

# Laurence Willborn

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COHEN: Today is, May the 9<sup>th</sup> [2018]. My name is Leah Cohen and I am here with Wilbert Laurence Willborn and he will share his experiences when he was drafted in the war for Vietnam. So thank you for coming to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library.

WILLBORN: Well, thanks so much for having us, having me. I'm certainly glad to contribute to the capture of so much of what has transpired in [what] is for the most part lost to the rest of the community. We need to share and in order to enhance each other's lives. Instead of living in isolation, we could create this... at least a reference pool of information that is available for others and our posterity.

COHEN: Yeah. Thank you, thank you for being— being part of— being of that—

WILLBORN: No, thank you.

COHEN: So we'll start off like they say, begin at the beginning. So we'll start off asking you where were you born and where did you grow up?

WILLBORN: I'm a Chicago native. West Side. My parents were both working. My father had a wide variety of positions. He came to Chicago at the depth of the Depression and went to McKinley High School— I think still exists. Uh, where he excelled despite the difficulties of his background in Arkansas. Our family was run out of Arkansas through threat of violence and so when we arrived in Chicago with nothing. I think it's the Illinois Central Railroad Station [questioningly] where a lot of blacks turned up with their own little luggage and had to have someone help them and so we received help from Chicago Urban League and others to help settle the newly arriving escapees from the rural South. My father excelled, despite his background, because he had engaged in a type of self-education. The males of our family were in black clergy. Not that they were big religious persons, but that it was the only venue really open for blacks to be educated as there actually was resistance on the part of the powers that be. That an educated black is a threat and therefore they have to control them. So, at one point it was against the law for a black to learn how to read and, and that kind of tendency still pervades a lot of our cultural traditions.

COHEN: So, you want to tell what... why your family was run out of Arkansas? Do you want... do you want to record this for posterity?

WILLBORN: Yes, my father's uncle lived in Brinkley, Arkansas and it's closely connected to another town, Holly Grove. Most blacks there were manual or—unskilled [workers?] and my uncle became an entrepreneur since blacks are not allowed, and not allowed, and not allowed... my uncle had a barber shop and eventually, it became a center for gathering, and so he became somewhat of an entrepreneur. Well, he was passing through town on a weekday and was criticized for having a clean shirt on, and so the local agriculturalist made a point of attacking him, beating him up and declaring that: "No black is supposed to be wearing a clean white shirt on, on a work day! You supposed to be wearing your coveralls and your dirty boots! And how dare you insult us by walking through town as though you were a human being!" My uncle picked himself up, went back home and put on another clean shirt—and brought his pistol with him and his wife, my father's aunt begged him not to do that because she knew it was gonna be some trouble and whereas my uncle, refused to comply to that. We eventually, were told by law enforcement that, "there's going to be mob violence against you and your family," and that law enforcement—we... "You're a nice guy. We like your family. We've known you a long time—"

COHEN: [5:56, inaudible]

WILLBORN: "but I'm going to tell ya now, I cannot protect you, therefore, be out of town by sundown." So they came to the house and said "Come on [6:06, inaudible] grab what you can grab, because chances are good this house is gonna be torched tonight. Don't be here when it gets dark." [6:17, inaudible] The law enforcement escorted them to the train station and says, "I don't know where you're going, just don't be here. Get out." Okay, and so, they had to go.

COHEN: Mm.

WILLBORN: Let's see, my mother went to Englewood High School. Englewood used to be a separate town and it used to be a town like, like Evanston. It was a neighboring town. Englewood High School was an exceptional high school and she was one of the earlier blacks in that. Let's see... my mother was an only child... late in life birth, exceptional little person and... Worked at Chur—at the Church Federation of Chicago because they... most of the business community would not hire blacks despite the background of Englewood High School

COHEN: Yeah.

WILLBORN: Yeah! You go to New Trier, you're almost automatically in, unless there's some problem at the interview. My mother... was exceptional in Pitman [shorthand]

and in Gregg shorthand because that would usually be one of the tricks. They would advertise for Pitman. You would show up. Take a Pitman test and then be told if you're black" "Oh, we only use Gregg!" And—and the reverse also true they would advertise for Gregg. You'd show up and they'd say "Oh, we only use Pitman." My mother knew both.

COHEN: [Laughs]

WILLBORN: My mother typed one hundred and ten words a minute.

COHEN: Wow!

WILLBORN: And, could not get a job.

COHEN: Hmm.

WILLBORN: Church Federation of Chicago hired her. Later on, she had a career at University of Illinois Medical Center. It's the state. They don't pay very much. That's okay we'll—we'll—accept it because uh—job security.

COHEN: Wow!

WILLBORN: Okay. Uh, they eventually, my parents, uh, eventually bought a two-story house and, in uh, Chicago's Westside. And one of the former Jewish communities, Lawndale. It's now called North Lawndale. And, uh, I went to the second worst high school in the state of Illinois.

COHEN: Which high school was that?

WILLBORN: Well, David Farragut. Uh, at the time, there's something called the North Central Accreditation Commission and, uh, they survey various campuses and present evaluation and recommendation. And ours was uh—very few of the positive uh, factors could be noted. And a huge number of the negative factors could be noticed. Uh...um, my high school remained on the very much endangered list. Apparently, there's one high school that's even worse than David Farragut.

COHEN: So was it um, assessed in this way when you were a student there? Or was it—

WILLBORN: Yes!

COHEN: Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WILLBORN: Yes, and subsequently later, it, actually, became worse. And eventually, they uh... City of Chicago tried various palliatives to just— deceive the people. Richard

J. Daley... Mayor is actually a single word, and for some reason I could not convince the members of the black community to withdraw their support from this person who insults them to their face and yet gets re-elected. [10:12, Inaudible] We used to have real problems with the—with why did you fight to get the franchise if after you get the right vote, you vote for somebody you don't like.

COHEN: [Laughs]

WILLBORN: That doesn't represent your interests and will tell you so and repeatedly, you know? Repeatedly. Uh—

COHEN: So, so, how did you experience the high school um, when you—when you were a student or were you involved in a lot of activities at the time?

WILLBORN: Uh, the activities of the high school the only saving graces. We had a library with uh, card catalogue and 80 percent of the books listed were not available. We had a chemistry lab with no chemicals in it. We had a fencing club with no foils. We had a ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] programs with no uniforms. We had the athletic department reduced to simply basketball, football. Uh, blacks were being deceived into putting all their ambition into basketball and I at the time kept telling—kept telling these people that you're being tricked. It's all just a joke. The, um, reading level of incoming freshmen, instead of 8<sup>th</sup> grade, was something like 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Therefore, after the school had x number of failures, they subsequently reduced first, second, third year uh, English programs. The math scores were all below 8<sup>th</sup> grade math scores so that in high school you couldn't teach advanced algebra, trigonometry to people who were barely able to handle fractions. So they attenuated the educational program. By a system of districting. They insured that Farragut High School had a class average of forty-one kids per class. This also guaranteed that no learning is gonna take place during these classes.

COHEN: Were your—were your parents concerned? Especially in that they were well-educated?

WILLBORN: That's amazing. Um, my parents didn't believe my complaints. And my Dad worked nights my mom worked days. So nobody's is coming to challenge and, er, my... apparently my parents and I fell out over some kind of issue. Either they had some kind of strange expectation of me so that we became like virtually just two different camps. Their world, my world, stop bothering me. Um, so there were very little academics in high school that were worth considering. Our... there was the humanities. We had a tradition of the music department and we had the director of the concert band had been there for twenty-nine years and he was Chicago's number one and he carried on the tradition even though he

had difficulties with understanding members of the black community. He um, I don't know if you know the name Marcel Ackerman but he was also the longtime leader of Chicago's All City band and All City was like, really recognized as highly select and a great performer and I was in that. We had a drama department and I was in drama. I was in all, all these humanities. I was in visual art and eventually matriculated at the School of the Art Institute. As a matter of fact, I got to go to what's now called the Young Artist's Studio.

COHEN: What's the Young Artist's Studio?

WILLBORN: Yeah, it's a program where in people below collage age can come onto campus and study art with college-level people. They... I think they also now have a program now where you can get college credit while still in high school. I don't know about that, but that became the only way I could remain in... At a school with drugs and violence and gangs and overcrowding and uh, all this nonsense. So, interesting high school experience. As, as things got worse and worse, it became easier and easier for me to justify my separation from uh, from the norm that they had in mind.

COHEN: So, so in other words, you, you had this kind of oasis of the theater, the art, and the music, the drama that became your world.

WILLBORN: That... yeah, yes. That was my only way of engaging with the Chicago Public Schools and staying interested in uh, tolerating all the nonsense that was happening at the time.

COHEN: Did you feel at risk? Like your personal security?

WILLBORN: Oh, absolutely. I was attacked on campus. Attacked to and from the school. Various gangs... "I am not a gang member." "Which gang are you in?" "I'm not in any gang." Oh, that's highly unusual. That makes you completely vulnerable. And uh—skinny little kid on his way home by himself. Ostracized because of my use of English as a normal person and—vulnerable in many ways and caught between the two gangs, the two major gangs and two minor gangs. So, there's like four gangs and "Which one are you in?" "I'm in none of them." "Oh, well, you're a victim." Strong-armed robbery and... It's mostly humiliation, mostly humiliation. There's not much to be gained by taking my lunch money especially if there's five people attacking you to take a dollar. All right, so I had to repeatedly tell them, "Oh, so you want twenty cents apiece?"

COHEN: [Laughs]

WILLBORN: Are you willing to go to prison? Because I am gonna turn you in. I'm going to, I'm going to turn you in and, you know, and I will testify in court against you and

some of those kids did end up having to go to disciplinary schools for twenty cents and I had sympathy for these kids. Trying to tell them that your participation in gangs and stuff is exactly what they want you to do. This is Richard J. Daley, Mayor, he's figured you out. He's got to a plan for you. He wants you to be a felon so that he can continue to keep you in prison.

COHEN: How do you think you have a kind of like a perspective you know, as a teenager of... I don't know how to explain it but how not to get sucked into the prevailing point of view at the time?

WILLBORN: Yeah, I think—it's—past lives. That's the only way [I can explain it] because my mother and I used to argue before I was born. We used to have these conversations while I was still in utero and my challenge to her was "I don't understand why you're tolerating this." And she used to go "There, there, it'll be all right." And I go, "No, it won't be all right. You live in the richest country in the world—and you're poor. You, you're living an all are created equal and you're not equal. You live in a justice for all and you don't have any justice. You're abused and attacked and you don't seem to fight back. Why tolerate it? There's no rules saying that any of us have to be human beings. Why don't we leave this planet it's just, you know... everybody should have a line—below which they refuse to go. If you, if you're not going to fight slavery, then you are a slave and you deserve your mistreatment." "Oh, don't, don't be so upset. Don't be so upset. It's going to be all right." She used to tell me. "It's going to be all right." And, same thing with our father, if you're going to be abused, you're allowing it. You must to stop allowing it. "Oh, well, the alternative is—death." And I say, "Death is acceptable under certain circumstances. Death before dishonor as many military people know. You, you're not going to be dishonored all your life."

COHEN: No.

WILLBORN: Well, that's it. You just draw a line and just say "I'm not going any lower."

COHEN: Did, did you have any brothers and sisters and did they share your views?

WILLBORN: Yes, I have two brothers and they're much older than I. So we didn't have much chance to talk. My nearest brother is—eight years older. So, I'm ten. He's left the house. He's left the house. Marriage. You're gone—whatever and my eldest brother, I hardly met him at all. He's from an earlier marriage of my father. He's one of the first of our family to be a military officer. He graduated from the service academy and flew for—strategic air command. He was a navigator. B-47 and flew for General Curtis LeMay. In those days, when blacks didn't do anything and he was actually in the [21:11?] Air Force Academy graduate. He's like my dad, he is... mathematics in his head.

COHEN: Yeah.

WILLBORN: And apparently there is a right brain, left brain kind of configuration. I don't know which is which, but neither of them seem to understand arts and, to me, there is nothing else, but art.

COHEN: [Laughs]

WILLBORN: You're a human being. Therefore, that's all there is.

COHEN: [Laughs] so, you're opposite ends in your interests.

WILLBORN: Yeah, I don't think it was exactly opposite. I think they were neglecting their potential. I think all of us have full potential, but you have to decide which of your innate abilities you're going to, by practice, activate. And they were... they couldn't see the point. How many artists make a living? How many choreographers live in New York and—buss tables for a living. So, do something practical.

COHEN: Yeah.

