Oral History Transcript

Interviewer: Richard Brock

Interviewee: Hosey Hutson

Date: October 26, 2023

Q: ([00:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/g2lmliZfkpzcvgYnBNmeN8daeS04QYTWPJAQHC-rA9uLx-g8DHRGWlX5kwNWGoG5nIZWZhaF0ERS7TFzIQl_UFVcPrc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3.06)): All right. Thank you so much for talking to me today. The goal of my interview is to gain understanding of the feelings about the draft of men of draft age during the Vietnam War and the general feelings about the war as a whole. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today about your first-hand experience as a young person during this time. Please tell me your full name and birthdate.

Hutson: ([00:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/HESHmSuiaFjy3BHm5qF7k-ADS0rsqWUMQLkVjlAzX0efkSa8gL1TE6R-YNmuq4p84HmtvyUfM2Jgcinn2nGt02RHf84?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=28.98)): Birthday is June 1st, 1942. Full name is James Hosey Hutson. H-u-t-s-o-n.

Q: ([00:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/QPmnmNBTVyQpe4dm-eYWRON2ulvC7qNyN6BwZQA-PIfN2WaUVc4xjITARmWSqIImrf4yVFO17DlMYJGvAkUlPRu_cbY?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=43.02)): How old were you when the draft for the Vietnam conflict started around 1964?

Hutson: ([00:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EEXLJIJjG0mQVt-NyBFJcfdtimDEfN68PaumnDFMe18wpRAsoL_H80SbIcj3VWBfCAjIS2hbD8o71gxrOMJZQmGiUA4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=53.4)): 22 would be ‘64, [22], ‘64.

Q: ([01:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/WEstGlunsVgPkRmQUlRv5MvcUPPvP0Us6Wqse7yiO3PUY-3TR3bQQA0ycXdFvUgdQNGGPK2eWlTfDmbF1fhhIigk0bA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=60.4)): What was the general feeling about the war during that time?

Hutson: ([01:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/dn4lbUIVn5FQvDsT4Kx9rdJuhkXSCO44BM-LT2tjvjnu61I0dn_TJ19kTzvwDKY-Py8fBrQ82R6s5UhQYFV7X3vVDm8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=64.08)): It sucked.

Q: ([01:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/BsAMygU8B3QjSbt3RQqltU4r1j-wIhY5xPnx2Xu_rJwEGiSvPAcU6tcZKaBMBr54eKivwsrkXLZkNc_nioiIu6MFy6g?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=67.92)): What were the men your age saying about the draft at the time?

Hutson: ([01:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/OitZWHbwjCysX94aVS3kGyXvY5hUj296EGiszPxu6p10gPLnTShfZ4vSEaqpC9FILhJs40dki14aOiSUqaycoZGNd2Y?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=73.11)): It was really a war for the politicians and not for the guys that had to go.

Q: ([01:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/rwAkn_tRDj0YA7b9S4MIqdwkg0xfaKIT2u0_Ey_mnf9ntbvVgUGoLXEb1aBtQZIhqpfeSzAq56MuxQJpgozFNnGfyN4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=88.95)): How did the draft work? What was the process?

Hutson: ([01:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/zyEfTJ_d-VaP_v7xDezhLIwnQpYIyythIc8JMr8BkWIGN6M7Di7icl4p6Zc3XaNsN8outXnSUNDpaBOoI4VcYGvFGpA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=92.82)): It was a changing target. We've always had a draft in the United States ever since the Revolutionary War. We had a draft at the Revolutionary War. We had a draft for the Civil War. We had a draft for the World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and they gave up the draft in 1975 for all voluntary army service.

Q: ([02:24](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/TcWhUw2At4QNK4-5-tp9akDK8GCj-wUk2wc8un6f-deB3Eq9lMwOX0csKJ9jkXs_iNkIdeeuJawFsfQxpvkLh0vvWnU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=144.45)): Sorry. Did you know anyone that just signed up or was everyone drafted?

Hutson: ([02:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EiDE3OPwiQvo5kfwsptNXe80uYDtPBHRW9TwNdaFjLMC0cCLKPnA041RChbTqO80wYwZdyOiPrgRaGz-xq6Xnq4IgTQ?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=153.67)): Everyone has to sign up for the draft between the ages of 18 and 25. [It] doesn't matter whether you're a citizen of this country or not. The Mexicans have to sign up for the draft and you still have to register. I'm sure you've registered for the draft, although they don't have a draft anymore. It is called a voluntary army.

