

**Oral Memoirs**

**Of**

**Ray Sturm**

An Interview Conducted by

Katie Hollingsworth

November 13, 2014

Community Veterans History Project

*University of Central Florida RICHES of Central Florida*

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## **Interview Histories**

Interviewer: Katie Hollingsworth

Transcriber: Katie Hollingsworth

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of the RICHES of Central Florida Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

## **Project Detail**

The Community Veterans History Project, a RICHES of Central Florida Project at the University of Central Florida, includes interviews with Central Florida veterans from all branches of the United States military. Beginning in 2010, the UCF Community Veterans History Project is collecting, preserving, and making accessible to the public the experiences of Central Florida's veterans so that future generations will better understand the realities of conflict. It is a collaborative endeavor supported by multiple departments and offices at UCF. The histories, which are collected by students and faculty, are archived and made digitally available through the UCF library. The UCF Community Veterans History Project will also contribute selected veterans' histories to the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

Katie Hollingsworth is an undergraduate history student at UCF.

Dr. Ray Sturm is an Associate Lecturer of Finance at the University of Central Florida. He served in the U.S. Army as a Sergeant of the 210<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade and the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

## **Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Ray Sturm is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on the November 13, 2014.

## **Abstract**

Oral history interview of Ray Sturm, who served in the U.S. Army from 1983 to 1989. Sturm was born in Winter Park, Florida, on October 22, 1963. He enlisted in the Army in 1983 and completed his basic training and advanced training at Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina. Sturm then served at Herzo Base in Herzogenaurach, Bavaria, Germany, and later in South Korea. He served in the 210th Field Artillery Brigade, 34th Infantry Division, and achieved the rank of Sergeant.

This interview was conducted by Katie Hollingsworth in Orlando, Florida, on November 13, 2014. Interview topics include basic training and advanced training at Fort Jackson, Herzo Base, his rank as Sergeant, Fort Stewart, the 24th Infantry Division, comradery, Sturm's interest in music, and his post-military life.

## **Ray Sturm**

Oral History Memoir  
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Katie Hollingsworth  
November 13, 2014  
Orlando, FL

0:00:00

### **Introduction**

**Sturm** And, by the way, I assume this is going to be edited?

**Hollingsworth** No.

**Sturm** No? Okay. Alright.

**Hollingsworth** Okay. So Today – it is the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 2014, and I am interviewing Dr. Ray Sturm, who served in the U.S. Army as a Sergeant in the 210<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade, 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. I am interviewing Dr. Sturm as part of the UCF [University of Central Florida] Community Veterans History Project. We are recording this interview in Orlando, Florida.

0:00:31

### **Background**

**Hollingsworth** So when and where were you born?

**Sturm** Uh, I was born right here in Central Florida. I was born in Winter Park, uh, in [October 22,] 1963.

**Hollingsworth** Okay, and, uh, what did your parents do for a living?

**Sturm** Uh, my dad was a CPA [Certified Public Accountant], and my mom was a homemaker.

**Hollingsworth** Um, how big was your family?

**Sturm** Uh, just the three of us. Well, and...

**Hollingsworth** Just the three of you?

**Sturm** And my grandmother lived with us...

**Hollingsworth** Oh.

**Sturm** Uh, until I was about 10 years old.

**Hollingsworth** And, um, what do you remember mostly about your childhood?

**Sturm** Um, what do I remember mostly?

**Hollingsworth** *[laughs]* Mmhmm[?].

**Sturm** Um, having a lot of fun *[laughs]*, and, uh, like—you know, like we, uh, had talked about earlier, uh, actually growing up near the Navy base. Uh, we were just two blocks from the Navy base there. Um, and that kind of impacted, uh—impacted our lives a little bit.

**Hollingsworth** And, uh, what kind of education did you receive?

**Sturm** Well, after high school, um, and after, uh, my military service, uh, I got my Bachelor's, uh, [degree] and Master's [degree] from University of Central Florida. So Bachelor's in accounting, Master's in taxation, um, and then I received a, uh, Doctorate [degree] in finance from Florida Atlantic University.

**Hollingsworth** Okay, and, um, before you enlisted, what did you—what sort of things did you enjoy doing?

**Sturm** Um, I enjoyed surfing. I enjoyed surfing and I enjoyed, uh, exercising. I was a—I was always very physical. So I ran track all through high school and—and in junior high. Um, and, uh, anything that involved sports I was, uh—I was interested in doing.

**Hollingsworth** Uh, were any of your other family members in the military?

**Sturm** Yes. Uh, yeah. My grandfather, um, was in the Army Corps of Engineers. Um, I think he was—I think that was actually a civilian position, But he was working in that. My, uh, step grandfather was, um, actually drafted in—I believe it was the Army, and, uh, he was drafted at like 40 years old, uh, in World War II. He was not—not very happy about that, and, um, my dad was in the Air Force, Which is what brought us down here to Central Florida in the first place.

0:02:35

### **Enlistment**

**Hollingsworth** Ah, and, Um, how aware were you of the Cold War, before you enlisted?

**Sturm** Um, not very. Uh, you know, obviously, uh, I knew it was going on, but, uh, you know, I enlisted at 20 years old, so I wasn't, uh—I wasn't, uh, all that aware of, uh—of the Cold War. I was more aware of [the Invasion of] Grenada,<sup>1</sup> because I went in right a—a month after that happened. So[?]....

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<sup>1</sup> Officially Operation Urgent Fury.

**Hollingsworth** Yeah, uh, what influenced you to enlist?

**Sturm** Um, lots of things. Uh, at that time, um, uh, I was in, uh—I was in college, but I wasn't really a student yet. So, um, you know, I was—I was still—still seeking, and really just everything, at that time, uh, uh, pointed towards the military. Um, one of the rea—one of the main reasons I did go in though was: I had always had an interest in the military. I mean, I could—I could remember, even back in elementary school, doing a book report on World War II. You know, so I had always had an interest in the, uh—in the military, um, and just kind of, you know, the, um, spirit of the American soldier, I guess you could say.

