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David Powell

Hayley Hasik

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Interviewee: David Powell
Interviewer: Hayley Hasik (ETWMP)
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Summary:

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0:00-0:51 HASIK: My name is Hayley Hasik and today is July 10, 2013. We're here at Texas A&M University-Commerce sitting with David Powell. I want to start with when and where were you were born.

DAVID POWELL: I was born the 16th of March 1947 in Porterville, California.

HASIK: And what did your parents do?

POWELL: My dad was a boiler, ran the boilers at a state mental hospital. And my mother was a homemaker.

HASIK: Did you have any siblings?

POWELL: I had a sister.

HASIK: Older? Younger?

POWELL: Older. (chuckles)

0:51-3:52 HASIK: You had mentioned earlier that your dad was in World War II.

POWELL: Yes.

HASIK: So, like, did he tell you stories about his service? Was that something that he talked about growing up?

POWELL: Yes. Yes. Some of 'em I haven't heard for many years. I've forgotten about it. But I remember their names. So, um. Yeah. He talked about his time but I thought those were, um, the last ship. Come to find out they were

on the first ship. So they were such a tight group. But I met most of 'em, or part of 'em that were still alive. So, uh, the captain. I think he was a, ugh, a Rear Admiral Naquin. He was, he was the officer in charge of the Squalus. And I met several of them. They had nicknames. One of 'em was called Bear Tracks and another one was called, well that was a different guy. That was someone else. They have different names for each person. (chuckles)

HASIK: Did your dad's, like, story kind of, I guess, perception of service at all shape your eventual service in the Navy?

POWELL: I kinda wanted to be in the submarine service but my eyes and my teeth were the problem. You have to pass a 90ft tower, a diving tower where they put you in 90 feet, no they put you at the bottom and you go 90ft in the air and if your teeth aren't perfect and your eyes, you can have some problems going up. So, every I guess 20 ft. there's a diver to help you get up if you had a problem. But, no. I couldn't. I couldn't pass that so I was out of it. So, I had...I've been in love with photography since college. And, of course, you know. (chuckles) I was a pole vaulter in high school and the coach says, "go over to the photo journalist and they will take pictures and you can take pictures of the track team." That was his gimmick. So, I went over and got in the class and the teacher had a different idea. We want pictures of pretty girls on campus. So I said, "well that sounds pretty good. Let's go for it." (chuckles) So that's what we did. I did some sports stuff. That's how I got interested in it totally. It's been fun ever since.

3:52- HASIK: And where did you go to college?

POWELL: I went to... The first college was Allen Hancock Junior College in Santa Maria, California. And didn't graduate. I joined the Navy after the first year because everyone was gettin' drafted so that's where I ended up. Then when I got in the service, had nothing in mind but I wanted to be a photographer. So, I thought, man this would be the place to go to school and everything. So after about two years, I had a warrant officer help me get into school. I went to the U.S. Naval Schools of Photography in Pensacola, Florida. That's where my graduate of photography is and then I went back later on to camera repair. So I learned how not only to take the pictures but actually repair 'em. I did repair for a while. Then journeyed on my photography by 1993.

4:58-5:34 HASIK: When did you, I guess, when did you decide you kinda wanted to go into the service? I know you said everybody was being drafted but, did you think maybe wait it out?

POWELL: No. I thought I was going to get drafted in the Army. My thoughts were I want to choose. I don't want the government to choose for me. [chuckles] So, I said I want to be on water. So, that's the funny part of it. I ended up in the war zone.

5:34-6:36 HASIK: And when did you enter the service?

POWELL: I actually got into a delayed program. Four months in active reserve and then at the end of that you go into full. So, it was the 4th of June. No, 4th of July weekend of that year. 1966. Yup. We're all standing around getting burned out in the sun but that was when I joined and then I got out July 12th of 1976.

HASIK: Where did you enter the service?

POWELL: San Diego, California.

HASIK: Nice and sunny

POWELL: Oh yes. (chuckles) That's where I got out of the service in San Diego.

HASIK: And where did you go? Did you have to do basic training or did you do your basic training...?

POWELL: Basic training was at Naval Training Center San Diego.

6:36-8:29 HASIK: What was basic training like?

POWELL: Uhhh. Learning to like other people. I hated it. And you had to like it whether you liked it or not. And one person gets in trouble you're disciplined, everyone is. So, it was kind of getting the group to be tight and, uh, learned how to interact with other sailors. Yeah. We learned history of the Navy and a lot of things like that. They made sure we knew how to swim. That's also a big part of Navy life is swimming. So you had to know how to do it. I learned recently that it was because of USS Arizona. A lot of the guys died because they didn't have to swim in those days, so some of 'em drowned because they didn't know how to swim. So, when I got into boot camp, they made sure we knew how to swim. Even if folk, you know sailors, they all knew how to swim, but don't know how to swim. They kicked 'em in the water. Then they swim all the way around the pool. But, uh. The basic camp is teaching you all the basics of what navy life is about. How to clean your own clothes and maintain your clothes and all that. It was a kinda neat disciplinary...

HASIK: Did you make friends with anybody that you kinda went to basic with?

POWELL: Uh. Not really super buddies but I met some of 'em who were buddies over there in Vietnam.

8:29-9:27 HASIK: Did anybody go into the service with you when you decided to go in?

POWELL: Yes, they did. Don Head... Head... Headmond, was his last name. He went in for four years and got out but, yeah. We went in at the same time. We drove down together. It was kind of interesting. Yeah. But after that, I lost track of him. So, anyway. Um. After boot camp, I went to North Island at our station NES North Island for about two years. But just about that time is when I went into the school. So I got to go there.

9:27-9:51 HASIK: So you had to choose to be a photographer.

POWELL: Yup. They had me as a... In the beginning they had me as a librarian. Aviation librarian is what they called it. That's where you have all the technical publications and all that, maintain all the records. Eh. It's okay. It's kinda boring.

9:51-10:55 GRUVER: Were those assignments based on the eye... your eyesight and teeth that you talked about or did you take a test that qualified you for those...?

POWELL: Yes. My aptitude tests were more for uh like librarian organizing numbers, organizing papers. So, that's what they saw. I did take a radioman test but I didn't pass that. That was one of the ones they said I was qualified to take if I wanted to. That was one I wouldn't have wanted 'cause you're in an isolation booth and sometimes it's, like, deafening and I can't stand that. I could not take a real tight box.

10:55-13:03 HASIK: No, thank you. When you got to Florida for photography school...

POWELL: Yes.

HASIK: How long were you there? What was that experience like? What kind of stuff did you do?

