

UPCOUNTRY HISTORY MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

TRANSCRIPT: FRANK [REDACTED]

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Interviewee: Frank [REDACTED]
Interviewer: Katie [REDACTED]
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START OF VIDEOCLIP 1 (33:47)

Katie [REDACTED] Alright, my name is Katie Womble and today I'm speaking with Frank Foster. It's March 8th, 2016 and we're going to talk about his service in Vietnam. But first, when and where were you born?

Frank [REDACTED] [Good] morning, Katie. I was born here in Greenville, in 1941. A genuine pre-war baby.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: My father was a lieutenant in the National Guard, so he got called up in World War II. We lived in a little apartment across from the Poinsett Club while he was overseas.

KW: Is that knocked down now?

FF: No, it's still there. It's called *The Commons*.

KW: Okay.

FF: I think Seabrook Marchant's company rents it. I've been dying to go back and see it because I still have my first memory there. After my father came back from World War II, he built a house over on Aberdeen Drive, near Augusta Circle. I went to Augusta Circle, then Greenville Junior High—where you caught the bus and came uptown. Then I went to Greenville High for a year before going up to Christ School in Arden, North Carolina, where about five or six of us from Greenville, who needed to go to boarding schools, went [laughs].

KW: Okay.

FF: After that I went down to The Citadel and when I graduated --

KW: When did you graduate from The Citadel?

FF: Nineteen sixty-four. [I] received a regular commission as an artillery officer and was assigned to Germany. The old 2nd Battalion of the 14th Field Artillery [Regiment] of the 4th Armored Division, in Fürth, stationed at an old Luftwaffe kaserne, outside of Nuremberg. That was pretty interesting, in my early twenties, to end up commanding an artillery battery and be responsible for nuclear weapons. I came back in '65 and I married my sweetheart from Charleston.

KW: That was Linda?

FF: I'm her souvenir of The Citadel. And then, by '67, the personnel requirements for officers and combat arms officers was so high that all of the battalions and fighting units in

Germany were being drawn down. We went from twenty-three officers to nine or eleven. All of us eventually got orders to Vietnam.

KW: Who managed the nuclear weapons and what not?

FF: We had a battery of self-propelled one-five-five guns [155mm howitzers] and the smallest nuclear round at that time was designed for the one-five-five gun. We kept a number of nuclear rounds stored in our ammunition depot. We went through intensive training to be able to assemble it, put the fuse on it, and fire it because, at that time, we expected the Russians to come down the Fulda Gap.

KW: The what gap? I'm sorry.

FF: The Fulda, F-U-L-D-A, which is a natural invasion route into Germany from the Russian side.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: So really, the only way ever expected to stop them was with the employment of nuclear weapons. However, that didn't happen, so that was good [coughs].

KW: Did it seem like it was going to happen though?

FF: Well, we trained very hard and you never knew when they were going to have alerts. It could be three 'o' clock in the morning. You'd have to get your guns. It could be twenty degrees outside. You'd have to get your battery started up and then you would maneuver it to an assembly area, maybe ten or fifteen miles from the kaserne, where we were stationed. I'll never forget that we had a medical corps captain, named Hugh Setzer, who was a Citadel graduate. [He] actually been [as]signed as an infantry lieutenant in Korea then after that he'd come back and gone to medical school. He was our battalion surgeon. It was very difficult to start the diesel engines when it's about twenty degrees outside, when they been sitting in the motor pool.

But Hugh gave me a very small vial of [pause] I'm trying to remember. What is the thing that you put people to sleep with?

KW: You mean like laughing gas stuff?

FF: Yeah, we're close, we're close... ether!

KW: Yeah, they don't use it anymore.

FF: [He] gave me a very small bottle of ether and said, "If you will crawl up in the air intakes and pop the ether—don't breathe—and have the driver hit the starter, it will suck the ether in and start the engines right away." So the first time we had an alert, at three 'o' clock in the morning, it was twenty degrees. I would crawl in—we had an air intake in the front of these big self-propelled guns—and pop the ether bottle, and hold my breath, and the driver would start it. I was the only one who could get his whole battery out of the kaserne to get them started.