**Hollingsworth** Hm, and, uh, why did you choose the Army?

**Sturm** Um, because I—when I went in, um, you know—like I said, I went in for a lot of reasons. uh, and I was actually very, uh—you know, I never planned on making it a career, but I did wanna do everything that I could do while I was in. um, and I figured that, uh, if—if I went in the Marines, uh, that I was going to have to be hardcore for three years, whether I liked it or not. Um, I didn't want to go into the Navy, because the idea of being on a ship for nine months at a time didn't appeal to me. Um, and I didn't want to go into the Air Force, because I—I didn't—I wasn't aware of some of the, uh—some of the things that you could do in the Air Force, at that time. Um, but, uh, uh, I wanted to—I chose the Army, because I thought it was a good compromise between being, uh—uh, being very hardcore and not so much. So I went in that, uh, figuring that if I really liked it, then I could go that route. Uh, if I didn't like it, I didn't have to.

**Hollingsworth** Okay, and, um, did your dad influence that decision at all?

**Sturm** Nope.

**Hollingsworth** Since he was from the Air Force?

**Sturm** Nope.

**Hollingsworth** Okay, but how did they react when you decided to enlist—your family?

**Sturm** Well, my dad being a veteran, um, I—I think they were happy about it. Of course, you know, they're concerned. You know, a parent—a, uh—a child going in the military is always a concern to the parent, but, um, I think that they were, um—I think that they were happy about it, uh, for the exact reason that it turned out, as the military, uh, um, helps you mature a lot, and you—you grow up—you grow up pretty quick.

**0:05:05** **Basic training and advanced training**

**Hollingsworth** Okay, and, uh, what do you remember most—what do you most remember about basic training?

**Sturm** Um, boy, was it cold [*laughs*]. I went in—I was in, uh—uh, I went in November—November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1983]. So, uh—so basic training was eight weeks, although we got, uh, Christmas exodus. So we got—I think we were out for like two weeks over Christmas, which was very shocking to me, but, um—but it was cold. It was cold. Yeah.

**Hollingsworth** And why was it cold? Where were you?

**Sturm** Well, it was Fort Jackson[, Columbia], South Carolina, and, um, I did, uh, uh—I did both basic and, uh, AIT [Advanced Individual Training], uh, at Fort Jackson, uh, South Carolina. So I was there from November until probably about March [1984], I guess it would be, and, uh, you know, after I—after I went on from that, you know, I was—I was in Germany. You'll probably be getting to that, but I was in Germany, uh, and we'd go to the field in the snow and all that kind of stuff, but the coldest day I've ever spent in my life was at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, um, out on the artillery range.

**Hollingsworth** Did you receive any advanced training?

**Sturm** Uh, well, just from my job. Ju—just from my job. I—I had wanted to, um—I wanted to go into [Army] Special Forces. Uh, and, uh, kinda—I—I ran into a lot of red tape, uh, start—starting with the fact that, if I had gone that route, I wouldn't have been able to enlist for another year, and I really couldn't wait that long, so I went in hoping that I would get in that route. Um, things didn't work out like that, but, uh, um, so I just—the—the, uh—really, the only advanced training I had was from my job.

**Hollingsworth** Can you tell me more about your job?

**Sturm** Um, I was in logistics. I was in supply, and, um, uh, so, you know, again, I took that at—at Fort Jackson, and, uh, one of the things that I—I learned about that in there is when you watch this—particularly like the old World War II movies—uh, you know, you see the stereotypical Supply Sergeant, you know, with the hat cocked back and the little, you know...

**Hollingsworth** [*laughs*].

**Sturm** Cigar sticking out of their mouth[sic]. Um, and that's not—that's not the way it is. Um, and, especially these days, 'cause, with computers, they have everything really, uh, locked down. Back then, uh, you could still do some wheeling and dealing, because things weren't as, uh—as accountable as they are now. When I say "things," I mean the supplies themselves. It wasn't as easy to account for them then, but one of the things that—that, uh—that surprised me about that job is: eh, we took the, um—we took the, uh, combat role—not that we saw any combat—but we took that very seriously, because if you think about it, when the enemy attacks, what's one of the first things they attack? It's the supply line. So,

go – you know, going into supplies sounds like, you know, I guess, wheel and deal...

**Hollingsworth** [laughs].

**Sturm** And smoke cigars, but it's actually a little more – a little more serious than that. So...

0:07:53 **Herzo Base**

**Hollingsworth** And, uh, what was it like going overseas? You mentioned Germany earlier.

**Sturm** Yeah, yeah, and that was my – that was my first time overseas. Um, you know, again, I was 20 years old, at the time, uh, uh, but it was – it was a little overwhelming, and, uh, I remember, uh – I remember when I first got there, uh, I flew into Frankfurt[, Hesse, Germany], and I was stationed about two hours south of Frankfurt. So I think – I think there were about a half dozen of us or so that were in the van. Um, and as we made our way down there, they'd drop off one by one, and, of course, I was the last one.

But, um, when – when he dropped me off – I'll – I'll never forget – When he dropped me off at my duty post, it was just a small air base. So you could walk from the front gate to the back gate in about five minutes, and, um, when he dropped me off, it was an overcast day, cold, and I had no idea where to go, and he spoke no English whatsoever [laughs]. So all he could do was point to this building, and, uh, so I walked in the building and just kind of found my way from there, but, um, uh, that was my initial, uh – initial experience going overseas. Uh, going overseas, uh, in some ways, really formed, uh, a lot of the values that I have today. So I don't know how in depth, uh, you meant that question to be.