POWELL: The photo school was 13 weeks and it was extensive courses. Anywhere from photography history from the beginning until it got to the Navy and the first one who started it in the Navy was a Navy cook and then all the way up to the day and then we also went from basic photography, the skills like what you'd learn in Eastman on Rochester University when you're going to school, the lab. But we did the lab, we did paperwork and all the stuff and learn how to log negatives. Then it progressed into photo journalism. You write a script, then you fill the pictures to that script. We did that or make a movie. So we had to use 16mm cameras. So we got full gambit of all that. And then aerial. We

didn't get to take the aerial but we got to process the huge negatives. They were like 7-inch, 5-inch, 7-inch films, 10-inch films. So we get to process 'em and then go print 'em. All that ended up, at the end of the school, we could go to anywhere--be able to go pick up any camera that we see and get a usable image for the government. That was a kind of neat thing about it. We got every little bit of training possible and, then, as you're going through it, what do I like, what do I not like.

13:03-17:20 HASIK: What part was your favorite?

POWELL: Oh, I think photographing. I like to photograph people. Yeah, that was my favorite. (chuckles)

HASIK: Any particular reason?

POWELL: I, uh, trying to think why. Seems to me, I like to see what people, their natural actions are, their expressions. Gives me kind-of-a reading of their personality and towards the end of my career, we were making people smile. So, it's kinda changed a little bit. People's reaction in Vietnam was kinda, a study of people. Some didn't like us, some loved us and you could see it in their faces from a smile to really frown. You see 'em in some of my images, there were some that really didn't like what I was doing. But, that was my love those kids. I started out photographing kids. I forgot to tell that. When I was in college, I was told I had to practice to be a good photographer. So, we bought bulk film, we loaded our own film, and we shot and processed my own stuff. Black and white mainly, but it was little kids next door and I photographed 'em until they couldn't see straight. One of 'em lives in Austin, now. That was one of my main subjects. So it's kinda hard to understand that she's 47 years old or 50 years old now. Anyway, beautiful lady. I photographed her with all the neighborhood kids. A lot of little kids come in and enjoyed playin' the game of photographing. They didn't mind, they'd pose. We tried everything to candlelight pictures to, we tried every kinda thing to see what would work. But, it was kind of a neat time. But then that follows into the other part of the rest of the Vietnam pictures. I don't know why I never printed 'em up sooner. It's just, um, someone discouraged me. I know when I first left the service, the first hitch, they said, "what, who cares about what you shot there? Look at these pictures, what do they, what does it mean? What are you trying to show?" And he says no one is going to care. So I just sat back and took steam out of my hair, I didn't know what to do with it. I knew one thing, they were important so I had 'em in a lockbox, um, airtight lockbox. The negatives. They turned out very good. The ones that were, are kinda difficult are the color images 'cause the emulsion for some reason on color film is starting to deteriorate. Almost like what happened in Hollywood. I go back to get a film and they find that their [external mumbling] the emulsion kinda pops like you're having a popcorn. It just

pops. Well now, whenever time it does that, it's just a hole. Now you got, now you got black spots all over the place. Fortunately, we can clean 'em up and maintain 'em. That's what I'm tryin' to do. It takes about an hour and a half each image. Those are such a massive problem.

17:20-18:32 GRUVER: And you have about 1300 images?

POWELL: Yes. Yes. I'd say about half-half black and white and color. Some of 'em are kinda interesting, some of 'em aren't. And that particular kind of way of photographing, you're going through different scenes and it's a very fast, split moment. Shoot. Don't think about it. Shoot. Shoot. Shoot. So, I have some interesting scenes. I have one that looks like a dump, I mean a lake that everyone dumps stuff on. I was just like, "I wonder what that is." (chuckles) "Why did I shoot that?" I kinda think I know what it is, but that might be part of the Agent Orange. They dumped stuff in that water that's killed everything in it 'cause it was like a little lake. But that's another story. But all the people seemed to be, a lot the people were friendly to us in Vietnam.

18:32-20:10 HASIK: So after Florida, how long until you went to Vietnam? Did you know you were going to Vietnam or was that kind of...?

POWELL: Right away. We always got orders right out of school and I was beside myself. I made 'em double check, triple check. They said "you're goin' to Vietnam." I said, "Oh my gosh. No." I did that in front of people, "No! No!" And my dad questioned me when I was goin' to school. He said, "are you sure you're not going to go to Vietnam?" Well, yes, I'll be on the ship. and then he says, "oh, well, I'm talking about land. Are you sure you're gonna be not on land?" I said, "I'm sure. We'll be on ships." so, what a surprise right out of school. And then we went to SERE [Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape] training, survival training. That was one part of it. What do they call it? Counterinsurgency school. We went to that for two weeks and then supposedly, we were going to go to SERE training, which was survival and you either go to Cherry Point, that's North Carolina, I think, and the other one was Warner Springs, California. They only had room for a couple and someone else volunteered so I went to Vietnam without SERE training.

20:10-21:31 GRUVER: So, you didn't want to go to Vietnam. Why did you know about Vietnam at that point?

POWELL: Just what we hear on the news. It was pretty bad. People would get captured. When I first got in, uh, a famous pilot was released while I was at North Island from prison. He was a prisoner of war, got released, and they called him Dieter Dan. I don't know what his full name was [Dieter Dengler] but he was a lieutenant and he was on North Island. They

interviewed him on the news when he got to North Island. That kinda scared me. The thought of being, you know, enemy. My thoughts were, if I get captured, I don't count on the government to get me out. I had to count on myself to get out and I was the person who would have fought my way out somehow. It's a tough going once that happens.

21:31-25:03 GRUVER: So your family—mom, dad—you were in high school during the Gulf of Tonkin incident. What was your family talking about President [Lyndon] Johnson and Vietnam? What were their opinions?

POWELL: During the time when Kennedy was assassinated, um, my dad was talking about we're going to be pulled into a war because they already had advisors over there by that time and my dad's idea was that Johnson was gonna make it go up, escalate it. And that is exactly what happened. But that's what they were worried. You know, they don't wanna see me go to war but, we were in a draft mode so, um, being a draft, that's also helped make my mind up. I didn't wanna be, I saw people around me being drafted and the thing was, and you won't believe this, and the thing was if you were a science major, um, you would not be drafted. Especially holding Bs or As in college. You could not be drafted. But then I saw a few of 'em that were A students at Hancock College gettin' drafted so I said, "nope."

