rule.

GULIHUR: And Mowrey was your advisor that you were attached to

THOMPSON: He was the advisor that I was attached to. And I do know that I think but I guess we went out on on patrols, but I don't I don't recall. I mean, and I would contact, I recall more sorties against our our facility our fort there, than I do any kind of combat on that, On those particular, when we went out, it's interesting because I've never really thought about that. But if you if you try and sparse it properly, there was very little combat, very little, maybe no combat other than getting mortar, stuff like that. No hand to hand stuff,

GULIHUR: But it was [mortar fire] pretty regular. Yeah, yeah.

THOMPSON: Yeah.

THOMPSON: And it wasn't it [pause] it didn't seem to be. It didn't seem to penetrate. I mean, I wasn't particularly fearful. There's an expression that's probably highly inappropriate, but young, dumb and full of cum. Have you ever heard that?

GULIHUR: Ah, yes I have.

THOMPSON: Where you are where you're essentially invincible and when things get really nasty, the adrenaline kicks in and that's a marvelous chemical. Anyway, I spent my six months that was supposed to be in the field, rotating in and out of Tabat and Aloui. I never went to Lang Vei. And I had

a couple of different advisors. Sargent, somebody, I don't remember very much about him. I do remember having a wonderful meal of spam and rice. I don't know where we got it. We had a kerosene stove, but we uh, kerosene fridge in our bunker. But when that tour [first 6 months of his deployment] was over, I was offered the opportunity to replace an Australian Sergeant Major on a helicopter sortie against some known, I guess, whatever, whatever the Lamsung Lamsung was the Vietnamese name for an operation.

GULIHUR: So this Sergeant Major, he was supposed to be helping them as an advisor.

THOMPSON: He was an advisor and he I'm not very clear how I replaced him because it certainly wasn't a king for a king or a knight for a knight. But my understanding was that he didn't want to go out on this mission. And there could be a lot more to this than I'm about to say. But my memory is that I said, Well, I'll go. And that got me permanently attached to the first regiment.

GULIHUR: All right. They liked your enthusiasm.

THOMPSON: I don't I don't I don't know where it came at probably was the advisor that I had at the time that this Aussie [australian] was supposed to go with. enjoyed my company? [chuckle] I don't quite know.

GULIHUR: Do you remember who that advisor was?

THOMPSON: A Major George Boehner

GULIHUR: Major George Boehner

THOMPSON: Yep. I think I think he was the first advisor I had. I'm pretty sure I had. I went out with two other captain. I have pictures going into hooch with him on a trail with him. Right? Pretty hard to take. photograph. We didn't have iPhones either.[chuckles]

GULIHUR: So your first six months was going in and out of the A shau [valley]?

THOMPSON: Yeah.

GULIHUR: And then when you got yourself attached to the first regiment? That was that must have been somewhere around December then Right? December of 63.

THOMPSON: January, February, March. Yeah. Could be could be I was with them for for four months. Yeah. And they were oh boy, they were wonderful. Or, you know, it was to this day, I don't know. What the nomenclature of the Platoon, Company, battalion, you know, squad, platoon, whatever that is, because I always thought that that a regiment was a whole lot bigger than anything we ever went out with.

GULIHUR: Oh Yeah I would...

THOMPSON: Yeah. In terms of calling, calling. You know, 50 guys a regiment.

GULIHUR: Oh, wow. That's tiny. That's, that's like two platoons if

THOMPSON: Max. Yeah. And we'd go out and APCs

GULIHUR: the M118's?

THOMPSON: Yeah, I thought they were 114

GULIHUR: M114s, potentially yeah

THOMPSON: Yeah, I think they were M one one fours. And we used them, as you know, they had a 50 and a 30 [50 caliber and 30 caliber machine guns]. And we had, you know, you could put 10 Vietnamese soldiers inside them or whatever it was. And we use use used to go out with I think, four or five of them, when they were you know, and we were always looking to get in a fight. I mean, they and that was not the case with the ARVN with the I mean. These were ARVN as well. But the whatever the

GULIHUR: So the first regiment, they were eager to fight or they were not eager to fight.

THOMPSON: This being the first regiment were eager to fight

GULIHUR: Okay, thats what i assumed

THOMPSON: They were, they weren't there for any reason other than to find and eradicate Viet, the North Vietnamese, or the Viet Cong. And they were led by a major. And they had a major boy, I can't believe I don't remember any of their names. But there were three, three soldiers that stamp their personality on the first regiment, one was a doctor. One was a captain, and one was a major. And a major was the leader, the captain was his adjutant or whatever. And the doctor was a doctor, but they were all bright, smart people. And we had innumerable successes with them. So, you know, I mean, I could go into detail about some of those successes. But

GULIHUR: How uh, So they they were at the DMZ, the first regiment, right?

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah, they're there. They were headquartered. In Hue, I think. And when we were not out, and we were out a lot, and we were out for a long time. They, they would have been division headquarters. And I think that was in Quang Tri. But maybe it had to be in Quang Tri, because that's where I was. My unit was MaaG military assistance advisory group, which became Mac V, which is military assistance, Mac, ma c. I don't know what the C stands for

GULIHUR: Command.

THOMPSON: Command, Vietnam, Mac V, and Maag, turning into Mac V, but mag was headquartered in Quang Tri we had, I don't know maybe, That's where all the advisors and RTOs and whatever. You know, the people that ran the O club [Officer's Club], we had Quang Tri the bartender who, whatever in the supply, and S [administrative] and G [intelligence] and whatever those things, to some extent, all slept there, and went a place I don't even remember to do their daily work and come home and do their sleeping. We had a real problem because so many of the people in the Quang Tri hutch, hootch motel were out in the field that the guys that were permanently stationed in Quang Tri were constantly doing what is it? CP? What do you do when you're, you know, at night somebody has to be awake and

GULIHUR: Fire guard or? Yeah. Nightwatch

THOMPSON: Yeah, but more. Yeah, whatever. That they say you come back from being out in the field. And they would leap on you to do whatever that was.

GULIHUR: Yeah. CQ. CQ Duty

THOMPSON: CQ.

THOMPSON: Quarters command, command of quarter. CQ. Yeah. But we we spent most I spent most of my time with the regiment. wherever that was. Geographically. It wasn't too far from Quang Tri. It may have been in Quang Tri. I don't remember.

GULIHUR: So the regiment would go out for periods of time?

THOMPSON: Yeah. Either by chopper or PC.

GULIHUR: Yeah. And do search and destroy missions. Yeah. Yeah. How long are these like two weeks? One week?

THOMPSON: Well, that story I told you about being up for about 30 days would probably be the longest but they weren't actually that interested in coming back in anyway. Yeah. So but I do remember going out in helicopters. And you know, if there were an enemy force, located by whatever means either L nineteen's flying around or friendly villagers or whatever. I think the villagers on the whole were quite anti ARVN because they were much better treated by the North and by the Vietcong, including having their heads cut off if they didn't obey, which we did, we would be willing to do the same. But I sense now that the villagers Diem was an awful leader. Right. You know, and he had his interest at heart and not the people of Vietnam, right. I wasn't very politically connected. A lot of people. I love it when people say, Well, you ought to know, because you were there. And I said, Boy, that's just the antithesis of reality.

GULIHUR: Yeah. So Diem was assassinated a couple of weeks before Kennedy in 63.

THOMPSON: And key, I think, Colonel or general ky, Ky, if Air Force swashbuckler took over maybe you're maybe we weren't in any way politically into it, Nor was the first regiment.

GULIHUR: But you said they were pretty harsh on the South Vietnamese civilians?