Most of them couldn't get them started.

KW: Wow! [laughs] Did you give away your secret?

FF: Say again?

KW: Did you give away your secret?

FF: Yeah, after a while, I had to share it with the other officers [because] it was only fair.

But not the first time.

KW: Yeah.

FF: But in '67, I got my orders and was assigned to Vietnam. Long flight there.

KW: Straight from Germany, or --

FF: Went from Germany—I had thirty days leave in the United States—and then to California. Then from California to Hawaii, to Vietnam.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: I remember landing. One of the first things we saw when I landed was a U2 spy plane. So I figured, “Okay, I’m in the combat zone.” I was initially assigned to the general staff because some of the generals wanted me there. If you see on the uniform, on the right-hand side, is a U.S. Army Vietnam patch. Then over here [points] would be the 173rd.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: Very shortly, I finagled an assignment to the 173rd just as the left Biên Hòa, which was outside of Saigon. The 173rd had been the first Army unit deployed to Vietnam, in 1965, and it was a separate Airborne Brigade of about five thousand soldiers. Normally, there would be three brigades in a division. There would be only thirty-five hundred soldiers in a brigade because the support forces—the artillery and the engineers—are separate as part of a division[‘s] troops. But the separate brigade has all of its forces. It has its own artillery, its own engineers, its own little armor unit, its own little MP [military police] unit...

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: I joined them just as they deployed from Biên Hòa to An Khê, which was in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. We were designated the 2nd Field Force Reserve. So that sounds like a cushy job, “Reserve, I like that.” But what it really meant was, anytime there was heavy fighting, we were the ones that got sent.

KW: Did you know that when you managed to get yourself into that job?

FF: Well, it paid more. It paid an \$110 extra dollars a month. It was almost like a thirty percent pay raise. So, I was only in it for the money really—and the big black boots and all that, which we didn’t even wear over there.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: In An Khê, it wasn't very long before we deployed, up to the Central Highlands, to counter a North Vietnamese invasion that was coming in through the area called *Dak To*, not too far from Parrot's Beak, called *Operation MacArthur*. The 4th Infantry Division had a brigade up there as well as a special forces camp at Dak Pek. We deployed in just after two C-130s had been hit by mortar and 120mm NVA rockets and crashed on the runway. So, that was the first thing; when you landed it was kind of depressing that you saw two big C-130s at the end.

KW: Burnt out?

FF: Yeah. We laagered forward of the airfield at base camp called *Eagle*. We were almost in a bowl, completely surrounded. The NVA [North Vietnamese Army] were coming down one way. They had dug in on the mountains on the other side. We had two ARVN, Army of the Republic of Vietnam, Airborne battalions.

KW: Did you work closely alongside with ARVN the whole time you were there?

FF: For about a month I worked with the Vietnamese Airborne Division, which was this patch [points].

KW: Okay.

FF: They were great soldiers, really tough and really hated the Communists. They were fighting up on one side. We were in the valley. Pushing out the other side, the 4th Infantry Division was holding the airstrips, so speak. This is in generalities.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: We started pushing out with a couple of companies, not battalions but companies, up into the hills sort of west of us. We ran into an entire NVA regiment that was dug in. At one time, they surrounded one of our companies and it was a terrible battle called *Hill 875*. I was on the hill next to it at that time and then later we pushed down to marry-up with them. The saddest

thing was that, during the night, when they attacked up Hill 875, they got surrounded by a much larger NVA force. When the fighter bombers came in, two of the Marine jets dropped their five-hundred-pound bombs short into the area, where our wounded and our chaplain was. They were all killed. Later the chaplain was awarded the Medal of Honor for his devotion and heroism during that battle.

KW: Just tending to the wounded? He was tending to the wounded? That kind of thing?

FF: In fact, up in the Pentagon, they have a display with his chalice and other things that we recovered.

KW: My understanding, [be]cause I still don't know a ton about the history of the Vietnam War, but there was a lot of fighting for hills and getting a certain hill. Then you would sort of move on.

