

**Bernard J. Hennessey
Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on February 5, 2009
Ballston Spa, New York**

Q: For the record, would you please state your full name and your date and place of birth?

BH: Bernard John Hennessey Jr., Born July 24, 1973, Troy New York.

Q: Did you attend school in Troy?

BH: Elementary School for a couple of years, yes.

Q: And did you enter the service from troy?

BH: Yes, I did.

Q: So you graduated from high school in troy?

BH: I graduated from high school in Watervliet.

Q: What year did you graduate?

BH: I graduated in 1991.

Q: Once you graduated from high school, did you go right into the service?

BH: No, I went into the service in September, 2 to 3 months after I graduated.

Q: I see you were in the Marine Corps, was here any reason why you chose to be a marine?

BH: No, not particularly.

Q: Did you have any family members in the service?

BH: My Grandfather was in the Army, but I was more interested in the marines.

Q: Whereabouts did you go for your basic training?

BH: My basic training was at Paris Island.

Q: Was that your first time away from home?

BH: Yes.

Q: What was Paris Island like? Was it a shock?

BH: It was a culture shock, yes.

Q: How long were you there for?

BH: I was there for three months, that's how long the basic training lasts. After basic training, we went to schooling, which was in Fort Lee, Virginia.

Q: What kind of schooling was that?

BH: It was Boat Fueling and Refueling School.

Q: Did you pick that school or did the Marine Corps pick that for you?

BH: I was able to pick three schools that I wanted to go to, and that was one of them. I was very happy to be able to go there.

Q: What was that training like?

BH: It was good. Because we were at an army base, it was a mixture of Marine Corps standards and army standards.

Q: Did you have more freedom there than you did at basic training?

BH: Oh yes.

Q: What was your typical training day like?

BH: We would wake up, do our physical training, and go to school until 3 or 4. Then, we would go back to the barracks and we were released from there. From there, we could go to the gym, go to the mall... we had a lot more freedom.

Q: So what M.O.S did you end up with?

BH: The MOS was called 1391, which was bulk field specialists.

Q: And how long was that schooling for?

BH: 8 weeks, I believe.

Q: Did you learn about all different kind of fuels or specifically one kind?

BH: All different types. We learned about their flash points, the vehicles that carried them, their smells and odors. We learned the expansion for how much fuel was in one of the tankers, we learned about ventilation and its purposes, and all the systems the fuels go through.

Q: Where did you go after your training?

BH: I was shipped overseas to Okinawa, Japan.

Q: When was that approximately?

BH: Around March of 1992.

Q: What was the weather like there when you arrived?

BH: When I arrived it was spring. It wasn't humid but it was warm.

Q: And what was your daily routine like?

BH: The daily routine was to get up, do our physical training... Then we would get dressed and go over to what were called the hot pits (The refueling pits), and wait for the aircraft to come in.

Q: Did that keep you pretty busy?

BH: Yeah, it had a good turnaround rate. If we weren't busy we would be doing classes. Or, we could actually play a little bit of football if we wanted to. There was an open area where we could play. It was a nice experience overall.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Japanese? **BH:** Only if we went off base, or if they came on.

Q: How long were you there for?

BH: I was there for one year.

Q: And after your year was up, where were you shipped off to next?

BH: I was shipped off to Pendleton base in California.

Q: How long were you at Pendleton?

BH: I was there for about 5 and a half years.

Q: Did you basically do the same thing at Pendleton?

BH: Not with the aircraft refueling side. I was more with the ground side - the wheeled vehicles. I was working 5-tons, Hum-Vs, any vehicles that had wheels and wouldn't move were brought over to us.

Q: So did you work refueling the ground vehicles?

BH: We would get deployed to Twenty Nine Palms, or even up to Bridgeport. We would be up there refueling, making sure people were safe.

Q: So you didn't operate a fuel truck per-say?

BH: No, we operated those too.

Q: You did that for about 5 years?

BH: Yes.

Q: Was there anything out of the ordinary that happened during that time? Did you TDY any place?

BH: I went out on ship for 6 months. I went to the Persian Gulf, U.A.E., Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel. It's called a west pack.

Q: And you hit all those places in a 6 month period?

BH: Yes.

Q: Was there anything going on in Somalia at that time?

BH: No.

Q: So all was pretty quiet in the ports you guys went to?

BH: All except for when we landed in the Persian Gulf. We were there when Israel was being threatened again.

Q: I see you've got Desert Storm and Desert Shield, was that after that?

BH: That was before, when I was in Japan. They needed marines to go over there so I volunteered.

Q: Were you under attack or fire when you were over there?

BH: I saw some combat, but what felt like 5 minutes was only really about 30 seconds. I had a couple of shots come near me, but that was about it.

Q: How long were you involved with desert storm and desert shield? **B**

H: I was involved for 3 months.

Q: At the end of that time, you went back to Pendleton?

BH: No, I went back to Japan to finish my year, then I shipped out to California.

Q: After your time in California, were you discharged? **BH:** Yes, I was discharged.

Q: What rank were you at that point? **BH:** I was a Corporal, E-4.

Q: I see you spent 8 years in the marines, any particular reason why you got out and didn't make it a career?

BH: I tried to make it a career, but they said I didn't make the grade for being 8 years in.

Q: During your service, what were your officers and supervisors like?

BH: They were all great guys. They listened to people who had experience, who didn't have experience... they really looked out for everybody except for themselves.

Q: You mentioned a Matthew Ridgeway in here?

BH: Yeah, that was one of my guys. I had a lot in common with him. I lost track of him when we went our separate ways after Okinawa in '97.

Q: Once you got out, did you maintain contact with any of the people you were in the service with?

BH: I would stop in every once in a while to Pendleton and talk with a couple of buddies, since I was right near it.

Q: So once you were discharged from Pendleton you stayed in that area for a while?

BH: Yes, I was in that area.

Q: What did you do in civilian life out there?

BH: I was a tow truck driver, a mechanic, anything I possibly could.

Q: How long did you stay out in California once you were discharged?

BH: I stayed in California for about 8 or 9 years.

Q: What made you come back to New York, family?

BH: Yeah, family.

Q: While you were out in California did you get married?

BH: Yes, I was married, and had two beautiful girls.

Q: Did you join any veteran's organizations at all?

BH: No, not over there.

Q: How about back here in New York? Did you join VFW or the Legion?

BH: No. Well, not yet.

Q: After you were discharged, did you make any use of the G.I bill to go back to school?

BH: No, I didn't. I was thinking about it up in Washington County, but the colleges over there didn't offer what I wanted.

Q: How long have you been involved with the program here in Ballston Spa?

BH: I have been involved since January 29th.

Q: Is there anything that we haven't touched on? Anything you'd like to add to the interview?

BH: No.

Q: Are you receiving any occupational training now?

BH: No, if I put myself out there I can really do anything.

Q: While you were in service, especially with all the traveling you were doing to different countries, did you suffer from any illnesses or injuries?

BH: No.

Q: Let me just ask you in closing, how do you feel being in the military changed you or affected your life?

BH: It affected me in that I was more disciplined. I was able to think more in depth about what I wanted to do, what I was doing, how I was going to go about doing it. I could be more effective in knowing what tools I needed for certain jobs instead of saying "oops I forgot this," and have to run back and forth from the truck.

Q: Thank you very much for your interview and thank you for your service.

BH: Thank you.