Q: ([03:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/ULbwPxrOF-3u16aXijFciCIWbpndibzSnABVcwGbYD_y1orzrpRsxgGE80I2q-PLH6vngTcRZPKiwnL2Zm34zHxhgQA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=189.94)): Tell me about your background and where you were at this time of your life.

Hutson: ([03:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/j3vt0dNwxBQIw4TdT4ZN1dWP3CBqKfLSeJVRn-AlJU6IIDzJaJsCLyOW9daX_hwfXHArIc12eo57PveXXPK4zx0kIkA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=195.55)): I was in college. My background, Susan and I were married. We got married in ‘62. What did I major in? Oh, I majored in biology, had a major in chemistry, minor in art. What else was the question? Tell me what number you're on.

Q: ([03:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/ShmAMrG9tjjhNppMuXDp44-f9ALQu1-lDdNzYQ48Lc8uh4Z8wBr-Ezl3sbY_a3at-PxpbMZ6FT4seKoJF2klAj_e7tw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=232.09)): Number six. What was your personal experience with the draft?

Hutson: ([04:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EhyG3Icssd3N6ONevb4xRKx77MGUWn8j-KNm2r928Fe7yZVdpC0TUhGCxu_QyA_nfzDIcqjNgufzWZb3j9ZUppMMaS4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=242.23)): Signed up for the draft when I was in high school, but I wasn’t but 18 the day after I graduated from high school. Being my birthday, being June the first. We used to go from the last day of May and start back on the first day of September. Your school year is entirely different than mine was. We went exactly nine months out of the year. And so I was working as a bag boy, which I think you know what that is, at the grocery store and had to sign up before I went to college. Had to sign up by your 18th birthday.

Q: ([05:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/ivaDuGCTdGPeqHq-pYkRI001TzEU5QxzzMGpLyiGzh9Rax5TSjy15-QGBgfMGViN1cDoMnza6x2vdUXjw6ZKlJrAxS8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=303.22)): Were you called? Tell me that story.

Hutson: ([05:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/e74wRhSr2CNF2K3xvXzhTN0zZEARVjosF8XM7DuvDrEGXT51kC34rMYdTIb9R0g7x2X3ctSyqMqAaxLdK0gd2zDSsE8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=308.74)): That story. The draft you could be exempted for a bunch of different things. If you were in college at the time that I was in that 18 to 25 year old period, at that particular time, you could be exempted if you went on to college. And then I don't know whether it was just an exemption for science during that period or whether it changed during that period because like I say, these things with the draft were always changing and what you could be exempted for. At one point in time while I was in college, they had an exemption if you were a science major, and since I had a major in biology and in chemistry, I was exempted. And if you went on to get your master's and PhD, you were exempted. Susan and I were married in ‘62, and one thing I didn't know about was that there was an actual exemption if you were married before 1964. The colleges and that sort of stuff, the minute you were not in college, they sent your name into the selective service, which is the draft, and they sent you a letter to show up in Montgomery at the induction center to induct you into the army. I graduated in ‘65, January of ‘65. I taught biology at Berry High School, or what do y'all call it, Berry? What do y'all call Berry High School? Hoover. Now Hoover, it's part of the Hoover school system now. At that time, it was part Jefferson County school system, just like your mother graduated from Shades Valley, and that was part of the Jefferson County school system. And Hoover school system didn't exist when I was teaching at Berry High School. And the minute that I graduated from college, they sent my name in for the draft because I wasn't in college, which would've exempted me.

([08:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/ONsKBBlLXohhtchaYGysxNbCnozXkS7IWpucMfteK3TFBk7gkTztjJh1C1DwZKntNShKVdZQiBTPJvSOap-tYU0s9TU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=538.23)): Everybody tried every form of exemption that they could possibly try. You asked me a question a while ago, what did the people think of the Vietnam War? It was a war for politicians. It was not a war of the people. It's just like World War II. Our country was actually an isolationist country up until Pearl Harbor. The war in Europe actually started in 1939. We didn't want, the United States didn't want any part of it. In fact, there were a lot of people that were famous people that actually supported Hitler, Lindbergh being one of 'em, the first guy to ever fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. He was a big supporter of Hitler's and Franklin D. Roosevelt was the president at the time. They didn't want to go to war.