HASIK: I don't like that anymore

POWELL: So I went to each place. I went to the Army. I went to the Marines. I went to the Coast Guard. And Navy was the only one that said, well, there's a chance. The Army would have sent me to photo school and I said, "what happens if you drop out?" "Oh, you get to be in infantry." And I said, "Good." (chuckles) Go to the next one. Coast Guard was a thirteen-month waiting list. I think it always is but it's a long list and you never get there. The Navy was wide open and the Navy was asking for corpsmen. "Anyone want to be in the hospital corpsmen?" No. That was, like, asking to be a helicopter pilot. Their life expectancy in Vietnam was really short. But, photographer was, I guess, could be considered not too much greater. You know, you're out there, the photographer itself was out there, in danger, which I encountered. I encountered it. Didn't know what to do with myself when it did happen, but one thing that kept me together was God. Christ, Christ was with me at all times and he preserved me for what? I'm not sure. But even to this day, I've been through some things that I just like, "I don't believe this." But anyway, what else were...?

25:03-27:18 HASIK: When you got to Vietnam, where did you go and, kind of, how did things progress from there once you left Florida?

POWELL: I went from Pensacola and then we went to, uh, Coronado Amphibious Base, that's what it was called. And from that point, that's where they do the SEALs, that's where we had our training. And then we went to Camp Pendleton for two weeks for training on weapons. Disassembly and shooting. And then we went from that point, sent over, we went to Travis Air Force Base. No, I went to Norton Air Force Base and went right over. We got there and I expected to see things flying all over the place but when I got there it was nothing. Da Nang was quiet and I prayed very big, "please Lord keep us safe here." When we landed, I expected to see mortars and all kinds of rounds flying. Nothing. Nothing. Just like normal. Just like back here [America]. We got on a bus and went over to the base and that was it. And then from that point, um, I did what you did. Well, you guys were here at the Tet Offensive, what, do you have any pictures? And they reeled out about 1,000-8x10s and said, "here you are. Have at it." So I started seeing all the dead bodies. It's like oh my gosh. I mean I have never seen an autopsy so I was sick seein' this stuff. Just really didn't know what to do with it. After that, I just felt really bad. You know, that's possibly what I could see. But the Tet Offensive was bad on that base. There was rounds going up and down on the streets. They were a lot of action.

27:18-30:15 GRUVER: So when did you arrive in Vietnam?

POWELL: In June.

GRUVER: In June of '68?

POWELL: Yes. June of '68 and um, at that point they just started getting me acquainted where things were for a number of weeks and then I think after about a month there, they gave me, they got field orders and they went up. There was a Vietnamese admiral that had, I don't know what kind of ceremony but it was a ceremony of some kind. And we went up to, um, special forces base up there. What was it called? Um. Coastal Group 12 is what it was called. An old French fort. It was unique. Never been overrun at any time. But we stayed there, I think, overnight. And then we went on a swift boat. No, not a swift boat. PBR [Patrol Boat, River] boat all the way up to city of Hue. This place is called Tan Mỹ. It's on the coast and Hue is about 10 miles on water inland. So we went PBR about 10 miles and they had seven PBRs because the Admiral was next in line to the presidency so, it was a big huge deal. And so they were, in the pictures, you can see their secret service people in the background. But we had like seven PBRs. Some officer, I don't know exactly which American officer, Army or Marine, but they were out there watching the place with binoculars. So it was a serious time. In the background of those photographs, you'll see the bridge was blown out. And the bridge goes over to what they call Hue City, which was a, the French had their place

their fort, and so it was kind of interesting. But, uh, that was my first journey up there and then coming back to DaNang. Then we go, like, about every three months we'd have to go out in the field. And the process we did all kinds of photography. Marijuana was a big problem. We'd photograph that almost every week. Evidence. But,

30:15-32:21 GRUVER: And this was for the military to prosecute?

POWELL: Yup.

GRUVER: Okay.

POWELL: Yup. And then, uh, we'd have to photograph ugh an Admiral's, I think, a status board of some kind. Anyway, we'd have to photograph that once a month. Just various things. I mean people tryin' to commit suicide. Then they don't. (chuckles) We had a guy who shot a hole through his face. You know, he put the gun in his mouth but it knocked a hole through his cheek. That was it. I think they sent him back to the states. Over, most of the problems are the girlfriends, which is really sad. One of the yeoman we knew for a whole year, he was a legal, legal yeoman, his girlfriend left him about 11 days before he left. He got a letter that said she's divorced him and he went to the bathroom and took his life. I said, "you gotta be kidding." They said, "Nope. Here's the pictures." We had to go take pictures. Couldn't believe that happened. But those were the sad stories, you know? Some guys were, since I know Christ, there's always time, God's time, not ours. But if you don't leave on a certain date, you know, it's not going to kill me another day. So, I didn't leave on time, either. I left a day, I think they pushed me back another day. Anyway, during the year, I had 4—3 of those field trips, I was by myself. So I was kind of on my own. So that was pretty neat.

32:21-40:31 HASIK: What was that like? What kind of things did you and...? Where did you go?

POWELL: (chuckles) One of the trips, um, was I always saw this French church near the city of, in Hue. So I wanted to go to this because it was a beautiful Catholic church. All the French, you know, the European design was all over this building. I said, "I've got to be inside." I've taken outside. So, on this one ride with this three-wheeled vehicle from from Phu Bai was about five miles. So anyway, we get in this thing 'cause those guys said you had to have a ride to get out there from Phu Bai. They put us in this thing. We're going down the road and two of us were, like our knees were at our chin with cameras. And we get to this place and half way I thought this was a dumb move 'cause if we get shot at, there's nothing we can do. We're gonna die in this thing. So, we get there and they want to know where we want out. So this guy pulls up in front of the church I