THOMPSON: Well, I have, I have images of one of the bright images or clear images I have is of a woman sitting on a bicycle on a damn rice paddy with cups attached to the rear wheel. Moving water from one paddy to another is five APCs go through in five different not in one line. And just putting punching holes in in her damn Yeah. You know that? That says a lot to me about I mean, there was no other way to get from point A to point B without doing it. But I doubt if she went back and said Boy, those guys it's good to see they[inaudible]

GULIHUR: Did you ever witness executions? By the first regiment?

THOMPSON: Yeah. Yeah.

GULIHUR: Was that like did you feel bad or did you feel like it was necessary?

THOMPSON: I think, i think, I'm sure that there was some chemical in me that made me feel that it was acceptable. One, I have one instance quite clear in mind where we captured it was a big, big battle and we we KIA'd [killed in action] eight, a lot of easier to say than killed. We have Viet- North Vietnamese. I pictured them coming. running toward our APC is trying to surrender and getting shot and killed. We captured the capt- of a captain waterboarded him. And when that was all done, they shot him.

GULIHUR: Wow.

THOMPSON: And, and in that same, so this isn't something that happened on a daily basis.

GULIHUR: Right.

GULIHUR: But in that same thing, that woman and her son were shot, executed for harboring a North Vietnamese in her a dugout hole in her hooch. God knows what sort of lasting impressions that made on me, but I certainly witnessed it and had no intentions of stopping it not that I could have.

GULIHUR: Yeah

THOMPSON: But it wasn't the first thing that came to mind. There's after I find this to be a little bravado and I don't like it. But after a pretty full born battle. Your thoughts aren't necessarily in favor of the enemy.

GULIHUR: No.No.

THOMPSON: An interesting vignette going back to when I was in Oh, I gotta take this.

GULIHUR: Oh, that's fine. We can pause.

[Tony takes a phone call]

GULIHUR: Okay, so

THOMPSON: So, so back to where I was the Lieutenant Mowry had this wonderful knife that he spent a lot of time when we weren't doing anything sharpening.

THOMPSON: And it was a Randall knife, which is a knife maker in Orlando, Florida, which was God knew. God only knows. Orlando was when I was from Vermont. And I, I really wanted to get one and he gave me the information and I communicated with them I guess by mail. And they said that it would be six months or something because these and it was an eight inch fighting knife. It was this huge thing. And, but anyway, eventually, I I received my knife with my name engraved on it and the date. Then not long after I got it and strapped it on to my, my body. I was out in the field, and we had entered a Viet Cong village that was pro Viet Cong. And we're going from hooch to hooch and I had my knife out. I had my rifle in one hand and I captured a North Vietnam captured, I think he probably came up like this.

GULIHUR: [chuckle] Hands up

THOMPSON: With my knife. Which is, in retrospect is God how stupid Could you be? But anyway, what goes through the mind of how old was like 20?

GULIHUR: That's a very common. Yeah,

THOMPSON: It was very strange.

GULIHUR: Yeah.

THOMPSON: I mean, it wasn't it

GULIHUR: It was a new knife. You wanted to you wanted to use your new knife. Yeah.

THOMPSON: Yeah[chuckle]

THOMPSON: Glad he didn't. I'm glad, because I hadn't been trained.

GULIHUR: Right

THOMPSON: Particularly well, and how to use I just knew that I had it so

GULIHUR: But you captured a prisoner of war?

THOMPSON: Yeah. Got this gear up in my room somewhere.

GULIHUR: Oh, really? What do you get from him?

THOMPSON: Um um um Sambo Down[speaking to his dog], a belt, a canteen, a cartridge with AK 47 rounds. And I guess I think I still have it somewhere.

GULIHUR: Do you know what happened to him? Was he taken for questioning?

THOMPSON: No idea.

GULIHUR: Okay.

THOMPSON: I assume he was taken for question. I don't recall the circumstance what I recall is using my knife when I should have not been using my knife more than what led up to that point or what led beyond that point. It's crazy what sticks in your mind. But in terms of what happened with the first regiment, we we had a lot of successes. We expended a lot of ammunition. I remember one time surrounding a rice paddy. We were in our APCs and they were they thought that there were We were reasonably high. This is my memory. And we thought that there were the enemy was somewhere in the bushes and the 30 [30 caliber machine gun] was firing and hitting the water and the bullets were skipping up and coming damn close to the

other APCs [armored personnel carriers] that were surrounding it, but that's that's strange memory. We had a very productive battle up in Cam Lo I think it was where and this was a huge example of how the war was conducted a lot of KIAs [enemy killed in action] a lot of weapons captured enough so that in fact I remember walking through the field and seeing a Vietnamese a North Vietnamese or Viet Cong I don't know whether his had been hit in the head with something, something big enough to flop his head over on his shoulder, his forehead onto his shoulder. I took a picture of it. And I wanted to send it back as a Christmas card saying Wish you were here. But luckily, I lost the picture something. Oh, wow. Anyway, that particular engagement brought made a lot of I mean, we were always looking for we, America was always looking for KIA [enemies killed in action]. That's how they judged how the war was going. And at the time, who was our ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge was our ambassador. And he had a secretary of PA, personal assistant by the name of Tony Lake. Who, strangely enough, was at one time a boyfriend of my sisters. Right. And do you know this story a bit?

GULIHUR: I think I read a bit about it. Yeah.

THOMPSON: But anyway, Tony, was sent up to, to what? reap the rewards or whatever of this battle and what he had heard, or what the information that landed in Saigon versus the reality that was in Cam Lo. It's like, killed, let's say 25 Whatever. And he had heard that we killed 250. For example, I don't remember but it was just absolute every every spot from Cam Lo to Quang Tri, Quang Tri to Hue, wHue to Da Nang and Hue being Corp headquarters. Da Nang being God knows what to Saigon. They added a few KIA.

GULIHUR: Oh, wow. A little exaggeration.

THOMPSON: Yeah

GULIHUR: As it went down [up the chain of command]

THOMPSON: All the way down. So it was a, you know, I mean, how can we with that kind of information, the decision makers, God knows where they were, but let's say the Kissinger's and who was the head of GM? Ford?,

GULIHUR: Oh, McNamara.

THOMPSON: McNamara, the guys that were trying to make decisions. Johnson, if that's the kind of information they were getting, it would be really, you know, yeah, the war would be run as it was,

GULIHUR: You had an entirely different perspective on the ground.

THOMPSON: Yes.

GULIHUR: It was first hand, yeah.

THOMPSON: Yeah, and I don't know if that was typical. But my one, my one real up close and personal. Experience with with Tony talking to Tony, who we were both quite surprised to meet up on the DMZ. I had crossed the DMZ, actually, with this with the first regiment, I'm sure against anybody's orders. But um anyway, that was I guess the final piece of the first regiment is when, was in March of, see there was a lot of, anyway, skipping a lot of the whatever. Meat and potatoes. We were and I was staying with them. out at their headquarters and We got mortared. And George Chamberlain Major George Chamberlain happened to be a Quang Tri for whatever reasons that particular night. And uh the, I think I think there were four APCs that went out, and it was a trap. It was you know, they ascertained that the mortars were from [pause] it don't know what, two miles away and they got a mile away and they were hit by RPGs and uh you know rocket propelled grenades. And all for all, I think there were four but all four APCs were destroyed.

GULIHUR: And that's about 10 men. Per APC.

THOMPSON: Well, I don't recall. Okay. I don't recall the way it happened. They may not have gathered enough to go. I mean, the captain was a was a bit of a cowboy. I mean, he said come on, let's go let's get these bastards. Yeah, and he may not have waited for anybody except for drivers with 30 and 50s [machine guns]. To go out, and these things were stretched, you

know, dug in, across the road. And they [inaudible] I have some pictures I'll show you.

THOMPSON: Once you've seen,

GULIHUR: I saw one of the destroyed APC's [picture]

THOMPSON: Big round [inaudible].