([10:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/tG-J1lnCreUmlkmRL9ad4cOIWCmwXh8L7TS8A3t6OM5Lsbb1bip1tiLUuCNrYFcjZD6dHXevfmDHOs_hTO9XWepJNQY?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=620.16)): All they did is they supplied England with materials and guns and airplanes and that sort of stuff. We didn't supply 'em with any men. Whenever Japan started a war in Southeast Asia, Japan had already conquered a lot of China, the Philippines, and they were moving on down to Australia, headed that way, the Marshall Islands and all that sort of stuff. And there were two islands in between the United States and Japan. One was Midway Island and the other one was Honolulu, Hawaii. Japan had already captured most of the Southeast Asia and the islands, Polynesians and all that sort of stuff. And they picked, they decided that they wanted to come on toward the United States. They actually occupied part of the United States at one point. There was some islands in the Ellucian Islands that they actually occupied. I had one uncle that was in Second World War and he went, his post was in Alaska. And I had another cousin that was in Southeast Asia.

([12:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/sK8Czy481Pepa_OwOkNsoObMYhiptzw4b1M8fZePnZsjvKwZxlMYeXtcTZpYeMHKSaGo68-LZBMdUdaDAWv7EkGvuYE?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=740)): One of my favorite guys that I had in college was Dr. E.B. Sledge. And he was actually in Peleliu near, he was part of that island hopping deal that they started out in Australia and started moving up the chain of islands, started in the Marshall Islands and moved up that way. But when Japan had taken possession of Midway Island, and they decided one Sunday morning, December 7th, 1941, that they wanted to take over Hawaii. Well, they came in to a place called Pearl Harbor, and all of our Pacific fleet was in Pearl Harbor one Sunday morning. The only thing fortunate that we had about it is our aircraft carriers were out on maneuvers outside the Pearl Harbor. And the Japanese took off from their aircraft carriers, came in to Pearl Harbor and sunk most of our battleships and a lot of the destroyers and that sort of stuff right there in Pearl Harbor. They never got it. They never fired a shot.

([14:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/xzVJrFgSxsSc52hdKaq2ykCzmt3TXI7BKGzCVBD4uxWzK0STuYy4zHl3-1s38U_0FWOXUTjgZPpaAid3GkTExKyBE2U?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=859.63)): Our forces never fired a shot. Japan killed about 4,000 of our people, our Navy guys. That morning the next day on December the eighth, 1941, Congress (and Congress has to declare war- nobody else can declare war) Congress declared war on Japan. And whenever they did that, they also joined the war in Europe and they started sending our soldiers over to England and airmen over to England. FDR gave a famous speech, and it always, the one sentence out of it is – yesterday Japan declared war on us, and it will always remain a day to be recalled as the day of infamy. And that's when we actually got into war with Japan and Europe and Hitler. Hitler had already been at war with Europe for three years before we ever got into the war, but they … alright, speed it up, Hosey.

([16:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/LliSu1pWi2bX2TTW2z9n63RKvkwZnrioSzoZWlsa6iAmqxi7c51EStWm8rUCwJarpvP_swmy6hM9sJEwmJuG4E6Tb0w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=975.98)): That started a draft. See, they would let draft go along for a period of time and never call anybody up. And that's when you said something about the draft during Vietnam, nobody wanted to go. Donald Trump had bone spurs. That's the reason he didn't go to Vietnam. But his daddy had enough money that he could afford to pay a doctor off to tell him that he had bone spurs. The minute that I got my letter, draft letter, to ask me to be in Montgomery at the induction center at 4:30 in the morning. It was in February of that year, ‘65. So I graduated in January. They sent me an induction letter in February. Of course, the first thing I did is I went to see my doctor and because they said I'd had a kidney infection, which I had had a kidney infection, but he said it wasn't the type that got me out of it.