wanted to go to. We get out and we try to give him some money. Well, of course, we had useless, it was like 500 dong note. Not worth a hill of beans, it's like maybe two cents and I wasn't going to give him military funny money that we had. 'Cause they would turn it in and get more, more of their money back out of it than we would. So we handed him a carton of cigarettes, didn't work. He didn't like that. He wanted something else. He wanted money. Well, that's it. That's all we got. So I said leave him the cigarettes and we got out of that thing and we went up to the church. We got on the steps and got to the door and I heard this noise. I turn around and look. Here is about two hundred men and this guy is getting them all upset. Their faces are red. Its like those crowds you see over in the Arab Spring. These guys were getting so rowdy and I thought we're not going to go in the church. (chuckles) Just forget it. I said let's go. So we get down to the street and his guys are over to the side of us and this guy is telling his story and he's getting more mad and his face is red and the veins coming out of his neck, you know. So I thought we'd better get out of here or we're going to die. Here comes the special services Jeep. I flagged 'em down. I said, can we get a ride, even drag us out of here? So they had M16s, lets see. They let us in. The they told us, we're going to eat. I said fine, that's good. So we went along with 'em and ate. But they got us out of that trouble because we were gonna, that was something we should have never put ourselves into. And then on the same trip, we were in the north by the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone] so we thought, well, let's get a ride to Quang Tri and let's try something special. So, we wanted to go on a caravan from Quang Tri to Da Nang and a caravan is just a bunch of trucks going that way and then, of course, you have to be armed. When I got there, I said I want to get on the caravan and he says "Do you have a combat vest?" I said no. "Do you have a helmet?" No. And he says, "do you have an M16 or your M14?" No, I have a .45. Nope, won't count. So he says you're not going off the base with that on a caravan. And he says, I asked him, actually I asked him where there's a barracks, anything where we can sleep overnight. He said, no there's no place. What about a helicopter? He said nope, no helicopters. So I said, well, where can we sleep? He says on the bench. And I said I'm not that kind of person, I said no I'm not gonna sleep on a bench. And he said, well the gates are going to shut at 5pm. At that point, no one gets off or on. I didn't like that sound. It's like something, something raised flags in my ears. Just went up. We got on the six-by and went back to Dong Ho and that's about maybe four miles and from that point, we got on a boat and we got on the water and headed out. And at that point, it was about dusk so everyone's starting to put on helmets, combat vests, weapons, loading 'em. I asked a guy, "do you know something that we don't?" And he says, "Yup. We're getting ready for action." So, we're going down the river. The river is a very flat river, as you saw one of the pictures, very flat. Maybe two feet the bank from the water. So they could swim and set a charge or they could sit in the patties and shoot at us. It was fortunate that the boat behind me blew

up. Not in front of us. The boat that was next behind the one that blew up, one of the kids was on that that I grew up with in Lompoc [California] and so, it was, what a reunion. He was white as a sheet when I saw him 'cause he saw the boat go up. So anyway, we got through that and we head back to Da Nang and that was it on that trip. But we went in, the other trips, got sick on one of the trips. That was because I tried, we had problems in Vietnam. (chuckles) So, I happened to take a dose, I went over to PX and bought X-Lax from the guy. They tell you to take a cube to a cube and a quarter or something. I took a quarter of a cube. Well, nothing seems to work and so I'm up there and we got a ride on a six-by. Those were the roughest ridin' things you've ever been on. Just vibratin' all the time. By the time we got into Dong Ha, it worked fine for me. What I had from the night before. (chuckles) I never got any pictures I got stuck in sickbay. I said you've got to save me. (chuckles) It was that serious. But after that we started to take pictures of all the installations. That's about it. But, something I learned I didn't know--some of those places I photographed out there in the field were being turned over to the Vietnamese. I never knew that. About a month or two before I left. So, kind of interesting.

40:31-41:54 GRUVER: So when you were on these trips, were you constantly taking photos?

POWELL: Yes.

GRUVER: And so was it, did you ever have a time when you realized I'm missing what's happening because I'm focusing on my job? Like the boat going down behind you. Did you ever see what happened?

POWELL: No. I think it turned. It turned dark about the time it happened but they were five minutes behind us and it was dark enough that when that happened that the boat behind 'em saw it. Saw the whole thing going up. They had 19 men on the boat. They all got thrown off and that was it. Really sad. They never raised it. So the pictures you see there were the ones after and when I got back they didn't want me to go back and shoot the boat or any of that. So they had someone else go up there. But, um. I'm tryin' to remember the other trips.

41:54-44:15 GRUVER: I'm just curious if your job sometimes distracted you from actually having a sense of what was happening around you.

POWELL: (pause) No, I don't think so. The only time, no I kinda left that open Um, one of the things, one of the things early on was shooting and the journalist class constantly told us to keep shooting. Keep shooting. Keep shooting. Don't just stop and watch. Keep shooting. You gotta keep going. Even in school in Florida we shot everything that was around the area, uh, Pensacola. But when I got to Vietnam I said, man, this is a, this is like a dream come true of everything. You know, you can shoot anything you

want. Just keep shooting. Like the book about the Agent Orange stuff, that was over a year all that was captured. I could never have planned that. But for some reason, all those images were preserved. And these people, the little kids all just happened to be in the way. One of the first assignments was a six-by ran over and destroyed a Vietnamese home but it was made out of tin and cardboard and wooden pallets and stuff, you know. And, uh, on the way there, there was this little girl with a flower standin' there. So I take a picture. And then later we saw the government paid 'em like 3,000 US dollars. They had this beautiful home. I thought (sucks air in) they got a new home for someone running over 'em.

44:15-45:20 GRUVER: You mentioned the six-by a couple of times, just so that we have it on record, describe what a six-by was.

POWELL: A six-by is like a tractor with a, uh, pickup bed on it and its really high in the air. So, it's like about eight feet in the air. So, you had to climb up to the bed to get into it. But it has a tractor, a regular tractor diesel in it. Really hard, rugged suspension. When you get into it, you know you've been into a rough ride.

GRUVER: Did it have suspension?

POWELL: I don't think so. (chuckles) They were pretty tough and noisy. But that was the only time I got to ride one. I was glad to not ride in another one. I'll just take the regular pickup.

45:20-47:17 HASIK: You've mentioned your interactions with Vietnamese people.

POWELL: Mmm-hmm.

HASIK: Overall, what was kind of your impression of them and (voice trails off)?

POWELL: My thoughts were a peaceful, loving people and they had some people that were villainous on one side that wanted to take whatever they had and they were not the kind of people to stand up and fight. They weren't. They were just that kind of a laid back bunch of civilization. But, the northern part seemed to be the warring people. They wanted to take over and, of course, that's the rice. The rice is the main goal down there and I don't know what else they had that anyone else wanted but there was that. They taught us in counterinsurgency that of all the Orientals, the Vietnamese were the outcasts of all the Asian populations. For some reason, no one wanted anything to do with the Vietnamese. That's why they landed where they are. The same with Chinese. When you got to Vietnam, you saw a lot of Chinese, southern Chinese, south China-type people there. I don't know what dialects are but they were in there mixed in with Vietnamese. So, what was the question? (chuckles)

HASIK: I just asked about your impressions of the Vietnamese.

POWELL: Yeah. I kinda loved 'em. They were neat.

47:17-48:33 GRUVER: Were you there long enough to learn the language and communicate (interrupted)?