**Hollingsworth** No, that's okay.

**Sturm** Yeah.

**Hollingsworth** Tell me more about it.

**Sturm** Yeah, um...

**Hollingsworth** How it impacts you today.

**Sturm** Well, you know, it was a completely different culture, you know? And I – I had, uh – I had never experienced anything like that before. Um, I remember when we were, uh, in process. Because when – when you get in country, uh, for, um – I think we went through two weeks of, um, kind of an indoctrination on the German culture, you know? And again, at that time, it was East [Germany] and West Germany. So we were in, we were – we were in West Germany.



Um, [laughs] they – they would actually hire a local. Uh, it was a German, uh – a Germany lady that came in, and she was just, you know, teaching us basic German phrases and things like that. Um, the very first thing she taught us was “Ein bier, bitte.” So “one beer, please,” of course, but one – one of the first things that really jumped out at me about being overseas was, uh, one of the military personnel’s telling us, uh, um, basically, to, uh, uh, be good boys while we were over there, because at – I don’t know if it’s still this way – but, at the time, there was no such thing as police brutality.

**Hollingsworth** Oh.

**Sturm** So, uh, you know – so the *polizei* tell you to do something, you do it, ‘cause there is no police brutality over there [laughs].

**Hollingsworth** So, um, could you tell me more about what you did in Germany?

**Sturm** Uh, well, that’s when I was with the 210<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade. Um, I was working in the, uh – working in the, uh, supply area over there. So, um, We were stationed – I was stationed at a little place called Herzo Base, which is near Herz – Herzogenaurach[, Bavaria], Germany, which is near Nuremberg, which is where they had the war trials, uh – The German war trials.<sup>2</sup> Um, uh, and the air base that I was at was actually an old Luftwaffe, uh, base, and it was right on the hilltop, uh, and where we were stationed, uh, as it was told to me – it’s a pretty interesting story, because, you know, obviously, there’s a[sic] air field out there, but apparently, during World War II, it was a secret air base. So what they would do is: they would, uh – when they weren’t, uh, using it, they would flood the field. So from the air, it would just look like a lake, and then when they – when they wanted to, uh – when they wanted to, uh, use it, then they would drain it, of course, and take off, and land, and do whatever it is that they needed to do. Uh, but the one thing that was kind of, uh, eerie over there was that, um: we had, uh, lots of underground passages, and they were all padlocked shut, and, uh, the rumor was – I don’t – I don’t know if it was true or not – but the, uh – the rumor was that there was, um – actually, in some of them, uh, supposedly, there were some old World War II planes down there, but, uh, they were concerned that some things had been booby-trapped, so apparently, the – all of that was flooded.

**Hollingsworth** Hm.

**Sturm** And, uh, of course, we, uh – we never went down there, but, um – but, like I say, I was there – I was there for 18 months, Uh, um, in the uh Headquarters. It’s called “Headquarters [and] Headquarters Battery.”

**Hollingsworth** Um, I read in your biographical data sheet that you would go on alert and get ready for battle. What was that like?

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<sup>2</sup> Correction: Nuremberg Trials.

**Sturm** Yeah, yeah, and that was something, uh—yeah. At that time, um, one-fifth of the entire Army was stationed in Germany. Um, and alerts were something that we did take seriously over there, and, um, uh, when we, uh—when we went on alert, then, within about two hours, uh, we had to be ready to go. So we were—where I was stationed, I believe it was—I believe we were only about like two hours from the Czech [Republic] border, um, but yeah. When we went on alert, we would have to be, uh, ready to go, and being in supply, we were in charge of all the, uh—all of the, uh, weapons. So we had to first issue everybody their weapons, and then all of the ammunition and everything. We had to pack up in the trucks, um, and be ready to go, and we went on alert probably about once a month or so. Sometimes, we would actually pull out and go somewhere, and sometimes it would just be a drill. We’d load up the trucks and then unload them, but yeah. That was something we took seriously over there.

**Hollingsworth** Um, what do you remember most about your service in Germany?

**Sturm** Um, [*sniffs*], uh, a couple of things. One, uh—speaking of alerts, one was: we, uh—we had an incident—I believe it was with Libya—where we shot down a couple of, uh, Libyan jets. Um, and when that happened, everybody across the—across the globe went on—went on alert. So I remember that, and also, about a month before I left, there was a terrorist attack at the Frankfurt Airport.

**Hollingsworth** Hm.

**Sturm** And, uh, they bombed the, uh—they bombed the Frankfurt Airport. Um, so, uh, uh, that and like, say, the alerts, and, uh, some concerts that I saw over there. I—in fact, I saw the very last concert of Van Halen with, uh, David Lee Roth.

**Hollingsworth** Oh [inaudible].

**Sturm** That was their 1984—their 1984 tour [*laughs*].

**Hollingsworth** Yeah[?]. Wow[?], that’s very lucky.

**Sturm** Yep, I saw them [*coughs*].

**Hollingsworth** How did you keep in contact with people back at home, while you were in Germany?

**Sturm** Yeah, that’s not like it is today.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** I mean, that was, um—it was either mail or phone calls. Um, the mail would take probably a week, and I had a girlfriend back here, at the time, um, and, uh, uh, mail would take about a week, and phone calls were hard, because the only option really, um, was the payphone. So you had to really [inaudible]. I had to write, you know, and say “Hey. Next Sunday I’ll call you at three o’clock.”

[laughs], and, uh, that's pretty much, uh, — that's pretty much, uh, how the communication went, so it was, uh — it was, uh, difficult. I did, uh — when I was in Germany, I did, uh, come home for a month on leave from over there, and that was actually part of the reason why.

**Hollingsworth** Hm.

**Sturm** But — yeah.

**Hollingsworth** Um, could you tell me about a typical day in Germany for you?

**Sturm** Um, yeah, we'd get up, and, uh, you know — by the way, you were asking me about one of the, uh — one of my memories from Germany. Um, I was a Florida boy, so that was the first time I'd seen snow.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** And, um, what I — I — I remember two things about that. One was, um, uh, much to my surprise, it's actually warmer when it snows...