FF: Yeah, here's what happened. The NVA was infiltrating into the highlands and they came in unbeknownst to the special forces or the Montagnard forces and really fortified the hills; they looked just like a World War I trench system and bunker system. Generally, we would try to locate them and then hit them with artillery and airstrikes. But in this case, we sort of went hiddididdle up the middle. I got to tell you, the NVA, the only reason they had to be down there was to fight and die. They had no problem with replacements, which I'll explain later from another battle.

KW: Okay.

FF: What some of the prisoners told us is that they came into the village and said, "You're seventeen-years-old, you're old enough to fight. If you desert, we'll come back and shoot your family. That was pretty big incentive to stay the course."

KW: Yeah. Do you think that motivated U.S. soldiers, at the time, to try and finish the war or did it make it more complicated?

FF: It's hard to say the motivation. I was in an elite unit and everybody there was highly motivated.

KW: Yeah.

FF: The Airborne units have a lot of history. It was all volunteers, so we didn't have any draftees. It was a different animal.

KW: Different atmosphere?

FF: Yeah. So anyway, once we really put the air [close air support] onto them on Hill 875, we finished the assault up there and they [the NVA] withdrew back across the border, which we couldn't pursue. We had driven them out of the highlands. At that time then, the brigade moved back along the coast to a town called Tuy Hòa.

KW: Okay, and that's T-U-Y, space, H-O-A?

FF: T-U-Y, space, H-O-A, and somewhere there's a hyphen mark over it.

KW: Okay.

FF: In Tuy Hòa, we were there, doing patrols all through the central area and reconstituting because we took a lot of losses.

KW: When was this?

FF: This was in November of 1967. Thanks for asking about that.

KW: Yeah.

FF: In fact, our losses were so heavy that we received a number of infantry replacements that were not parachutist or airborne-qualified.

KW: Just to fill the gaps?

FF: Just to bring the strength of the unit back up. Otherwise, we'd have been really under strength. They diverted other infantry replacements to us. As soon as we got back to Tuy Hòa, in December and January, we started getting in Airborne replacements. We sent those guys back to regular—what we call *leg-infantry* units.

KW: Okay.

FF: They were not happy to leave. We were not happy to lose them, because you'd form friendships and relationships, but you had to be airborne-qualified to be the 173rd.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: In Tuy Hòa, it was a pretty good set-up there for a while. Unbeknownst to us, Tet was approaching and, on 30 January 1968, the North Vietnamese and the Vietnamese, or Viet Cong, attacked all over Vietnam. In our particular area, the 95th NVA Regiment came down to attack Tuy Hòa North. What was interesting about this was, I was involved in it from the very start and then accompanied the general when he went in. Afterwards, I knew the company commander who led the assault. I was able to go and talk to the North Vietnamese prisoners. Later, the Viet Cong prisoners that we had taken and even the fighter pilots who gave us the direct air support. [I] ended up writing the after action report for [the] plans and ops [operations] officer.

KW: Wow.

FF: So, what happened was, about one 'o' clock in the morning, the 95th NVA Regiment had been infiltrating down through the mountains to attack Tuy Hòa. Their whole purpose was to attack an American artillery unit stationed there, the 319th Artillery [Regiment]. There were a couple of light aircraft on a small airstrip, that ran along the road, on the outskirts of Tuy Hòa. They [the NVA] was [supposed] to blow up the planes. Then they were supposed to go on

through and celebrate Tet after defeating the “puppet troops,” as they said—I’ll give you a bit of their verbiage.

KW: Yeah, please do. What did they mean by puppet troops?

FF: [The NVA was] referring to the soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, the South Vietnamese soldiers.

KW: That would be a good propaganda stance.