POWELL: Um, enough to get in trouble. They had, I stopped when that started telling me that two-word syllable, that BA could mean a whole bunch of things. One was Mrs. One could be a house. Ten different meanings to the word and I thought, no I don't think so. I'll just keep English. I knew some of the slang stuff but, nothing. Never learned the language at all. But, uh, most of 'em speaks English quite well, the ones I encountered and I have a Vietnamese friend right now, too. He was a, I believe he said he was a major in the Vietnamese Air Force. So, we're kinda buds. Anyway. (chuckles)

48:33-51:05 GRUVER: How was the food?

POWELL: Mmm.

HASIK: You're stealing my questions, man!

POWELL: Nah. I didn't try their food too much. But they had, uh, the new years, new year's eve. (shakes head signaling error) The Vietnamese New Year cookies were pretty good. I like those. They were, they taste like, like Wheaties but, like, in a wheel, wheel shape. I come to find out the Chinese use that, too. But they're like a cookie, you know, crunchy. Really good. And their beer was good. We got to try that once. We went to the Vietnamese workers home. We have a picture in there of him. Work in the lab and he took us over to his house once and we weren't supposed to be there too much. You know, drop him off. But he had come in and have a beer. Wow. What a buzz. (chuckles) That was strong beer, let me tell you. We didn't even want to go back to work. But, um, they were very cordial. They had some other food there we ate that was really good. I forgot what it was. Something like a vegetable and a meat soup, but it was really good. Not too many other homes we got to go into. And we had a pass. I forgot to mention that. We had a, I can't find it now, I don't know where I put it but, I had a pass with my picture on it and the Provost Martial, no one was to be in town walking the streets. But we had this press pass that we could walk anywhere we wanted. So, sometimes I would walk down the street in front of the stores and walk around. They would stop and ask me, what do you think you're doing here? I'm taking pictures for the Admiral and they would say, okay just be careful. They'd leave. So we did have a pass to walk around if we wanted to, if we felt brave enough. (chuckles)

51:05-55:30 HASIK: Were you brave enough?

POWELL: (chuckles and shakes his head no) Not too many times, I did a couple of times. The worst was, uh, I think on the third time I went to field. I got a ride with a Vietnamese Army, I don't know, he was a private or what. But, he had a six-by but I rode in the seat in front. We got halfway to where I was going and he says, get out. And then here's his family. He was just goin', he didn't say that right, you know. He's only gonna go and see his family. Well, he kicked me out and I was out there in the boonies by myself and the interesting thing was the people were laughing and making fun of me but after I walked past their place, they were all gone and it was quiet. You could hear a pin drop and that was not a good feeling because I was told if you could hear a pin drop, look out. So, I turned around. I didn't know which direction to go in. So, I turned around and walked back and forth several times and the more that happened, the more I was getting scared. I admit, I was scared. And one of the things that brought me through that was I sang hymns. All the hymns from when I was a kid to now. I was singin' 'em. And then I walked past these people and they made fun again. And I said, I'm going to be brave and go that way and just kept on it and I walked slowly and out came a voice of an Army sergeant with an M16 and then said, you're my buddy. Now, on this road, there was all these trucks going back and forth. Not one of 'em would stop. Not one. So, when I got in that, we went down there and had lunch out there with the flies in the field and that's another experience. (chuckles) You get your food, they serve you out in the open there to the workers and stuff. They said, come and eat. Well, you move your hand, the flies go away, the flies are back. So, you're doing this [left hand stationary, right hand swaying left to right] and then trying to eat. So that was another experience, I had never had since. There were so many flies there, it was just outrageous. But then I went over to that Tan My base and shot pictures of that. That was next to MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam], real special boats. Anyway, uh, I think that trip, what did I do? I'm trying to remember on that one. That one is still kinda foggy but, um, I guess we met up with, I think I met up with the Public Affairs officer and that's when we went on the PBR [river patrol boat] patrol. But that was a scary moment in that walking down the street because I found out recently from an army veteran that was in Vietnam and he told me that you were wearing a .45. He said all the officers wore .45s. He said, they thought you were an officer, you were in danger. I thought I was. So, I didn't know that until now. I always had that picture of the Nikon F with a bullet hole in the lens. I've always had that in my mind. But I live up to the fact that that might happen.

55:30-56:23 GRUVER: Well, when the, I believe you said, ran into the Army sergeant (interrupted),

POWELL: Yes.

GRUVER: What did he say to you when the two of you met on your way
(interrupted).

POWELL: He asked, what in the world are you doing out here? He said, you know, I was out here playing around in the river. So I don't have any idea, he was probably had a girlfriend there or something. That's all I can tell that he was out there for. Goofin' off. A lot of guys lost their life doin' that over there, too. So, I decided to stick with him. But all he did was raise his M16 and they stopped. I thought, hmm, interesting.

56:23-58:30 POWELL: Let you know why I have .45. This is the part, when I first got there, I realized that was not a good place to go, Vietnam. We had had, Pendleton had weapons training in all the weapons. The M14, 16, 30 caliber machine gun, all those things, you know. Um, when we got to Vietnam, we had to qualify for a weapon. I said, what are you talking about? We had to go to the range, we had to strip the weapon, we had to shoot and qualify with it before we can have a weapon. But here comes the trick. You got a little card that says you're authorized to use this weapon and then you have to leave the rifle or pistol in the armory. So, if the base is being attacked, you have a weapon but you don't have a weapon until you get to the armory if it's still there. So, it was bizarre. I was like, I don't believe this is a war zone. So, that's really the truth. Not a war zone. I don't know what it was but there were civilians everywhere. Some making \$100,000 a year, tax free of course. They already mapped. One guy whose working in public works had already mapped out how many years over there and he would be set for life. Well, that's what he did. He probably made about a half million over there just setting it off just like you would over here.

GRUVER: In the 1960s.

POWELL: Yeah. In the 1960s. So, that was pretty sad. But, some of these people.

