Transcription: Sid Hull

Today is May 14th, 2010, and this is Bill O'Hara. I'm Director of Surveying with the General Land Office. I am interviewing Irving S. Sid Hull. This interview is taking place in person in a small conference room in I-4 just outside the commissioner's office at 1700 North Congress Avenue, Stephen F. Austin Building in Austin. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. All right, now we'll get started.

Sid Hull: OK.

OK, so the few questions I'm going to ask, really we're gonna kind of walk through your life and learn a little bit about your background and then talk some more about your military time.

Sid Hull: This is then a quick synopsis.

This is all the stuff from the service, we're going to get to that because we really want to learn about your –

Sid Hull: So starting at birth.

So when is your birthday?

Sid Hull: February 24th, 1937.

And where were you born?

Sid Hull: Sharon, Massachusetts.

You're from Massachusetts.

Sid Hull: Yes.

Well my mother and father are from Boston.

Sid Hull: Oh, well Sharon is 20 miles outside of Boston, right on the railroad line between Providence and Boston.

And what year were you born?

Sid Hull: '37.

I think my father was born in '35. My mother and father grew up in Readville, Mass. It's part of Boston now.

Sid Hull: You can say they're from Boston. If you pin them down, they're really not from Boston.

Well, Readville is part of Boston now.

Sid Hull: I know it's part of Boston proper. It's Boston metropolitan area, but you pin 'em down, oh now, I'm from Quincy really, or I'm from Rosland or whatever.

OK, that's very true about that. And your parent's names?

Sid Hull: Well, my father's name was Sidney Purham Hull and my mother's name was Alice Walker Hull.

And where were they born?

Sid Hull: Well, my mother was born in Massachusetts in Bedramas and my father was born in Rockport, Maine.

New England roots.

Sid Hull: New England roots.

Not a bad thing.

Sid Hull: And ended up here in Texas.

Yeah, well I can't wait to hear about that part of the story.

Sid Hull: OK.

And you served in which branch of the military?

Sid Hull: I was in the Army.

OK, and when did you join?

Sid Hull: I enlisted in September of 1955.

OK, so what made you want to join the Army?

Sid Hull: Couldn't find a job. I was 18, couldn't find a job. I was living in Florida. My folks moved down there and I joined them, and I couldn't find a decent job. See, when I was 17 years old, I already knew everything there was to know, and so I quit school and headed south. And because I couldn't find a job, I enlisted in the service, but I asked for and was granted enlistment into the military police. And so shortly after I enlisted, I took the GED and passed it, and then I went to military police school at what was then Camp Gordon, Georgia, back in '55, '56, and after the military police school, on that list it'll show I went to Fort Sheraton, Illinois. That was my first assignment.

And so you did boot camp where?

Sid Hull: At Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

OK, so here you grew up in New England and you went down to Florida.

Sid Hull: I went to Florida, but the place I enlisted in Florida, they sent me to Fort Jackson for basic training.

And then you did your military police training -

Sid Hull: In Georgia, what was then Camp Gordon, now it's Fort Gordon.

OK, and then to Fort Sheridan.

Sid Hull: Fort Sheridan was the first assignment, and then that was headquarters, at the time it was headquarters for 5th Army. It's just a small camp right on Lake Michigan, about 30 miles north of Chicago in what is a high dollar area of Illinois. It sits and deactivated and sold off into lots for grandiose homes.

So Fort Sheridan doesn't exist anymore.

Sid Hull: No.

All right, so then you went to Fort Dix from there?

Sid Hull: Well, I got out of the service in September of '58. I said OK, I'm gonna go find me a job and make my way. Well I was out for about two and a half months, couldn't find a job except as a bartender, and thank God that this place was just a shot and a beer type place because I didn't know how to mix drinks at all. Give me a shot, give me a beer, and that was it, and I could do that. So after a while I said mmm, this isn't working out. So I reenlisted in Jacksonville, Florida, and I was sent back to Fort Jackson just briefly to get oriented and then they sent me to Fort Dix and I joined a military police battalion there. And that battalion was one of the ones that was right in the thick of it in Vietnam, 716th MP battalion.

So this is in the late 1950s.

Sid Hull: This was in 1959, yeah, that I actually reenlisted, and I was only in New Jersey for a year, a little over a year, which is where I met my wife, and we got married at Chapel 13 on Fort Dix. I don't know if that's an unlucky number or not, but we just celebrated our 50th anniversary.

Congratulations, I think it must've been a very lucky number. That's awesome. Do you have children?

Sid Hull: Yeah, three children, two boys and a girl.

All right. Are they around here?

Sid Hull: My son lives here in town. He just turned 46 and he's worked for AMD ever since he graduated from high school.

Really? That's amazing.

Sid Hull: AMD split off a subsidiary called Spancha, and they make flash chips, and so he went with that group. They're still over there off of Ben White making chips. I got a son in Olympia, Washington. He's got a family of three. I got a daughter in Salado.

Salado, Texas, just up the highway here? That's a pretty little place there.

Sid Hull: She works at Scott & White.

Well good deal. Two of your kids are pretty close.

Sid Hull: Yes, real close.

And the other one, that's probably a good place to go visit.

Sid Hull: Well actually we brought him down, him and his whole family last month. They wanted us to go up there and we said well why would we go up there – first of all I don't want to fly now that TSA is what it is today and so I just said, no, why don't you come down here? So we paid for them to come down here. He had him and his three kids and his wife and they stayed for about 10 days, had a great time. His brother and sister are here, so what's the point of us going up there.

A little bit of a family reunion sounds like.

Sid Hull: It was, a real good one, too.

So you were at Fort Dix for just a little while.