FF: I talked to a quartermaster aspirin, whom we captured after the battle and he said that they were late getting down to make the assault because the local guides kind of got them messed up and didn’t get them in position until about three ‘o’ clock in the morning. They was supposed to be accompanied by the 85th VC Battalion, but it didn’t show up because it didn’t think it was such a good idea to make that attack [laughs]. That was there story, because we captured one of their soldiers a little later. In fact, he turned himself in. He said, “No, we weren’t going to go with them.” They had three companies of infantry—about fifty-five men in each company—armed with AK-47s [assault rifles], carrying fifty-five to ninety rounds of ammunition, and maybe two machine guns with three drums each, of a hundred rounds in a drum. Two or three grenades each. A couple of rocket launchers.

KW: So they were armed, but were they well-trained? [The] VC.

FF: They were very well motivated and their comment was a counterpart. Our soldiers, that came in, we traditionally carried five-hundred rounds of ammunition for the M16 [assault rifle] and fifteen-hundred rounds per machinegun.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: Their comments, to me, the ones I was interrogation with later, was, “We don’t shoot wildly like you do. We aim and shoot.” But never in the whole time there did I see the NVA or

the VC with more than fifty or sixty rounds. Ninety rounds would be the max that they would carry—I mean, they [Union and Confederate soldiers] carried forty rounds in the [American] Civil War, when they were loading them [muzzle-loading rifles] from the front and not semiautomatic weapons. So anyway, they made the assault about three ‘o’ clock in the morning. They got into the first line of artillery bunkers, before guys really got up, and had a heck of a fight.

KW: Do you remember what the weather was like that day?

FF: Yeah, it was beautiful. Always sun shining, seventy-four degrees, slight breeze off of the ocean. We got called as a reaction force, so D Company, 4th Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry [Regiment] came in by helicopter and they landed by six ‘o’ clock. Unfortunately, the artillery battalion commander had been killed leading the counterattack. The Airborne troops just drove right through the perimeter and drove out the NVA. We brought up 40mm Dusters, which had twin 40mm guns—it’s really an antiaircraft gun—but once you depressed it and shot it into a bunker, it pretty-well wiped it out. The NVA started withdrawing. As they moved away from us, and down the airfield, there was a South Vietnamese prison camp. They captured one of the towers and started shooting from there. But it didn’t take much on that, to knock those guys out. They kept withdrawing down --

KW: Sorry, [but] do you know if they took prisoners out of there?

FF: No, they were never able to get any of the prisoners out.

KW: So they moved on out of there and then you were saying they went somewhere else.

FF: The NVA, at this time, probably lost... fifty to sixty guys out in front because we also brought in what’s called *Spooky*; was a [A]C-47 [gunship] with miniguns on it. It caught some of them out in the rice paddies and it’s just like doing people with a hose.

KW: Yeah.

FF: So they slid away from the artillery operation, down the side of the airfield, along the rice paddies, into a little village. What we didn't know at the time that there was maybe three-hundred-and-something of them. D Company, the attacking force that came into help, was an understrength infantry company. I think Captain Jackson had thirty-five men per platoon and really only two platoons. So he had maybe seventy-guys. They pushed down and made an attack into the village. They caught the North Vietnamese facing the wrong way on the initial assault. Several of the guys wiped those guys out and spider-holed until they got to the last ones. They were waiting and they shot each other, which was kind of interesting, but our guy was only wounded so that was good.

KW: Yeah.

FF: Meanwhile, the ARVN 47th Regiment came in from the left and stabilized the high ground. Then we had them trapped but we didn't know how many. The NVA battalion commander had all his men dig in into spider holes.

KW: What's a spider hole?

FF: Think of a fifty-five-gallon drum in the ground, where you pull the top or a camouflage over it. You can't really see anybody there until they push it up and take a shot at you. Now, when they get out of it, it's a little difficult because then they have to come out.

KW: Then they were vulnerable.