58:30-62:37 POWELL: Now, this is another side I didn't tell you about. The death side. Yeah. They volunteered me to go down to the hospital and shoot the wounded coming in. So, I was in. It was very discrete, I could not shoot faces. I was there when several people were dying and I watched them as they went away. And then the other time was, like maybe 8 weeks into Vietnam, they killed a man trying to get into special forces. When we went out in the morning to see him, this little old man, I mean it broke my heart. 80 years old, at least, was trying to get a pen that was between the concertina wires. And, of course at night, and he never stopped and he kept trying to get that pen and, of course, they killed him. Went there to see if he had, they thought he had a hand grenade or some charge underneath so, they

dealt with that and they turned him over and he didn't have anything. Just a handkerchief. Like a Kleenex, you know. And its kinda sad. Yeah, I had tears, actually and the funny part, I don't know if it was funny but, to me it was just strange. I turned around and here was a flower growing there. Of all the things to think of, you know, God was telling me that life was still going on. I even took a picture of that flower. It was kind of interesting. I still have the picture of that man. I don't really, I didn't really print it up. That hurt me. And, of course, the young man was in his defenses, he was right, but I thought, what are you galloping up and down like a superhero for doing that and bragging about what choice of weapon? I mean, to me that was nasty. I shouldn't be telling that on video but, I mean that's the gist of what I thought, that's just not me and I thought I object to it. But, uh, so anyway, during the year there was a lot of that. I was around death several times. People I saw one second and another they're gone. And, so, it's surreal because you think of life as, its gonna always be here, but what you see may not be here the next moment. So, but, uh, that happened with a guy, a friend of the lab went down and took his buddy back to the boat and come back to the lab and the boat blew up. He was trying to get him to stay there to eat supper. He was gonna cook for him, since he was a cook and he told him, no I'm on duty, I gotta get back to lab so, when he got back and he found out the boat blew up. Just couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. That man was just sitting here talking with us, last words. Anyway, um, so those are the sad moments.

62:37-64:38 HASIK: How many guys worked in the lab with you?

POWELL: Uh, we had 1, 2, we had like five. Five of us in the lab.

HASIK: Then you guys all took photos and processed them and did they have specific jobs?

POWELL: We had different jobs. People would place job orders and just like an invoice, write it up and then we had to be at a place at a certain time and that's where we'd be. Some of us did realism photography. So our photography covered the whole spectrum. Everything. Just part of it. We did passport photos, naturalization, all that kinda stuff, we did that, too. And once in a while there would be a bureau picture to set up and photograph. But that's, we had a basic studio, a little room and we had big cameras and little cameras. 4 x 5s was the biggest we had and then we had the Nikons. Then we had a Bolex movie camera. I used it once. They had a fire department deal for Christmas, I think it was, something like that and some television station in Kansas got the film but, I went and shot that over there. Then they sent it on and I never got to see what the film was. It was probably some blip over there on the news, newscast, but, yup.

64:28-67:11 GRUVER: So, how much film did you have to take with you when you went on your field trips?

POWELL: Okay. I took probably about fifteen rolls and part of it is black and white and part of it is color. The best film I like to shoot for myself, the Navy didn't pay for it, I liked the Kodachrome and it was neat because in three days, we could have our slides back and that's, like, normal here. Three days in the lab. But we sent to San Francisco area somewhere, Palo Alto and they would ship it back right away, really fast. But the color was, is still good to where you can, um, I didn't like ektachrome because ektachrome is so easy to overexpose. Once you overexpose it, it's ruined. Well, the old thought and I have some that I've now brought back from dead that was too light. I took Photoshop and pulled 'em out and said, wow gee whiz, look at this. I had some of that Vietnamese Admiral that way and I pulled 'em out and they look good. But, basically, the black and white film was horrible because the water temperature was so high that it's, like, grainy. We used to call 'em golf-ball sized grain but, it was so grainy, you never got good quality images. At least we thought but, Photoshop, man, you can sharpen the image up and it's beautiful. I was impressed, have a different idea about Nikons now. Nikon F was one of the best ones we had and, yet, it's simple to repair. So, I know how to repair 'em as well. At the time I was in Vietnam, I didn't know. Boy, they're a nice camera. Still rugged.

67:11-74:18 HASIK: You told us earlier about your experience with Agent Orange.

POWELL: Yes.

HASIK: I was wondering if you could tell us that story.

POWELL: Yes, uh. Agent Orange. In 1969, well, I had a day off on March 16, 1969 and what happened was a plane was flying over about 150 feet above the ground and he was dumping looked like fuel and the fuel was going to get on the base. So, in doing that, it's gonna be contaminating the base. That's what that's not good about. The next thing is, he's gonna crash. So, I took the picture with the camera I had on me and, um, I went back to the lab and in walking back to the lab, he flew past me two more times. And, when I got into the lab, I told everyone to get ready, there was going to be a plane crash and get the duty crew out there and shoot and they heard the plane go by a fourth time, they said they was dumping Agent Orange on the perimeter. Okay, but we were breathing this stuff in so they didn't want the image, they didn't know what to do with it, so I forgot about it and I didn't know I had this image. Anyway, I'm surprised I saw it, what he was doing. And, um, anyway, um, during during the year, I went and shot a picture of the main gate, I'm not sure why but, I shot a picture of the main gate and when looking back, it was in color, so the

trees are dead. You can see it right as you go-and it also tells what base it was. So, and then of course the antennas on the mountain are identifying with the picture of the plane dumping Agent Orange. So, you know where it was, it was monkey mountain in the background. And then I had a picture later on that year on monkey mountain looking down on the base and I saw all the dead trees, which I never noticed before and I just stopped the truck and shot a picture. They said, well, maybe someday you'll use it. I thought, yeah right. Anyway, went back, at that time I had a telephoto lens, my camera, and I went focused in on the barracks and took a picture and I was surprised I had all this but, it all tied together. And so this is what I consider the evidence of Agent Orange. Hard evidence that they did dump on the bases and I've heard of veterans at the VA hospital. The wife of one of 'em told me they never dumped on any base and so this picture is evidence it dumped. And, uh, then of course, I'm a member of Vietnam Veterans of America and they said that it was, that goes for sixteen miles is what they're finding out. So everything has been contaminated now. So, it a matter of living in a toxic environment. First six weeks we get sick, so sick, uh, you're bent over. I'd say about 85% of the veterans I talked to had the same sickness. They didn't know what it was and no one told them. So, um, I guess they got over it. Very violent. They had never been sick like that before. Then the next thing is the face, just a break out. Just horrible break out of acne and, uh, didn't know what it was. Had no idea. Something else that happened, too, had tonsillitis over there so, I don't know if that was part of the toxins, too. (chuckles) But, I couldn't do nothing but eat like cottage cheese and somethin' else other than milk or something. I couldn't eat for about three days. But, as I go along, this stuff was just starting to crop up all these different things that happened. When I got back to, they never told us about any symptoms or anything and started having itchy hands, itchy hands is a sign of neuropathy. (right hand scratches the left) And itchy arms like this (right hand scratching left forearm) and legs once and a while. And that went from that to itchy feet. And I'd rub the bottom of my foot. Man, why is my foot that itchy and no matter how hard I rubbed, it wouldn't go away. It just developed into now numb. Agent Orange does affect over time. My son was born with clubbed foot, which is one of the signs of Agent Orange toxins being transferred to my son. So, we had to work with his foot. It was actually 90 degrees, it was like that. (gesturing with hands) If we had let it go, he would have been one of those people walking weird. So anyway that's, and my granddaughters have some side effects, too. Of course, the VA doesn't recognize that yet. They're working on it but, that's part of the Agent Orange and it over time, something will happen. It will end out lives. There's about a million and a half of us left.