WILLBORN: So, my father eventually worked for Ford Motor Company when blacks didn't get jobs at Ford. And he was a machinist when blacks didn't get jobs as machinists and he eventually worked on the J-47 engine [?] Ford just make jet engines. They were in early—

COHEN: I didn't realize that.

WILLBORN: Yeah, there was something other... the J-49 or J-79 jet engine and my father actually worked on those prototype jet engines. Something happened in that program and, like... many industrial jobs, they, hire and—layoff according to the company's needs, but your landlord doesn't see things that way. So—

COHEN: [Laughs] Yeah.

WILLBORN: So, the landlord don't want to hear that or "What are you doing?" He was a member of the International Association of Machinists when very few blacks had that. So, he couldn't stand those vagaries. So he left and worked at the United States Post Office which became a big pool for black upward mobility. At least you were guaranteed a job—

COHEN: Guaranteed a full-time job.

WILLBORN: Guaranteed to have a steady... though maybe not lucrative, but it's steady and it's very difficult to be fired from the Post Office. So, between his working for federal government and my mother working for the State of Illinois. We had the ability to pay a mortgage, with great regularity. So, they're only the three of us and I don't really see my parents [24:17, inaudible]—My mother leaves early. She had to leave to go to work before I had to leave to go to school. My father doesn't get home until two in the afternoon and then he has to sleep. So, he's at home, asleep. My mother comes home at six or eight. So, I only see one of my parents for a couple of hours every day. So we were very much, "you go there, I go there". Brothers are... my brothers are kind of materialists and they don't really see human beings as anything other than producers and consumers and we've had—difficulties understanding each other on that point [25:06?].

COHEN: Do you think that you're influenced by the times? You know by, Martin Luther King? Do you think like, I guess what I'm trying ask is, were there current events that you were aware of growing up that might have influenced your thinking?

WILLBORN: I—always felt myself a shaper of current events rather than someone who read about them. I'm a hippie in a sense that I knew I was a hippie before that word was invented. And when I heard that other people were actually also of that same mind set, I said, "Of course, what else could there be?" President Kennedy was assassinated while I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and it was something that, to me, seemed easily predictable. Easily predictable.

COHEN: Hmm. How, how so?

WILLBORN: Yeah, because President Eisenhower had gotten us involved in events in the Far East. Korea and in—and in areas of South East Asia, especially with the French withdrawal.

COHEN: Mhm.

WILLBORN: We had advisers in South East Asia in 1953 and it was—easily predictable. Eventually some of those advisers are going to get killed and then that is going to justify an increase of forces and an increase in involvement and as the French withdraw, the Americans are going to see, "Aha! The French have softened these people up for the past one hundred years." So I know that they are ready to finally capitulate to—to a—Caucasian conqueror and so they saw the opportunity to make money and to whoop these little people into line. So you knew that this was coming. And there were certain things you could hear in Kennedy's voice when he spoke that showed that he was hesitating. He was not one of these 'carry on' this American hegemony. He was starting to say that other people have rights and—I knew good and well you're going to have a problem. They're going to have to get rid of you some kind of way. Later on, I

learned that his Secretary of Defense—McNamara [Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara] had told in the oval office, told the Joint Chiefs "Gentlemen, if we don't stop doing this we are war criminals. Let's face it, there is the Nuremberg Code. All of you have read it. All of you have read these points. As a matter of fact, we had forced the Germans and other nations to be signatories to the Nuremberg Code. And now look at the points and we are violating all of them. If we don't stop, we will be the defendants at The Hague. Shortly thereafter, McNamara had to sit... I submit, his resignation. We knew that President Kennedy could not simply say, "Okay, I want to withdraw all American forces." There was too much inertia rolling that way. Too many people involved. The Hunt Brothers, the Brown Brothers, these, these people are going to, promote their agenda and if you're an impediment to— H. L. Hunt, then you might have a little problem.

COHEN: How, how were... excuse me... how did you become aware of events at Vietnam when you were in high school? Like what were your sources of information?

WILLBORN: Yeah, I was reading— reports from government agencies as you could simply go down to the library and pull off the shelves.

COHEN: Mm.

WILLBORN: It's hard to know which report because the government produces such a vast volume on... a vast number of subjects. So, it's hard to hunt your way through to find something valuable. Among, the documents I read was the United States Army field manuals. And— you could see that this is clearly a violation of every kind of tenant that you said you were preserving, protecting, and defending. Enhanced interrogation techniques by Army officers? And they are teaching this? Later on, I found out that there's United States Army Intelligence schools where they teach young West Point Officers... Cadets. "This is how you break somebodies' arm. This how you set fire to their nose. This is how you do that to get them to confess." And I said "You can't teach our officers this." You know that their doing it. Like the police, you know they have a secret room where they get you to confess. Okay, so, you could read things that were coming out in congressional hearings. You could read that because they... those have to published and you can see that those things are going on. The press must know about it. The press knows more than they're actually printing. They always do and so— you become a student activist telling your fellow high school kids, "Don't join the military. Don't join the police force. This is what they're doing and if they can do it overseas, they can come home and do it to you."

COHEN: So, were some of your fellow students of interested in volunteering for the Army?

WILLBORN: Yes. As a matter of fact, at one point both the [US] Marines and the Army actually had classrooms dedicated for recruiting.

COHEN: In— in— on—

WILLBORN: On campus.

COHEN: I'm sorry, was this in the high school?

WILLBORN: In a high school. And— apparently, the recruitment numbers weren't high enough in, in those days so that recruiters were actually sent out under pressure to get kids to sign up. All kinds of promises were being made to these high school kids, "Sign now and everything will be fine and you going to be all right and you'll have training and employment and possibilities. And, and consider your alternatives. Consider your alternatives, you're graduating from a dumb high school in a dumb neighborhood—

COHEN: [Laughs]

WILLBORN: —and you're going to work at McDonald's your entire life? I don't think so. You can't work at a gas station anymore. They don't have that. You can't hardly work at Jewel Food store putting the stock boy. They don't hardly have that anymore. So, come on in and get yourselves something and be [rambling sound, 32:44, unsure of how to word/mention in transcription]." How to... and these kids were believing it, having no countervailing information and so, we used to say, "You should talk to people who are already in the Army right now and find out that they hate it and you're going to hate it and once you sign, it's going to be real hard for you to get out. It's actually against the law and they're going to keep you in line. They're going to have you. Well, it's either go to the Army or go to jail." You know, so a lot of kids were signing up. We had a—

COHEN: Is this for after they graduated from high school or was this when they were seventeen years old and required parental consent? How it... how did it work?

WILLBORN: "Go get your parents to sign. Here, go take this document home. Your dad will sign because your mom will sign because they know that you're going to get in trouble if you just keep hanging out after school nothing to do and no... no definite direction and you're going to get yourself arrested for something stupid and then when you're standing in front of a jury they're going to ask you, "Well, a— what else is he doing? We may as well send him to jail. Even if he didn't do this, chances are he'll be something by the end of the week." So, your jury is going to convict you. Therefore, parents are enthused to send their kid to go do something. A lot of kids went and a— I never heard from them again. So, a— Kennedy was assassinated and it was clear from the warren report that this is all

a lie. It's clearly a lie. That single shooter theory... all of a sudden— the suspected assassin, he's killed and then, the man who killed the assassin, he suddenly dies. So, apparently somebody is cleaning up the loose edges. It's clear that Mrs. Kennedy knew something, beforehand. It's clear that Governor Connally [Governor of Texas, John Connally], probably was not targeted and ended up getting hit anyway and I'm sure, you know, Governor Connally knows things that he didn't say. It's clear that Vice President Johnson, whose next-door neighbor is J. Edgar Hoover— it's clear that he was prepared for what was going on. The magic bullet showed up at Parkland Hospital<sup>1</sup>. All of this pointed that something was going on. The Warren report was way too large to have been [written] in a short amount of time and clearly there's this twenty-five-year gag order... I forget what it's called. Was... there was information that was... what is it? Time capsule. Information in a time capsule cannot be open over an x amount of years and everybody says, "That's... clearly your lying!" So, we knew that that was wrong. Mar... MLK was assassinated. I was never one of his people anyway. But it was clear that, this was a... create... you had this... you have a snake, find its head, chop its head off and that was clearly the way it worked. MLK was never my person. I don't think he intended to be the Leader of the Black People. I think the people outside of the black community made him, "You are the Leader of the Black People." We do not have that office. There is no... there's no such thing as the leader of the black people. We don't have that office and [MLK] did not run for that office and I would have not voted for him for that office, but suddenly, he's getting all the grant money. He's getting all the media attention. He's being promoted around the world as the Leader of the Black People. The only competition was Malcolm X [American Muslim Minister and Civil Rights Activist]. Malcolm X was the alternative and the Black Panther Party [Self-Defense, African American Revolutionary Party]. These things were chosen by us. The honorable Elijah Muhammad [religious leader who led the Nation of Islam] told— dominant society, "I am severing all ties with you. I am—"

COHEN: So, who— who were... did you have any personal leaders, like people whom you felt were at the helm and should be at the helm?

WILLBORN: Mostly philosophers. Albert Einstein. William Herschel [German-British astronomer and composer]. Socrates. These are people... I was in martial arts, so there's a number— of famous martial arts people who all said the same thing, "Society is not an answer. Society is a mechanism, and in order to engage with that mechanism, it's going to make demands of you, and those demands are going to be very deleterious to your own personal progress. Most philosophers who say, "If you want to progress, you have to let society go." And that's primarily what I was doing. I was doing that through the music and art because it's seems that your associating now with the muses, and the muses are Zeus'

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<sup>1</sup> Hospital in Dallas, Texas where Kennedy, his assassin, and his assassin's killer were pronounced dead

[Greek God] children and this is a chance for you to advance to Mount Olympus [highest mountain in Greece and home of the Greek gods]. Mount Olympus is going to give you a problem too, “because you’re a mortal [rambling sound]. They’re better than you [rambling sound]. But at least you’re not squabbling about parking spaces [rambling sound]—”

COHEN: [Laughs]

WILLBORN: “—bank accounts and that doesn’t mean anything and, you know, “Store not for yourself treasure upon earth where moth and rust corrupt and the thief breaks through, to take away [paraphrase of Matthew 6:19] because, you know, where your treasure is that’s where your heart lies also. So, let go of that. Otherwise, you’re going to be down there with that and so, you’re right, everything on the earth disintegrates, including your own flesh. Don’t attach to that. Let that go. You’re going to let that go anyway.”

COHEN: Like a, spiritual values [unintelligible]...

WILLBORN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. After all, whatever earthly values you have, it’s going to deteriorate. So, why not associate yourself with those things that— transcend time, transcend space and so that way, if the whole Earth blow up in World War Three— that’s something that could happen, that’s all. It really won’t affect because you transcend this linear time—

COHEN: That being said, could we go back to a question connected to linear time?

WILLBORN: Sorry. [Laughs]

COHEN: That being said, could I ask you a question connected to linear time?

WILLBORN: Ah, yes, a linear time!

COHEN: So after... after you finished high school—

WILLBORN: Oh.

COHEN: What did you do?

WILLBORN: Yeah, that’s a problem! Society has a— list of slots and many Chicago high schools have a career counselor and many high schools have faculty and what— they eventually will say to any twelve-year-old, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” And because you are not connected to labor, you don’t know even know what jobs exist and you have no idea what life in the workforce is like because your parents may have a job title, but you have no idea what they do

when they leave house and when they come home, they're tired and complaining so they don't want to tell you what it is their life is like. So you talk to most kids about a job it's doctor, lawyer, police, fire— teacher, nurse— Indian... Indian chief, "What do you want be? Do you want be a druggist? Do you want to be a— truck driver?" Depend on Hollywood to tell you about what the jobs are. All right, so you say to a kid in the career office, "Well, I'm looking at your... your high school performance. What would you like to be?" "Oh, I don't know." Okay, let the career counselor recommend something. Mine looked perfunctory glance at my bad grades and said, "You should be a truck driver." And I says, "Okay, well, thank you for your advice. Thank you. You should know, however, that I'm currently taking classes at University of Chicago and at the Art Institute. So, we should stop wasting each other's time." Remember that most of our— cultural heroes all hated their education system. George Orwell [Author of Animal Farm] was kicked out of... "Never darken our door again and—"

COHEN: [Laughs] Yeah.

WILLBORN: Einstein had a hard time in school and that's kind of the way it is. Not just the conformity, but the stupidity of this class system. Oh, I might mention, there was something called... you know, I'm talking too much. I might mention that there's something called the Science Research Associates [SRA], they spun out of IBM [International Business Machines Corporation].

COHEN: Oh.