FF: I don't think he was planning for them to come out. General Schweitzer, meanwhile, had come up. He was the brigade commander. He and Lieutenant Colonel Johnson, who was the battalion commander, ordered Jackson to assault the village, to capture it. By this time, Jackson was down to... maybe sixty men and there were maybe still two hundred of those guys

there, still dug in with all kinds of weapons. The General decided that we would drop CS [tear] gas in there and then assault in gas masks, which was not a really cool thing to do because the sea breeze blows gas away pretty quick. Then you have to go in there wearing a gas mask, which you can only see out of like this [mimics blinders with hands]. So Jacksons men made an assault. They got about halfway through until they really ran into heavy resistance [and] lost maybe a dozen guys. Then they had to withdraw. At that point, we called in airstrikes, a couple of F-100 Thuds [attack aircraft]. The first plane carried four five-hundred-pound bombs and the second one carried four napalms. They made a dry-pass over the village—when I say village too, don't think of it as a big village. If you saw from that photograph it was maybe only two-hundred yards [or] a hundred-and-fifty yards, bordered on one side by the rice paddy [and] on the other side by a huge sand dune.

KW: Did the villagers run into the woods?

FF: They had didi'd [departed] out of there earlier.

KW: Yeah.

FF: The South Vietnamese Combat Police had come in and helped them move out of the way and then secured the line up above so they couldn't get into Tuy Hòa North.

KW: That's good.

FF: The pilots made a first pass over, clearly identified their target, dropped two five-hundred-pound bombs. His wingman deployed the napalm and then came back through and dropped one bomb each, on another pass. It was interesting, talking to one of the guys we captured. He said the first bomb hit in their command post area and killed the deputy commander, the political officer, and wounded the battalion commander. He said the firebomb

came within about three feet of him and burned his arms and legs. So he said he just laid there [laughs] 'till we finally came in.

KW: Until you got him.

FF: What was left tried to start escaping out through the rice paddies. Then the second flight of aircraft, coming in from Biên Hòa, bombed them.

KW: So they still used bombs in the rice paddies. They didn't switch to the guns?

FF: Yeah, you're right, they did. They made passes with the 20mm cannons and those were also pretty detrimental because that would even go down into where the guys were dug in.

KW: Okay.

FF: At this point the battle was pretty much over.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: What was left of Jackson's paratroopers were getting ready to assault, but the 47th ARVN Regiment saw a chance for glory with no fighting and they came down and started taking prisoners.

KW: So where were you in all of this?

FF: I was on the sand dune, up above, trying to stay out of harm's way

KW: Okay.

FF: We were also helping with some of the resupply and then bringing the wounded. We had to carry the wounded up the hill before we could get them on some sort of transport. Then a helicopter would take them out. It was interesting, in that we pretty well decimated the 2nd Battalion of the 95th NVA Regiment, 30-31 January 1968, including the battalion commander, the deputy rank, [and] the political officer.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: On 30 March, they attacked again into Tuy Hòa North, almost completely reconstituted with replacements sent down from --

KW: Replacement officers too?

FF: Everybody.

KW: Wow.

FF: That was another battle with the D, 16th Armor.

KW: Is that where you were going to tell me how easily they were able to reconstitute?

FF: I don't know how they could do that because the guys had to walk all the way down from North Vietnam. So they obviously had them in the pipeline. Within thirty days, they could bring them off of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, through the mountains, all the way across Vietnam, to the coast. They completely reconstituted that NVA battalion and then attacked again within two months. You had to give them credit for being absolutely dedicated and fanatical about it.

KW: Why do you think they were?

FF: Their mission was to overthrow the puppet government of South Vietnam—as they said—drive out the Americans, and restore the fatherland. That's a direct quote. So what you finally figured out after years, is that it's pretty hard to suppress a nationalist uprising. In this particular case, the communist government did not care what their losses were. They had an almost infinite supply of soldiers, supplies from Russia and China, and they figured they could wait us out; they waited the French out.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: If you ask me, fifty years later, "What did I learn from this?" I learned we should never follow the French anywhere [laughs].

KW: [laughs] Except to Paris. Yeah, French colonial history in Vietnam was a mess.

FF: Well, when I left in, I guess, the late fall of '68, we had moved to Bồng Sơn and we were capturing fifteen-year-olds, who had tattoos on their arm that said, "Born in the North to die in the South." They were fatalistic about it.

KW: This is a little bit not historical to ask, but when you hear about youths being radicalized today to fight for ISIS [the Islamic State of Iraq], does that ring a bell for you or are they apples and oranges?