GULIHUR: But even with a skeleton crew for APCs destroyed out of a regiment of 50 men, that's substantial

THOMPSON: Oh it it deactivated the unit. Totally that's that was close enough to my DEROS[date employee is expected to return from overseas] that I didn't have, I didn't have anywhere to go. I didn't link up with anybody after that happened.

GULIHUR: So.

THOMPSON: To my knowledge to my memory,

GULIHUR: After they were hit by the ambush, y'all went out after?

THOMPSON: Well, I told I called major Chamberlain and I said, I should be going out with these guys. And he said no, wait for me, I'll be there in five minutes. And so we went out in his jeep alone to the site. And it was, you know, in fact, I was carrying at the time I was carrying an M1a1 carbine

GULIHUR: Right

THOMPSON: With a paratrooper stock, wonderful, had a selector that they sent to us cosmoline up and cleaned it off and put it in on my weapon and fired it and it was fine. And I went out into the to one of the APCs[armored personnel

carriers]. And behind it were two North Vietnamese and my weapon jammed.

GULIHUR: Oh my

THOMPSON: I pulled the trigger and nothing happened. And they were carrying carrying a rocket or carrying one of these things

GULIHUR: RPG [rocket propelled grenade]

THOMPSON: I'm not quite sure how I handled it. But I didn't dive on them with my knife I ran in the other direction for sure. And I'm sure they were just as happy and they were and in the in the captain the Di We[name of the captain] was capturing. So, so we ascertained that the major the Vietnamese major commander of the unit was killed, the captain, I don't know how we ascertain that he was captured.

GULIHUR: Probably didn't find his body more

THOMPSON: More or less. I wouldn't be surprised. Yeah, let's just leave it at that probably. And then we went out in more APCs looking for these guys and never that immediately. Not hoping not to give them the opportunity to get away but in particular, this guy had a big price on his head as as we all did, but but this was a very aggressive unit that was a thorn in the side of the Vietcong and North Vietnamese

GULIHUR: So did you have any more run ins with any enemy combatants

THOMPSON: No

GULIHUR: Besides those two?

THOMPSON: No that that on that particular day that was it and it's very cloudy in my mind because I don't remember how mortified I was that I couldn't pull the trigger or when I mean that I could that the my weapon didn't fire for you know the shock of seeing, [chuckle] the combination of all that. I don't remember what I did I mean

GULIHUR: That must have been really scary

THOMPSON: [pause] It was something I don't know if scary is but you've been there you know adrenaline is an amazing chemical.

GULIHUR: Yeah

THOMPSON: It's the sort of thing that would maybe allow you to jump in there and start kicking ass

GULIHUR: Yeah

THOMPSON: Um but that's not what I did.

GULIHUR: I, yeah.

THOMPSON: So that was kind of the end of my, we had some you know they were all trying to get blown off by an APC it hit a mine prior to this. I'll never forget I saved the day I Di We [ARVN 1st regiment captain} when he's alive. He planted face first in in about three inches of water [chuckle] and I picked his head up and hardly dramatic lifesaving event [laughter] but he might have drowned, but um, that was shocked everybody in that APC was killed inside

GULIHUR: But DI We the captain he lived Yeah

THOMPSON: Yeah

GULIHUR: Yeah

THOMPSON: He and I were on top. The driver, I assume that his head poked out. Possibly a gunner was on top. But that running into him they weren't i They weren't we never knew what an IED [improvised explosive device] was back then. But typically when that sort of a thing happened, it was a precursor to an ambush.

GULIHUR: Yeah

THOMPSON: But in this particular event we prepared for, we were prepared to north of I guess three other APCs with it. But we were I assume we were prepared for an ambush. But I don't I don't recall I know that nothing there was no enemy fire which is strange now that I think about it and I never have because they seldom planted mines without having an as without it being the first step in something other you know, like an ambush

GULIHUR: Could have been an old French mine?

THOMPSON: I doubt it because it was in a road on a road on a dirt road. That that was a reasonably well traveled. I don't think it was la rue. What is it thea rue sans joie? Do you know that book by the route?

GULIHUR: No.

THOMPSON: The route without joy by Bernard fall? Have you ever read anything by Bernard fall having?

GULIHUR: I haven't.

THOMPSON: He wrote a book called The fall of Dien bien phu? It's absolutely fabulous. Dien bien phu was is unbelievable. It was like, Yeah, French, obviously, were cut loose by the French government that had [inaudible] off of Indochina, fend for yourself. Heroism after heroism until there was nobody left to be a hero. But anyway.

GULIHUR: Yeah.

THOMPSON: So rue sans joie, highway one that runs I guess from Hanoi down to Saigon along the coast after it comes down to the coast. Anyway.

GULIHUR: So you were awarded the Cross of Gallantry and the Bronze Star for going after your comrades and trying to find them?

THOMPSON: No. No.

GULIHUR: Okay

THOMPSON: For that thing that happened up when Tony lake. I guess I don't even remember. I don't remember why. Why I got it. But I remember that ceremony [chuckle]. I remember. I, I have the the award. So it would it would tell exactly what battle it was for.

GULIHUR: Oh, wow. Yeah. I would love to read that.

THOMPSON: Okay.

GULIHUR: Yeah

THOMPSON: I got it. Its on rice paper. But I've taken a copy of photograph. A copy of it. It's interesting. I didn't pay much attention to, to why. And it wasn't because I was always deserving the cross of cross of gallantry, every time. We got into a contact. But [snap] anyway,

GULIHUR: Yeah.

THOMPSON: So that's Vietnam in a nutshell, I think. I mean, I'm sure there are all sorts of little vignettes that could come popping into my mind as soon as you leave.

GULIHUR: Well, when uh, When you were. After the action in March 64.

THOMPSON: After the after them ambush.

GULIHUR: How long was it until you left Vietnam? You only had a

THOMPSON: A month.

GULIHUR: A month?

THOMPSON: Or less, maybe, I left on April 6

GULIHUR: On April 6 of 64.

THOMPSON: And my DEROS [date of employee return from overseas] was July I think, I mean, my projected I think I entered the Army in July. And and I had just enough time left in the service, that they wouldn't reassign me. You know,

it wasn't it was 91 days, maybe I would have gone somewhere but it was 89 or whatever. You know how it was less than I think it was that that action? I don't know the date of that action, but it was I left in April 6.

GULIHUR: So that summer, you returned to the States.

THOMPSON: I did, I returned to Dartmouth summer school.

GULIHUR: Wow.

THOMPSON: Oh, I have. I have a I had one lovely event. I had to go before a reconsideration board. And I went and met with Thadeus Seymour, the Dean of men prior and he encouraged me to come back. And I said I had every intention of coming back, and He said, Well, you have, there's a board of x five or four, six professors that you have to meet with and get recertified. And so I came back to Hanover and sat in front of this board. And the one question that I remember that they felt was paramount was how did I maintain my major [Art History]? And I'd been in combat, you know, eight weeks, six, seven weeks earlier, and I was saying, Boy, if that's if that's what is important, if that's how they want to discuss this, whatever, it was just awful meeting. And at the end of it. I went into Thad's office, and he actually made every effort and was successful and had in telling me to come back. Because after that, I didn't want to come back. I didn't want to come back to Dartmouth?

GULIHUR: How did did Thaddeus feel somewhat responsible for sending you?