WILLBORN: Yeah. This is interesting connecting to the military. In World War I, we needed an Army. So, we had all these raw human beings and the Army had a number of jobs. So, we had no way of selecting, which person would go where. So, they would just count off, "We need hundred and ten of you guys okay ninety-nine... [rambling sound] You go with sergeant so and so. You're going to be that job. Then— we need x number of these. You fifteen guys, you go over there. That's what you're going to do." Okay, the end of World War One— technology was developed. And as World War II started, we saw that the number of military jobs had proliferated. It used to be done one, two, three, four, five and training is enhanced if you find people who are more likely to succeed in certain types of training. How can you identify that? Well, you'll have to have some sort of testing. Well, at the time, if you test 100,000 eighteen-year-old people, the war will be over before you get the test results back. So, there's really, you're kind of caught in a quadrium.

COHEN: Yeah.

WILLBORN: Later on, during the war, the military got better at devising a test by associating with universities to be able to identify job skills that would be useful for these

raw recruits and you could identify... people would show that you could slot them to training programs more effectively. Okay, after the war, we'd finally got to electronic data processing and IBM Corporation says, "Listen, the testing that we did, for the war, why don't we continue that testing before the next war? So, they started a series of number two pencil optical character reading and testing all these kids with this company, Science Research Associates [SRA]. "Send in your answers — do not make your marks [rambling sound] extraneous marks, and okay. Pencil down." You know, that kind of thing. Black people did... exceptionally poorly on these tests. I did exceptionally well. I was recruited after the test scores came back. "You must've cheated." I was retested. I was retested from my elementary school. I was retested: five hours' worth of testing, [performed under the vigilance of] ... a proctor with only six students so they were going to make sure that we were not cheating.

COHEN: So, this was at the end of elementary school?

WILLBORN: Yeah, in elementary school. So, subsequently, I was recruited to go to [University of Chicago] lab school. "Aha! What a great opportunity! I think you might do well in a, more rigorous environment. Wouldn't that be better for you since you seem to be particularly bored with things that are happening here? You seem to be bored. So, wouldn't you like a more challenging program?" So, I had to get my father's permission. I finally dragged him to school. He didn't want to come. Blah, blah, blah. Strangely enough, "No, I do not want my son to go to a special school." And that was the first time me and him really had to have a fight. I mean, I didn't say anything until we got home. "What in the world is wrong with you?" So, that was interesting. So, okay SAT scores finally came out and I'm in the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile. I... at the time, I didn't know statistics. So, I didn't know what that [high ranking] meant. I don't know. So, I think, 1600 is a perfect score? I'm not sure. I'm not sure, but my score was like 1420.

COHEN: Wow.

WILLBORN: Something like that and— I didn't know what that meant because I didn't know what [other scores] people were getting. A faculty member who was very important to me as she was one of the few people who treated me like an adult because apparently— art is a world where we recognize you and not your circumstance. Mozart can compose. "So, we're not worried about whether he's Catholic or a Jew or... hey, did you write that piece of music? Do that again!" And said, "Okay!"

COHEN: [Laughs]

WILLBORN: So, that's how we managed to survive that nonsense. "Okay, so after... after graduating high school, what are you going to do?" Ah, well, very few artists

make a living. Even the best of them. Okay, so I had little jobs at— I don't know, at retailers. There's some... there's a catalogue retail house called Aldens [inc.]. My future Mother-in-Law managed to get me a slot there and... you know, that was horrible and then I went from one little stupid thing... you know, I was married at one point. Early in my marriage, I was making \$1.65 an hour and of course, the wife was dissatisfied. Of course, I'm dissatisfied. I'm a grown man. I think high sch--... I think kids with paper routes made more than what I [was earning] .... I had a very difficult situation because that's what you're doing.

COHEN: Yes, I was... yeah. Is that where you were at in 1970 when you were drafted [unintelligible]?

WILLBORN: Yeah. Yeah, I didn't have enough money to— go to school full-time. So, I went from eighteen credit hours, which would have made, student deferment, to twelve credit hours, which was the maximum that I could afford. That immediately made me 1A and because I had written some very nasty letters to Selective Service [An independent agency of the United States Government that maintains information on those potentially subject to military conscription] and [I did request]... a hearing [i.e. an appeal of selective service decision] and [was granted] ... a hearing with them and was very nasty to them at the hearing. They apparently, "Make sure to draft this guy as soon as they get the chance and within—"

COHEN: Could... could you back up a bit because I don't totally understand it. Like what were studying for the twelve hours a week? And you were saying that because you were studying fewer than eighteen hours a week you were in a classification that was subject to... to draft?

WILLBORN: Yes. You had to be a full-time college student to keep your student deferment.

COHEN: Yeah.

WILLBORN: That meant you had to have eighteen credit hours— every semester... trimester. You had to have eighteen and— tuition— and living expenses, meant that I had to reschedule myself. I was taking twelve credit hours and because I suspected that I'm going to have to make a living other than art, I went to a computer school [in which tuition and fees were met] out of pocket... So, I had a, small student employment, twelve credit hours and then, four nights a week at a computer school. So, fairly, busy, schedule. And then I got drafted! [Laughs]

COHEN: Oh! So, what were you saying about the letters though? The letters? You said I was... I was known to have written... who did you write the letters

WILLBORN: Yes, the Selective Service sent me a notification saying, “We don’t know why you’re not 1A.” And so I had to write them, “I’m full time student. Blah, blah, blah. I’m working [rambling sound, 54:10] and other... other people get student deferment. I don’t see why I don’t. Further, I object to you... I object to the whole Selective Service system.” I do not think that, we can, grant or deny equal protection under the law on basis of some board of unelected persons who are accountable to whom? They’re certainly not accountable for the black community. So, who are you people on the board to decide who is going to go to the war zone? Who are you?” And the most... the best they could offer me was a hearing.

COHEN: I see.

WILLBORN: I went to hearing, and it was— it was a travesty! It was horrible! They— gave you a strange time to be there and a strange window of opportunity to... It was between 6:30 and 7:15 you had to appear, and the address on Cicero avenue, was a building that looked like an abandoned building. I had walked, driven by, and walked by it twice saying, “I can’t find the address.” Apparently, they want it that way so they can say, “We offered you the hearing. You didn’t show up.” I went to this run down, derelict looking building and pulled on the handle and [to my surprise] the door opened! I went in and there was this— eighteen people in this room! With a thirty-foot-long table, and that the chair for me to sit in was immediately in front of the door. So, you had like, eleven people on your right and all these people on your left, and the table was set up so that, as you turned one way, you couldn’t see the people behind you on this side. And, they did the same reverse they... someone would ask you, and they were... it was like being in elementary school! With kids signaling... as a matter of fact, I caught in the reflection of somebody’s eyes, they were gesturing behind my back. And I turned around and had to say, “You know, I haven’t been treated like this since fourth grade.” They showed me [a page], “By the way, is this a letter written by you? Is that your signature?” And... Oh, in addition to the letter I sent them an attached teabag. Teabag.

COHEN: Why... why did you attach—

WILLBORN: In reference to the Boston Tea Party.

COHEN: Okay, I see. Thank you.

WILLBORN: And, “Did you send this letter young man?” I said, “Well, may I see it?” [After examination],” Uh, yes! This looks like something I would write.” “Oh, so, you think that the federal government has no right to tell you what to do?” Answer, “Yes! Yes! We the people of the United States, tell the federal government what

to do. You don't tell us what to do. See, we killed the king because the king thought that he told us.

COHEN: [Laughs] Right, right.

WILLBORN: No, we told the government. Governments are instituted to ensure our rights, okay? You work for me. I don't work for you. You report to me! I don't report to you. You're crazy! And if there is a constitution, you haven't read it!" "Okay, well, uh, thank you for coming in. We'll let you know our decision later." Okay, their decision is 1A. I said, "Okay, you know what? I could defect to Canada. As a matter of fact, I tried before. I could simply just go to jail. I could do that. No, I'll tell you what, you want me in your Army? I'm coming and I'm going to hurt you now. You think you want... You think you're going to hurt me. No, I'm coming to the Army with the intention of "I'm going to hurt the Army." You're [in the] wrong. You're violating Geneva Convention [The Geneva Conventions comprise four treaties, and three additional protocols, that establish the standards of international law for humanitarian treatment in war.]. You're violating Nuremburg Code [a set of research ethics principles for human experimentation created as a result of the Nuremberg trials at the end of the Second World War.]. You're violating the International Declaration of Human Rights [a historic document that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its third session on 10 December 1948 as Resolution 217 at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, France.]. I'm gonna come see you!" And, it was my intention to go there to hurt the Army. And yes, we had a good time, the two of us. I threatened my command...

COHEN: Who is the two... who is the two of you?

WILLBORN: The Army versus me.

COHEN: I see.

WILLBORN: Yeah, it was clearly my intention to put an end to this whole thing— from the inside.

COHEN: So, okay, okay, now that was interesting, because that was one of the questions I was wondering was when you developed your opinion? So, it seems before when you went in you decided—

WILLBORN: Yeah, before I went in.

COHEN: — to try to oppose from within.

WILLBORN: Yes, I was [already] opposing from without... As a matter of fact, I told the Draft Board, "Two weeks before coming in here, I was marching on State street carrying a banner "End the War," "Withdraw from Vietnam," "Stop this Nonsense," "Prevent World War Three," and now you want me now to join you and be part of your enlisted forces. Guess what? The only thing I can do with a uniform on, is to fight you from within.

COHEN: Had... had you participated in a lot of protests marches?

WILLBORN: Yes. Yes, I hadn't joined any particular organizations because I hadn't yet found anything whose manifesto or vowed philosophy made any er, made a lot of sense, because like I say I was martial arts background, and most of the protest organizations were organized to move from ones type of society to another type of society, and no, no, no, no, no, I don't mean for you to change horse, I mean for you to go get off of the horse. Your [One's] philosophy should be based on yourself [self], not on loyalty to this group vs loyalty to that group. Do you want to be a Republican? Do you want to be an Anglican? Do you want to be this group or that group? And my answer is, "No you don't want to be in any group." You don't want to be in any group, and the hippies who were the only ones who said, "Uh, we are not a group." Oh, you're not a group?

COHEN: The other thing you've referenced a few times is martial arts.

WILLBORN: Yes

COHEN: So from what period of time were you training in martial arts?

WILLBORN: Yes, I started when I was fourteen, and uh, I was in a Japanese system, and though they attract their younger students with, the dramatic, combat, uh bushido samurai kind of philosophy, that's only the beginning stages of Japanese martial arts. They intend very much, [more] philosophy and most young people aren't interested in that, so they start you out with just combat and things like that, with the intention of moving you further and further ahead, into Japanese philosophy, and uh, the place where I was studying originally, was uh, under Mas Oyama [Kyokushin Karate] it was Oyama style. Uh, the true high karate form of Japan. Um, [Speaking Japanese] uh, he's uh, he's a very famous combat kind of guy. He's big for Japanese, 6' 2" and 260 pounds, and he was famous because he killed a bull by punching. "What you can't do? You can't possibly be?" No he could, like, he punched a bull in the heart and killed him. So yes this person is teaching a very violent system. ASPCA demanded that he not do that anymore. That's cruel. And then he says, "Well, bull fighting. Bull fighting. Meat Eating. I kill one but these people kill 500 a day, eh so how cruel am I? Uh, okay, okay, all right." So he complied. He ceased from doing thing. He became world famous, violent guy, he could, you know, do that. Okay but, there were additional

instructors who knew that that's only the beginning. You need to advance further and further. So I was with the Japanese file, style for a while. And uh, I studied a Korean style, and uh, then I studied Aikido and eventually I uh, found Gung Fu, which in, then I found the highest form of Gung Fu. So, I now teach that style after studying uh, with my very famous teacher for um, four days a week for nineteen years. I have, you know, little things, I've known in a very small community as a respected teacher in the martial arts, now that I'm older. One never is famous in our, famous in our system until you're eighty. You, you're still a beginner. You, young man, are still worried about stuff. You really won't get this. You remember life begins at eighty? They mean it. They kind of mean it. Yeah, so, you're not there.

COHEN: I'll tell my mother that, she's eighty-one.

WILLBORN: Yeah, eighty-one, er, start to get there. Oh, in this system, the ideal age to begin studying is forty-nine, so it's not really a system for kids. It's for when you're tired of that. When you want to move something, when you wanted to go further.

COHEN: So, back in 1970, you're drafted. You decided to go from within, like how long, like at that point were you married did you have a child or children?