FF: I think a couple of things. One, to a large extent, they really felt that they were going to unify Vietnam under Communism and [that] everybody's life would be better. Two, they weren't given much of a choice. But, on the other hand, there wasn't a heck of a lot to do in North Vietnam. It was a lot more exciting, when you're eighteen to twenty-two—with the history of their fighting against the French—to come down and fight, then to be in a rice paddy bending over. It's the same way in almost any war; you can always get the young guys off the farm because it's a lot more exciting. I sort of rambled here.

KW: You're good. You talked about Tuy Hòa North. How do you say it? Sorry. Tuy Hòa? And then there were two battles. There's the Tuy Hòa North and then there's Tuy Hòa in March of '68. Is that what you --

FF: Well actually, when I was there, the biggest battle was in November '67 at Dak To and the final capture of Hill 875.

KW: So it was pretty shortly after you arrived.

FF: Yes, and our losses were probably twenty-five percent or thirty percent. Then we came back and reconstituted at Tuy Hòa North. We continued sending out patrols, we deployed a lot of long-range reconnaissance patrols and stuff like that. And then Tet, with the attack on Tuy Hòa North.

KW: While that attack on Tuy Hòa North was taking place, did you all have knowledge that it was taking place all over?

FF: No, it was a complete surprise. Only as we were getting involved, did more information come in that they were attacking Saigon. All up and down, almost every place they could. It was a mammoth deployment—it was almost a complete destruction of the Viet Cong, their losses were so great, once the Marines cleared them out of Huế. It was a shame that the media called it a great communist victory when, in essence, their entire Viet Cong infrastructure was destroyed. We thought that was a real turning point. As I got ready to leave, towards the fall of '68, when we were capturing fifteen-year-olds, we were beginning to think, “Well, maybe their manpower pool is exhausted.” On the hand, they fought the French for, what, twenty years? They were prepared to fight forever and I don't think the Americans were. The South Vietnamese, they would fight. They knew what would happen when the Communists were coming. In fact, you can open the Greenville phonebook right now and look up the word *Nguyen* and you'd be surprised at how many Vietnamese are in Greenville. When I was doing a book on Vietnamese awards, I was able to track down a Vietnamese paratrooper and he told me that, after the fall of Vietnam, that they fought on for almost a year, [un]till they were out of –

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BEGINNING OF VIDEOCLIP 2 of 2 (8:35)

FF: -- clothes, food, and ammunition. Then he went three years in a rehabilitation camp and was able to get to a refugee camp and eventually to the United States.

KW: Yeah. I could tell what you meant by “rehabilitation camp,” but for someone reading the transcript or the interview, can you explain what the rehabilitation camp was?

FF: I’m not sure I can explain it. I wasn’t there. But he did not want to talk about it, so I assume it was [a] very painful process; an extraction of revenge, somewhat, against the enemy forces. They won. The South Vietnamese lost.

KW: When did you come back to the United States?

FF: In the fall of ’68.

KW: Right. What was the public sentiment towards the war at that point?

FF: Pretty negative.

KW: Yeah? It had already turned?

FF: It was certainly not a warm welcome, coming back. You know, you’re in uniform...

KW: Did you wear your uniform in public?

FF: Well, absolutely. I was proud to be coming back as a paratrooper officer.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: There were a couple of remarks, but then on then on the other end, it could be an invitation to get whacked by me to them. It then came back to Greenville for everybody and it was a warm welcome, but nobody really wanted to—they wanted us to win. They wanted to support us here in the South, but nobody was really deeply interested in the war. Everybody was more interested in getting on with their lives here.

KW: How do you think that’s different from World War II and even Korea?