Sid Hull: I shipped out, well we were married in February of 1960, and five weeks later I shipped out to Korea, literally by ship, three weeks, and landed in Inchon, was stationed at Wejongbu, First Corps, what they called I-Corps. That's when I got out of the military police. I went to a military police company at Wejongbu. The handwriting was on the wall. They were top heavy in NCOs and my chances of making it were slim to nothing. So I asked the CO if he minded if I looked for a new home, and he said no, I got too many people now anyhow, so go see if you can find a place. And so I started wandering around Wejongbu, Korea, and I came across a signal construction company, part of a battalion, and went in and asked if I could speak to the CO, and the first sergeant let me in and told him I was looking for a new home. He said oh, good, we could use a good worker. So he wrote a letter to my CO at the military police company, they cut orders, I was sent over there, and never knew how people clam telephones. I knew that they had hooks and stuff. I finally found out where all those splinters come from, telephone pole. This guy threw me a set of hooks and said strap 'em on and climb that pole. I said you're kidding. So I went up about six feet and then he grabbed my feet and he pulled himself up. He said see, they hold. And I was a lineman for all the time I was in Korea, it was a signal construction company. It was a KATUSA company. Are you familiar with the KATUSA? KATUSA is an acronym for Korean Augmentation to the United States Army. The company was made up of NCO's and officers that were American personnel, and all of the soldiers and the workers were Korean soldiers. So I had a section of Korean soldiers that I was in charge of, and all of the work that was done, we put telephone poles up everywhere. In fact while I was there, I was stationed at the DMZ, TDY for about three months, right up in the demilitarized zone where we were right across from Pamela John, and we actually built a pole line through the DMZ to Pamela John, to the Swiss Swede Legation. On this side, on the south

side of Pamela John was the Swiss Swede Legation which resolved conflict when there was any, with the neutral nations on the other side, which was the Texan Poles. So usually they got together. If they could resolve it, they did. Otherwise, all the officers and the brass had to meet.

Now this all was pretty new by then, I mean not ten years old, right?

Sid Hull: Well, Korea had ended in '53, so yeah, it was about seven years later. Interesting, I mean South Korea was a third world country then, just really backwards. They had come a long way.

So this pole line built was to run some communication wires?

Sid Hull: Yeah, we ran cable really, just cable, like they do nowadays here, but we ran it through a swamp. The engineers had to clear the mines out before we started, and then we went through a swamp which was interesting. Learned how to put up a telephone pole in the swamp, and yeah, and then we ended up hooking up right outside the quarters of the Swiss Swede Legation, and tapping into their phones. It was just upgrading their telephone system.

And you were doing this with soldiers from South Korea, were your laborers more or less?

Sid Hull: Yeah. And the North Korean soldiers were watching every move we made.

I'm a land surveyor, so now I'm starting think about boundaries and I'm wondering how you got through there.

Sid Hull: Well there's a road through there, there's a road right through the DMZ. They actually had a little village halfway through the DMZ. I think the DMZ is about 4,000 meters on either side, and there were roads in and out. But they had a little village there called Freedom Village which I don't know who it was made up of, South Koreans I'm sure. And they were kind of cared for by the military. Interesting. I never really got involved in that part of it though.

So you were in Korea for -

Sid Hull: 13 months.

13 months total?

Sid Hull: Mm-hmm.

Did you get to go back home after that?

Sid Hull: Yes I did, I went home and actually while I was over there, toward the end of my tour, I noticed that many of the people I went over there with were getting their orders and going back and I hadn't gotten any word that I was going back. So I got concerned and I went down to headquarters company to personnel and I asked them why haven't I gotten any orders if everybody else that I know is going back already? They said I don't know, let's check it out. So they looked through the files and found out that they hadn't asked for any orders for me. So they sent off a TWIX to Washington and I waited about a week or so and was called back down and they said oh, we got your orders now. So I looked at it and it said USMA. I said what the hell, what's that? They said you're going to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Not

going to it, that's where I was going to be stationed as a telephone lineman. So that's where I went. There were two cable splicers and two linemen, and one civilian in charge of us, and we were the phone company for West Point.

That must've been a great assignment.

Sid Hull: It was a good assignment, yeah. Like I say, we were the phone company for the whole campus as well as everything around there. Have you ever heard of Captain Buckner? OK, they have a complete Army camp 5 miles from West Point where they train the cadets and units, detachments, come up from Fort Bening for infantry, Fort Sill for artillery, Fort Knox for armored, all these people come up, Fort Gordon for Signal Corps, and what have you, and they train these plebs in the summertime between their freshman year and their sophomore year – engineers from Fort Lanaboy, I mean all kind – they have artillery ranges, rifle ranges, machine gun ranges, everything that you can imagine just outside of West Point. Nobody knows it's there.

So it's there for training the cadets. It's not active in any other way?

Sid Hull: No, it's just for cadets. They get training by the cream of the crop that's sent up there from the various military installations whose MOS they serve.

How about that? So you were the phone company so to speak, and so you were running new lines and maintaining -

Sid Hull: Repairing and maintaining mostly, mostly maintaining, yeah.

That must've been a great assignment.

Sid Hull: Yeah, it was great.

To go from Korea to West Point.

Sid Hull: You were in the service -

I was –

Sid Hull: You know what the charge of quarters is, CQ?

I'm familiar with the term. I was in the Air Force though –

Sid Hull: In the Army, at night when everybody went home, there always had to be somebody in the orderly room, and we called them charge of quarters. They would stay all night until the first sergeant would relieve them the next morning. At West Point they had a service company of about 200 people with all different jobs, different MOS's or AFSE's as you know, and so I was on duty one day. I was a sergeant E5 and for months they had been taking dirt, they had been building new quarters for officers on West Point and the dirt that they were hauling away because they were building it out of the side of a large hill was going over to the Hudson River and they were pouring it into the river and they were going to make an athletic field. So they had about four acres poured and they smoothed it off, had grass growing, they had bulldozers and heavy equipment on the thing, and the night I was on CQ, that four acres sank into the Hudson

River and it created a tidal wave to fill the gap which washed away warehouses and everything else at West Point. So Conex containers, you know what they are? These big metal containers that stuff is moved from overseas?