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** Than when it doesn't snow, and that was very surprising to me, 'cause the coldest days over there was when it didn't snow at all, but, um, another time, uh — another time, uh, uh, I was walking from — from supply — from where I worked over to the mess hall for lunch, which was only about, uh — I don't know — about maybe 400 feet or — well, it was probably longer — probably about 200 yards. You know, it wasn't that far away, but it was cold that day and I had on — I had on everything I owned

**Hollingsworth** [laughs].

**Sturm** And by the time I got there, I was ready to get inside, but, um, uh, those were — those were two things, uh, that I remember from over there, but, typical day: we'd get up, um, we would have, um, uh, uh — we'd have PT — physical training — at six o'clock. So that'd be our — be our morning formation, uh, make sure everybody was there. Uh, we'd do our — we'd do our exercises, Go for a run, so forth and so on. Uh, and then come back, uh, go get something to eat, and then our next formation was at 8:30 or 8:45. Um, so we'd get our, you know, briefing for the day. Whatever it is that we were going to do, um, and then we'd go to work, uh, um, which, usually, at least one day a week for us involved going on a supply run down to Nuremberg. So I learned how to — how to drive a truck, how to back up a truck with just two side mirrors and towing a trailer.

**Hollingsworth** [laughs].

**Sturm** In a deuce and a half truck. Um, so, you know, we'd — we'd work all day, and then, uh, we'd have our, um, uh, evening formation. We'd have it about 5:45, and

then they would lower the flag at five, and, uh, that was a — that was a typical day.

**Hollingsworth** The whole[?] day?

**Sturm** Mmhmm.

**0:16:58** **Sergeant rank**

**Hollingsworth** Um, could you tell me how — how you became a Sergeant?

**Sturm** Uh, well, I had some college when I went in, in the first place. Like I said, I was only in for three years, so when I enlisted, I was already a, uh, PFC [Private First Class]. So I — I went in as an E[nlisted Rank]-3.

**Hollingsworth** Okay.

**Sturm** Um, when I — after — After basic and AIT, when I was sent, uh, uh, to Germany, uh, as soon as I got there, the Sergeant, uh, immediately put me in for promotion to E4, uh — Spec[ialist] 4. So I was, uh — I don't recall how long it took for that to go through. Probably a month or two. So I had a head start, because I had had some college.

**Hollingsworth** Oh.

**Sturm** So they, uh — um, when I was back here at Fort Stewart, uh, for my last year, uh, they promoted me to Sergeant about six months before I got out.

**Hollingsworth** [inaudible].

**Sturm** I think part of that — yeah. I think part of that plan was to try to get me to, uh, reenlist.

**Hollingsworth** [inaudible] [*laughs*].

**Sturm** Which — yeah. It didn't work.

**Hollingsworth** They do that.

**Sturm** [*laughs*].

**Hollingsworth** Um, what did you do as a Sergeant?

**Sturm** Um, well, then, Uh, I — as a, um — as a private and as a specialist, you pulled a lot you know — you pulled a lot. You pulled the guard duty stuff, you pulled the, you know — the KP [kitchen patrol], uh, that kind of stuff. When I became a Sergeant, um, then I was on the other side of that. so I was, you know, instead of — instead of being on the guard duty, I'd, you know — once a month or so, I'd be the NCO [non-commissioned officer] in charge at the barracks, 'cause — 'cause,

at night, at five o'clock, when everybody gets off, um, you had to have a, uh, Sergeant and a, uh – and a, uh, non-NCO that[sic] would be on duty for the whole night, you know, in case something happened. So, uh, then I became more in the management...

**Hollingsworth** Oh.

**Sturm** I guess you could say. Yeah. With, uh, zero leadership training, at the time [laughs].

**Hollingsworth** Did that change overtime? Did you develop some sort of leadership, after a while?

**Sturm** Well, I – it was only six months. Like I said, I was promoted six months before I'd got out. So, um – yeah. You know, I learned a few things. But, uh, really the, eh – not 'til later. Not 'til after I got out and I reflected on, um, – I – I don't want to say mistakes that I've made – just, um, inexperience, you know? And, uh, reflecting on them later is when they really paid dividends, but yeah. I really didn't have enough time left in my enlistment to, uh...

**Hollingsworth** Okay.

**Sturm** Learn a lot of lessons. Although, they did – they did – they tried to, uh, get me to reenlist to go to Warrant Officer [Candidate] School.

**Hollingsworth** Interesting[?].

**Sturm** Yeah.

**Hollingsworth** And, um, you said no. Why?

**Sturm** Uh, well, first of all, I had never, um – I, you know – I had never intended on making the military a career. Um, but also, you know, I was in a – in a, uh – in a really tough time, because I was in from 1983 to 1986. Um, and that was just, Uh, you know – that was just – what? Ten years after the end of the draft and eight years after the end of Vietnam [War], and I guess it would be three years after the failed, um, Iran hostage rescue.<sup>3</sup> So, you know, when I was in, you know, the, um, you know – the military was really beaten down. The, uh, bu – uh, a lot of the equipment we had was left over from Vietnam. Um, a lot of the good soldiers – particularly in the NCO ranks – a lot of the good soldiers, uh, had retired after Vietnam, and right in the, uh – at the end of the [19]70s, um, uh, you know, Cart – during the [James "Jimmy" Earl] Carter[, Jr.] administration, the – the – the defense budget had really been cut to almost nothing, you know? So the equipment wasn't being updated, uh, you know, because of the budget cuts. The good soldiers were getting out. You know, they weren't reenlisting. They weren't able to attract good, uh, recruits, but then, you know, when [Ronald Wilson]

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<sup>3</sup> Officially Operation Eagle Claw, or Operation Evening Light, or Operation Rice Bowl.