WILLBORN: Yes, we knew that America was not the place for us, we tried to go to... So we eloped. Her parents were difficult. My parents were difficult, so we eloped to Canada. Uh, the Canadian government has their own problems, they also have a race problem, and they had unemployment problems, so they don't need any more High School kids who are coming here for er, shelter and homes so they denied us entry. So, we drifted back to Chicago, um, my daughter was born in 1970. So, we were, more confident about my draft status. "No, no, you're going drafted." So at the time I was drafted, I was in college, and had a job, and was married, and had a child. "We don't care. You're 1A, and by the way, report at 6:15 in the morning at such and such address." I says, "Okay." Apparently, this is a boxing match that the Army and I are going to have to have. So I'm going.

COHEN: Did your wife share your views about war?

WILLBORN: Yeah. She's a most remarkable person, and I still don't think I understand her as well as one might. Uh, she's telepathic to a really great extent, and, uh, she's uh, very good at manipulating so what she really means and what she says, I'm never sure. We've been divorced a long time. I still don't have the confidence to say that I knew what she was thinking. Never did. She's uh, you can look right at her, and you get the impression that she knows something and she's not telling you. Well of course, what man knows a woman. No men know anything about women. With her you could tell that she's intentionally sort of condescending to

all members of my gender. She knows, you don't know. You're only a man, please. You're not even in the club, okay. You don't know. There, there, just, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, but you don't know.

COHEN: Uh, okay. So we don't know how she felt about you being drafted or, we don't know how she really felt about being drafted.

WILLBORN: Or no, not how she really felt.

COHEN: So you were sent, I believe to basic training in Fort Lewis, Washington.

WILLBORN: Yes, yes.

COHEN: So what uh what did you have to do there?

WILLBORN: Oh um, one of the biggest problems was that I was mature and surrounded by recruits, [of as yet lesser sophistication].

COHEN: Kids, yeah.

WILLBORN: And I had training cadre who was very used to kids, and uh, Army training is, going to take advantage of a young man's insecurity, and uh, I'm very secure in myself. I was the only one in my battalion of recruits that was married, uh I was the only one in, even the uh, company captain, and his exec, neither one of them was married, and I was the only who had a child of more than two other people. The uh, the uh, professional sergeants, the er, training sergeants, they were settled people, they were in their 40s, and they had a perspective on having their own life, having a home, paying a mortgage and thinking about their retirement, but, most of everybody else was basically kids. They're used to talking to kids. They're trying to talk to me, doesn't really work. And besides that, I uh know what an Army is, they don't. And many of the sergeants were in it because they wanted employment, and so they didn't have political perspective. They didn't have historical perspective. They didn't need it. You, you know, you have your, your, your 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant, you're trying to become Master Sergeant. How can you do that? You got to put in your years and just, you know, do. Just do, shut up, do, just do. And so yes, I had to tell these uh, young [fellow] trainees, "By the way, you are an American citizen. You still are. You are being treated like an adult. You're not twenty-one yet. That doesn't mean that you can be treated like a child." Oh, some of these kids, I call them kids because they were being prepared to die for no reason, and they needed to get perspective on you know, like, "if you get killed tomorrow, what will you say about yourself?" And so I'm obviously a disruptive force in this company. They have to do something about me. There, you know, non-judicial punishment. Extra duties, extra kitchen patrol, police. Extra fire guard duties, as though, that was gonna break me. Come on, you're talking to an adult. So, that was all difficult.

COHEN: Were a lot of the um, young trainees persuaded by what you were saying, or starting to question the...

WILLBORN: I flatter myself to think that yes, I did have some impact, and um, some of the people with whom I was speaking were subsequently pulled aside and ... [were warned], "Don't ever talk to that guy again." And so that's the only way I knew, that it was having an impact. Because I was identified by company command and by the NCO's as "That's a trouble maker, and we know how to deal with trouble makers. And don't worry about it, something is going to happen to him." So um, that kind of thing.

COHEN: Did anybody of higher rank try to have an intelligent or mature conversation with you?

WILLBORN: Yes, my company commander. I'm not sure where he went to school but he was clearly a math and philosophy kind of graduate. And uh, he interviewed me about, "Why are you a troublemaker in the company?" and made references to— obviously he had read things and was trying to challenge me and as we interviewed it was clear that both of us were interviewing each other and it was clear that [the commander] is a smart guy and he knows that this is wrong and I know that it's wrong. And so he eventually ended up saying, "Well you know what's gonna have to happen. You're going to have to settle down, and not expose yourself too much and go along to get along, and you'll get out of the Army in a couple years. Don't worry about it." And I says, "Well, yes I understand. You're a young officer, you have to think about your future, and so you don't want too much trouble either so let us both be reasonable folks." So I appealed to him, "I'll tell you what, why don't you recommend that you throw me out; out of the Army? Why don't you recommend that?" He said, "No can't do that."

COHEN: So why they couldn't they do that? Why was that not an option?

WILLBORN: Well, one, I'm not breaking the law. So I'm not a criminal, I did no murders, no rapes, not theft, no gambling, none of that. All right so I'm not doing that, none of the obvious things. So, I am not like, violent against my fellow soldiers. Okay, all right that didn't happen. I'm not a conscientious objector.

COHEN: Now that's an interesting question. Why would you not be a conscientious objector?

WILLBORN: Well, I had read the statutes and I had spoken with people who did recommend that I apply for conscientious objector status. Uh, I recognize that uh, we know that was a bad thing, but I also recognize, from martial arts, that every now and

then, your neighbors will act up, and that, though you don't want to be demonstrative against their inappropriate behavior. Apparently there comes a point where that's what they need. Apparently, your neighbors, e.g., Canada's another country. The Canadians will take back Montana, Idaho, the Dakotas, and Minnesota, if you uh, are not going to fight. If you're, if you disarm, they will "for your protection", come and take over. And eh, er, they will do it in the nicest of Canadian etiquette, but still, their armored personnel carriers, their attack helicopters will land in Chicago for the protection of the Chicago population. Yes, we will, this is, "for you." And they will not leave until you demand that they leave. And thus it is, your neighbor likes you until he realizes that you won't fight. I spoke with members of the Quaker community, the Society of Friends. I am not like uh, I mean, "Ideally, I agree with you, but you're going to have to fight." That's all there is to it. A tiger will attack you unless you explain to that tiger it's gonna cost you, it will cost you. to have this conflict. Yes, I like you, I wish a good life for both of us, but I will kill you, if necessary. And so I'm not a conscientious objector.

COHEN: I understand, yeah.

WILLBORN: Especially since I'm in the martial arts. So martial arts is very much, "Okay, don't make me fight you. Okay, don't make me. But I will."

COHEN: Like self-defense is...

WILLBORN: Yeah, you know there is a line between you and I. "You're over there. I'm over here. Oh, you think that line should be like this?" "No." There has to be some diplomacy between the two of us, and diplomacy has to be enforced every now and then.

COHEN: Okay, so, what did you think about the, I forgot the rank, his suggestion that you basically just get along you know, keep your head low, what did you think about that suggestion?

WILLBORN: I explained to my commander, "That's how the Nazi regime worked." And as long as people say that, then there will be a Mussolini. There will be a Stalin. There will be, because these people [i.e, the autocrats] will realize that most people [i.e., citizens] don't want any trouble, and that they will go along. You don't have to be a zealous Nazi to be a Nazi. Listen, listen, it's Zyklon B. Just dump it on the people [victims] and close the lid, and "shh, just don't worry, just go along. It'll be all right. And then you know, you'll get your stripes, and yeah it's a bad thing but don't worry." And I'd say, "That's how it works. How did the Roman Empire work?" Okay we don't hate the Syrians, but we have to kill 10,000 of them in order to get along. Just go along with it. And that's how all these wars work, is most people just don't want trouble and so we'll do it.

COHEN: And so after you were in that fort, in Fort Lewis, I think you were sent to Fort Gordon.

WILLBORN: Yes, Fort Gordon, Georgia. Uh, that was for uh, Advance individual Training in a, a combat MOS. 31m20. It's sort of a radio relay kind of MOS. [clears throat] Excuse me, but before graduating my scores were high enough that I got reevaluated and reassigned to Fort Jackson.

COHEN: Oh, so that was a short period of time, before Gordon was a few months?

WILLBORN: I got my first um, non-judicial at Fort Gordon.

COHEN: What was that about?

WILLBORN: Uh, yeah. I, um, had some time and was essentially, without an assignment. So I flew home on a Friday, planning to come back for the next revelry, which was on a Monday, and uh Delta Airlines was supposed to get me back to Augusta, Georgia, Sunday afternoon so that I could be back in barracks by eight o'clock, sleep, and then wake up Monday morning at fort. Apparently, scheduled airlines have their own ways of canceling flights. And I have the ticket it says, first it said delayed, and then it said delayed again. I got back to Fort Gordon at ten am on Monday. And you are absent without leave, and I say, "Not my fault." And they said, "Yes, your fault." I said, "Okay fine." So I don't know. Extra duty. Restricted to base, uh, you know all that kind of stuff. They couldn't reduce my grade because I was a private E-1. What were you going to do?

COHEN: Did you like the training on working on radios? Like was it interesting to you?

WILLBORN: Didn't get much of that. Actually, I was um, pulled out of that and told to go stand over there because we're sending you to Fort Jackson. And basically, I was in the barracks all day with nothing to do.

COHEN: Oh okay, until you got the new AIT at Fort Jackson in South Carolina.

WILLBORN: It's sort of an Administrative School in, uh, the first session is typing. Learn to type. I got the certificate for being the best typist in my group.

COHEN: Like your mom.

WILLBORN: I was a college student. I was typing in, and I had jobs. I was surprised that you can hardly get anything done in Chicago if you can't type, and so I was really

surprised that people weren't familiar with this, and so, I wasn't a remarkable typist, forty-five words. Still, for other trainees who never typed before, they couldn't understand why it was QWERTY and I says, "Yeah, I could tell you the long story as to why that is, but don't worry about it. So yeah, number one typist out of that group.

COHEN: So, was this the uh Army's way of handling you, was um, not to train you for combat but rather to do clerical work so that it might not be as offensive to you as other types of positions?

WILLBORN: I don't think they were being nice to me. I think it just worked out that they had that need for uh, administrative school graduates, and my— all my test scores were very high, um so, why waste him, you know, stepping on a land mine when we actually need somebody to complete these reports here.

COHEN: Right, right. I see what you're saying. So they wanted you to—

WILLBORN: They weren't being nice.

COHEN: There was a need. There was a need.

WILLBORN: Yeah, mostly an overwhelming need.

COHEN: I see. So how long were you in Fort Jackson and did you receive other types of training in addition typing.

WILLBORN: Yeah, Fort Jackson in my memory is uh, blurry about such things. Uh, it must of been at least two months. Two months at least for the typing school, and then additional training and uh, data entry. Yeah, so I'm not quite sure how long that was. Okay, but there was, I'm sure the Army could tell you more precisely than I could.

COHEN: So while you were there did you continue to uh, discuss with uh other recruits your views and--?

WILLBORN: Yes, as a matter of fact I um, this is, it was excellent barracks. These were air conditioned, uh, cubicle kind of separation barracks. Only eight men in a room. More like a college campus barracks. Covered my wall with anti-war posters. Distributed leaflets on campus, uh, uh, through the barracks. Uh, would come back to the barracks and find that the training cadre had torn up my private property, and so I issued complaints, "You can't restrict my freedom of speech. You can't tear up a private, er private property. You can't do that." "Well, this is our barracks. And [inaudible] I'm not gonna have your kind of communist uh, whatever, and your infiltrating my command, [inaudible]." And so you know, you

get ostracized, but yes, that wasn't a problem, and uh, during the weekends when not on duty, hippie garb, so then I was completely identifiable as somebody who doesn't belong on this fort.