74:18-75:28 GRUVER: When you reported to sickbay when you became ill, what did the doctors and nurses tell you?

POWELL: Uh, they told me that was a normal, normal for going to this foreign country. That it would, uh, that everyone gets sick and you're getting adjusted to this environment. But they didn't say it was toxic.

GRUVER: And how long had you been in Vietnam at that point?

POWELL: About six weeks. Six weeks, yeah. They noted that everyone gets it about six weeks. I said yeah that's a good reason. We're all in a toxic place. (chuckles) So, six to eight weeks I was there. I think it was about six weeks. They give me some pill and it took it away. I don't know what it was. But they didn't know the name of the disease or what I contracted. It's strange in itself.

75:28-75:55 GRUVER: Did they have the facilities to do any blood work?

POWELL: Oh yeah. Yeah, they had a hospital down there, oh yes.

GRUVER: Did they do any blood work?

POWELL: No they wouldn't. No, no, no. They wouldn't do any blood work. (chuckles) But, uh, the VAs done blood work but they are taking their time.

75:55-76:12 HASIK: While you were in Vietnam dealing with all of the atrocities there, did you hear anything going on in the United States as far as civil rights or draft dodgers or that kind of thing? No?

POWELL: None. Not 'till I got back.

76:12-71:23 HASIK: Did you correspond with your parents, um, while you were in Vietnam?

POWELL: I corresponded with a lady, a artist, she was a painter and I used to go out and photograph for her, old barns in Lompoc. And, what happened, um, she decided to write me letters, just keep track of me. Her letters would always, there are a lot of horrible things they say are going on over there. I'm saying, I wonder what those are? So, I write her back, well, I haven't heard nothing here. Not yet. So, yeah. There was a lot of that I guess going on here that we didn't, we didn't hear about it but over there they would always tell you the worst news, you know. But it wasn't happening every minute and that's where I learned most of the wars, they don't happen bang, bang, bang. There are events that happen days and days apart. Oh man. I guess I should have written down all the stuff that happened. We got rocket attacked once. Rockets happened one about midnight to one o'clock in the morning. Red alert-means you have to get out of your bunk no matter what state you're in and get into the bunker. So, barely got some kind of clothes on and went out in the bunker and we

could hear those things coming in and a whistle ring kind of sound. The whistle and when they hit, it was like a ringing out. It was a really strange sound. They hit us about four times. And then, uh, we lost one person out of that occasion. With the rest of the time, we never got hit. Just that one time and, uh, about two blocks away. That was close enough. But I heard someone else talking about the ring sounds, I forgot what news. Someone was asking someone about it. Yeah, we never forget the sound when you hear 'em coming. Or the thuds, when you're far away, its thuds. Thump, thump, thump. This is a deep, ringing thump. And that happened one day when we were in a movie theatre and we could hear 'em far off. We though, meh it's down the road and it just got louder and louder and louder. Finally everybody's running. (chuckles) And that's when those picket fence things, I don't know. Oh, yeah. This commanding officer decided that he come in somewhere around July or August. Took, took over the command at Camp Tien Sha and he decided that he was going to make this a beautiful base, not a war zone base. So he put picket fences with points on 'em all over the base and then there was only one entrance that you could get into that yard like a gate. So, if there was an air raid. We had incoming. We had to hurtle these things and if you miss, guess what? You get a shin hurt. So, we jumped four fences that night to get to a bunker because he put that darn fence up.

HASIK: Did he take the fence down after that?

POWELL: Nope. They kept 'em up and when I first got there, there was no fences. so, if you had to get to a bunker, you could get there. Man, if you're not jumper, you're in trouble. (chuckles) You pray out there at the gate. But that was one of the downfalls, you had to jump the fences to get to the bunker. And in doing that, I jumped four fences and I finally got to a bunker and it was over. Everything that was in my pockets was down the street. Go back pickin' all my stuff up, down the street.

81:23-81:57 GRUVER: How tall were these fences that you were jumping?

POWELL: About three feet.

HASIK: Tall enough.

POWELL: Tall enough, yeah. (chortles)

GRUVER: So did your height, you're a pretty tall guy, did that help you a little bit?

POWELL: Yeah. Yeah, I was a high jumper in college and high school. I did have a little strong legs so I could jump. But, boy I tell ya. With boots, combat boots on, man that was nasty.

81:57-83:11 HASIK: You described the lack of, kind of, constant action in war, did you live in a state of, I guess, constant hyper awareness or kind of anticipation of?...

POWELL: You're always on edge. Edge to the point when you hear somethin', you know somethin' s coming. And I never slept very well because my barracks was an interesting history. It was a French base at one time, when they were there, and the story was that the French soldiers were sleeping and the maids let in the enemy and they come in and cut their throats in the barracks where we were sleeping. So, that always made me uncomfortable. I always slept with a, since I couldn't have a pistol, like I slept with a knife under my pillow. So, if anyone slipped in, I had a shot at something. But, uh, they call that PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) now. (chuckles) Paranoia.

83:11-83:19 HASIK: How long were you in Vietnam?

POWELL: One year and eight days.

83:19-86:52 HASIK: And then what did you do once you got home? Because you were in the service for ten years.

POWELL: Oh my gosh, it was fun. When I got home, we flew, we left Da Nang on Flying Tiger Lines. They don't even have that anymore, but it was a contract airlines. Now they packed the plane to the, just tight. All the knees and the chairs in front were stuck. So it was the most uncomfortable 24-hour air ride I've ever been in. But when we left, what was so cute, guys were kissing that plane when we left the ground. They were so happy to get out of that place. But when we landed at Norton Air Force Base, I didn't have time to write my family. They didn't know I had arrived and I went from Norton over to Long Beach and we slept 36 hours. They literally kicked me and my friend outta there. A guy I met over there, he was from Boston area. We slept in the beds for 36 hours. And they said, you guys have to get out of here. So when we got up we didn't know what day it was. All the days had passed already so we got on a bus and he went to the airport. Last I saw of him. My parents didn't know I was comin' back and some families were waiting, you know. So it was good to see. But, uh, I had almost a quarantine because I had a broom and a hat and then they questioned all my cameras. I had like six cameras. What am I doing with so many cameras? And then I had my pictures and they saw my pictures. Oh my gosh. So they went through all the pictures and then they, and I sent all the negatives and stuff back but the cameras I carried 'cause I didn't want 'em ruined. Anyway, so I got stuck there a little longer than normal. But, when I got home, they were glad to see me. They would have met me, only I couldn't tell anyone I was comin' back. But, yeah, you need someone when you come back. And then when I was gettin' on, what

was it, a bus? I was going somewhere. Going' to the airport, oh, I was going to the bus terminal. When people were throwing things at us on the bus. The first time I had ever seen that. We never did that to people when they were in the military. We never, they were calling us bad names, throwing things at us. So, anyway, I eventually got out of the military uniform because I was gettin' pummeled. But, um, yeah. I was glad to get back.