OK, yeah, I think I know what those are.

Sid Hull: Floating down the Hudson River. And some officer called me up and says find the duck drivers, get the duck drivers here. You know what a duck is -

Yeah, I know –

Sid Hull: So I have to find a duck driver, and I didn't know where the hell the duck drivers were. But pretty soon the duck drivers came in and they got their ducks out and they started down the river trying to grab as many of the Conex containers they could. Of course the wave went on the other side of the river, too, and it washed out some boat docks and some nice boats and stuff.

What caused it to sink? Did it get washed out underneath?

Sid Hull: We learned later that whoever was responsible for building this athletic field never really sounded the river underneath, the bottom of the river to see if it could hold four acres of dirt. And it couldn't.

I know the Army's got some good engineers, too, some of the very best.

Sid Hull: Yeah, I just, I don't know what happened, but – anyhow I was there nine months and I was told by the civilian in charge that they were going to hire all civilians to do this job, so they were going to let all four of us go. So they said well, since you've only been here a short time and we're uprooting you and sending you off, you choose where you want to go. Where do you want to go? And so my wife is from New Jersey and I'm from Massachusetts, and I said anywhere in the northeast would be fine. Don't worry, no problem. So I get orders for Fort Bliss. You know where Fort Bliss is, don't you?

El Paso.

Sid Hull: Yeah.

That's not northeast!

Sid Hull: Whoever at the Pentagon was geographically challenged. And so and I headed for Fort Bliss in the middle of January from upstate New York.

And what year was this?

Sid Hull: It was the end of '61, first of '62.

I lived in El Paso at the Bigsy Air Force Base.

Sid Hull: OK, I remember Bigsy Air Force Base. In '62 I was there and our unit's motor pool was right at the end of the runway, and every time they had an alert, and those B-52's started to take off, they'd come right over our motor pool. But the B-52's weren't as bad as the KC-135's.

That's what my father was on. He was a boom operator on a 135.

Sid Hull: Well, they don't have any mufflers on them, I'll tell you. You can't even hear yourself think when they fly overhead.

That's something, we were on the same base. I mean those bases I think were –

Sid Hull: They're right next to each other, absolutely, yeah.

I don't know what year they closed Bigs, but it's been some time.

Sid Hull: It was after '62, I know that, yeah.

I think we moved from there in 1964 I think we moved from there. My dad got stationed up at Westover AFB in western Massachusetts. That's where he finished his career.

Sid Hull: OK, did they stay there?

He did. He stayed, we were there. He was 21 years in the Air Force and he spent the last I guess eight or nine years at Westover and retired there.

Sid Hull: You got to be a homesteader, did you?

I guess, yeah.

Sid Hull: That's what they call folks that just kind of live there and stay.

It's unusual from what I've seen.

Sid Hull: Well I saw a lot of homesteaders at West Point. I mean I really did, people that had gotten to West Point as a young NCO and managed to finagle and squirm and get pulled off of orders and everything else until they retired there.

That sounds like a great assignment. You'd probably not want to leave if you could stay.

Sid Hull: No, it's beautiful up there. It's right in the mountains of New York.

I've never been. I had a cousin that went to school at West Point. She graduated from there about eight years ago I think and she's recently gotten out and is in medical school now, but she got great training at West Point. She served over in, she was in Alaska and then she did two tours over in Iraq and she just got out a couple of years ago. She's one of my younger cousins. We don't know each other real well, but and her dad was an Army helicopter pilot, my uncle Tom. Tom O'Hara. I don't know if you would've ever met him, but he was in Vietnam through the late 60s. He had four tours over in Nam as a chopper pilot.

Sid Hull: Wow.

He got shot down a few times but managed to survive it every single time. He's a tough son of a gun. All three of his kids have gone to military academies – West Point, Air Force and Anapolis. Anyway, so you were at Fort Bliss. Here you go from New York to Texas, quite a difference in culture and weather.

Sid Hull: Oh yeah. One time we were out driving around and my wife saw a roadrunner. She said catch it. I says you're crazy. It was a different thing there. As I say, we were a single construction company and what they were doing I have no idea. I had never learned anything about the company itself and why it would be stationed at a post that was the Air defense school, the Air defense artillery, the nikey rockets and stuff like that, the white sands missile range and what have you. But we were there. Anyhow these Air defense units would have to go out over and set up, so we did manage to build some pole lines while we were there out in the desert, and what we'd do is run pole lines out to where these people were going to set up so that they wouldn't have to run any lines for communication. All they would have to do is lock in and start talking. So that was our task. While I was there, I got there in I think January, and in the summer. A couple of officers from our company were supposed to have gone to Panama to jungle warfare school but they sneaked out of it, so they sent myself and another fellow. So from the desert of west Texas, I went to the jungles of Panama for three weeks of intense training in jungle warfare. Yeah. And then when I got done and I got back, the Army in its infinite wisdom sent me to Germany for three years.

So how old were you by then?

Sid Hull: 25.

And you'd done a world of traveling.

Sid Hull: Yeah.

So how long were you at Fort Bliss?

Sid Hull: Nine months.

Just nine months, then off to Germany. You were able to take your family over to Germany with you, right?