THOMPSON: No, no, no, I hope not. I mean, I would hate to think he was, that he felt that way. I, I think he's a very he was incredibly simpatico [sympathetic] to 3000 students at Dartmouth. And I was one of them. And he may have had reason to take a modestly special interest in me because he encouraged me to go into the army and, and my family. If not, I thought it was probably a good idea that I grow up. And when I had orders to go to Vietnam, you didn't know what Vietnam was all about, you know, we hadn't we hadn't arrived at the Tet Offensive and the Battle of Hue [inaudible], you know, what gave everybody the sour taste. So you know, it didn't have the same impact I'm sure it had on somebody who was told to go to Vietnam in 1969 or 70. You know, that would have been far more impressionable than when I went I think anyway, so I, you know, Thad [Dean of Dartmouth Thadeus Seymour] encouraged me and I came back

and went to summer school. In fact, I was at summer school when the first women were allowed in campus rooms as in the academic side of campus I had girl. I guess part of why I got thrown out is because I had a girl in my room

GULIHUR: oh wow.

THOMPSON: Russell Sage.[chuckle] I find this hard to believe but the campus cop saw me walking with her to the Hanover inn and followed my footsteps in the snow

GULIHUR: What? [astonishment]

THOMPSON: Back to the window corner window at Russell Sage.

GULIHUR: Okay, and this was back in the 63?

THOMPSON: When I got tossed

GULIHUR: yeah, yeah.

THOMPSON: And when I had to go and explain to to Thad [Thaddeus Seymour dean of Dartmouth]. Right my my behavior which included scholastic and social bad, bad marks.

GULIHUR: Wow

THOMPSON: But anyway, this guy followed my footsteps from where he saw me to the Hanover inn

GULIHUR: Seems a little excessive.

THOMPSON: I didn't find it. I find it excessive. You know, it wasn't necessarily excessive at the time. But.

GULIHUR: But yeah, you

THOMPSON: So there I am a Dartmouth taking classes in history of art and whatever, whatever else I needed to graduate

GULIHUR: In the summer of 64 is when you started taking classes again. Yeah. Literally right after.

THOMPSON: Yeah, my my hair hair would still short probably.

GULIHUR: How How was that? Like? I mean,

THOMPSON: I had some sense of why am I listening to this person who might be an expert in the what he was teaching, but not in living [life] , you know? I mean, he's coming from a different world than I've just come from. And it was, it was a little bit discomfoting, and it shouldn't have been but it was. And, you know, I had, this was the beginning of the real anti-war feeling. And so my experience at my fraternity wasn't all that pleasant. And as I've spoken to you earlier, having been called to my face a moral coward for going to Vietnam was, you know, probably more than disappointing. Think grounds for, you know, for kickass fight. But I did. I eventually retreated to White River Junction, I don't remember where I was living. When I first got back from

GULIHUR: So did you find most of the animosity coming from the student body, faculty members,

THOMPSON: Total total student body because I didn't, I didn't really have a big relationship with faculty members. Bob McGrath was the professor of that I remember in the history of art. And I think, you know, my recollection of him was a pretty, pretty decent professor. But I think I had this chip on my shoulder, through my up to graduation, about where I'd been and where they hadn't been, or not so much where they hadn't been, maybe they didn't understand what I, I find it hard to articulate this right now. And, you know, what am I supposed to? What the hell did I feel like that for? But I thought I was doing a service to my country. And certainly nobody paid any respect for that, if not quite to the contrary. So.

GULIHUR: Did you have any allies on campus, any students in GDX [Gamma Delta Chi], in your fraternity?

THOMPSON: I had. My my roommate in White River was also tossed and went into the Army and was a cartographer in Iran.

GULIHUR: A Different experience.

THOMPSON: Where they didn't have any headquarters and he was in a three quarter ton truck all alone, doing cartography or whatever. He had a great time. Yeah. beluga caviar out the years and skiing with the Shah. Virtually. And what was his name? Kevin Shore, Kevin Shore? Yeah, he was a Gamma Delta Chi. And Cam Savage was another roommate who had taken a sabbatical and went to Hollywood, is a terribly good looking guy. But he was from Stowe, Vermont, a really good friend grew up together and and we lived together in White River Junction, the three of us and had very little contact except for classes with our fellow students. And I, I've been probably I don't, I don't I don't recall ever looking for or knowing or anything about whether there were any other Vietnam vets on campus at the time,

GULIHUR: There was no organization of veterans on campus?

THOMPSON: May have been. It didn't beckon me or I wasn't looking for it. You know? I'm not sure. Because this, this particular session has brought out some thinking that I apparently never did before. I don't recall any association with for example, ROTC, which would have been on campus at the time, right? I'm sure before didn't they get rid of it and then bring it back? That's right. So I don't know if I tucked it under my belt and went forward and to try to forget about it. But I I know that years later, when. When I graduated from Dartmouth, in June of the following year, whatever that was, I think, I'm not gonna think about which year it was. I went to New York looking for a job. And my dad and a friend of his were they're trying to raise money for the local hospital, Copley, the hospital in Morrisville, and we're approaching we're down there to approach a very wealthy neighbor of ours who had his in Stowe, Arthur Dana, to get a sizable donation. And I had dinner with my father and his friend, Charlie Black, who was about to start working for a guy named Dick Snelling who was going to run for Governor of Vermont. And he said, Tony, why don't you work for Dick, he needs an assistant. So I worked for Dick, driving his bus. And living in his house when he ran against a very popular incumbent, Phil Hoff and ran on a sales tax platform, which was as unpopular as Phil Hoff was popular. So Dick got slammed in the election. And an aside would be that shortly thereafter, they instituted a sales tax. But Dick, then, after he lost gave me a job in his company, and for a while I worked in, in Greene, New York, he had a branch there. And I started dating a girl that I dated when I was at Dartmouth, who lived in New York. And I then decided to leave Greene New York, and work and look for a job in New York and got a job with First

National City Bank. And actually lived with Penny. Until and then my best friend from Dartmouth, John English. Who was a RT, R, river patrol boat, okay, yeah. Lieutenant J. G, had his own patrol boat, and was hugely disappointed. We have quite different feelings about the war. He was appalled by what was happening. I think he was asked on several occasions to patrol the South China Sea coastline in a small area where there were forces bringing, trying to bring the enemy out onto the beach and his job was to mow em down.

GULIHUR: Yeah. Was he was he in Vietnam simultaneously?

THOMPSON: No, he was in a four year naval after he graduated from Dartmouth. He joined the Navy. So if you've pieced it all together, somehow he came back. After I had been in Vietnam Been at Dartmouth, worked for Dick, worked for first National City Bank. He by then had finished his tour in the Navy, and came to First National City Bank asking if I had, just telling me that he was looking for a job. Not that I was gonna give him a job. He wanted to know what banking was like. And I said, it's, you know, it ain't for me. I'll tell you that. So we both bought one way tickets to Australia.

GULIHUR: So you got on—

THOMPSON: And on, and it was in great part of not liking what was going on in America. And it wasn't so much the anti-war as it was the burning and looting and stuff that had been going on. I hope I'm correct in that period, that around when we went to Australia, because that had a lot to do with why I was prepared to go and leave the job. I was born to be the head of First National City Bank. [Chuckle] Leave it, I was cutting cutting articles out of the Wall Street Journal of the any of the companies that were in my territory. It was a horrible job and I wasn't cut cut out for it. [laughter] So it wasn't hard to leave it. So I says John and I went to Australia,

THOMPSON: But John had a different perspective on the war. Yeah, and we never talked about it.

GULIHUR: Okay, so that was just, it was just you know, understood differences.

THOMPSON: It was all I could do to get him to smoke to get him to smoke a joint [laughter] because he was so adamant against marijuana because the guys in his boat were so often stoned in it, you know, there was nothing he

could do about it. And going into the path of danger with a handful of guys that were whacked [high], made a huge impression on him. Yeah. And but we succeeded.

GULIHUR: That's great. I'm sure. I'm sure it was cathartic for him.

THOMPSON: It probably was, God I don't know. I mean, this isn't necessarily anything to pat yourself on the back about but I know we started with, do you ever hear of Amyl nitrate?