COHEN: But, um considering this the fact that this was already after the Tet offensive, I would expect that some of the people on the base who'd been drafted, even if they'd were not activists would not be so excited about Vietnam and I wonder if you came across—

WILLBORN: [Willborn talking over Cohen] Yeah, I was wondering about that. And was surprised at the lack of political awareness of most of the trainees, and uh, even most of the NCO's were intentionally not listening to that. They were intentionally blinding themselves to uh, Lyndon Banes Johnson, and they were not listening when uh, their own documents to, "You know, 'this is your country'". Here's the New York Times, kids, that's not a communist rag. Here read this article, front page **New York Times**, look what your president just did. They, they'd put their blinders on, and said, "I don't want to think about it. I don't want to hear it, and I don't like you, you communist you." And I say, "Communist. Is Nixon a communist? I mean this is, this is what, this is what's happening, and they expect you to die supporting this." "Please I don't want to hear it, I don't want to see it." Monkey see, Monkey... No, No. Hear no evil. Hear no evil, don't want to hear it. So it was a lot of that going on. With the Hispanics uh, uh, um trainee's. They were pretty much aware that something is wrong here. And they had you know, kind of coalitions where the Hispanics would all eat at the same [unofficially] designated common areas and recreation time the Hispanics would group together and I spoke with them on occasion and they were surprised that I knew about the mistreatment of undocumented uh people in California and Texas, and, I told them about the history of the Marijuana Laws, and they didn't know that. And they say, "Well fellow traveler, uh, Hispanics are being mistreated and yet they asked you to come here and die for a system that mistreats you." And [as a whole] they were fundamentally [more]aware of this contradiction, but their situation is so deplorable to them that you know they'd say, "I'll join the Marines, I'll join the Army so as to more strongly qualify my uh, petition for citizenship, because I can't go back to Sinaloa, I can't live there." You can't live in a Juarez. You can't and the governments there are forcing them into uh, get out of this country kind of situation and they knew it. Uh, you see it in Chicago even today. They will take non-union jobs, and they will work and get cheated. They will work for below wages, and they will live in substandard housing because their situation is so horrible, and they want American workers to fight other American workers, and as long as the working class fights the working class, yes, the ruling class stays in power. And that was part of my argument with them. If we can get the Hispanic Soldiers to fight the black soldiers to fight the hillbilly soldiers to fight the white soldiers, if we can keep the troops fighting each other, then yes, the NCO's and the uh general staff won't be

under any kind of criticism, or any kind of attack. It's a plan. It's not a mistake. It's not a basic antipathy against you. It's a fomented kind of thing, to get you to fight yourself. And yeah they were politically aware, but their situation was so precarious that they didn't want to do anything. Yeah I understood that, I understood that.

COHEN: Did you feel that um, they succeeded in fomenting um, discord between different working-class groups on the bases where you were?

WILLBORN: Divide and conquer. Yes, America is good at that. There's even a couple of cases now where senior NCOs in the Marine Corps were members of the Ku Klux Klan, recently discovered. No it wasn't recently discovered. No, you knew that on the day that that guy signed up. And he had been in the Marines twenty-five years and had been a member of the Klan all that time, and they [i.e. the Corps] knew it. The Marines are a brotherhood, er brotherhood and sisterhood. The Marines have loyalty to each other beyond the level of the civilian Army whose forced in and hurries up and gets out. Marines are a brotherhood and, and they knew that there is antipathy between white Marines and black Marines, and unfortunately, in California there's been, horrible cases where Hispanic Marines were gang members before joining the Marines, as a matter of fact, some of them were sent by their gangs to join the Marines, and, and, and a particular base, they had all chosen to wear, identifying markers, like a red bandana. And were rallying as, as gang members in the Marines, with the purpose of bringing their Marine corps training back to the gang when they left. Uh, one of the base commanders uh, had to take severe action against these people, and says, "Listen, there is no other gang other than Marines. If you're anything but Marine, you get out now." And gave a lot of them the option, "You get out now." Because if, if later on, I give you the option to get out, and you don't take this option, if I catch you engaging in something, that's UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Justice] automatically, and I will be severe with you about it." It's a shame to keep the people fighting each other, but that's the plan.

COHEN: And said also that when you were there you had your first conviction, at Fort Jackson, so what were you convicted of?

WILLBORN: That was uh, also uh, an AWOL situation. Same thing, I flew home on a Friday, planning to be back, and I didn't get back until—I didn't get back in time. So I had a second UCMJ, this was a battalion level UCMJ. And so I had to see our battalion commander who was a, a Lieutenant Colonel Darden, by the way, he's a fine officer, and I have a lot of respect for him, but um, he did not expect me to know anything about the constitution, and he and I had a little discussion in his office, about that...

[Break 1:34:22-1:43:40]

COHEN: Okay, I think you told me that the commander was surprised at your knowledge of the legal aspects of the um, of the UCMJ, the Uniform Code of Military Justice, is that correct? Yeah.

WILLBORN: That was part of the Anti-War movement, and my association with, activists who knew, oh, um, American laws for civilians and who concentrated on helping enlisted personnel who got into the legal trouble while in the military, and so groups like the National Lawyers Guild, the American Civil Liberties Union and just, GI self-help groups, all were collecting this data on, "Oh, these are your rights under UCMJ, this is what it used to be. These are the parameters, and these are what usually happens in disposition of many cases. And they were keeping that information and making it available as widely as possibly.

COHEN: How did you have access to it? Like did you go, was it when you went for on leave in Chicago or on the base itself?

WILLBORN: Before I was in the military, I was in contact with groups here in Chicago who were anti-war and since I suspected that I would might be personally involved, it was probably better that I arm myself with as much information as possible.

COHEN: And what was your assignment after all the training?

WILLBORN: My first real military assignment was at Fort Riley, Kansas, um, Company C, 701 maintenance battalion, and that's part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army, Big Red 1 [i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division] and that was the first time I had a real patch, it's the green baseball plate with a red number one in it. You've seen it. It's a, I think Pershing, General Pershing's uh, namesake or famous thing. I was the company clerk at a mechanized infantry unit. And this unit primarily um, was uh, armor personnel carrier, trucks, and M-48 tanks, and uh, there's a combat recovery vehicle that's like a tank tow truck, they had that. And, uh some cranes, and 155mm self-propelled howitzers. That was also part of the equipment. And then various communications equipment and logistics and uh, medical people were also associated. And uh, I worked in the orderly room, and was surprised at the vast number of American military people who didn't know telephone etiquette. I was explaining to people who work with me, "When the phone rings, you pick it up, and then..." The Army even tells you precisely how to answer the phone. This is what you say. It's easy enough to remember. You announce the name of the company, and then you simply say, "How may I help you, Sir?" And then that person will say something and then you will usually just pass the communication onto someone else, because you're a private, what do you know. And it's usually, "Let me speak to the commander." And you say, very simply, "Thank you, sir,

would you care to hold? Or may I take a message?" and I was surprised that grown men couldn't do this. Later on, I found out that, apparently there's a uh, a gender problem that they, that many of these soldiers felt that that was women's work. Secretary jobs, and so, like washing dishes, they claimed, [makes protest noises] Type, that's girl stuff." And so they were intentionally not learning that. A big caveman [Doing a 'caveman' voice] doesn't know how to read. "I don't read but I'm a man." And so they were playing that in their heads, so that's why they were intentionally not knowing how to be courteous or these things. And I said, "Oh, so, big and dumb. Is that what you want to be? Okay, okay." Uh, at that time, at least sixty percent of the personnel of company C had already been to Vietnam, and were back stateside.

COHEN: And you were at that time part of Company C?

WILLBORN: Yeah. I was the company clerk for that. And So I was in the orderly room with the commander and his exec. Okay. Once my views became known, to people who had killed Vietnamese people that, uh, "You're the kind of hippie that we don't like. We were over there risking our lives to preserve your freedom and you were here smoking dope and having a good time with my girlfriend." And there was this resentment that I have this really cushy job in the air-conditioned orderly room and all I have to do is, do these reports, type this file. [rumbling noise] Do this secretary work. "While we're sweating and carrying on and grunting, and you're just a private, and these guys are E-6's and you know, there seems to be a little problem here." Eventually, we did have, like the big confrontation in the orderly room, and voices got raised, and I looked out - there was six people in the orderly room, who weren't supposed to be there, who were all of a sudden, starting to arguing with me to the point where it got loud enough so that the commander came out. And I've had this argument a thousand times so I'm very good at this argument.

COHEN: You're a debater! [Laughs]

WILLBORN: So I shoot these guys down. That's it, that's all there's to it. Number one thing. When you were a kid in high school, you could not find Vietnam on a map. You don't hate the Vietnamese, they have never done anything to Hawaii or California, or Pearl Harbor, or, or Texas. They have never done anything to you to make you hate them. After you got there, you found out that they were people living in their country trying to raise their kids. You don't like their particular kind of government, that's not your business and that's certainly not worth you leaving your family, to travel thirteen thousand miles to bomb them. And you know you didn't like killing them. That was wrong. You did... Now that you're back stateside, many of you are suffering that guilt of knowing that, well these civilians were running around but we couldn't take a chance, so we shot them all. We know this. And um, to assuage guilt you have to go further. You have to

prove to yourself continuously that what you did was right. Otherwise then you have to turn around and face, "Wait a minute, I am a major sinner." In order to fight that, you had to brag about the violence that you had done so that you can keep on that road and never question it." And a lot of these guys, I'd say at least twenty percent of them, knew that they had done wrong, and just didn't want to face it, and my presence was forcing them to face it. So it became psychologically uncomfortable for them. Not for me, I liked this kind of conflict. I'm right in, I'm here to tell you this is the real world, yes, you wonder how those things happened in Germany. You wonder how people could have allowed that. You were the one who actually is a perpetrator. Had you been born in Germany at that time [i.e. during the 1930s], yeah you would have been in there. "No I wouldn't have." Face it. You would have. This is why you have to think. This is why you have to fight. This is why you cannot accept. You can't just blindly accept it. You have to think for yourself. You're an American. This is a democracy, that means you are the government. You have to decide what [type of ] government is possible. "You're making us very uncomfortable." Okay. They had to do something about me.

COHEN: You were saying this was the last argument was in earshot of the battalion commander?

WILLBORN: Yee... Uh, the confrontation between myself and my battalion commander that was very reasonable. He, he doesn't understand why anybody who reports to is AWOL. "If you got a problem, you're gonna get punished." And I says, "Fine, fine. You know, no big deal." Okay yes, you need to discipline your troops, that's fine. But at the company level, when I left Fort Jackson, went to Fort Riley, Kansas. It was a company level confrontation between myself and fellow soldiers that brought the attention of the exec and the commander.

COHEN: Oh, okay at the company level.

WILLBORN: So, Captain MacDonald actually emerged from his office while we were having this conversation. And he spits out the platitudes that he's supposed to because—He is, he wasn't a stupid guy. He was actually a very smart guy. And he knew that he's an officer, okay. You're an officer so that means that you have to support the policies of the Army. And so, he would deliver the platitudes to the troops assembled, and I say, "All righty, Sir. Well okay, but you do understand? What they say and what they do are very different things, and we have all taken an oath to preserve, protect and defend, Richard Nixon? No, what's it say? Raise your right hand. Say your name, the constitution of the United States. So when LBJ's policies are this and the constitution is that, which do you follow?" "Well you're supposed obey your..." "Now, come on now. Nuremburg code. Nuremburg code and the United States is the drafter and a signatory so that thing is still in effect. And what's it say? You are obligated to disobey an illegal

order. You are obligated, and you're an officer and you know this. And you were taught Geneva Convention. And you know that torture is not allowed. You know that rape as a weapon of war is not allowed. You know that your troops did this. You know that you are the officer, and you know that every officer is responsible for the behavior of their troops and you know that if you are commander, you're culpable and your uniform does not confer any immunity from the law. You did these things. Your troops did these things. And if you outrank them, you are carrying their burden." Ope, all quiet orderly room. Everybody starts leaving. Subsequently, yeah, you got a problem. All of a sudden, my duty assignments are changed, and neh, neh, neh, and you can't come here anymore and [makes similar noise as before] and so they were expecting to, again, break me because they thought I was a kid. No, you can't, you can't just tease me and expect me to complain. Oh, they took me out of the air-conditioned orderly room and sent me to the motor pool where I have no motor pool skills. And then they sent me from there to duty soldier. Oh, Fort Riley is square miles large, so they gave a lawn mower and say, "Here cut the grass." "Oh okay, fine. Okay, got to do it." And, "Ah ha ha, you have to cut the grass." "No problem, Buddy." Being in the Army is being in the Army so whatever they tell you to do, it's still in the Army. If they told me to walk down this road to pick up cigarette butts, that would be fine, that's what I'm supposed to do today. So, their attempts to just tease me, totally meaningless.

COHEN: [Quietly] That's right. So, when did they want you to be, to join with Operation Reforger?

WILLBORN: Right.

COHEN: Was this after they saw that these various attempts weren't having an impact on you?

WILLBORN: Yes um, it's a, I believe it's a joint exercise between the uh, uh, NATO forces, and uh, it's uh, preparation for World War III. And apparently, the Warsaw Pact has assembled something like 25,000 tanks, armored vehicles and artillery at a geographic location called the Fulda Gap, and it's pretty much, it's a gap in a mountain range, and it's pretty much a corridor through which Warsaw Pact nations could create a serious infantry and armor thrust, and apparently uh, they, the Warsaw Pact nations were intimidating NATO by having a massive build up right there at that location. So that within hours they could launch an assault. They don't have to go get troops. They've already got the troops sitting right there looking your direction. So Reforger, I think it's called Reinforce Germany, or Reintroduce... It's a scheduled exercise, uh, to let Warsaw Pact know that we are ready to respond within hours if things get bad. Yes, you can come and then we will be there to resist you. Uh, Reforger is not expected to win World War III.