Sid Hull: Not really. Well yes, I was able to take my wife over there. We didn't have any children at the time. My orders read that I was supposed to depart the end of October of 1962 for Germany, and she was supposed to go with me, but she didn't, she couldn't, because the Russians decided to put missiles in Cuba at that time, and because it was a sticky situation. They pulled all dependents off of orders and so we could go by ourselves. So that's what happened. So I went to Germany and I was assigned to a single battalion in Kitzingen in Germany, 53rd Signal Battalion, and when I got there, the battalion XO looked at my orders and looked at my records and said we need a career counselor for the battalion because we just assigned our career counselor as first sergeant at headquarters company. And I said oh? They said would you like to be our career counselor? I says what is a career counselor and what do they do? And he said well, you just reenlist people that want to reenlist, or if their term of service is up, and they want to stay in, you discharge them and reenlist them. I said oh, I guess I can do that. And so that's what I did for a while and I was there about nine months – this nine month thing keeps coming

up – but I was there about nine months and the unit shipped back to the States. It had gone over to Germany sometime in the late 50s for some crisis or another and it was due to rotate back, so they rotated back. Well of course I hadn't been there long enough, so they reassigned me to a single battalion in Kaiserschlagen, Germany, and that was better because Kitzingen was a tiny little town and Kaiserschlagen was a big city, and it had many what they called Kasern's which is the German name for a small camp. And so I was assigned to a single battalion at the Kleberg Kasern. I lost my job as career counselor because they had one, so I was back as a section chief, and I did my job, whatever that was, playing war games really mostly. I got to know the career counselor real well. I was getting to like this. So it wasn't very long until he was sent up to group headquarters as the group career counselor, so he put in a good word for me to become the battalion career counselor of the single battalion in Kaiserschlagen, and so I did. I had that job until my tour was done. I found all kinds of weird ways to reenlist people on the telephone pole or whatever, with the flag flying up there, but I liked it so well I put in for recruiting school when I left, and I went to recruiting school at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, in October of '65. That's in Indianapolis. It was an eight-week school and I managed to graduate OK, and my first assignment was Mt. Clemens, Michigan, which was just north of Detroit, and right outside of Selfridge Air Force Base. So I got quarters on base. The town was right next door, and since I was in the active military, they allowed me to get military quarters there, and so I did. By then we had two kids. My first son was born in Germany, and my second son was conceived in Germany, and born shortly after we got back. We were there six months, just got settled in, and I got levied for Vietnam, in my secondary MOS. My primary MOS was now recruiter. So my secondary MOS was back to Signal Corps, telephone lineman, and I was joining a single construction battalion that was forming at Fort Brag, North Carolina. So in June of '66 I was sent to Fort Brag and I became a section chief in one of the line companies in this Signal battalion. That was my job. We mostly got everything done. We were all ready to go but we weren't going to leave until August 1st. So they said any of us who wanted to go home for a week could, and so I did, and so I flew back to Detroit on the airline and I had a round trip ticket to take me back to the Fort Brag area. While I was home, all the airlines went on strike, every one of them, and it was a crisis because this was 1966 and they were just building up in Vietnam, the war was building up and so President Johnson ordered the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserves into the air – any cargo plane you could imagine was flying around the country ferrying troops wherever they needed to go. Because I was at an Air Force base, I went down and I checked with operations and I said I got to get back to Fort Brag. They said OK. We got a C-124 coming in, fueling here tomorrow morning, we can get you out. So sure enough, I had never ridden on a C-124, I didn't know what a C-124 was, but it's a Globemaster. It's one of these great big – pop rear cargo. It's kind of shaped like this, it's a two-story thing. I got as far as McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey, from Selfridge Air Force Base in Michigan, and so I went into operations and said I got to get to Fort Brag. They said oh, well we got a C-119 flying boxcar out here, it's just getting ready to take off and one of its stops is Polk Air Force Base which is right outside Fort Brag, so I said OK, good. So I got on and I got sick. I've never been so sick on an airplane in my life. I know why the Airborne jumps out of those things. I mean we stopped at about three different air bases on the way. I think ours was the fourth stop, and I was getting sicker and sicker and I was just about to grab for the barf bag when I heard the landing gear go down. I said I can make it, I can make it. I should've threw up because I would've felt better because I was sick for three days after that. So we shipped out August 1st by ship. Whenever I ship out, I manage to ship out. Three weeks again on the Pacific Ocean. Each line company of our battalion was dropped off at a different site, and I ended up at Cameron Bay in Vietnam. And so I was with Bravo Company, Signal Construction Battalion. We were going to start building pole lines in our area and get communications established, and I was there about two weeks and the commander got a call that they needed me at headquarters company just

outside Saigon at Longbin. I said OK, what's this about? He says I don't know. Just get you a hop and get on down there. So I went down to the operations. The Air Force had a base there, and I went to operations, and I said I need a ride to Saigon, Tonsenut. They said OK, we got one going here pretty quick. I jumped on and got down there. Got a ride out to headquarters company and they found out when they left the States that they didn't make any provisions for anybody to be discharged and reenlisted in the battalion. They had no paperwork whatsoever. And a lot of people, a lot of the career NCO's and stuf, when they left the States, they left having signed a statement of intent to reenlist because if their term of service was up while they were over there, they had to reenlist for continuity, and they couldn't not reenlist, because if they decided they didn't want to reenlist because they were in a combat zone, then their discharge papers were coded such that they could never reenlist. So I scrounged around Saigon at different units for what few DD form 214's – you're familiar?

I am.

Sid Hull: And then the DD form 4 is the enlistment paper. DD form 214 is the discharge. I scrounged up what I could and then I wrote a letter to my old headquarters in Detroit asking them for some and they sent me a couple of boxes, so I was pretty well established.

So you got sent to Saigon to headquarters to start –

Sid Hull: To become a career counselor. Back again. Doing what I'd been doing.

They suddenly realized they needed this and you were there.

Sid Hull: I was there. They started looking through people's records and they noticed that I had been a career counselor in Germany and that I had been to recruiting school and been on recruiting duty, so they said well, who better?

He's already here.

Sid Hull: So I did that for several months and we were with the 1st Signal Brigade. That's what this patch is here.

Can you describe that for the tape?

Sid Hull: Well, it's got a blue stripe in the center, broad blue stripe. It's built like a shield. It has two what should be orange stripes, because orange is Signal Corps. These look more like reddish orange. And then a sword like a lightning bolt pointing upwards, and that's the crest if you will of the 1st Signal Brigade. 1st Signal Brigade was the largest brigade in Vietnam at one time. It had over 25,000 troops, but it was all made up of different battalions, different signal battalions and separate units and what have you, but it was at one time the largest brigade in the theater.