GULIHUR: No, I haven't

THOMPSON: It's a little cartridge, that glass cartridge that comes in a net. And you break it. If you're having a heart attack and sniff it in it. It opens your pores and gives you an oxygen?

GULIHUR: Oh, yes, I think yes. I think I've heard of this. Yes.

THOMPSON: You know, little steps at time. So anyway, so So that part there was there was a fair bit of illicit um never anything, never LSD or anything, needles or whatever, but spent a lot of time on the beach. And John, we met a guy in Pango, Pango Pango, Tim Nalli, who was wandering his way to Australia, and the three of us hooked up for, you know, a couple of years. John finally got on, I ended up working on the floor of the Sydney Stock Exchange. As a trader, I would get orders called down. And it was very un-electronic. It was all paper. And, in fact, I think I was maybe the only American on the floor of the Sydney Stock Exchange. During a mineral boom, a thing called Poseidon started at two cents and became worth \$22 or something. And took every mining stock in Australia along with it. And it was the time when the America's Cup was being held in Newport. And they were they were sailboats not these things they have now. And the Aussies, I think the boat was the Gretel, the Aussies one, one race. And they were getting hammered. Every time they it's every four years and for the last 12 years, they were getting crucified. And they finally won one race. And I was in the floor of the stock exchange, when the New York Yacht Club overturned the victory for some legal reason, whether it was created or not, and it was, you know, it's funny once again, I was treated ill, entire Ozzy contention on the floor of the stock exchange. Not quite unlike going back to my fraternity being called a moral coward. He Ozzy's

were fabulous in terms of how they treated Americans, they remember what the what we did for them in the Second World War, right, et cetera.

GULIHUR: It was the anti war sentiment in Australia.

THOMPSON: Not at all. No. Okay. And they had a contingent of predominantly Malaysian CT fighters that were, you know, Ranger equivalent communist terrorists, the Aussies and men and to help fight the communist terrorists in Malaysia. And they were wonderful in but a very small contingent, I don't think, I don't know if there were 100 of them in Vietnam, or they were even battled

GULIHUR: The longtan. Right. The Aussies. Okay. I think it wasn't a big it wasn't as significant as the Americans were in Vietnam. Oh, no, no, right. No,

THOMPSON: God, no. I mean, we. We lost what? 50,000 men,

GULIHUR: Right. Or even the South Koreans even put more than the Australians. Right.

THOMPSON: It's the South Koreans. We're, without doubt not controlled by the US Army. You know, okay, you're on guard duty, but we Can't let you have bullets because, you know, it's I don't know. I mean, that's just because they would go they might start something.

THOMPSON: There wasn't no yet. Nummies north or Viet Cong within, you know, a mile of a rock outpost. Yeah, they were. They were nuts. They were so good. I always, I don't know, if you could, you know, link them to or equate them with a Greenbrae. But they had a pretty big outpost and not not six man teams. I guess that's a unit is Special Forces. I got my first Thompson submachine gun from Greenbrae. And having had zero training on it, I was in that underground bunker. And I had the gun between my knees. And it's a 45. Right? How did Matt and mag is in the magazine. And I pulled the bolt back and watch it pick up around and didn't know it was a fixed firing pin. Yeah. I've seen I knew those the hole, a hole that size of Chicago next to my foot. The round went. But anyway, that's a long way from John English and IB and Viet are being in Australia. We had a wonderful time there and the Aussies are great. They work predominantly in order to travel. Right? You know, they work for six months somewhere and then get enough money to buy an airplane ticket. God knows where. So, and I

met my wife, the mother of my two kids in Australia. Elizabeth was was a country girl from Glen Innes. She had gone to finishing school, she went to school at Sacred Heart and Australia where they were meaner than the Viet Cong to the to the female students. The nuns were strict as heck, she went to school for a year and Switzerland, and then came down to Sydney to work. And I met her in Sydney and we were married in Surfers Paradise, where at the time there was one five story hotel that her parents had a piece of and now it's like my— Have you ever heard of surfers? It's like Miami Beach. They have a Formula One race there. It's an incredibly successful beach. You know, it's like Miami, just condos up and down the beach. But my dad and mom and John English had just left Sydney on his motorcycle, we both bought motorcycles. I begged my parents for the money and they reluctantly helped me. Which wasn't bad, because I had a motorcycle at Dartmouth. But John had never ridden had never ridden on a motor— driven a motorcycle, and Australia, the drivers on the right and to learn to ride a motorcycle, it like an England or Australia. It's quite quite fearful because you know, your instincts are not to go to the left or, you know, anyway, he survived. And when Elizabeth and I were getting married and surfers he happened to be in Broken Hill on his way to Darwin, heading back to America. He came back for the wedding. I had a friend of mine was head of a company called Martin Corporation, which was a branch I think of Wells Fargo, venture capitalist branch of Wells Fargo. He was heading that up in Sydney. And he was my best man. He was married to a Dillingham lady. And Dillingham is one of the seven founding white families of Hawaii, the pineapple.

GULIHUR: Oh I didnt know

THOMPSON: People and I saw John and I on our way to Australia spent a couple of days with the Dillingham in Hawaii. We had a great trip going from going from New York Athletic Club where we left in a car that we were assigned to go cross country in on behalf of the owner who put their car with this company that does that sort of thing. We went, we went to Vail [Colorado] we went, spent some time in flo— caro— and California. Anyway, I don't know if I'm getting way out of [inaudible].

GULIHUR: No, no, you're good. What? What ultimately ultimately made you leave Australia.

THOMPSON: I started a company with a friend who was an accountant at the firm, the brokerage firm I worked for mass producing picture frames and selling them at department stores. And it was one heck of an uphill climb. We were essentially competing with the Japanese and absolutely underfunded would be a no exaggeration. We had no money. But we designed a piece of machinery, air operated that brought four corners together. And you know, you could hand gun staples into each corner. And so we figured out that we could make them pretty inexpensively. But it wasn't making any money. For sure. We ended up Elizabeth's father helped us buy a neat townhouse terrace house, they called them in Paddington, which is a suburb of Sydney. And I ended up using that as a factory. And there wasn't— we ended up writing factory space, but it was looked like a long, hard battle to make this thing, successful. And my dad wanted to retire, and he came down to Australia and said, would you be interested working at his company? And I said, I'll think about it. And we, Michael, and Michael cash and my partner and I put our business artist frame was the name of it on the market, we couldn't sell it. And we will I remember we wanted \$20,000 for it. So we put 49% of it on the market for \$20,000 and sold it. Clearly nobody was really massaging the numbers very successfully. But it sounded better if we were going to stay in keep an interest in it to the buying public so we you know, and we bailed on it. But my dad coming down, and you know, Sweet Bert was the name of a company that he had. He had purchased from Wayne Burt, and I came back and worked for him for a year until he could no longer stand working with me. Because I thought everything he did was wrong [chuckle]. I knew better on any number of things, and in the time that I was working with him, I had an opportunity to really get involved with the community. We put on a tennis tournament that was won by people whose names you've probably never heard of. But Jimmy Connors won it two years and Ivan Lendl won it in a minute it was a it was voted as one of the top 10 tournaments in the world by TENNIS Magazine, with a little nudge from four full page ads from our tennis tournament.

GULIHUR: I'm actually a huge tennis fan.

THOMPSON: Yeah, you are?

GULIHUR: Yeah, but that was an Stowe. Right? Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Yeah, I cheer

THOMPSON: I charied it for, did you go to the bathroom?

GULIHUR: Yes. I saw.[poster in his bathroom for stowe tennis tourney]

THOMPSON: Yeah. Well, that was the tournament that I chaired Much to my father's disappointment– probably not but because I was away. I mean, we had to build. We had to build a tennis court. We had to figure out that you need tickets. You know, I mean, this was[inaudible]

GULIHUR: Line judges

THOMPSON: And line judges and volunteers and

GULIHUR: Ball boys

THOMPSON: Ball boys and rooms for the players. And it was it was great. And they you know, we had Yeah, anyway.