86:52-93:17 HASIK: What did you do, kind of, after you got home and reacquainted with your family?

POWELL: They sent me to, um, what was it HS-6 in Imperial Beach, California, and then I continued on my lovely trips, I love 'em. They sent me to, because the squadron was on a ship in Japan so they sent me to Naval Station in San Diego. I stayed three days there, then they sent me to Travis Air Force Base and I hopped the Japanese islands and met an instructor in school that was now stationed overseas. And I thought, man, this is cool getting to talk to him, and we had a good time. And then we got a plane from there over to an Air Force Base and we took a bus and we had this long bus ride on the Japanese Island. And, um, Nagasaki. We went to Satsuma, Japan and met the ship there and went back to Vietnam, again, but only on water and I stayed on that. And they decommissioned the ship, the Kearsarge. And I was back in the states, Imperial Beach for the rest of that hitch. During that hitch, I met a Chinese lady. So, I couldn't get married while I was in service because the military wouldn't let us go over there. They wouldn't allow me to marry so we figured out a way to do it. So I got out of the service, went over there and got married, and came back into the service and she was part of the service. But, it was kind of neat. There was a way to get around everything. Anyway, um, so, I spent 6 more years in the service and that is where I came up with 10. But, um, never got to go to war zone after that- that one time. But I had my little family and then I was stationed at Point Mugu, more exciting stuff too. I had a deal with Congressman Teague. He liked, he was a backer of the Tomcat and a Sparrow missile project. He was pushing the Sparrow missile on that so being a barter guy, too, we went and bartered. I give him a picture and he helped me get school for camera repair. But that was the start of another little saga where when I got back, I left a message at the duty desk that I was going to see Congressman Teague's secretary. Okay, whoever made this stupid statement but they went from that to I was on the base with the Congressman and photographing the base. So, it was, I think, three or four captains, Navy captains, and two admirals, wanted to know why, where is he? Where is the congressman and where is the photographer? So, they didn't know where he was; they were scared. My captain was about a 4'11" guy, short little man, and I was standing at attention and he's looking up to me. What are you doin' with the congressman? I said, I'm not doing anything with the congressman. I said I

went to see his secretary and I said I delivered a picture to him. He said, but I want to know why my photographer is doing with a congressman. And I said nothing, I just had, I delivered a picture, you know. So, he said, next time I wanna know, you know, if you're with anyone on this base, I need to know because I have to answer to all these other guys. I said, well, you can put it to rest, he's not on the base, so. But, when I got back, when I actually arrived to the shop, there was a warrant officer pounding on the door and he was shaking and he says, you're in trouble. So, I went up there, no, I was not in trouble. Just another little area. But, I got my school and it was kind of neat and I helped him out. He got a nice portrait of the plane firing the missile at sub-sonic speed, which is what he wanted. so, anyway, that was a little saga. The next hitch. But, uh, we did all kinds of stuff. What did we do? That one was a air test evaluation squadron, so they test all different kinds of new weaponry and stuff. And we had, I spent what three years there. Yeah. They were going to put me in the sea duty somewhere. But I went to that and I went to the Constellation, which is a carrier. so, it was fun. I always have flair everywhere I go. There's always some kinda fire going. (chuckles)

GRUVER: That you start sometimes?

POWELL: Oh yeah. Oh yes. Oh yes. Anyway, um.

93:25-95:24 GRUVER: So where did you meet your wife?

POWELL: I met her in Hong Kong. The deal was in the Kearsarge that when we got to Hong Kong, we had three days. Okay, and we wanted to go out and get pictures of Hong Kong for the cruise book 'cause every ship has a cruise book. At the end of the cruise, they make a book and everybody gets it. So, we went and photographed some scenes and stuff. well, what better way than we rented some girl out of one of those places, and she showed me everything about Hong Kong. That was pretty cool. Got to see a lot of places. And just got to know her after the third day. And then that carried over and just so, after about a year we got married.

GRUVER: So you wrote letters back and forth?

POWELL: Yes. Wrote letters, yeah. Yup and she's still here. She's still in this country. She got LA-ised. She got too Americanised and I got too Chinesed. I got to be more like Chinese people than American and then she went the other way. Never worked. Didn't work out. After about, oh my gosh, it was about 16 years. So my son is here with me and she is over in California and I remarried over here. That's ancient history. (chuckles) Been married, what, 20 years. 20 years now to a lady from El Paso.

95:24-97:29 HASIK: I have one last question.

POWELL: Yes.

HASIK: Many people would consider you, for your service to this country a hero. What's your reaction or response to that?

POWELL: We actually just did our job. We did our job. Don't really consider it a hero as I do Audie Murphy. That's my hero, so, I don't know if you've studied any of him. That's that's, and basically all of us did the same thing, we do something out of the ordinary when we have to. And that's (shrugs) and basically do a job. Fortunate for me, I didn't see action, come close. Gosh, enemy on the other side of the sands, I don't know how much closer I could get to a hand-to-hand fight. That was pretty close. They made us all get off and the boat went in the water, backed off and said oh my gosh we're stranded. So, yeah yeah. Each situation you kinda deal with and you think, what are you gonna do? Which way are you gonna go? Um, have water with the snakes or I stay here on land and fight and our thoughts are, we're gonna fight. And, that time on the beach, I never had a weapon. That was what was sad 'cause we went on a boat and the captain didn't want us to have any weapons. So, we couldn't carry a weapon with us. So, I was empty. (chuckles) Not even a pocket knife. That was sad. But, (interrupted)

97:29-97:43 HASIK: Wow. I would like to thank (interrupted)

POWELL: Go ahead.

HASIK: I was just going to say I would like to thank you for your service and for sitting down with us today.

POWELL: Yes.

HASIK: Um. On behalf of myself, the university, and the East Texas War and Memory Project.

POWELL: You're welcome.