([17:50](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/-JB82TgTpcRD6w7l-QMEFBnLxMvXZAAoTG9Ofi8SSVd_35G2mbNhn9Lc7Y4amkghdx38OUjTnOE7mlilkwrCZAhkd6k?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1070.13)): So I get up in the morning at about three o'clock and I'm driving along and it's spitting snow and I go down to the induction center. Well, if you could see a lightning and hear thunder, you were pretty much pass the physical for the army. So then the only choice you had, I tried the doctor. That didn't work. I went down to the, take my physical at Maxwell, I mean at Montgomery, at the induction center, and they said, I passed. So the only option I had was to join either the Navy, the Air Force, Coast Guard, who else? That's it, or go in the Army. And the Army, you had a really good chance to get killed, and I didn't particularly want to do that part. And I went down to see the Air Force recruiter and they said, there's several things you can do. You can either just go ahead and be in Air Force, or you can go to officer school or you can go to flight training. And I said, well, I want to go to flight training. So then they started testing me. Had to take an IQ test. Had to take about eight physicals and several other tests, spatial tests and all this sort of stuff, and passed all those. They even counted a number of fillings in your teeth.

([20:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/Yph-bd6f1VTUSwShqtEuy_VB1_R3-ZfqhfbkaCe21-mYjyP97YFMemld5LrQe2mKYHf9s3JEcoqleNQbTsd-ix0apeg?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1203.81)): I had about eight physicals, hearing tests, IQ tests two, everything. [I] finally got accepted to the officer's school– flight training. And if you didn't, George Bush's son, George W, he got in the reserves. And some politician had passed a law that said if you were married before 1964 that you could SIE, which stands for self-initiated elimination, and they would put you in the inactive reserves for five years and send you home. And that's what I did.

Q: ([21:25](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/0iot4HerTa_CkTKGseR82_kz52CuWDFqf8-M3ax93dp2VM8m4F6Mm-Dl3aeEn-ef6aydqVQnev5yK1389PvF-C9TcOY?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1285.57)): What was day-to-Day life like at Officer Training School

Hutson: ([21:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/xWm09eZ-vmsv5IE2Oxa1GXoxd0mNp2lJ-lUdlkhpJJMVQUiiWSQpQDz_nk9Y1Al8_0Y4B-o3BO9MtZIeLKF3KdTIIN4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1289.47)): Up at four o'clock, we went to the bathroom, then we went to PT, which was physical training, and came back, went to breakfast, and then we went to, the first course we had for the day was UT Universal Code of Military Justice Law course. And we called up the master bedroom because we would get up and we didn't have any air conditioning in our dorms. We had a fan, but we couldn't turn the fan on because it made dust on the tables and everything, so we couldn't turn the fan on. I went out there on July the fifth, so you can imagine how hot it was in San Antonio, Texas on July the fifth. We had a old wool blanket that had to go on our bed and it had to be made up to standards every morning. So we would sleep laying on, we couldn't lay on top of the bed. We had to have physically be in the bed at some point, so we'd put one leg under the blanket and lay there on top. And that way we had to make up the bed in the morning with hospital corners and they would bring a quarter in, and if they dropped that quarter on the bed and it didn't bounce completely off the bed, you got a gig. And if you had 10 gigs, you automatically flunked out of officer school.

([23:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/w7LEJhMDLKOf69qjoh3o8RJhoZVQG1rfvnOxlmv7Ud4a4kQk_nqpiocBYbiFL9jvfafvewytOM0ob_ZN9ZH255laTa0?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1425.92)): We would go, make up our beds, go out and do our physical training. We had to go out early, as close to four o'clock in the morning as we could because it was so hot. And they actually had, if the temperature and humidity got to a certain point, they wouldn't let us take PT. And then we came back and we went to breakfast, we marched to breakfast. We marched everywhere we went, and then we'd go up to take the law course. [We would] started out with law, and then we had, for the first couple of weeks, we had a course in the chain of command, which you had to be able to take it from where you were, give your name first and go all the way to the president of the United States because he was a Supreme commander. But we had to be able to tell everybody's name that we had to, if we received an order, it had to come down through that chain of command– president first on down. Alright. What else?

Q: ([25:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/XyShdubcS5GZIJAfN-aJxU9cEV-RBTzMw3fMRRVe0B6fgfQoWqOUmnve7gQzzOHkCGhn-jVteRibCwRkWxKKn-EGqLM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1516.1)): What was the process to report that you were in school or married?