I have a question about what Signal Corps do. To establish communications?

Sid Hull: Basically, yeah. There's all kinds of jobs in the Signal Corps. My job was building pole lines and establishing communications through hardware, cable, telephone poles, stuff like that. The 40th Signal Battalion which was what I was a member of was the only heavy construction signal battalion in Vietnam all the time we were there. All the rest of the signal

battalions established radio communications, mostly radio, between groups and organizations. We were all over the country. They're the ones that got hit the worst because they were instant communications for the troops and so if the VC or the North Vietnamese could destroy one of these trailers with these radiomen in it, they would. It was very dangerous.

They were probably front lines a lot.

Sid Hull: Some of them were. Front lines, there were really no front lines. The front lines could be anywhere at anytime.

What about the heavy equipment guys like yourself. So you're going in there and putting poles up. It seemed like you would have been even more visible then.

Sid Hull: We were visible. I got a theory, OK? I don't know how true it is and people could shoot holes in it, but I think knowing the mind of the Asians, that they figured that we were building their infrastructure of telephone communications, so leave it alone. We'll have it eventually.

That makes sense.

Sid Hull: Really we were never severely engaged with the VC.

How did you determine where to run the pole lines?

Sid Hull: Oh, engineers, the headquarters, all the minds up above us determined that. We were just given an assignment and told to do it.

Would somebody mark a line where you were gonna run the pole lines?

Sid Hull: Basically, yeah. And we had big stocks of telephone poles and we had these big trucks, what they called line trucks, with the booms on them that set 'em up, and we had these trucks that had the big augers on the back of them that drilled the holes and everything. It was just like any type of signal construction battalion. My job as a career counselor now was to go around to my companies. I had four line companies. I'd go to them whenever somebody wanted to reenlist or if I had to counsel somebody. So I would do that by hopping on an airplane. I'd go down to Tonsenut Air Base and say what do you got going to Cameron Bay or Kuchi, well Kuchi later on, but anyhow, I wanted to go into group headquarters. I wanted more work to do. I'm kind of a workaholic anyhow. And so, except around the house, but -

I'm sure you do your part.

Sid Hull: I try not to. But I would go around and do whatever I had to do, reenlist somebody, make sure the paperwork was correct and everything. I tried three different times putting in the request for transfer to group headquarters so that I could have more responsibility, and all three times the sergeant major whispered to the commander that they can't afford to lose me, and so it never got passed up. I finally confronted the sergeant major and asked him when was I going to be able to transfer out? He said Sergeant Hull, if you leave here, it's not going to be as a staff sergeant. I says you mean I'm going to get promoted? Not the right thing to say. Anyhow, right next door to us was the 2nd Signal Brigade which we were part of that, not brigade, Signal Group. You had brigade, then you had group, and then you had battalion. And so our battalion was part

of about five different battalions in the 2nd Signal Group. So I went over to group headquarters and I knew that they needed a career counselor because they didn't have one. I said I've been trying to get up here without any luck. The sergeant major keeps talking the CO out of letting me go, and I know you need a career counselor. Can you guys cut orders bringing me up here? They said yeah, we can do that. Next thing I know, I was called into the office and told that 2nd Signal Brigade had cut orders reassigning me to them. Sergeant major was pissed. I went up there, and so now I had about five battalions that I had to work with and their companies. So I was traveling to more places, bigger area. I was enjoying the heck out of it. I flew on every kind of aircraft you can imagine over there. I was up in Cameron Bay one time and I was looking for a ride back to Saigon, and I went to operations and I said you got anything going to Tonsenut? They said yeah, there's one loading up right now. I said good, where is it? He said it's that C-47 out there. I said oh, I've never ridden on a C-47. So OK. So I get out there and there's this big silver C-47, or what's known as a DC3 to civilians. And Air American. I said oh, Air American, they've got an airline over here, OK. I didn't know. Not until I saw the movie. I just jumped on and got a ride to Saigon. I've flown in everything, helicopters, all kinds of fixed aircraft.

So Air America was a civilian airline?

Sid Hull: No, it was CIA.

Oh, I didn't see the movie.

Sid Hull: It's with oh, what's his name, the Aussie guy -

Russell Crow?

Sid Hull: No, the other guy, he's in those movies, he had five but I can't remember the names of the movies.

The Crocodile Dundee guy?

Sid Hull: No, I can't think of his name. It may come to me. But anyhow in fact I had the shit scared out of me. I was in Bung Tao which is down south on the coast and visiting a unit down there, and I can't remember how I got there but I do remember how I got back because I went to the air base operations and asked for a ride back to Saigon. They said oh yeah, we got a plane out here just getting ready to go. It was a Dehaviland Beaver. Are you familiar with planes?

Not really.

Sid Hull: It's a high-wing, it's kind of one of those big radial engine like bush planes that they fly in Canada and Alaska. It's a high-wing plane and it's made by Dehaviland and the Beaver holds about six passengers, and then they have one that's called the Otter and it holds about 12 passengers. And it was an Army plane. So we take off and it was just me and the pilot. So I'm sitting in the back on one of the seats and we climb up to about 1500 feet and pretty soon I hear nothing except the wind blowing through the struts and I'm getting a bit concerned because you're supposed to hear the roar of the engine, and nothing. So he banks it around and he comes up and he lines up with the runway, and just before he touched down he turned around and he got this big shit eating grin on his face and he said I got you! I said what? He was just practicing dead stick landings. You know what a dead stick landing is?

It doesn't sound good.

Sid Hull: It's a power off landing. And those planes, they glide. So as soon as his wheels hit the runway, he hit the throttle and off it goes. But even though the engine is still running, you can't hear it. You just hear the wind going through the struts.

You learned a little bit about it that day.

Sid Hull: I knew something about aircraft. You need thrust, you need lift, and there's drag, and there's gravity. I was worried about gravity.