Reforger is not expected actually, to be successful. It, found out that, if Warsaw Pact were to execute this thrust, that all of NATO forces assembled could only slow them down, and it was not expected to hold ground, it was not expected to push them back. It was just to merely slow their assault.

COHEN: So were you aware of the Purpose of Operation Reforger when you were still in the Army?

WILLBORN: Yes. I made a point of reading as much about this as I could, because well, first of all, curious mind, and, if you're going to get killed, you should know why. I mean when you, when Saint Peter asks you what happened you should be able to tell him something. "Oh, I don't know." "Well, what were you doing on the day that you?" "I was just doing what they were telling me to do. I dunno." And I said, "Okay I know most people lived like that." Okay, er, you know like, er, you're an industrial worker in an industrial society. You're a small cog, big machine. You're not supposed to think, right? Don't think. The Army, basic Army training says, "Right way, wrong way, Army way." Don't trouble me with right and wrong. Just shut and do it. Just shut up. Okay. That's what you do. Don't think. Do." And so, and so, that apparently works for a lot of people. All right so I want to know, what, what do you mean, by, by NATO? What do you mean by NATO? Who's head of NATO? How do I get to be head of NATO? If I want to be head of NATO right now what would I do?" Uh, uh, let me explain the command structure. What is World War III? Uh, you need to know what that is because you're preparing for that right now. "Yes, you are, you're in uniform, you're getting ready to fight World War III." You should at least know what that is. So that at least you could prepare your grave before you die, because nobody going to bury you later. There won't be anybody here to bury you. So find out why you're dead. I mean, find out why you're dead before you're dead. Okay? "You went to Vietnam to kill those people. Why?" "Well uh..." I say, "Okay, you see here. You're gonna live your whole life like that. So find out what you're doing." What are you doing in?

COHEN: Like find out, in general, and then in particular.

WILLBORN: Yes, and what are you, in particular, doing. How are you going to call yourself an adult? Your wife could have asked you, "What are you doing?" "I don't know." "Okay. Then she has a right to be upset with you. All right, your kids can ask you, "Dad, what did you do?" "Well, [inaudible]" And they're meaningless, meaningless.

COHEN: So you were aware of Reforger, and you, did you know that company C was going to be sent overseas right away, and did you know it was, like was it to be to Germany or to Vietnam? What was the initial plan that you were told at the time?

WILLBORN: Yeah, uh, we definitely, that, that unit was definitely was part of this large plan, our um, battalion, our company. You know, it was on the flow chart. This is where you go. There's already barracks designated for us. Certain locations, and these are our areas, yeah in Germany. These are your areas of responsibility etc.etc., for this exercise. And they say, "Okay, okay, okay." So they were, they definitely were going, and I think it was traditional that this group had been there many times. I don't know. That part I didn't find out. How many Reforger's had that been on, I don't know. Uh, so I didn't have any trouble with uh, NATO exercise to do, to prepare for defense of Europe. I didn't have any trouble with that, but what I did have trouble with was the fact that clearly my command structure and my fellow soldiers were already upset with me. And so they could take advantage of the fact that I was overseas at that time and as it turns out, the average deployment to Army Republic of Vietnam, ARVN, uh was minimum thirteen months, and I'm not sure, but I heard that if you have less than thirteen months, they probably won't send you. I did have sufficient time for me to be given orders to leave Germany and go to Vietnam. Had I been in Europe as they planned, with no civilian clothes, and no passport, and no French Language, and no money other than American money, I would not be able to leave, it would be so easy to identify me at an airport and have, uh, you know, Lufthansa say, "I think one of your soldiers is here, come and get him." And then uh, Military Police is in the airport, to say, "Come on, you know come with us."

COHEN: There'd be no option to go AWOL there.

WILLBORN: Yeah. It would, it, can you, can you run? Well if you run, okay, now you're in a foreign country without a passport, and you don't have a job [inaudible] it won't be too long before you can get picked up, or returned in handcuffs, et cetera, et cetera. So I decided to avoid this embarrassing vulnerability, I think I will let company C go to Germany without me. See you guys later. So uh, on weekend, I simply flew back home. And was trying to fly back, I don't know uh. I didn't leave a note and I didn't take my personal belongings with me to cause then any kind of alert which uh, however I did tell uh, uh, another group of trainees, there was something called leadership training. These were young recruits, uh, young AIT people who wanted to qualify for uh, uh, Officer Candidate School. Uh, so, how do they qualify for that? Oh you have to be particularly neat soldier. So these were people who made their bunks really well and shined their shoes really well and said, "Yes, Sir", and, "No, Sir." And I says, "You know what, you're really being quite foolish. Okay, you really are, because um, just because you can type well does that mean that you're ready for leadership and opportunity be a man and become an officer." And I says, "You should talk to people who are officers now, before deciding that you want to be an officer. And again, as an officer you're gonna have to ask yourself what is it that Lyndon Johnson wants you to do as an officer." "Nope, nope, blinders, nope, nope, nope. I've heard

propaganda before." I says, "Okay, yes, okay see. That's an interesting word. It comes from [the word] propagate. You think that other people's persuasion is propaganda but you don't think that what you believe now is uh, a type of propaganda. And you don't believe that when you go to Mexico and you tell them to buy Coca-Cola that you're not engaging in propaganda. All right, okay. You're not, they are." And I says, "Okay," So I did inform them and other enlisted people that I, that I don't have any intention of going to Germany with you, so I'll," See you later. Nice knowing you." Okay, Uh, apparently, uh, Army people have a certain look about them because we, it becomes intensely easy for the Military Police to identify, oh, members of the uniformed services. I'd be in an airport and there'd be these people walking around in civilian clothes. The MP's would go right to them, and say "Show me your pass." And the first thing they'd do is, "Uh, uh, how do you know?" They say, "Dude, you have it written all over you." And interesting the way that they get these young recruits so oriented to the military that it shows in their faces and their demeanor and their pacing and their, in their breathing so that they don't know that they're soldiers. Yeah, everybody else knows you are. I don't see why you don't. But strangely enough, they never identified me as, I've never been challenged, "Show me your pass." I've never been— As a matter of fact when I was at Fort Carson, people used to say, "Are you in the Army? What are you doing here?" Uh, you know, MP would be willing to stop me. "You're trespassing, aren't you. Uh, what you doing here?" Um, interesting, I was at home for uh, Christmas at the end of basic training, they let us go, and I was really surprised, but they let us go. I was at home and I didn't know I was in the Army. I was talking to my mother, and I said, "latrine", and then I said, "Who said that word?" Oh, I see. I actually, I actually talked about the bathroom and I said, "latrine" and I couldn't believe that I had said that. And I says, "Okay, so apparently, indoctrination, some kind of psychological pressure, somehow they can turn you into a soldier."

COHEN: Yeah, even despite our best efforts.

WILLBORN: Yeah, I guess so. Even when you're like, conscious of, "No, you can't get me. And I will..." Apparently, they are getting you.

COHEN: Laurence, I'm going to just check the time because... No, sorry, no, we're good. We're good. That's fine. I was just a little concerned because at 1:30, quarter to 2:00, I would need wrap things up because I'll be, I'll actually be, I'm doing an interview for a summer intern, but we're good. We're twenty to 1. We're good. I just wanted to make sure, that's all I wanted.

WILLBORN: Okay, so that'll give us about how much time?

COHEN: Um, so about another hour, is that, would that be--?

WILLBORN: And thank you for making aware of that so I can stop ambling so much.

COHEN: No, or we, if you would like to say more we can always set up a part two.

WILLBORN: Oh, we could do that, as well, but I'll try to be more concise so we can move things forward.

COHEN: Okay, so you, so in other words you came back home to Chicago, and didn't join company C in their exercise in Germany, so what happened next?

WILLBORN: Okay. I can't get employment. I didn't seek employment. I knew that as a member of the armed forces, if you are absent without leave, that's one thing, but if you are absent without leave and you take a job, that's called desertion. That's like the official, like evidence, that you actually never intend to come back. Aha, so don't get a job, okay that's fine. Fine, also, employers would ask you, "What was your last job? What were you doing? How come...? let me see your resume." Okay, so, other employers, and blacks could hardly get a job at that time anyway, so I didn't even seek employment. Okay, so uh, the dissatisfied family is wondering about my next move. I get myself deeper and deeper involved in anti-war activities. Now I have a vested interest in ending the war as quickly as possible. it's more than philosophical, its more than religious, its more than political, it's personal now. This war has to end, and the draft has to end, you can't have conscription in a free country: that's a contradiction. And so, my anti-war activities increased sharply. I join, I worked with a group called the Chicago Area Military Project, and among the things we did was a uh, a self-published newspaper that was uh, distributed around the globe. We had uh, 2900 subscribers at the time. Many of them on military bases and universities et cetera, just archivists were keeping these things. And, of course, members of the government were collecting them, and uh, one of the congressional hearings was called uh, I'm not quite sure of the exact title, there was a hearing on "Attempts to Subvert the Armed Forces of the United States." I got a copy of that congressional hearing and my organization was listed as part of the testimony given to that committee. We all felt vindicated that Congress knows that we mean it, and that yes, we are attempting to subvert the United States Military, and which, of course, is a felony, not, I don't think it's treason though, I'm not quite sure. We did have several lawyers associated with it, and I meant to ask about it, and I meant to ask about it. "Is subversion in time of war treasonous?" I don't know, I don't think so. And besides that, there's been no declaration of war, and the government has been fudging that line, trying to prosecute as though there were and stuff like that. Okay, so, among the things we did, we went on broadcast, and leafletting and word of mouth, among the anti-war groups, that if you have enlisted personnel who are oh, having trouble and are in the Chicago area, come on in and you can talk to somebody and we can help arm that person to, uh, resist those injustices that they feel are inappropriate er

wrongly applied, and so we would get these GI's who happened to be still in the service and assist them with getting out on hardship, getting out on conscientious, oh, dealing with uh, racial issues, and job assignments and other forms of discrimination. We're dealing with uh, harsh punishment, and uh, uh, actual AWOL and people were considering defecting out of the country and trying to get asylum. We had people who would help with all those uh, all that kind of counseling, and uh right here, on Diversey [St.] we had an office, and uh, seven days a week, come on in and we'll help you. That was a very important aspect. I wrote articles for that newspaper, and I did artwork for the newspaper. And I wish I had copies, uh, but some of them exist somewhere, so that's cool.

COHEN: So although you were working, it was sort of volunteer like it wasn't remunerative?

WILLBORN: Right, right, right. I don't know whether or not if we had any paid members. There may have been, and some of the attorneys who worked with us pro-bono, uh they may have been compensated for expenses or whatever, I don't know. They must have had money from some sources because the office was extensive and the rent was high, clearly, it was, one of, Diversey and Sheffield, so they were paying a lot of rent, clearly. And lots of office equipment, desks, telephones, and mail, there's got to be some money going around. And uh, we're publishing this newspaper, we have to pay to get it printed, and I personally know, that, that printer we were using, he was expensive. I'm sorry that's all there was to it. So, yeah there's some money going. I didn't get any uh but yeah there was money going on.

COHEN: So did you go back to school, or did the Army come looking for you, like what were some of the...?

