



NCSU Libraries
Special Collections & University Archives
Oral History Interview
TAPE LOG

Note that this is not a literal transcript. Questions and answers are paraphrased.

Interviewee: Sion "Si" Harrington III, LTC (Ret.), Military Collection Archivist

Interviewers: Dr. Robert Serow, Professor of Education

Anna Dahlstein, NCSU Libraries Fellow, Special Collections

Date: June 17, 2003

Location: NC Office of Archives & History

Length: Approximately 22 minutes.

000 Introductory information

012 Date of birth?

January 8, 1949.

015 Where from?

Erwin, North Carolina (Harnett County).

019 Parents' occupation and education?

Both schoolteachers, both college-educated, both from NC -- dad from Erwin and mom from Beauford County.

029 Siblings?

None.

034 Military service – When, under what circumstances, for how long?

Joined National Guard in 1970 while a UNC college student.

Remained in National Guard for ten and a half years.

By then teaching high school history.

Army was short of company-grade officers so went on active duty for twelve years, Jan.. 1981- Jan. 1993.

Worked with airborne units, jumping out of airplanes etc.

After that, went into Army Reserve and retired from that in August 2000.

Finished up as Lieutenant Colonel.

065 Major in college, when finished degree, graduate education?

1971 A.B. in Social Studies Education from UNC-Chapel Hill.

1984 (I think), M.A. in Human Relations through Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Prior to that, 18 hours of graduate work at Campbell University toward Education degree but got interrupted by entry into active duty.
1999 (I think), M.A. in History from NC State

- 088 Which studies supported by GI Bill?
The ones at NC State. Liked the school and the professors. Had taken a course or two at State before then. Took a bit longer to complete the program due to full-time work at the State Archives.
- 105 Tell us more about the MA supported by GI Bill -- Concentration, thesis subject?
Concentration in Military History and minor in Southern History.
Thesis on the Confederate Major General Lafayette McLaws.
Dr. Harris still trying to get me to publish it as a book.
[elaborates, also mentions famous Confederate officer James Longstreet)
- 130 You mentioned that your studies were delayed. Dates of the Master's degree?
Fall 1993 – Spring 1999.
Completed most coursework in the first year or year and a half while a full-time student.
Then busy working full-time at State Archives and serving as a member of the Army Reserve one or two weekends a month. Had to slow down studies a bit. But GI Bill is pretty much what got me through. Had it not been for that, I would not have been able to have the degree. The money that was available. It just wasn't practical for me at the time to take what I was making here... Even taking one course at a time would have been prohibitive. Still have about 10 months left of GI Bill I'd like to use somehow. That GI bill was a godsend.
- 160 How much money was it relative to the tuition?
Don't remember specifically. It was a lump sum you got every month and you paid your own bills out of that. Also could do it thanks to state school and in-state tuition. As I recall it was sufficient to cover the expenses.
- 174 In May of 1999 upon receiving MA, you started working at the State Archives?
No, as of April 1994 worked part-time here. (Iconographics)
In December 1994 started full-time position as College Records Archivist. College records for thirty-some private colleges, business schools, etc.
Busy job due to many requests for transcripts.
In December of 1995, I got a phone call from Army Reserve of Bronx NY. They sent me to Sarajevo, Bosnia in early January and I was there for several months. When got back, called up to the Director's office. Had tried to get them [the State Archives] to collect photos of North Carolinians who served in World War I. NC Archives saw a book put out by the State of Wisconsin with letters and photos on Vietnam. They wanted to do something like that, but without limiting the scope to Vietnam. A mammoth undertaking. [Elaborates on time required.]

- 234 Tell us a bit about the oral history project.
Oral history is just one part. Try to encourage people around the state to do interviews with veterans. It doesn't matter what branch of service, and it doesn't have to be wartime service. We send packages of questions to volunteers / interested parties. They send us tapes and release forms and we process them. Collection of 360 interviews on tape or video.
The other part of the project is an effort to collect and preserve photos and papers related to the service of North Carolinians. We encourage people to donate letters and postcards by or to individuals in the service, military papers, anything related to military service that is not an artifact.
- 260 How useful is training you got under GI Bill to your current occupation, career?
Extremely valuable. I was very fortunate to work with three History professors at NC State: [Joseph "Joe" Caddell], Joseph Hobbs, [William C] Harris. They were just phenomenal. Knowledge of military and how they helped me draw things together. Really a pleasure working with them. They made it fun. I wish they could offer a doctorate in History at NC State. Even at my age I'd be tempted to go back.
- 277 Which GI Bill – Vietnam Era or Montgomery GI Bill? MGIB, right?
Yes.
- 280 Any thoughts on how useful a policy it could be in the years ahead?
For young people who can't visualize ever being able to afford an education... Just like after WWII there were some people who would not have gotten any training otherwise. My own father got a college degree because he had been in the Navy. Without the GI Bill, my parents would probably have worked their entire lives in the cotton mill in Erwin, like their parents had.
- 295 Your official title?
Military Collection Archivist
- 303 You mentioned you worked as an instructor at NC State. Tell us about that.
I was assigned to the ROTC dept., the dept. of Military Science, between 1989 and 1993. Served as an instructor, an assistant professor of military science. Worked with cadets at every level, from freshmen to seniors. Did some coursework then but did not have time to do much. Very good dept., some of the best young people you'll ever find in your life.
- 315 Since this is our first joint interview for this project, do you have any suggestions about material to be included in our future interviews?
I think you pretty well covered it. Most interesting thing is why and how people used the GI Bill.
- 328 End of recording.