So you saw a lot of Vietnam, a lot of the country I guess.

Sid Hull: I did. I went to Kuchi which is the headquarters of the 25th Infantry, and that was a pretty hot zone right there. There's a road, Route 1, that goes right to it from Saigon, but nobody travels it because it's just loaded with VC, so I had to take a helicopter out. I don't remember why I went, but that's a lot of years ago. That's 43 years ago.

That's some time ago.

Sid Hull: So when I came back from Vietnam, I came back in July of '67, surprised my wife.

You didn't tell her you were coming home?

Sid Hull: No. She didn't know when. She knew I was coming home sometime, she didn't know when exactly. God was she mad. Well, I had 30 days to clear out of the quarters I was staying at at Selfridge Air Force Base, and move out. I had to get out. So I went up to Saginaw which is about 100 miles north of Selfridge AFB which is where I was living at the time, and got a hold of a good realtor, and he got me into a new house in a brand new subdivision, and I just got in under the wire because I could only afford 10 percent down and I needed that 10 percent insurance, and they were dragging their feet. They came in right under the wire and I just happened to get in. But as we were driving back and forth between there, now this is the summer of '67, and we were going up the Interstate 75 to Saginaw, Michigan, and there's convoy after convoy coming south, and there's machine guns mounted on the jeeps, and 50 caliber machine guns mounted in rings on the Dussenhaf's, and I'm saying what the hell is going on. I said I know that the National Guard trains in the summer time but they usually are not that well armed until they get to where they're going. Well, that was the Detroit riots. And Selfridge AFB, I was at it, that's where I lived until I finally moved up. Selfridge AFB is only 25 miles from Detroit. So there were police patrolling our neighborhood with M16's. It got hairy. I said I'm going back to Vietnam. It's safer. So we finally got settled into Saginaw and I became station commander of the Army recruiting station there, and it was good duty. I stayed there for almost six years.

You were a homesteader.

Sid Hull: I was a homesteader, not by choice really. I couldn't get out of there. They wouldn't let me go. But there was a lot of consternation among the troops in recruiting command, and finally in the spring of 1973, recruiting command put out a letter that any recruiter who had been three years or more in one place could ask for a reassignment anywhere within the continental United States. So we couldn't put in the paperwork until the beginning of the next fiscal year

which was July 1st at that time. So this was like the end of May, and my wife's best friend from New Jersey whom she graduated from high school with happened to be living with her husband in Austin and she had invited her down with my daughter for a week or so, two weeks. So she came down and it must have been a relatively mild June because she came back saying how nice it was.

What year was that?

Sid Hull: '73. '67 was when I came back from Vietnam and I was there in Saginaw until '73. And then she came back and said Austin is a real nice place. Of course she'd never really been in the summer heat. So that's where I put in for. I put in a request for transfer to Austin. Usually you put in three choices, but I didn't. I just put in one. As luck would have it, two recruiters had just gotten fired for phonying up high school diplomas and police record checks, and so I got assigned here and I was a station commander downtown. At that time, all of the recruiting stations were on the fourth floor I think of the International Life Building on the corner of 7th and Colorado, and so that's where I worked.

Where did you live?

Sid Hull: I live south. I live near Crockett High School. All my kids went to Crockett High.

Good. You didn't have to live out at Bergstrom Air Force Base?

Sid Hull: No, I didn't want to live out at Bergstrom. Then I started raising the family and getting into things, and I was going to school. While I was on recruiting duty I was enrolled at ACC, taking different business courses, and I was diagnosed with heart disease in '74. I didn't know what was wrong with me. At first I was heavy, lethargic, tired all the time. The hospital out at Bergstrom diagnosed me with hypothyroidism which is my thyroid quit working and my metabolism had slowed down to almost nothing. I was gaining weight and couldn't lose it. So they diagnosed this condition and they started me on thyroid replacement, and about three weeks later I started to feel better, and I had what I thought was a heart attack. It turned out to be a severe case of angina. I didn't know what was wrong. So I kept going back to this doctor over at Bergstrom Hospital and he started treating me for B12 deficiency, iron deficiency, God knows what else, for about six weeks until I got fed up with that and said can I refer myself to Brok____ Medical Center to visit and see what's wrong with me, because you don't seem to be doing much for me. He says yeah, we'll put you down there. So they made an appointment with me at nuclear medicine which is for the thyroid, that's the clinic that handles those things. I went down there and I started to talk to the chief of the clinic who lieutenant colonel, and I hadn't gotten five minutes into my problems of what I was doing, but he just held up his hand and said we need to get you over to cardiology. So he took me over to cardiology and I had two majors that were probing and punching and testing and God knows what, and they determined that I had heart disease. I was told at that time that I was going to be kicked out of the Army. They don't waste any time when you do that. So they had me brought down to Brook and they admitted before a medical board. So I went to this medical board. I was there about three months at Brook Army Medical Center in Fort Sam Houston. Finally they got through with the board and they sent all the paperwork up to Washington and several weeks later it came back and they called me down there and said we got your paperwork back but we need to ask you question. I said OK. If the Army would approve it, would you like to stay in for 20 years? I had let's see about 18 years in at the time, 18 and a half. I said yeah, I think I would. I had planned to put in more than 20 years. So they said OK, then we'll send the paperwork back if you'll sign that you

would like to stay 'til 20 years. We'll send the paperwork back to Washington. I says OK. Could you tell me what my percent of disability was? They said no, we can't because you decided to stay for 20 years. OK. So they sent the paperwork back up and it came back approved because I had an office job. I wasn't out digging ditches or anything like that. I did get angina but they gave me nitroglycerin to control it. So I stayed as a recruiter, and they said when you are approaching your 20 years, come back and see us because we got to get you ready for discharge. We're not going to let you go beyond 20 years. So my 20 years would've been up on the 10th of December of '75. So in October I went back to Brook Army Medical Center and I had to go through a whole medical board again, only this time they let me do it as an outpatient. I could go back and forth because they used most of the stuff they had used a couple of years before. So the end of October they put me on what they called convalescent leave 30 days at a time. They said we'll let you know when the paperwork comes back. So they sent it all up to Washington. And I waited and I waited and I waited, so I'm sitting at home, I'm on convalescent leave and I'm not doing a damn thing and I'm drawing full pay and allowances.