GULIHUR: And what year was this?

THOMPSON: I think that say says 79

GULIHUR: 79? okay.

THOMPSON: Okay, I came back and 73

GULIHUR: Right

THOMPSON: Back from Australia. So I think it was 78, 79. It was four years. It's a funny town [Stowe, Vermont] , I got involved with a horse show that came to Stowe and the people in horse shows are phenomenally wealthy, you know, the demographics, what it did for the town. And we had the opportunity to have a permanent horse show, but the town–you know. This other friend of mine, Paul Spear and I went before the Select Board was a hearing. And I'll never forget one of the one of the questions raised was, doesn't horse manure draw flies. And, you know, I don't want flies in my house. I said to Paul let's can this idea, if that's the kind of heat we're

going to get, it's like going through an environmental snail darter process to. So we didn't go further for the horse show. And in the same vein, there was there wasn't enough financial enthusiasm to keep it in Stowe for further. So it went, I think it went down to Stratton, then it went to New Haven, then what became the Miami open, you know, that date, you know, went from \$75,000 prize money to, you know, show up and get 150 grand, or whatever you do now, for a tennis tournament, but we put— we found rooms and with the community with all the players, and it was a hell of a wonderful experience.

GULIHUR: Yeah. So, you came back in 73?

THOMPSON: Yeah, and worked for Sweet [Sweet Burt], and my dad, right.

GULIHUR: And how was that coming back to the United States right around the end of the war?

THOMPSON: It, it was very, it was— very nothing, I shouldn't use the word very. I didn't have much of a feeling for it, for the war. Which is amazing, because I was— when when did we pull out what was 74? [inaudible] I was appalled by the the pictures of the, you know, escaping on the helicopters on the American Embassy and especially from my understanding of and from all of my biased sources of news, which weren't many of them available. But we had the North Vietnamese virtually at the negotiating table, because of their losses that the Tet Offensive. Where in to this day, I don't know. You know, I haven't looked into how valid that is. But they had tremendous losses. And I think we at that particular period lost, I think maybe 5000 Americans through the Tet. Are you familiar with that?

GULIHUR: I don't know the exact casualty numbers, no.

THOMPSON: Me neither. And maybe I just swept it out of my mind because I was in a country that had very little respect for the reasons given for being, you know, the domino theory.

GULIHUR: Yeah, right

THOMPSON: You know, I said, you need a reason. The domino theory is a good reason. I always thought it was because the South China Sea had incredible oil.

GULIHUR: Ahh yes, theres always an ulterior motive.

THOMPSON: But it never got played, and it certainly didn't make headlines. I guess Walter Cronkite really put the cap on America when he said, get the hell out of there. But– the biggest impact that had on me was because of the way we handled the war. What a terrible waste of lives.

GULIHUR: Right.

THOMPSON: Because it certainly could have been– if there's any such thing as winning the war like that we sure as hell could have won it. But that never surfaces. That argument doesn't surface. You know, we partied up with bad leaders in Vietnam that were, you know that that was, but they were, they were the best that we could find at the time. I think that had a lot to do with, with our, with the loss– in the losing the war that we did, you know, we had a lot of popular [inaudible], we had a lot of programs out there to try and bring the Vietnamese people more on our side. But none of them worked as well as the, the Viet Congs, whether it was by force, or, you know, whatever, however they did it. Don't forget, it was not a civil war, that the South Vietnamese were not, if they had their choice, they would not have hooked up with the North Vietnamese at all. At least, that's my spin on history.

GULIHUR: Right.

THOMPSON: They weren't necessarily delighted with the American bombings and what we were doing, but they're the North Viet, the North Vietnam conquered the South. As far as I'm concerned.

GULIHUR: Right

THOMPSON: It's the way I look at it wasn't the south capitulated they, they butchered the I mean, you go, I went back to Vietnam. God knows how many years ago, but maybe maybe six or seven years ago, and you go to Da nang. And they were still hurting from what the North did. You know, I went to Hanoi, and it was ebullient, festive, strong, and you know, there were more cannon factories, and it was booming and parts of they– they took it out on the South that we're supporting. Just probably like the God knows who in Afghanistan, you know, not treating those that help the Americans particularly well.

GULIHUR: Right. When you returned to Vietnam, what was the motive for that?

THOMPSON: It wasn't really to see. I knew the places that for example, where we had battles. You couldn't find I couldn't I wouldn't be— they wouldn't be accessible the A Shau Valley, and I was with a friend Ted Herrick and we were both more he had a travel agency. Do a trip for us. It was fabulous. You know, we went to we were bound to— bound for Cambodia. But that fell through we went through Vietnam, we went through Thailand, we went through North Vietnam. And it was just a good itinerary. And I thought it was you know, I've never been I've never been to the wall [Vietnam Memorial Wall, D.C.]. Not having any interest to this day, really. To go to the wall. I think—

GULIHUR: And the wall are you speaking of?

THOMPSON: Washington, DC.

GULIHUR: Oh, that's right.

THOMPSON: For some reason, rather, I'm twisted enough to think that's paying lip service to the people that died in Vietnam.

GULIHUR: so uh

THOMPSON: Rather than honoring them.

GULIHUR: yeah. Is that your—Is that how you feel?

THOMPSON: [chuckle] Sorry. Yeah, I do. I thought it would be rather traumatic to go there. And I didn't want to this day I'm not you know—ive— I'm not necessarily in love with the way a lot of Vietnam vets carry themselves. I'd much rather be like, the guys that came back from Korea to carry themselves

GULIHUR: The silent ones.

THOMPSON: Well do your job and and, you know, and don't expect all the crap that we're getting to try and I don't know, make amends for some politically bad decisions. We never should have been there. Maybe if we were there.

Maybe we should have tried to win the war. Maybe I don't whatever. But I see—if I see somebody that's wearing a Vietnam hat I usually say hi and say, Where did you serve? But I feel there's some kind of a, or I am giving a lot of vets some kind of a stigma that they probably don't deserve— For— You know, you just I think I guess I have a hard time articulating my— I said twisted once before, I don't want to use it again. But my twisted view of that there, there I am. You know I don't know what part Vietnam played in making Tony Thompson who he is right now. You know, some clearly something.

GULIHUR: Well

THOMPSON: But it's not identifiable. By me anyway. You may say, whatever.

GULIHUR: How did you react to the to the discovery of post traumatic stress disorder in the 80s? Did that was that something that made you reflect on your time in Vietnam?

THOMPSON: No. No. I hesitate to say this. Because that trauma is real for a lot of people. I had I had gone to the VA, for medical prescriptions, glasses and stuff like that the VA and in Vieira, Florida is excellent. The VA in white river junction is awful. Oh, so I heard

GULIHUR: I thought it was great.

THOMPSON: Oh, in in White River. Yeah. When I was young, it was awful. That's super, absolutely great to hear. But that's cool. Or cool. That's good news. But I've gone there for an annual biannual physical. They one of the questions they asked me is have I ever been involved in Agent Orange? And I said, Well, if you call wiping it off you food Yes, I have been. Because that was on the Ho Chi Minh trail when they were at the height, the defoliation. And we saw, you know, we, we never got out of the way. Because we didn't know you should get out of the way. And so I was I was awarded a stipend for I have diabetes, which they attributed to being excuse me, they the attribute—. Possibly attributed and for the benefit of the doubt. They certainly always gave you the benefit of the doubt. The VA,

GULIHUR: Yes, they do.