Reagan came in in '80, he spent basically all of the '80s building all of this back up.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** Um, but I was in kind of at the beginning of that, and, you know, in retrospect, I—I, you know—again, at 20 years old, I didn't really understand this, at the time, but, um, you know, in retrospect, uh, what he was doing was he was putting a lot of his, uh—a lot of the, uh, defense budget money—particularly in the early years—into modernizing the equipment. You know...

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** The Stealth Bomber,<sup>4</sup> the [M1] Abrams Tank, that kind of stuff. Um, so it wasn't really going into training yet.

**Hollingsworth** Right.

**Sturm** And that didn't really kick in, until later in the '80s, and, uh, it paid dividends, as we saw in [Operation] Desert Storm, you know, in—in '91—I guess it was—Or 1990—'91.<sup>5</sup> Whatever that was. Uh, it paid dividends then. Um, So I just—I—I didn't, um—uh, I didn't, you know—I wanted to go in. Um, I—I wanted to, uh, you know, experience the lifestyle. I, you know—I—I had—I had, uh, um, you know, admired what the—what the American soldier stood for, you know? And I wanted to go and experience that, but I never intended on making it a career, and when I got in there, um, you know, we weren't—we weren't really doing a whole heck of a lot of training, at that time. So I just wanted to get out and move on.

**Hollingsworth** Yeah.

**Sturm** So...

**0:22:00** **Fort Stewart and the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division**

**Hollingsworth** Uh, so what did you do when you came back to Orlando?

**Sturm** Um, I went back to school.

**Hollingsworth** Okay.

**Sturm** Yeah, I had had some, uh—uh, I had, uh, um, almost two years of college before I went in. Uh, I came back. I finished, uh—finished up my AA [Associate of Arts], um, and then got the Bachelor's, uh got the CPA, uh, and, you know, so forth and so on.

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<sup>4</sup> Officially the Northrop B-2 Spirit.

<sup>5</sup> January 17, 1991 – February 28, 1991.

**Hollingsworth** And, um, did you do any service in Orlando? Or was it straight from Germany back to—you were done, after Germany?

**Sturm** No, no, after Germany—I spent, uh, 18 months in Germany.

**Hollingsworth** Right.

**Sturm** A year and a half in Germany, and then, I was sent to Fort Stewart, Georgia, for my last year. So I spent my last year...

**Hollingsworth** Okay.

**Sturm** In Fort Stewart, Georgia, um, which is where I was with the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

**Hollingsworth** Can you tell me more about...

**Sturm** Yeah.

**Hollingsworth** [inaudible].

**Sturm** That would be [laughs]—yeah. Um, yeah. If I'd have known how good I had it in Germany...

**Hollingsworth** [laughs].

**Sturm** I would have stayed there [laughs], because, uh, the—one of—one of the things that I didn't appreciate is that, over in Germany, um, you know, we all wanted to travel, You know, which—by the way, is[sic] some other memories I have of Germany—is doing something with traveling over there. Um, but, you know, we all wanted to travel, including the Officers, you know?

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** So they wanted to get off on a Friday and, you know—and go travel, as well. Well, at Fort Stewart, Georgia, there's not really a whole heck of a lot to see. So, uh, there wasn't—wasn't much to do, except sit on post and work [laughs], but, uh—but the thing about it: I was with the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry—and this was actually, um, I believe, part of, uh, Reagan's, uh, modernization—is we were actually a rapid deployment force there.

**Hollingsworth** Okay.

**Sturm** So we were, uh—we were, um, uh, trained so that, within two hours' notice, uh, we could go anywhere in the world, uh, and be there within 24 hours, and ready to go. Um, one of the things that we did, uh—eh, even though there wasn't a lot of training going on, at that time—One of the things we did do, um, was, every year, the unit would go out into the, uh, [Fort Irwin & the] National Training

Center, out in the, uh, Mojave Desert and, uh, do desert training, which, uh, came into play in, uh, Oper – in, uh, Desert Storm.

**Hollingsworth** Okay.

**Sturm** Because, uh, when that kicked off, of course, in the deserts of, uh, Iraq and Kuwait, uh, the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division – my old unit – was, uh – played a – played a pretty key role in that, uh – in that, uh, campaign. Uh, be – Again, because we had – we – we – we’d get a desert, every year. In fact, uh, when – the year I was in with them, we went to the Mojave, but the year before that, uh, they actually went to the Sahara Desert and trained for a month over there.

**Hollingsworth** Were you happy you didn’t have to go anywhere near there?

**Sturm** Yes.

**Hollingsworth** [*laughs*].

**Sturm** Yeah. I felt bad, uh...

**Hollingsworth** [*inaudible*].

**Sturm** When – when we were in the – when we were in the Mojave, we were there from mid-July to mid-August.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** And, uh, unlike being cold in Germany, it was hot.

**Hollingsworth** Oh[?].

**Sturm** Out there, and, uh, I really felt and I have a lot of respect for the soldiers, uh, in the, uh – in Desert Storm. Because, uh, they were, you know – that kicked off in January[, 17, 1991], and I – I can’t help but think that there was – the time of that was the cooler weather, but I remember seeing on TV. I remember seeing, uh, video of them training in the summer, and ‘cause one of the things they were worried about was the, uh – was gas attacks.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** And I remember seeing them in the summer, running around in the middle of the desert in full chemical suits, and I don’t know that I could have done that in my best day. I have a lot of respect for those guys, because we used wear those chemical suits. They have, uh, charcoal in them, and, um, uh, we used to wear those thing to stay warm in snow, and they were running around in those things in the summer, over in, uh – over in Kuwait, getting ready for that, and, uh – I don’t – I don’t – I do not know how they did it. So yes. I’m glad I – I’m glad I was not part of that [*laughs*].



0:25:41

**Comradery and music**

**Hollingsworth** [*laughs*] And, um, Between Germany and your service in Georgia and South Carolina, what was your, uh, most – most – most memorable about your time in the service? [*sniffs*].