And how did you feel physically?

Sid Hull: Well, I mean I couldn't exert myself. If I did I'd get angina. But otherwise I was feeling fine. My metabolism was back and everything, and so yeah, I was taking other medications for my heart. Finally the paperwork came back around the 1st of March of '76. So I was on leave for almost five months. They presented me with the paperwork and I was to retire on 18th of March. Usually you retired at the end of the month, but this was the letter order from the Department of the Army saying your retirement date is the 18th of March. So that was it, that was the end of it. And they signed me up, I was 60 percent disabled for heart disease. Instead of drawing 50 percent from the Army for 20 years I was drawing 60 percent because I was 60 percent disabled. I said well, OK. I was still going to school at the time, so this was March, so I kept going to school. I finished that semester, enrolled in the summer, and finished that, and graduated in August from ACC. I was one of the first graduates because they didn't start that school until '74 I think. The next month I enrolled at St. Edwards and majored in accounting, and I enrolled under the veterans rehabilitation program from the VA. So at St. Ed's they paid my books, tuition and fees, and they paid me a stipend of about $475 a month. All I had to do was go to school, so I did. I went to school full time through the summer and everything, carried a full load. I got all my accounting courses done and I got a whole bunch of other courses done and so I still had time but I didn't have enough to do. I couldn't carry a full load without trying something else, so I also majored in finance so that I could still carry a full load. So I graduated with 164 hours and two majors. I graduated in May of '78. I finally got a job. I started in August of '78 with the Texas Education Agency right across the street. Of course at that time they were at 11th and Brazos. Then they finally built this Travis building next door. But I stayed with them for 20 years.

You retired from state service as well?

Sid Hull: Yeah. Actually they allowed me to buy five years of military time. When I first went to work for the Texas Education Agency, we were all under TRS.

I don't know what that is.

Sid Hull: Teacher Retirement System, instead of the Employees Retirement System of Texas. Although we were state employees, most of the people that worked at TEA were educators, so that's why they stayed on with the Teacher Retirement System. Then we got a new

commissioner of education came down from New York state and he was the one that transferred us over to ERS so we could retire either under TRS or under ERS. But before he did that, I had my ten years of service in, and under TRS, if you retired from the military, it was OK to buy military time up to five years. Under ERS, it's not. If you retired from the military, you can't buy any military time. So I bought the five years at less than $5,000, so I retired with 25 years.

And all that transferred over from TRS to ERS?

Sid Hull: And I retired under ERS because TRS insurance sucks.

ERS is the way to go. OK, I have one more question because as you were talking I started thinking about your time as a recruiter, and this was during the draft.

Sid Hull: Yes, I made the transition from draft to the volunteer Army as a recruiter, and it was hard.

I got out of high school in 1975, and Vietnam ended the year before I think, '74, and the draft ended.

Sid Hull: The draft ended, yes. Actually the draft, selective service, was kind of gearing down if you will because they had the different things, they had the lottery and then they had something else, and really not that many people were getting drafted anymore after the hostilities ended in Vietnam.

But you were still recruiting though when Vietnam was going -

Sid Hull: When I was recruiting, my favorite contacts were the Selective Service Board clerks.

So what would they do for you? They would tell you –

Sid Hull: They would let me know who was going to be drafted and I would try to convince them that they would have a better deal if they enlisted because they can get what they wanted. I kind of pride myself on the fact that I never lied to a recruit. Because the Army could get you what you wanted if you qualified. That's the kicker, because you got to take a whole battery of tests and you got to pass a physical examination, and the scores that you get on that battery of tests and your physical determined what you were qualified for.

So you were in Austin from '73 to '75?

Sid Hull: Fall of '73 until the fall of '75, yeah, two years.

So what was it like trying to recruit?

Sid Hull: I would hustle.

I would assume your target group were mostly, were men just out of high school.

Sid Hull: A lot of men, and some women, yeah mostly. Fortunately the Department of Defense came up with a tool that made it a little bit easier. I don't know if you've ever heard of the SVAB, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. You never heard of that?

I took an aptitude test.

Sid Hull: How old are you?

I'll be 53 next month.

Sid Hull: Well since my wife's brother took it when he was in high school and he just turned 60, I'm sure that you did.

I know I took a test.

Sid Hull: You had an aptitude test. Let me tell you what happened about this time. High school counselors had all kinds of measures to determine whether a kid was qualified for college. They had nothing to measure whether or what they were qualified if they weren't going to college. And this Armed Services Aptitude Battery was just the thing. This was a Godsend to counselors and it was given to them free by the Department of Defense, and it was prompted by Army recruiters. All they had to do was share that information with the Army and the Air Force and Navy and Coast Guard and Marine Corps recruiters. We'd get the information. We'd get their names, their scores, their social security numbers, addresses, phone numbers, everything. And the teachers and the counselors loved it because it gave them some kind of indication as to what these kids would be qualified for by looking at the scores indicated what areas, electronics or motor mechanics or what have you, that they would qualify for. So they loved it.

Very interesting. Did you keep track of the number of recruits you had?

Sid Hull: I never did. I'm not a counter. I don't count and I don't know how many people I enlisted, I really don't.

I bet you popped a lot though. I don't know what your batting average was, but -

Sid Hull: I did good. I got two Army Commendation Medals as a recruiter.