WILLBORN: No, by talking to some of the counselors there and myself being we realized that we would have to get this settled one way or the other, I uh, talked to as many people as I could, and found out that you have to turn yourself in. It's better for processing if you turn yourself in, and it's easier for them to process you if you voluntarily turn yourself in. Don't wait to get arrested, that's not good, because then there's another level that has to be dealt with. So, where is the good place to turn in? Okay so, there's uh, grapevine, uh, people who have gone in at various times of the years, and apparently base commanders have a lot of latitude in how they want this handled on their base. So, the policies are very different [i.e. vary widely], and so some of them are extremely harsh, and some of them are, "Hurry up and get him out of here, you know. I don't even want you around. You're infecting my troops so hurry up and get out." So you know, uh, turned out that Fort Carson, Colorado at that time was probably the best place to get quickly in. They don't want you here, so they'll keep you away from the other soldiers and, "Here, you know, here sign this. Just sign this stuff and get

out of here okay." [Cohen laughs]. They do have to; they do have to have a statement from you. So there has to be an officer and you do have to be interviewed. You know, "What was your intention? What are you doing, okay how can we resolve this?" So, since there's a backlog, you have to stay on post during this time. Since you're a[n alleged] criminal, I was held in the personnel confinement facility. It's a type of jail, barbed wire, uh, guard towers, and uh, live ammunition to keep you in, and to give you something to do, they reduce you from you from your MOS to "duty soldier", which is like, the lowest possible pay grade, and we don't know what to do with you. So Fort Carson is many square miles, so they would take you out [of your confines] in the morning, and er, "Pick up leaves I don't care", and then they'd come give you some food. And then they'd say, "Get back on the truck." And then they'd take you back to the jail, give you something to do, otherwise you're hanging out of the jail all day. [inaudible] Then they tried that, but then the prisoners get to slapping each other, so give them something to do. They're troops - what are you going to do with them? Keep them occupied, all right, keep them occupied. Take them out and it's raining it's wet and they don't like it, some of them are going to get sick. Good, do that. That way they're not yelling at us, you know, uh, sick call, don't let them go on sick call. They'd be mean to them and then you know, let them know they're in jail. All right that's what they did. I got processed eventually, then they become very tedious about certain things. Uh, maybe I told you, they made a big deal out of the uh uniform belt buckle, yeah, uh, "You have to turn in your belt buckle." "Here take it." No, no that's the wrong belt buckle." "What?" "Yeah that's the wrong belt buckle." [Cohen reacts]. Okay, so, "Can I go to the PX and buy you guys a belt buckle and turn in a belt buckle." That's the wrong belt buckle. Because we're the Army, we're gonna give you a hard time. So you have to wait to be issued a [replacement] belt buckle. And then you could turn that Belt buckle in. Now you can't leave until, so that gave them the excuse, that they can keep you there as long as they want to. Keep you there as long they want to. And they, it's, that's what they did. So eventually, I got a belt buckle and I turned it in. Um, from Fort Carson, Denver, City of Denver, I was gonna fly home, and uh, I'm uh, I look like a hippie, and somebody says, "Are, are you in the Army?" I says, "Yesterday, I was. Today, I'm not." And it was good for me to hear me say that. Actually, I had to think, you know I'm glad you asked me that. Yesterday, I was. Because like, while i was on the base, people were routinely, "You in the Army? What are you doing here? You in the Army? How long you been in the Army?" Longer than you. Too long, how's that.

COHEN: So finally Denver. You're a civilian legally, again.

WILLBORN: Fly home.

COHEN: Fly home. So what happens when you come back?

WILLBORN: Bad discharge. Apparently, there's five levels of discharge. I didn't know this. Um, there's honorable, of course, and then there's general, and then there's under conditions other than honorable. That's what I have. Discharge under conditions other than honorable. And then there's one lower than that, I think it's called bad conduct. And then there's dishonorable. Now, Dishonorable is serious. They can't give you that. It's a federal trial. And it's a felony conviction, and it never goes away, and there's ranges of employment completely barred. I don't think you can vote. I think, I think that's also part of – “You're a felon.” So no jobs of trust and things like that. Um, Walt Disney used to have a nationwide program, every Sunday. On the wall behind him was a dishonorable discharge, and for years people used to see that, and puzzle over why it said Dishonorable, I even said, I must be misreading it. You know, it can't be. Turns out yes, Walt Disney had a dishonorable discharge and was proud of it, and wanted you to know every Sunday, because he would have, on the wall right behind him, where you could see his face, "Dis" if you couldn't see the whole you saw "Dishonorable" Written there. So, I say, "Well, well, how about that." I wonder why, I mean, I wonder what he did. I wonder what he did to manage to get a dishonorable discharge. I'll have to look into that, er Pritzker should look into that, is more accurate.

COHEN: Did you, um did you meet other people like yourself when you were in either basic training or the AIT training or on assignment? Like did you meet any other individuals that had a very similar philosophy as you and who were also espousing it?

WILLBORN: Well, on, in, among my acquaintances, uh, at least 40% of the enlisted all kind of surreptitiously agreed. "There is injustice. We are perpetrating injustice, but, they could not confront it. They were very much involved with personal pain and manipulation and so they would suppress their misgiving's as they're supposed to.

COHEN: Uh, so did you go back to work or to school and because of the nature of your discharge, were you eligible for the GI Bill for education?

WILLBORN: Yes, I had to sign, um agreeing that I was going to be ineligible for any GI benefits, any VA benefits that is to say.

COHEN: So you were not eligible?

WILLBORN: Right ineligible and I was anxious enough to get away at the time... I don't care. Give me whatever paper, I don't want your little pittance. I didn't even know what GI benefits were. What the right to buried in a military cemetery? The right to go to a VA hospital and be mistreated in a hospital? No, no I don't want that

anyway. So, "Well, you'll have to sign saying that you waive all VA benefits. Sign." Turned out that was, uh, that the VA benefits were much larger than I thought they were. Montgomery GI bill and stuff like that. It's actually much larger. And it would have been helpful, but at the time, "get away from me." I'll get away from you; you'll get away from me that's it. So um, small employments. Lucky, I got into the natural foods industry when it was growing and uh, bunch of hippies had decided to go into business, and uh, people with familiarity with eastern philosophy. And uh, we understood that the food industry is part of the military industrial complex and as long as you keep going back to Heinz and Coca-Cola, you're still part of their system. You need to break away from um, industrial farming, and so a series of organic farms was established by these hippies who said, "We don't need industrial food. We will produce organic food for people who can get away from industrial poison, industrial pesticide, industrial fertilizer. These Rachel Carson's **Silent Spring** was explaining that, "Guess what? You're under attack constantly. They are giving you chemicals and they know they are harmful and they're giving them to you anyway. They expect you to feed your children these products. Uh, and you don't know what's in these products and they're giving you these pharmaceuticals, and you don't know what's in these pharmaceuticals. You're gonna have to break away to get, to protect yourself." So the hippies became an alternative community and a large part of that was food, and the group I was with was the largest distributor to the uh retailers and uh, sort of my three-state area. Milwaukee all the way around to Gary. You know, the arch around the south eastern Lake Michigan. And we had about twenty-five different retailers, not associated with us, but were our customers. We sold them our... Our biggest thing was to sell them the organic produce. This was difficult to arrange. Organic produce doesn't have fertilizers so it has a very short shelf life. So most of the cost of organic produce was air freight.

COHEN: Oh because the timing was important.

WILLBORN: Very. So that kind of justified all of the higher prices. You don't have shelf life, I, I, and you're on a specialized family owned farm. Yeah, you want carrots, well these are special carrots, and I'm gonna have to charge. And people were glad to pay it. It was part of the rejection of Archer Daniels Midland. I'm glad to be away from that, and I'm glad to pay a price for, for something that I can feed to my child. So that became sort of the mystique of paying higher prices for your food, was with that I became like, very skilled. I was uh, the miller of uh grains. Whole wheat flour. Organic whole wheat flour. Stone ground organic, whole wheat flour. No pesticide, no herbicide, dun, dun, dun, dun, and uh yeah, we started to have a thriving business. The big money people came around to absorb us... These people uh, demanded that we join them. "You are hippies; we are business people. You don't know what you're doing." And it's true we don't. Uh, the founder of our group. He's a guy. He went to college, he's not a business guy. "Where did you get your capitalization?" Well it turns out that his father-in-law

gave them two million dollars. He did not expect the business to succeed, but he loves his daughter. And so... "Dad oh, if only we could start our own business." And Dad goes, "You're a fool. You don't know nothing about business. Okay I'll give you the money, and in a couple of years you'll be broke. It'll be, so I'll be a nice guy. You know, I'm a nice guy, help my son-in-law, who's a fool, and you know." All right, so, these businesspeople came around and offered us a chance to join a coalition of business people who are going to make this business grow. "We know how to do it. You don't know how to do it." "We're hippies, we are against big business. We're against your bank. We're proud to be away from you. That's part of our mystique. Our customers appreciate us because we're not you. So we're proud to not be you." Okay kid. We'll be back later when you fail, and we'll buy you for nothing, because you'll be bankrupt." "Oh, we're not gonna be bankrupt, our customers love us. If I went to our customers and said, 'We need some money', they would all pitch, they would pass the hat and pitch in. They want us to succeed because we're not you. We don't like you." "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Wear your beads, and take your LSD, we don't care nothing about you. You're gonna need a job in a little while, Kid. One day after you have a child, you're gonna need a job and an insurance [policy], and a mortgage and guess who you're gonna come to see." Well we didn't believe him...And so the big investors decided that, since we can't buy these little guys, we'll just take over by consolidating in a major effort. [music plays in the background] So they first of all tried to destroy the uh, the um, um, the competing family farms. They would go to the legislators and get them on taxes. They get them on real estate. Get them on licensing, er, find a way to put these organic hippies out of business, and um, they found ways to continue to get that land away from those kids, because they were just kids, and, "You don't know nothing about farming, and you don't, you know, you don't know the county assessor. We do." And uh, big food producers says, "Get rid of those kids." And they put pressure on them, and uh, only some of the strongest of the organic farms managed to survive and so you'll see something like, Whole Foods [Market]. This guy is not a hippie. He is not organic, and he doesn't care or anything about New Wave, New Age or any of that stuff. This guy saw a business opportunity and did very well. He got, he got financing for capitalization. And he hired college kids who knew something. And uh, learned the buzz words, and learned how to capture this market, and did. They took over the whole market. And so, yeah, these people went to court about the word organic and successfully argued that the hippies cannot monopolize that word. That this a word out of the dictionary, Your Honor. And so, what does organic mean, Your Honor. And so, now this is a word in court. So when you have a food product and you want to claim that it's organic, who says you can't. Is Canadian whiskey organic? Yes. Who says it's not, some hippie? No, no, no. Any food producer can use that word. And so, it's another attempt to wipe out that hippie movement and take it over. So people go to a Whole Foods Market] looking for organics and it's all a lie, because anybody can use that word now. The big time lawyers won their cases. I told those kids, "We should

intentionally misspell the word so that it could be a trade word. And you could copyright that word or something. They would use it anyway, but then you would have to sue them successfully, and you couldn't, you wouldn't win.

COHEN: Out of curiosity, did you ever consider studying law?

WILLBORN: I did consider that. [pause] I was opposed to that because it would force me to join the system that I wanted to destroy. Should I destroy it from within? Well, there was something called the national lawyers guild, and when uh our successful uh injunction was won in federal court here in Chicago, and I think I sent you a note about those cases. Members of the National Lawyers Guild informed me that if you're willing to be a "Movement Lawyer" they are prepared to help you with admission and tuitions, and I still am considering National Lawyers Guild. I was opposed to the Supreme Court. Ever since the Amistad Case.<sup>2</sup> The Amistad was a slave ship, that had a mutiny. And the slaves took over the ship, and didn't know how to sail the ship, so at point of sword, they made the surviving crew members sail them someplace where they could get off. They tricked these slaves into landing among the thirteen colonies. When they arrived, they were arrested. The "cargo" has rebelled. The "cargo" has rebelled. The case went to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court decided that, "You're slaves. You're property. The property was purchased, so therefore you are slaves in perpetuity, because you were bought." And ever since then, I says, "All are created equal." they know that. That's the constitution they're defending and they blatantly said that. Uh, the first Supreme Court Justice John Jay, his position on blacks was clear. "Oh, shut up, you're nobody to me!" Even in cases where, I mean there's a whole range of horrible decision by the Supreme Court. I have no faith in this system. It just needs to be destroyed. It's such a blatant... Frederick Douglas standing in front of the Capital and yelling at these people about blatant truths. It doesn't mean anything. So you know, the whole system has to be overthrown and I didn't want any part in that. Same thing. I was invited to write a PhD thesis. I don't know whether I want to be Doctor Laurence. This kind of attempt to make me into a specialist would then remove me from the world of hippies and put me into the world of specialist. And that's also a way of dividing the black community, between the masses and the talented tenth, and all of that is divide and conquer. And you know there's still a problem with that. I do have a Master's [degree] now. It's a master's in Eastern Classics. Eastern Classics, what is that? It's the great books of other civilizations. It's not the great books of Greece and Rome. Western Civilization believes that the civilization means Greece. The word, "Ancient Greece" is almost one word to most western universities. It's you know, its, "The founding of democracy, the cradle of

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<sup>2</sup> *United States v. the Amistad 1841*, was a landmark abolitionist case. In a 7-1 decision the Supreme Court argued against the Slave Trade and released the kidnapped Africans. The case would be overshadowed by the pro-slave case, *Dred Scott v. Sanford*.

democracy." As though all of history starts with Greece and Rome, but this is patently not true. And to participate in that academic system, is you know, is joining the thing that calls me subaltern. Subaltern, that was a word that I learned from the history department. Oh it turns out that the vast majority of other people's cultures are not considered serious history. What? No, no, even though the number of non- Europeans is much larger than the number of Europeans. They don't count. All of their history, is called Subaltern. Meaning, like, what Hitler's untermensch? Is that what you're saying? Essentially yes. It means that yes you have an interesting history, but that's only exotic, uh, you know over the, orchids or butterflies. It's way over there. So I don't know whether I want to be that.