THOMPSON: And, one of the woman said, look, there's there's money out here that they want to spend on the veterans. Yeah, so feel feel comfortable taking your share of it. So I get some money from the VA. And I'm thankful for that. I have an unending tinnitus, which is ringing in your ears. It's not like I lived with a fifty– 155 [artillery] right next to me, but they claim it has possibly. It's possibly the result of being in Vietnam. Under the circumstance that I was in Vietnam. I don't think you'd get it if you're in Vietnam in the kitchen. But I do have I have it as we speak.

GULIHUR: Yeah.

THOMPSON: And they give me some money for that. So and I take it with this money. So So PTSD or whatever it is. I wish it was devoted more to the people that really had the problems and not necessarily the, you know, and this is a hard thing to say, but I I think a lot of people I shouldn't say a lot of people I should say some people play on it is a crutch or something that suck it up is one way to deal with that stuff. And if it's of the nature that you can't suck it up, then go and get help.

GULIHUR: Did you ever get evaluated for PTSD?

THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah. And they said I ought to, to go speak to people. I said—I said, [chuckle] Okay, actually, I did say, Okay, I had a video call that never, I waited a half an hour on my iPhone, and it never happened.

GULIHUR: Wow, I'm sorry.

THOMPSON: So I don't really think that I deserve the attention that a skilled mental health person should be given because somebody other than me, for my PTSD, I mean, how can you not have some some modest disorder after seeing women and children executed or guy with a in– a –in a poncho? That's where you know.

GULIHUR: Yeah.

THOMPSON: And there are a lot more than than the ones I described. I mean, I assume. But I don't think it's me. There are things that I know, that I can attribute to my being in Vietnam. There are other parts of my personality that I just say, well, that's tough shit. That's Tony Thompson. Love it or leave.

GULIHUR: [exasperated chuckle] Yeah.

THOMPSON: And whether it's because he was in Vietnam, or because he's just got that kind of a DNA., or, so you I don't, I'm not all that comfortable. Not I shouldn't say comfortable. But I've probably said this to you a number of times. I don't know how that experience impacted me.

GULIHUR: But it impacted you somehow.

THOMPSON: Undoubtedly. Right.

GULIHUR: I mean, made you grow up for sure.

THOMPSON: [skepticism] Yeah, I mean, certainly by two years.[Both laugh heartily] I'm not sure if I've gotten rid of all of those.

GULIHUR: Although you said it felt like at Dartmouth, sometimes this is something similar I [experience]. You said it was hard to articulate this. That It was with the professors, you felt like there was something that you knew that they didn't have. Yeah, they couldn't really understand.

THOMPSON: I attribute that to the proximity to where I was. I don't feel that way now about anybody.

GULIHUR: Yeah, okay.

THOMPSON: You know, at all. And that was something that I've I think I felt more in those early days out of Vietnam than— I than I, than I don't at all [anymore feel like that]. How could I? You know?

GULIHUR: Right.

GULIHUR: So, when did you— we go a few more questions. Ah going back to Dartmouth, because kind of want to connect this to um

THOMPSON: My time at Dartmouth

GULIHUR: Your time at Dartmouth, and then Dartmouth today in the community there today. Did you reengage like, like, there was probably a period that you didn't want to ever go back and go talk to people at Dartmouth?

THOMPSON: No, it wasn't more, what I really I had a lot of respect for Dartmouth as a college. I started losing respect for Dartmouth as a college when we determined that it was inappropriate to have the Indian as our mascot.

GULIHUR: Oh, what year was that again?

THOMPSON: God knows that. You know, Dartmouth was founded as a college to educate Indians, whether it did or whether it didn't, whatever, but obviously, that was a lot. It was quite a while ago that Dartmouth was had the foresight to do what now you better damn well do or your you know, or your the Washington Commodores and, and or the Cleveland Commodores and the Washington commanders or anybody that you know. I find it– I find it offensive the direction we're going in. I always thought that it was a– and I'm a white guy. I'm not an Indian. So, okay, maybe the Indians were being disrespected or felt disrespected by having Dartmouth be– have a mascot. But I always looked at it as an honor. You know, I always I always felt that that that there was good in it. You know, and I never maybe looked at it from the odd Indians point of view. That doesn't think it's good. So, So be it. Okay. That always bothered me, and there were some issues of some professors that got tenure, that I found their behavior and their politics where were, were you know, not just not to my choosing but unhealthy for the college. And I haven't, I haven't gotten away from that. In fact, I feel more that I think Dartmouth is more left leaning than, than I wish it were, I don't like, especially places like California, and some of this is, is hearsay from a group of old timers that that should do a little more research, but the inability for somebody that's not a proud boy, but but tends to speak in a very deeply conservative manner not being allowed on the campus.

GULIHUR: Right.

THOMPSON: Or getting booted off. I mean, come on. I find that remarkable. And I don't think academia today, from my limited understanding is offering. I think the socialist agenda is absolutely wonderful. But I also from a capitalist point of view, I think, I think it's got to be paid for. I don't think– I think they should teach a class in ethics at Harvard Business School. But it truly isn't

part of Harvard Business School. Maybe it is now I don't know. But I think greed has made socialism look far more attractive, right, than it than it should be. Because there isn't a socialist country, in a world that has what America has. And if we go any further down that route, which I think we are, I think we're in for a big shock.

GULIHUR: And what do you mean by what we have in compared to other socialist countries?

THOMPSON: The freedoms the the ability to Yeah, you may be absolutely right. Maybe we have everything we have nothing more than they have. Do you think socialism has worked in most countries? I shouldn't be interviewing you.

GULIHUR: Well, I am not a geopolitical expert, or uh

THOMPSON: Neither am I. You can hear that I'm not.

GULIHUR: I would definitely say we have some freedoms when it comes to say firearms. That's something other socialist countries don't have, but we are quite socialist, but we still have those freedoms. So uh.

THOMPSON: Well, I look at South American countries that are run by the Venezuela's the Argentina's the Brazil's that have taken socialism to its natural course. And I don't think they're happy.

GULIHUR: No

THOMPSON: And I think that's where we're headed.

GULIHUR: Right.

THOMPSON: Whether we like it or not.

GULIHUR: So, yeah, the the other change that happened at Dartmouth was the, well,

THOMPSON: Women?

GULIHUR: Oh well we can go down that one to if you like. I was gonna say ROTC. Yeah, but yeah.

GULIHUR: How, how do you feel like with the return of ROTC with, with Jim Wright coming in, and basically making it possible for a guy like me [Afghanistan Veteran] to show up there? That's definitely.

THOMPSON: You know, a guy like you would give it a lot of weight. Because for obvious reasons. A guy like me, thinks of it more, you know, with with a less understanding of what a big move it was, and how good it was to get it back. I think it should be there. And so what it is but I don't know. I never followed, what, what got rid of it. I don't know what what students in faculty forces forced it off the campus.

GULIHUR: But when you heard about it, that must have been you must have had zero respect for the decision. At least.

THOMPSON: Yeah, but but I had a lot. I lost a lot of respect for Dartmouth, you know, on the road from from being called a moral coward. You know, and in part of it wasn't a loss of respect, it was just I distance myself from the college. I give my class news more for respect of those that are there or whatever, but I'm, I'm not, and I respect anybody that can get into Dartmouth because I think it's a challenge. It's, you know, it's not like just apply and you're in, I mean, you, you have to, you have to show some signs of whatever, I don't know what they are. But whether it's SATs scores, or, or the number of trophies you won for attending class, which I guess is now what happens in academia at the lower grades. But I've distanced myself from Dartmouth, I did go back and dragged John English, back with me to a house he bought in— right across the river. What— Norwich, because his daughter went to Dartmouth. And he was he was extremely, I can't put words in my mouth, but he didn't attend many of the functions at our 50th reunion.