**Sturm** Oh, my gosh. Um, I think the comradery, as – as cliché as that may sound.

**Hollingsworth** No.

**Sturm** It's actually very true, because, uh, you know, especially in your training – and particularly, in basic and AIT – you know, there's kind of an us-against-them, you know, mentality, because, you know, they're, you know – part of basic training, uh, you know, as they tell you – which is true – is, you know, they gotta break you down to build you up, you know?

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** So, um, you know – so we were, you know – we were really banding together to survive, uh – to survive that, and then, you know, even in the units, uh, you know, you build up a comradery with, uh – with, you know, your friends, and they're the people you work with, Um, and, uh, you know, which carries over into going out at night, you know?

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** You know, uh, Going out, you know, and, uh, doing your thing, but when you're, you know – when you're going out with, uh, you know, 12 brothers, you know, and you would trust any of them with your life, um, that's – that's, uh – That's a rare connection, and that's what – that's what I miss the most and that's – that – and that's what I remember. That's what I remember the most.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm. You remember the people.

**Sturm** Yeah, yeah. Like I say, uh – like I say, the, uh – comradery.

**Hollingsworth** Ah [*laughs*].

**Sturm** Yeah.

**Hollingsworth** Um, what did you do during your free time?

**Sturm** Um, well...

**Hollingsworth** Travel?

**Sturm** Did some – no. I did some growing up.

**Hollingsworth** Ah.

**Sturm** I did some growing up. I, um – ‘cause I was, uh – when I went in, you know, I was in my party phase.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** And, uh, you know, especially, when I hit[?] to Germany. Uh, Oktoberfest [laughs], uh “Ein bier, bitte?” Uh...

**Hollingsworth** [laughs].

**Sturm** You know, that whole thing. Um, my first – my first six months in Germany, when I wasn’t, uh – when I wasn’t working, I was, uh, trying to sample every beer that, uh, Germany ever made.

**Hollingsworth** [laughs].

**Sturm** Um, and after about six months, you know, I – I woke up, uh – I woke up one day, and realized that I had been there six months, and I had nothing to show for it, you know? And about that same time – I’d, uh – I’d – I had been a musician my whole life – and about that time, I kinda was, uh, re – uh, uh, re-interested in music, and, um, I actually, uh, started, uh – started playing music again. So I started – I kinda[?] – I really, you know – I quit the partying, um, and I would spend a lot of time playing music. In fact, uh, the first band I ever played in my life was over there

**Hollingsworth** Okay.

**Sturm** Was over there, in German, Which would be – qualify as another memory from over there [laughs]. Um, uh, But I – but that’s what I did. I kinda, you know, like I said, grew up a little bit, uh, got over the partying thing, and started, uh, laying the groundwork for the future.

**0:28:26 Post-military education**

**Hollingsworth** There you go, and, um, when you came back – right when your service ended – what was it like?

**Sturm** Uh, it was a tremendous sense of freedom.

**Hollingsworth** [laughs]. I bet.

**Sturm** Uh, well, you know, when you’re a soldier, uh, the government owns you 24-7, 365, and, um, uh, you know, when, you know, we – Up in Fort Stewart – and Germany, for that matter, but, uh – you know, in Fort Stewart, uh, you know, we’d go to the field a month at a time, so you – I mean, you’re there for a month, you know? Um, and it – It was the freedom getting out, and, uh, you know, I was – I was used to, you know – for three years, I had – I had woken up every

morning at 5:30 or so, and exercised at six, and, uh, I, you know – I was determined to continue doing that, which lasted about two weeks [laughs].

**Hollingsworth** [laughs].

**Sturm** But, uh, big, big, big sense of freedom

**Hollingsworth** Ah.

**Sturm** Yep.

**Hollingsworth** And [inaudible].

**Sturm** And pride.

**Hollingsworth** [inaudible].

**Sturm** Oh, yeah. I was proud of what I did, um, Even though, you know, at that time, uh, you know – at that time, we really weren't heralded, uh, as heroes, like the soldiers are now, and rightfully so, 'cause like, you know – like I say, it was, you know – it was only about 10 years after Vietnam

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** And everybody was kind of over the military. They – they were – they were tired of hearing about it, and they really, you know – They just really didn't want to have anything to do with it. Yep.

**Hollingsworth** Oh. When you left the military, did you – I know you went back and did your education – but did you work at all, while you were doing that? Or did you just go straight into school?

**Sturm** Uh, no, 'cause I got out, uh – I got out in November, so I got out November 8<sup>th</sup> [, 1989], um, and I enrolled for the, uh – for the spring semester the following January [1990].

**Hollingsworth** Okay.

**Sturm** Um, so yeah. I did, you know – I did work, but my main focus was on school.

**Hollingsworth** School?

**Sturm** Yeah, and that was – that was part of the growing up – 'cause that's part of the growing up in the military, but also, when I was in, I – I had the, um – I had the, uh, v[eterans'] benefits, which was the – the successor to the G.I. Bill.<sup>6</sup> So I actually, um – I actually earned college money...

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<sup>6</sup> Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944.

**Hollingsworth** Oh.

**Sturm** That, uh – while I was in there – while I was there. Yeah. When – when I was in Germany, I tried to take a college class over there. That didn't work out too well.

**Hollingsworth** Right[?].

**Sturm** But – no. So when – when I got out, I was – I was, uh – I was pretty head strong on going back to finishing school.