Hutson: ([25:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/R5hCNDJUgpXb5xCr9kOHCM3kifSVmyOVBqSRB2wDaZXANLJEFgK6V6LRlCjy79t-a0l1GfIfikLIjen3qagQ-N5fM9U?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1521.35)): They had to, by law, they had to tell you about the SIE process, and one of 'em was that if you were married before ‘64, you could self-initiate and get out of the service. But you were in inactive reserves. Alright.

Q: ([25:51](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/Psd7IG6ukgEoPfMxX_w1UJQYv6YwlU9hyW4pjnk9q_ne1zXkGYicvGdqWks-tl_lF09OVlDeVLWQdH0y2rsr_QvAuY0?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1551.87)): Do you have any close friends that served? What happened to them?

Hutson: ([25:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/kkWh9B1FoY4McH4LMKwT48NLzpDH8OJ4wy6vHYviZnYLAjPJh93B5pDfVtt9IYrNMDM5WGgghFXTr9DNbMSH7e37IPc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1557.13)): A couple of examples– an old boy named Sammy Doss. He went to Vietnam, got killed. Woody Walter was a roommate of mine in college. I went to college with him. Four of us went to college to Montevallo. Woody flunked out his freshman year. They drafted him. He went to, he served a tour in Vietnam and came back, signed up for another tour. They sent him to college. He got his act together and they sent him to college. He got his degree in college and went to OCS in the Army and got his bars and actually retired as a colonel. Not a full bird, but a colonel. And he died about a couple of years ago. Alright.

Q: ([27:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/PNK41kK1hmkXqTPPsXtO00lEBwWpp6628PV_VFjIrm_xAlozXvkb6jD0xCLAo55CtWMJ4w995E-JE-_9g4KWtz0G8V4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1643.1)): Are there any other experiences pertaining to the Vietnam War that you would like to talk about?

Hutson: ([27:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/MAyZv5HdzZPt-psfOmFNEsOWnsLyfhsBKeqgfZcUwn1q7xdVoV10_63FdtobmUxKYNZ5cG_ekE2VEyIKzJxzQLHXm8Y?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1650.84)): I'm going to leave that one to you.

Mrs. Hutson (in the background) ([27:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/eg6LRYfK69gnt50VK42tbQ02FKBNWAiHxMWHQWkyzup0bgO0bTac6IKYpvSiaQVh2oxRKgqxIlfQ9iFH3i2nigdS59s?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1659.4)): Tell 'em about why you had to wait for me, how you got caught up because you had to wait.

Hutson: ([27:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/4MZSgye0lGWFytCgG_FWsElr_LhXeHWXhuo0fllBYb2j8m9uJBq3DzFqxq84s_kwNXbq11rBSVWkIHpysAXiCcALFSs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1663.41)): Oh, the minute you were out of college or your deferment was used up, which I had a deferment because of being a science major. I started college a year ahead of Nana, and Nana was, she had, after I graduated and I taught a semester at Berry High School, I had to wait on her to go to, I was conditionally accepted to Alabama for my master's degree, but I had to wait on her for a semester and they got me that semester that I was out. And if it hadn't have been from Nana, I wouldn't be sitting here now.

Mrs. Hutson ([28:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/OTulpcjkxXezMszBTHBBaZ0nomeTyPJlJWd594khSTARYOb3XkmJHYlxCAmG5eFt3zJOXAAKd5h0fdlT8L4nWdKkPIU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1725.23)): Then, he eventually got out because he had been married for so long.

Hutson: ([28:50](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/2qLJd4gfCPBR_sJPntJB2D-NiVMa9ZVvBy1lc4-S-528VFdjvmKjmDBDMKZnjTda-9ZJYyHU8nwEJIjz0_Y2iMrOHjg?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1730.88)): They had to tell you about that. By law they had to tell you. It is not exactly a fun thing.

Q: ([29:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/4sIsjl2tgjfTv0Qht3iM9BkPybIu0yBs7Wib9ef9ISvowXawLRvXau_6ytb5rFbNAewamoX29vz9uuLH4CS42GQg54o?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1743.48)): All right. Well, thank you so much for interviewing with me today.

Hutson: ([29:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/BSeMF7jshvhXsQ7x25z6Y9AsQ3qeVNfRQopwG8rOiMNDr2a05UtUF1_IszrUEyKiGWifklWdqYr_2b0XEM9gN3_wwkQ?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1747.98)): Well, you don't want to go. That was basically the attitude that they had, that everybody had. You just tried everything you could not to get drafted.