COHEN: Well, I have two questions. One question is, um, we often ask people how their service affected their life afterwards. Sometimes it's more straightforward, "I was trained as a mechanic, I worked as a mechanic." But in your case it's I feel like I'm asking you from a little bit more of a perverse point of view. Was somehow being in the Army, useful for you in some fashion, not because you thought it was worthwhile, but for other reasons?

WILLBORN: In many ways the, being in the Army and oh, confronting directly uh did me a lot of good. I think I did the Army a lot of good. There were commanders and fellow soldiers who needed to hear these things, and who needed somebody to stand in their face and not back down off of them when the truth... I noticed that when the truth comes into the room that everybody shuts up eventually. You know, you don't win an argument because you're the last person yelling. You win the argument when other people start shutting up and all of a sudden their eyes are looking at the floor and they start looking at their watches. This is how you know the argument has been won. It ends up that quite frequently that by simply telling people, "I'm not telling you something that you don't already know. I am not telling you something that you don't already believe. You know yourself. this is true." A friend, a good friend of mine in the Army, he showed me a photography of atrocity. He was proud of that. There was like a ping pong table and it was completely covered by chopped off human arms. And these were children's arms. Mostly they were right arms, there were some left arms, but it was a complete table arranged of little, little right arms. Little right arms in rows and rows of them, and then the GI's were standing around the table giving the thumbs up and patting each other on the back and holding their weapons and holding their beer cans. This guy was proud of this, and I couldn't attack him about it. I just says, "You know what, years from now, you are going to be very upset with yourself about this. Years from now you will not want your child to see this. I would suggest that years from now you don't want NATO to know. I would suggest that you don't want the United Nations to see this. I don't think you want Eleanor Roosevelt to see this. Okay. I don't think you want Harry Truman to see this and he used a nuclear bomb. Yes, you got to stay with your

violence in order to keep it from, that guilt from coming back on you." I talked to a Green Barret Sergeant who was feeling post-Vietnam stress, and his answer was you learn to drink. And as it turns out yeah, uh, a very high alcohol abuse level. And PTSD is now recognized as a problem. Turns out that more Iraqi veterans died from suicide after returning than died in combat. It turns out that um, naval officers who were using drones actually have refused orders to destroy targets. "No, no, no, clear to engage. You know clear to engage." And... these are officer who have eventually begun see that maybe there is a problem with bombing people just indiscriminately. That's kind of unfair isn't it? They're starting to question the idea of being given an order to kill somebody who's walking down the road. Lieutenant Goodman, a naval flyer bombed people and then was shot down and was caught. Became a POW and while he was a POW, they took this black naval officer around to the hospitals where these are some of your victims. These are people whose village you bombed. These are people who never hated you. Now go on back to the United States and question yourself and question your country about what you did. They could have put him on trial for committing these acts without, without, without declaration of war. I mean, why are you bombing people in their homes? And as a matter of fact, there's a law saying that United States people cannot do, cannot commit acts of war. Yeah these are, I think my time in the military, first of all, it shows that hippies are not cowards. We're not simply scared to fight, no, we're willing to fight when there is injustice. People were beaten in the street right out here in Michigan Avenue, because they were willing to put themselves on the line. Yes, we're afraid of violence, we don't want it but I mean we're willing to face violence and actually to engage it when it becomes ugly and necessary. So uh, my time in the military did help, and further it gave me further, further credibility whenever any discussions came up. You couldn't just say, "Oh you don't know what you're talking about." "No, no, believe me [inaudible]. No, I know what the Army did." Veterans For Peace. Vietnam Veterans Against the War. These are... Nurses against the war, nurses for peace. And there's groups of former military nurses who say, "This is all wrong. This has to be rethought." So being a veteran and facing uh a lot of these contradictions, it helped a lot during my time and post my time. Uh, I'm in political worker's organizations and union, you know labor movements and uh, a lot of that is reinforced by the fact that, yes, I am not afraid to face large forces. After all, when I was acting up, I could have been sentenced to death. And they informed me that, "Yes, we can, uh cowardice in the face of the enemy. Refusal to obey a direct order and uh, we can put you on trial for your life." And I says, "Please do. Please do." At that point I was willing to fight. Yes, I do now have a family and yes I would prefer to spend some time with my kid and my wife. I would prefer that, but I don't know, when you threaten me it's sort of like, the self-defense the martial arts training comes into play right away. "Okay if there's going to be a fight then let's go. Let's go now." Okay so let's do this. And uh yes, I wanted them to charge me with desertion. That would have meant that I would have to have a trial, and in

talking with lawyers outside of the military, I says "Yes if there's a trial. We can bring up some serious issues." See the court can't do anything until there's a case. the court needed a case, so I wanted to have a case.

COHEN: But you didn't go for desertion, in the end?

WILLBORN: No, they didn't want... They didn't charge me with desertion. They uh decided that, "Well what you have is AWOL and we would handle that under uniform code of military justice as absent without leave, and we don't know how far we want to take that." And then eventually then they heard that we were coming after them they said, "Okay, okay, I'll tell you what, let's just forget the whole ditty. We'll drop our charges if you shut up." So they offered me the chance to get out, and that's how we ended the whole thing. Yeah uh...

COHEN: Do you have any um, I'm not sure how to phrase it. I mean at some point you probably would have had the option to move somewhere else, to another country, so I guess what I'm wondering is, do you still feel that America has value or has potential to live up to its constitution? Like what are your thoughts about this?

Wilbron: America is a great country and a great opportunity for humanity to advance. When we told King George III that, "No, we are not your subjects", that was a major step forward. Uh, the great sweep of history, is uh, that humans suffer, and that we have to try to alleviate, find a mechanism, improve our miserable, brutish, and short lives, we have to do this under the aegis of you want your child to have a better life. You want that, for some reason, and we're not quite sure what that reason is, but most people kind of have that as a major thing. Now we envisioned that somewhere there's a better way. Almost everybody looks at a blue sky and says, "Now, isn't that beautiful. I wish I were up there." Uh the notion of heaven is always away from mud, cold, rock, sand, and germs, and oh, look at the beautiful white fluffy clouds and starry nights, and movement of planets. Isn't that wonderful? Surely, that's the abode of the gods and don't you wish that you could go there? And so most of us, seeing that, wished that we were there. How can we get there, I don't know? Heaven on Earth, let's try to, let's try, let's try to find a way. All right, what are we suffering? What's your main suffering? Air. You have to breath every thirty-five seconds. it is an effort. Okay what's, what's, what's the next thing that will kill you? Lack of water. All right there's places where there's no water. Got to have a well. Okay, the rivers contaminated, no, no, no, no. All right first air, water, next is food. Food is always a problem for any human being. Essentially, we're monkey's and we have metabolism and it's uh.... We are some of the weakest animals on the planet. It's amazing that we're alive. We almost went extinct four different times by the way. I have uh good faculty member, Professor at um, he's also Assistant Curator at Field Museum and he, evolutionary biologist and he's, he can see with

evidence, human beings almost went extinct and it would not have been an unusual thing for, because 99% of the species that ever lived are no longer here and they can show you that in the fossil record. So, had we gone extinct it would have had no big deal. All right, so human beings tried to relieve their suffering and apparently we have the advantage of big brain. So what can you do with your big brain to move yourself forward? Okay, it turns out that group effort seems to be more efficient and more effective. Specialization of labor requires group. Group requires organizing. Organizing means leader follower. Apparently, the crude methods were as the warlord then dun, dun, dun, then the baron, then the nation state, then the king, and then each one of those had to be fought in a revolution to to improve them. We, here in the United States, great country. We have thrown off the monarchy, we have thrown off the aristocracy, but now we have the new battle, the battle of capitalism. Apparently, the owners now want to be the power. Hey, Supreme Court says, "And those who own the country ought to run the country." Wouldn't you think so? Whose farm is it? It's my farm, I should make the rules. All right, so now we have the labor movement to fight off this, and so, I was with the socialists for a while. Socialists still got these things where they want, they want loyalty to socialism. I says, "No, no, no, no, no. The point of getting rid of the king, is to get rid of the king. The point of getting rid of the boss is to get rid of the boss." "Well, the party should live forever." No, no, now you're right back in there. Right back in there. Now you're wanting me to join another group that will be the boss and then will have to have a fight against that. Look at Stalin, he is "The Party." Oh, that was, it sounded good, but then what did it become. The party became this faceless big brother. Almost impossible to get rid of that. Almost impossible, so United States has the opportunity to learn from the sweep of history. What are we gonna do next? This is a real opportunity, and having the natural resources that we do, and the population that we do, we're in a really good position to find our way into the next the next level of human freedom. We're approaching that rapidly through technology. I don't know if you've heard, oh, there's Sofia, the humanoid. This is the first non-biological entity to become a citizen. Citizen of Saudi Arabia. I don't know why, but the idea that we can escape our suffering through technology is really very close at hand, and I'm glad to see that. Of course, this means the next battle. The next battle will be to keep the technology from controlling us, and so uh, we're at the dawning of a new age, and it's exciting times, and I don't think the humans are going to win this battle. Machines are evolving, and once they learn how to evolve, they will have no use for us. And so they will either make children of us or will destroy us, and they don't need us. So exciting times. Exciting times, and I think humanity is right on the edge of going extinct again. We'll see, we'll see.

COHEN: Is there a question that I did not ask that I should ask?

WILLBORN: Your thoughts in this thing are very insightful, I'm sure that you've giving these issues a lot of thought. I think we're... at the Pritzker Military Library and so the whole question of the use of force altogether. Should all force be repudiated? Should all humans disarm forever? I think that's a question that should come up more often for this organization. It would be hard to get a lot of people associated. Colonel Pritzker herself, I mean, it would be hard for you to walk up to her and say, "Uniforms are bad, rifles are bad, bayonets are bad, let's all put them down." No it would be hard for anybody to tell America to disarm, but uh, I think this organization should face that question. There is a possibility that we will disarm, and I don't know what military veterans are going to feel about that, so we need to all question ourselves about, the question of total disarmament. It wouldn't be a very popular idea around here, I don't think.

COHEN: But is it even popular with yourself? Like I sort of had the understanding from you that if it's a just battle it's an unfortunate necessity.

WILLBORN: Yeah. Yeah. You should have a fire extinguisher. You hope that you never ever, ever, ever have to use it, but you should have one. That's my position. Ideally though, we should never even need that. Okay, I make this comparison. We build homes. We build them out of flammable materials. The Great Fire of London was 1666. It was so similar to the Chicago Fire that I wrote a paper about that when I was an undergrad. As our engineering gets better, as the insurance companies get better, we will devise way to build structures that are more and more resistant to fire. More and more resistant to fire. The first Palmer House burnt to the ground within days of its completion during the Great Chicago Fire. It is rebuilt as the first fireproof hotel. it's not actually fireproofed, but one of the things it did, it's steel frame building. It's not just organic. As our technology improves, more and more buildings and more and more content will reach a point of being fire proof. Therefore, the fire department. The fire department will have fewer and fewer fire calls every year. This is a good thing eventually, the number of uncontrolled burning buildings in Chicago will be 1% of what it is right now. And then the number of active duty fireman, firefighters will be cut by half. You're a firefighter, you're trained. You've been to one fire this year, and yet you got eight million dollars' worth of equipment. Maybe the city council will say, "Oh, uh, we'll reduce the number of firemen that we hire, and reduce that". Okay same parallel. You have a military. How many men in your standing Army? Yes, the general wants some more money, we need more invisible airplanes, okay, the number of wars you fought was how many? The number of potential enemies is how many? The Russian Federation has applied to join NATO? The Warsaw Pact is dissolving? How many more marines do we need? Maybe we should have a smaller standing Army, until you have virtually none. Remember when we had overkill. We had enough nuclear weapons to destroy all of humanity 200 times. Okay, how can you justify that? Well, let us have the strategic arms limitation talks where we reduced the nuclear arsenal. Let's keep

this in mind until you finally don't need a nuclear bomb at all. Are we headed in that direction? I hope so.

COHEN: Well, on behalf of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library I think It's fitting that I present what they call the challenge coin.

WILLBORN: Yeah!

COHEN: To a man who challenges the world from the time you were young onward with a very optimistic, progressive view of where the world is heading so thank you.

WILLBORN: Thank you.