**Hollingsworth** That's good.

**Sturm** Yeah.

**0:30:44** **Keeping in touch with other soldiers**

**Hollingsworth** Um, did you keep in touch with any of the people you served with?

**Sturm** I did not, until, um, uh, really, just a couple years ago, and it was, uh, primarily, uh, thanks to Facebook, but, um, I've, uh – I've actually only, uh – well, I take that back, because there was one guy down in Tampa. Uh, uh, my roommates in, uh – in, uh, Fort Stewart – one of them lived in Tampa, the other was from Virginia, and I did – right after I got out, I kept – kept in touch with them a little bit, but, um, I actually really didn't keep in touch with anybody, until, uh, one of my best friends from Germany, um – we had a, uh – we had a reunion, uh – uh, I guess it was – eight – nine months ago. Him[sic] and his family were coming through town here to go on a cruise, and, uh, that was the first time I had seen him in, uh – in 20 years, and, uh – and, uh, we had a – we had a good chat about the – about those times, and It was interesting to me, becau – because, it was, you know – I had my perspective, but it was interesting to me to get someone else's perspective on the same experiences, uh, from – from 20 years prior.

So – yeah, and I did – now that I think about it, I did, um – oh gosh. This was probably a good 10 years – No. it's more than that. Probably a good 15 years ago, uh, My Sergeant from – from, uh – from Germany, uh, – I did go and see him. He was – he lived up in Atlanta[, Georgia], and I did go and see him one weekend, and, uh, it was – it was kinda – it was interesting, you know, because, when you're, you know – when he's your Sergeant, you have one relationship, But when you're both civilians, you know, 20 years later, uh, you can talk a little more freely, I guess you could say, and he was a good guy. That was another, um – you'd asked me earlier about, uh, influences and memories and stuff, and he was – he was, uh – he was a big influence on me. Sergeant Jones – he was, uh – he was a big influence – Sergeant Wilson Jones. Uh, He was a, uh, big influence on me. He was one of the best bosses that[sic] I ever had in my life, and, uh, I learned a lot about, um – I learned a lot about initiative and perseverance, uh, from working under him. He was – he was a good guy, and he's still alive, to my knowledge.

**Hollingsworth** [laughs].

**Sturm** To my knowledge, he is.

**Hollingsworth** And, uh, so maturing, growing up, and, uh, Sergeant Jones.

0:33:05 **Military's influence on life**

**Hollingsworth** Was there anything else, with your time in the military, uh, service – or, military service, that influenced your life since leaving?

**Sturm** Oh, gosh. Yeah, you know, uh, you know the – I learned the military changes ya, and, you know, whether it changes you for the good or the bad, I think it kind of depends on the individual, and the experiences that you have in there. Um, you know, Like I say, uh, I was fortunate enough, where we didn't have any conflicts, um, going on, at the time. So, uh, you know, while – while I was standing on the wall, wolf – the wolf never came, and I'm happy about that.

But – no. The – the military changes you, and, you know, you – my maturation process, in that, you know, I learned a lot about, uh, you know, initiative, a lot about perseverance...

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** Um, self-esteem. In fact, you know, uh, Sergeant Jones – I reminded him of this story: when I – when I saw him, uh – it's probably been a good 15 years ago, but, um, uh, you know, one time – and again, you know, 20 year old kid, you know? I don't remember what exactly the details were, but he had sent me back to the supply room to find something. You know, so I went back there, and I looked around, and I didn't found[sic] – find it. So I came back, and told him – I said "Hey, Sergeant," You know, "I couldn't find it." and he said "Well, then you didn't look." And I said, you know – I was like, "What are you talking about? I just – I just got back from there. I couldn't find it." He said "No, if you had looked, you would have found it. Now go back there and find it." And He was right. You know, it was back there, I just didn't look hard enough.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** And that, you know – that's one of the – I, you know – I could sit here the rest of the day, telling stories like that, but, um, you know, that's something that's carried with me through – really, through today. Um, you know, when I was working, I remember a, uh – a colleague of mine, when I was earning my PhD – um, I was, uh, uh, uh, you know – PhD is a stressful, stressful thing to go through, and I was – something was going on, and I was wound up about it, and I remember him saying, you know, "Hey," you know, "Don't worry about it, 'cause you're a warrior," You know? You're – Even though this is going on now, you'll still be okay, because – and That's directly rooted back into – into my military experience, in that, you know – in that perse – that perseverance.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** Um, so—yeah. All sorts of, you know—all sorts of, uh, uh, values, um, you know, that I—that I learned, and, you know, some of them were good. Um, uh, some of them were good. You know, I saw some, uh—uh, some experiences—not—I saw some things that I—that set a bad example for me, uh, which served me well, because I didn't want anything to do with that. You know, so—yeah. Lots of—lots of things.

**0:35:35** **Advice to current service members**

**Hollingsworth** So what advice would you give today's military members?

**Sturm** Um, phew. That's a tough one, uh, you know, because we've got some conflicts going on in the world right now.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** Also, when you enlist right now, uh, it's quite possible you might end up in a combat situation.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** Uh, so I would, you know—I—I would measure my words carefully, but, uh, you know, barring the combat part of it, um, you know, I would say—I would say to enjoy the time, and, uh—especially if you get sent overseas. Um, uh, uh, do some traveling. That was one regret that I have about my time in Germany is that I didn't do a lot of traveling. We did some, uh, traveling. You know, Spain and France.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** We—we did some traveling, but, um, uh, I would like to have done a lot more traveling, in retrospect. Um, uh, and serve with honor. You know, that was One of the things that, uh—that attracted me to the military in the first place, uh—was, you know, uh, I saw examples of soldiers, and, they're, you know—they're people that[sic] are, um, uh, you know—that[sic] are serving something greater than themselves. You know, they're making a sacrifice that's not, uh, you know—they're not just in there for self-serving reasons. They're serving, you know, the freedom of the country, um, and, you know, again, that comradery. They're just, you know—in short, they're just something greater than—than themselves, and, you know, my advice would be, uh, to enjoy that, because, uh, it may end, when you get out of the, uh—when you get out of the military.