FF: [pause] Well, [in] World War II, I think the entire country embraced the war and the defeat of the Nazis and the Japanese; they were really hacked-off. Korea, I think people tended to ignore it, as much as they could. I think the support of the military had turned a hundred

percent in the last ten years. In fact, as I understand it now, the military is the most respected profession in the United States. But we were young, in our twenties. The infantry guys were eighteen. They were into it. In one part of the assault, a guy grabbed a[n] AK-47 and started attacking with it. It jammed. A North Vietnamese guy popped up. The AK jammed. He went to clear it. The guy ducked behind a hooch. Popped around the other side. It jammed again and he couldn't get him. But finally, the third time, the guy came around, missed the guy standing to the left of me and the American shot him with the AK-47. And finally, I asked him, "Why'd you use the AK-47? Why didn't you use your M16?" He said, "Aww Captain, I never shot a guy with his own gun before" [laughs]. There's some hardcore young guys in there.

KW: You sort of have to be hardcore to take it.

FF: Well, their blood was up.

KW: Yeah.

FF: That's what they were over there for. They volunteered to come. They volunteered to fight.

KW: So you worked mainly with volunteers.

FF: A whole different perspective in an Airborne unit.

KW: Yeah, that is true.

FF: And probably the same for the Marines.

KW: What was I going to ask... Oh yeah, was is strange to come back home? How old were you when you came back home?

FF: I think I was, maybe, twenty-six.

KW: In a lot of ways, you would still be treated like a young adult when you came back, but you'd been in charge of so many people when you were over there. Was that kind of weird?

FF: Yes, it was. You'd have an awful lot of responsibility early on. At twenty-three, to have responsibility for nuclear weapons, a battery of artillery that's six guns, a hundred soldiers. You sort of looked at some of your civilian peers and...

KW: You're like, "What are you doing?" [laughs].

FF: Why would I want to be in any of these careers? It made you a lot more self-reliant and a lot more interested in leaving Greenville and seeing the rest of the world.

KW: Was the textile industry sort of phasing out, in the 60s, in Greenville?

FF: Greenville was dead, absolutely dead. We used to laugh and say, "The holy trinity of Greenville was the Poinsett Club, the Country Club, and Christ Church." [laughs] That's the only three things to do.

KW: Wow, keeping it going.

FF: Yeah.

KW: Why did you decide to make the military your career?

FF: [pause] I didn't want to stay in Greenville, it wasn't near [as] exciting. South Carolina didn't look very exciting.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: Twenty-five years later, Greenville looked like the best place in the world to come back to and it has been. But once you had a taste of responsibility... The military just seemed to offer a satisfaction that wasn't anywhere else.

KW: Mmhmm [pause]. Have you been involved with any veterans' organizations?

FF: Not really. I support a couple of them, but I'm not real good on getting back and telling war stories. You've heard more war stories here than I've told anywhere else. [Be]cause I haven't told anybody else about some of these battles.

KW: Mmhmm. Do you have grandchildren at all?

FF: I do. I have a twelve-year-old [and] an eight-year-old, almost thirteen --

KW: Do you think you'll talk to them at some point?

FF: No, not at all. They're not interested. In fact, my father never talked about World War II, except of one of two things, and they were more of a humorous slide.

KW: Mmhmm. That seems pretty typical for the World War II men.

FF: I think so. Well, you don't have anything in common to talk to people about.

KW: Why would you bring it up?

FF: Yeah. You know, you can talk to fellow veterans that had similar experiences, but you have to have a long background and relationship.

KW: Is there anything else I could have asked you that you wanted to talk about today?

FF: No, I think I've rambled all over the country.

KW: Well, I think you did a good ramble. It was a good ramble.

FF: It was a real honor to serve with this particular unit because everybody in there was highly motivated.

KW: Mmhmm.

FF: The other forces that we worked with—when I got a chance to talk like to the Air Force pilots—it was just awe-inspiring. As long as we could fix the enemy and then apply a technical advantage, we never lost a battle over there. But I don't think the United States is prepared to grind-out for ten of fifteen years in some place like this; although we have in Korea and that has been successful.

KW: The South Koreans are really grateful, from what I understand.

FF: Look what's happened in South Korea. It's probably the most prosperous place in Asia now. Well, thank you for the opportunity to do the interview.

KW: Thank you. Thank you so much.

END OF VIDEOCLIP 2 of 2 (8:35)

END OF INTERVIEW

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