We're going to have to wrap up here soon, but I wanted to go over, you got awards and medals and you got a number of them here and maybe you could tell us what they are. Are they all on this sheet you gave me? OK, the Army Commendation Medal. That's the Bronze Oak Leaf. How many -

Sid Hull: They start at the top. The Army Commendation Medal and then the Bronze Oak Leaf indicates a second award. Good Conduct Medal with five knots. That means six awards of the Good Conduct Medal. National Defense Service medal, just about everybody who serves now, that's this one here, gets that. U.S. Vietnam Service medal, that's this one here with two campaign stars, so I was in three campaigns. The Korea Defense Service medal, which is this one here, that's for serving in Korea since 1954. The Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation and the Army Meritorious Unit Citation, which are these two here. Now this is the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross and this is the Meritorious Unit Citation, and I've got two Bronze Oak Leaf's which is I was in three different, I can't think of it – time periods of combat.

Tours?

Sid Hull: Not tours. I can't think of it now. Expert with the M14 rifle, Sharp Shooter with the carbine marksman with the pistol.

OK, and then you've got a recruiting badge.

Sid Hull: Army Hash Marks which is six, total of 18, that's 18 years. One hash mark is three years, and if you only did 20, you can't have seven, you got to have six because seven would be 21. Overseas Bars, the two little horizontal bars on your sleeve, they call them Hershey bars, but each one of them is six months in combat.

Then the 1st Signal Brigade.

Sid Hull: Yeah, that's this patch here. Recruiting Command patch and then Army Jungle Expert patch. So when I went through jungle warfare school, I did so well that I got a patch for that which reads Jungle Expert.

Very good, wow, we covered a lot of territory.

Sid Hull: Well, you get me going…

Well we're about to wrap up. Is there anything else you'd like to kind of put into the record here, Sid, in part of your story?

Sid Hull: Well, right now I've been retired, really retired, since I was 65. When I retired in '76, I never bothered to enroll in the VA until I was approaching Medicare age and I needed something else. But I've not been sorry that I didn't because I'm treated out here at the VA clinic on Montopolis and treated quite well. A lot of people don't know that they are eligible for the VA. Daily we have people coming in from the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Second World War, that have just found out that they are eligible to enroll in the VA, and wasted all this time. I wasted all that time. And in 2004, I decided to give something back so I started to volunteer at the VA clinic. So I started out just folding letters. The VA clinic in Austin has about 22,000 patients, and every time they get a letter from the clinics and they have an appointment, it's the volunteers that mail them. Volunteers save the VA millions, literally, billions of dollars. I went to an awards ceremony last month in Temple where we get awards for putting in hours and so forth, and I got this pin and so since I joined and became a volunteer at the clinic, I've volunteered for over 2,500 hours.

That's great. That's a lot of hours. How long have you been doing that?

Sid Hull: Going on six years.

That's quite a commitment. You do that at Temple?

Sid Hull: No, right here at Montopolis.

That's what your card is for here?

Sid Hull: Yeah. VA clinic on Montopolis. And I became, I started just folding letters and then I became a driver. We send two shuttles to Temple every day with patients that need, that have appointments that only the Temple hospital can do for them. The clinic doesn't have facilities

for that. And then we have another shuttle that travels between the clinic on Montopolis and the Southgate Building which is on I-35 frontage road just north of Oltorf where mental health and where the social workers that work with the homeless veterans are housed, because our clinic is bursting at the seams. Sometime hopefully by next month, we'll know who the contractor is for the new clinic in town. They're going to build a brand new clinic. It's going to be three times the size of the clinic on Montopolis, 186,000 square feet, and we'll have a lot of the things that right now we don't have that can only be done at Temple. It should be done by the end of 2012.

So where is that going to be built at?

Sid Hull: It's going to be built on Metropolis Drive. If you go east on 71 and then turn south on 183, as you're going south on 183 there's a blinking yellow light and that's Metropolis Drive. It T's into 183. If you take a right on that road, and go down a little over a quarter of a mile and look to the left after you passed a retention pond and what have you, you'll see a big area. It's 35 acres and that's where it's going to be built. That road runs between 183 and Burleson Road. It comes right out by Smith School.

Well that's great. So you're still doing a lot of work with veterans.

Sid Hull: All the time. That's why I wear that hat all the time because I let them know who I am, and they let me know who they are. I mean you can buy all these hats over there, Marine hats, Air Force hats, Army hats. There's a guy that comes around once a month and he sells these caps and pins and what have you.

That's great. Well Sid, it's been a real pleasure talking to you. I think you're the fourth interview that I've done. The others were over the phone and they were with World War II veterans, but I feel like I'm talking with a contemporary here. Even though I didn't serve in Vietnam, you're probably about my dad's age and my dad was in Vietnam. He did several tours over there and he was in Korea as well.

Sid Hull: Was he in the Korean War?

He went over as a gunner on I forget what kind of aircraft that was, but he was in the Air Force and he was a gunner, and the way he told the story, he was on the way over there and the war ended, so I think he got there but then turned around and came right back.

Sid Hull: He may be a little older than I am. I'm 73.

My dad passed away about six years ago and he was 70, so he would've been 75 or 76. I think he would've been 76 this year. But then he went from being a gunner to being a boom operator on a 135 and he was usually for a bunch of years growing up over on Westover AFB is the wing, the aircraft wing. The whole base, they would all go to Vietnam, and then they actually went to Thailand and did their six-month TDY over there and came back and he was always on alert so he was hardly ever home. When he was on alert, he was outside of the base because we lived around the base. Then they'd go, six months later go back, then they'd come home, then go back, and they did that I think about four times he went over there. Then he came home one time and he had melanoma and they took his flying status away and so they had to treat that cancer. He was in about 18 years at the time so they let him stay in and he was a golfer, and they put him as the NCOIC of the golf course on the base, perfect job for him. But anyway, we'll go ahead

and wrap this up. So on behalf of Commissioner Patterson and the Veterans Land Board and the General Land Office, I want to thank you for coming in here and sharing your story.

Sid Hull: Well I figured I'd better get around to it since I promised him about four months ago that I'd do this.

Well we thank you for your service to our country, too. It's very important.

[End of recording]