**0:37:07** **Post-military hobbies**

**Hollingsworth** Alright. So, uh, what do you do in your free time now?

**Sturm** Uh, surf [*laughs*].

**Hollingsworth** You still surf?

**Sturm** Yeah, yeah, I surf. I, you know, spend as much time with my daughter as I can.

**Hollingsworth** Okay.

**Sturm** Um, You know, still, uh—still working out. Uh, I have all sorts of hobbies. I like to cook. Uh, I fly radio-controlled airplanes. In fact, one of my recent hobbies—as of about two years ago, um—is, uh—is shooting. Uh, when I—When I went into the military, you know, I was a city boy.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** So I never grew up around guns or anything. Uh, And when I went in the military, uh, obviously, we shot. Uh, you know, I—I had, uh, a lot—we—we—I had some fun experiences on the range, shooting some, uh—some of the automatic weapons, and, uh, there was—there was a lot of those fun experiences in there, but I never really thought much about it, you know? It was just something we did.

**Hollingsworth** Right.

**Sturm** And when we went to the range, I always enjoyed it

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** Uh, but I never really—never really thought much about it. So, when I got out, um, you know, I never owned a gun. I was never around a gun. I just never thought about it. About probably three years ago now, a friend of mine, um, who was into guns, you know, said “Hey. You wanna come out to the range with me one day?” And I said, “Alright. Yeah. I haven’t shot, you know, in 25 years”—or however long it’s been. So I went out with him, and, uh, you know, what I was trained on was the M16 [rifle].

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** And the civilian version of that is AR-15.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** So he had an AR-15. Um, you know, when I went out—when I took basic training, it was cold—we went out on a cold day, and, uh, I went out there, and, uh, you know, he gave his AR-15, and I did all that I knew to do, which was, you know, the way that I was trained in the military. So, you know, I got down into my prone position on the ground, and, you know, I put about six rounds in

about, you know – about an inch in the target, and was thinking, *Man, maybe I missed my calling in life here.*

**Hollingsworth** Yeah.

**Sturm** ‘Cause I hadn’t shot, you know – I hadn’t even picked up a weapon in 25 years, but being out there in the cold, um, you know, and the smell of the gun powder when you shoot it, and then – and then, remembering how to shoot, uh, you know, was muscle memory, um, and it all came back to me, and that was a, uh – that was a pleasant memory, because I – I remembered, uh, you know, those – those were always good times in the military, going out in the range, and that’s actually become, uh, one of my hobbies.

**Hollingsworth** Oh.

**Sturm** So, you know, I own – I own several guns now. We go out – we go out shooting, about every Saturday morning, uh, on the range. Um, and that’s, uh – that’s a – that’s kinda reminiscing

**Hollingsworth** Yeah.

**Sturm** Over the, uh, uh – from the, uh – from the military days, but...

**Hollingsworth** Do you ever take your daughter with you?

**Sturm** Uh, I took her once. She’s, uh – she’s not real, uh, uh, interested in guns, But I did, uh – I did take her out there once, just to show her that there was nothing to be scared of. Um, so, you know, she’s not – she’s not scared of them, but she respects them and stays away from them [*laughs*].

**Hollingsworth** [*inaudible*].

**Sturm** Yeah.

**0:39:49** Closing remarks

**Hollingsworth** Um, is there anything else you would like to talk about?

**Sturm** Uh, oh, my gosh. Um, [*sighs*] probably – I mean, uh, you know – I’m – I’m – I’m glad I went in. I mean, it – Like I say, it really shaped a lot of the values that I have, uh, these days. Uh, And, you know, it – sometimes – sometimes that’s not always good, because, uh, you know, when I’m, uh – when I’m in, uh – when I’m in, uh, a task mode, then I kind of have a flashback, you know, to the – to the military days, Like with, you know – like with Sergeant Jones. Like, hey, if you got something to do, get it done.

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.



**Sturm** You know, I don't want to hear any excuses. Get it done, but, um, no. I was—I was glad I went in. I did, uh—I did a lot of growing up, when I was in there, and, you know, uh, like I said, before I went in, I was not a student. Uh, when I came out, I was a student, and, uh, my—my GPA [grade point average], uh—I don't know remember exactly what it was—but I got very few grades less than a[sic]—less than an A, uh, when I came out.

So, uh—so no. It was a—it was a good experience. Um, I'm glad I did it. Uh, you know, I respect the, uh—the guys that are going in now, and women—the people that are going in, uh, now, because you gotta—now, um, you know—I—I haven't looked at the enlistment standards. I've never compared them across time, but I, you know—I think you've got to be smarter to go in now, because they have all this high-tech equipment...

**Hollingsworth** Mmhmm.

**Sturm** Um, and they're doing things now that we didn't do, uh—that we didn't do back then. So I really—I really have a lot of respect for the people going in these days. In addition to the fact that, when you go in now, you may wind [*yawns*]—you may wind up in a combat zone very easily, in the middle of the desert somewhere. Well, um—so yeah. I could, uh—I could, uh—I could probably sit here all afternoon...

**Hollingsworth** [*laughs*].

**Sturm** If you gave me the opportunity, but I don't think you have enough tape to do that [*laughs*].

**Hollingsworth** Hm, alright. Well, thank you very much, Dr. Sturm...

**Sturm** You're welcome.

**Hollingsworth** For your time. It was an honor to be able to interview you

**Sturm** My pleasure.

**Hollingsworth** And I very much appreciate you for your time and service.

**Sturm** I...

**Hollingsworth** Veterans' Day just passed. So we'll be in touch again, and we'll have a copy of your interview for you.

**Sturm** Okay. [*inaudible*].

**Hollingsworth** And I'll bring it to you on the [UCF] Lake Mary campus...

**Sturm** Very good.

**Hollingsworth** Because I want to see it.

**Sturm** Oh, okay. Very good.

**Hollingsworth** That's it.

**Sturm** Very good.

**Unidentified** 42 minutes.

**Sturm** Yeah. There are probably more things I could have thought up. I didn't know how much tape I...

*End of Interview*