GULIHUR: How was that 50th reunion?

THOMPSON: Well, it was it was centered a lot around Vietnam for reasons that I didn't know why. And it was shocking, shockingly supportive of anybody that thought the war was wrong. Including a lot of veterans, a number of

veterans that were were there. I'm not sure what you know, what their, what their situation was in Vietnam, I don't think it should make a difference. I've often thought being in Vietnam doesn't give you doesn't enlighten you very much. It's much better to be not in Vietnam and try and read the broadest spectrum of news you can. But I also went back for Burns, what's his name's 10 part series on Vietnam,

GULIHUR: Ken Burns, yeah.

THOMPSON: And didn't get pissed off until he opened his mouth.

GULIHUR: [chuckle] What did he say?

THOMPSON: When he said I am going to be— I've made every effort to show my lack of bias.

GULIHUR: Oh

THOMPSON: And I watched the 10.

GULIHUR: Yeah.

GULIHUR: Well there's certain professors at Dartmouth who also have contention with Ken Burns.

THOMPSON: Really?

GULIHUR: So yeah, you're not alone there

THOMPSON: Was that the guys that didn't like his baseball movie are?

GULIHUR: No, no.

THOMPSON: No, he's a hell of a hell of a documentarist.

GULIHUR: They actually specifically worked with him on the Vietnam documentary and they

THOMPSON: help out the your, your professor?

GULIHUR: He's, he's the one I'm speaking of. Yeah, he's

THOMPSON: Interesting.

THOMPSON: No, interesting, because I thought everybody kissed his ass.

GULIHUR: Nope

THOMPSON: And not to show disrespect for him. But I'm glad to hear some people have have not held him up in a holy grail. Yeah. Because mainly because you can cheap in the lives of those people that died in Vietnam by sort of presenting a picture that says we never should have been there. I think.

GULIHUR: Do you, Do you feel like it's impossible to hold those two perspectives? That the war was wrong, but we can also honor the soldiers?

THOMPSON: I do. Yeah. I don't think the war was wrong. No, I'm sorry. Yes, I think, you know, what's wrong? What, what's wrong to me was that we lost, when we could have won, I mean, period. But popular opinion was louder, and I don't know. You know, what the numbers were that. It's like right now, I think there are things going on that in America that I don't necessarily think that the average American is well represented by these two extremes that are floating out there. You know, Trump and and I hate to say it, but Biden, you know, the so I If I were to your question was, do you think it's a dichotomy.

GULIHUR: Do you think it's impossible to hold those two perspectives? that we honor our veterans and they did a good job in the war. Like, but also that may be politically, there was like, it was not correct. Right?

THOMPSON: I think that the definition of correct is is really difficult.

GULIHUR: Certainly

THOMPSON: You know, because I thought we were there protecting our own interests. I don't think so much we were there to try and make the Vietnamese anything. We were there, and yeah, the domino theory. In hindsight, I mean, look at Germany, look at Japan, you know, after their, you know, wars everybody's recovered and almost forgotten about them. Saigon is

an incredibly vibrant wonderful city after the war. I just think we were there to protect what we thought were was a necessary. It was never proven to me that it wasn't necessary. So you know, how you define correct like I said earlier, not on tape but the trial of the Lieutenant Calley, or whatever his name was, I always felt was not a not a misjustice, but sort of put into perspective the problems of the war when they're viewed you know, outside of outside of—

GULIHUR: Outside of the ground [ground level perspective]?

THOMPSON: Yeah, now I'm not trying to say you have to be there to to know about it. But what what happened in that My Lai? Was was atrocious, but those are the same kids that are throwing grenades at them.

GULIHUR: Yeah.

THOMPSON: And that doesn't make it right to shoot them. So you know, let's—you don't— that cliché, you do what you got to do. Doesn't hold well, in war, if you're trying to be nice.

GULIHUR: Yeah.

THOMPSON: So you know, get rid of your do what they did in Costa Rica, they got rid of their military and put it in education. We don't— we're getting rid of our military. Did you know about that black powder plant in, In Louisiana that blew up two years ago?

GULIHUR: No

THOMPSON: There was a black powder, which believe it or not, is more than just the stuff you put down for an old revolutionary reenactment. But for two years, we haven't been able to rebuild it. We don't have any black powder, which is one of the mat— one of the most important ingredients for almost all of our armaments, like chronically. Yeah, so here we are. But that's way it aside, are you are we running into time? restraints, or?

GULIHUR: Yeah, I mean.

THOMPSON: Do you want me to shut up?

GULIHUR: No, no, not necessarily.

THOMPSON: Bad word. I didn't mean that.

GULIHUR: Well, I, I don't necessarily have much more unless..

THOMPSON: I'm wondering if I've brought the Dartmouth into the picture to the extent that you you had in mind. My real thing was that I kind of distanced myself from Dartmouth, which is an answer, but not necessarily an answer of how I've integrated or whatever with my experiences with Dartmouth, whatever. I mean, I've been back a couple of times, which is interesting, but Well, sir.

GULIHUR: Well, sir, you are now. You now have built lineage and heritage for veterans on campus, and having you at the school at the college. That would be an honor. And you would only be receiving support from the student body today.

THOMPSON: I wouldn't mind taking some grief either.[chuckle] Yeah, I mean, I, I can I can handle better now than I did. You know, I think I could argue with somebody that had a problem with a war more than having my back patted because I went. Really, I feel so strongly and I've brought Korea up 100 times,

GULIHUR: It's important

THOMPSON: To hear that, that suck it up, man we have freedom isn't free. All the cliches in the world that you want are mostly cliches because they're right. They're true. We have to be prepared to fight for what we have. And to fight for we have we need to be militarily strong. Maybe we're getting back there a little bit. I I'm not terribly impressed with, you know, I think I think it's a little late. I think. I've watched movies of Chinese marching on their aircraft carrier decks, and I say, oh, my gosh, they remind me the ROK. I don't know, if we can pull out of our country, that same group of people that landed in Normandy, we could find people like yourself.

GULIHUR: I appreciate that.

THOMPSON: People like myself, but how many of them are there? You know, the people that don't want to work? Probably wouldn't want to you know, storm the beaches of New Jersey either or whatever. I don't know.

GULIHUR: Well, it definitely doesn't seem like the military is going away anytime soon.

THOMPSON: Yeah.

GULIHUR: And,

THOMPSON: It can't but whether what, you know, I am a huge believer. And when I run for president, it will be my, really my platform; conscription. I think every American has to spend two years not in the military, but serving having some skin in the game. We're serving their country. They don't.

GULIHUR: It definitely breeds a different type of citizen. I'll say that.

THOMPSON: Yeah

GULIHUR: Yeah. Well, Tony, that Yeah. With that. Thank you. Thank you so much, sir.

THOMPSON: Well, my pleasure. It was a pleasure meeting, a fellow vet, and someday somebody will interview you, I hope.

GULIHUR: Sounds good.

THOMPSON: Right. Yeah. Thanks.

ABSTRACT-

Tony Thompson Dartmouth class of 1964, enlisted as a Radioman in 1963 taking a hiatus from college at the recommendation of his dean. He went to Vietnam during the advisory period in 1964. The first 6 months he spent rotating in and out of Aloui and Tabat in the A Chau valley. The latter half of his deployment he was attached to the decorated ARVN 1st regiment at the DMZ and saw their destruction in March of 1965. He earned bronze star and Vietnam cross of gallantry. His potential for PTSD from watching executions of civilians is discussed. Tony returned to Dartmouth 3 months later and had a poor experience with the anti-war sentiment. The aggressive anti-war environment made him move off campus to finish his degree. He left the U.S. for the less hostile environment of Australia. Returned to Vermont in the 90's. Tony elaborates on his geopolitical sentiment and the direction of contemporary American society.