

WAYNE CAPPS  
Rt. 1  
Moorefield, KY 40350

Q. Mike Downs  
A. Wayne Capps

Q. Where were you born and what year?  
A. Mt. Sterling, KY. 1946, December 14.

Q. How many people were in your family?  
A. 6 children and my mother and father.

Q. What did your father do?  
A. He was a blacksmith.

Q. Did you go to school in Mt. Sterling?  
A. No, I went first grade at Moorefield in Nicholas County, the second through sixth at Bethel in Bath County and the 7th through 12th at Nicholas County.

Q. You moved around quite a bit then. How did you like that?  
A. It was alright. I liked the Bath County school system better than I did Nicholas County.

Q. What did you do for leisure time when you were growing up.  
A. Worked.

Q. Didn't have any leisure time?  
A. Not a whole lot.

Q. Did you graduate from Nicholas County?  
A. Yes, 1964.

Q. Are you married now?  
A. Yes.

Q. Do you have any children.  
A. Yes, two girls and a boy. They are all three adopted.

Q. What did you do immediately after high school?

- A. Went to college at Morehead State University.
- Q. That was in 1964? What was your major.
- A. History and Political Science.
- Q. OK. You started college in 1964, how long did you go?
- A. Off and on from 1964 to January of 1970. I had to work my way through school. I'd go a semester and work a semester.
- Q. What was the last grade of school you completed before you went in to the service?
- A. I lacked three hours graduating. I needed three hours of trigonometry and I was drafted out of college.
- Q. So you were drafted then, what year was that?
- A. 1970. Feb. 3, 1970.
- Q. And you were three hours short of your degree? It must have shocked you didn't it.
- A. Very much so. As a matter of fact the semester ended on the 28th day of January and the day I got home from that semester ending I got my draft notice in the mail. And I left on the third day of February.
- Q. Were you married at that time?
- A. Yes
- Q. You were on campus off and on before 1970, was there any kind of anti-war activity? Anything like that at Morehead?
- A. No at Morehead. There was at other campuses but Dr. Doran pretty much kept that down.
- Q. What was your MOS in the service?
- A. I was a 68 Bravo, Turbine Engine Mechanic.
- Q. Before you went to Vietnam, did you know anything about it? Why the army was there or anything about the country in particular?
- A. No.
- Q. When were you in Vietnam?
- A. From August the 4th, 1970 from Aug. 3, 1971.
- Q. You spent your full year then didn't you?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What unit were you assigned to?

- A. I was with a company, the 22 8th aviation battalion, First Cavalry division. 41
- Q. Where exactly were your base camps?
- A. The first 8 months I was at Bearut, which is about 30 miles South of Saigon and I Corps. And the last four months, 2 months of it I spent at Chu Lai which is in III Corp, and the last 2 months I spent at DMZ.
- Q. Did you understand then why the United States was in Vietnam?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Why do you think we were there?
- A. I think the intent was to stop communistic oppression but I think that it was drug out because of political favors, I'm saying of the "fat cats." I truly believe if General Westmoreland had been given the cooperation that he needed, I think the war would have been over in a thirty-day span.
- Q. Did you see any combat while you were there?
- A. Yes
- Q. Where was that at, in this same area?
- A. All over. I was a crew chief on a Chinook helicopter for three months in Vietnam.
- Q. What was your average day like?
- A. The average day was 18 hours.
- Q. What exactly was it that you did?
- A. Well, it was different in my case because if a chopper came in and it had a mechanical problem it didn't matter what time of the day or night it was we were expected to be there to fix it. On many cases our choppers were out in the fields picking up troops, delivering troops, delivering supplies. If they were shot down or if they were damaged, had mechanical problems, we had to go out. There were many times we went out two or three o'clock in the morning. All total I flew over 500 flying hours in Vietnam and I flew every recovery mission that my unit went on in the year I was there.
- Q. Were you fired on quite a bit?
- A. Quite a bit.
- Q. What about, were you ever in any combat on the ground?
- A. No.
- Q. That part of the country was mostly heavy jungle.
- A. Yes, very heavy.

Q. Kind of hard to see who was shooting at you.

A. Yes, all you did was shoot back.

Q. Were you ever in any contact with the Vietnamese people themselves?

A. Yes, we had our typical hooch maids who took care of the buildings where we stayed, cleaned our clothes. The people at the barber shop were Vietnamese, a lot of people that worked at the PX were Vietnamese.

Q. Did you form any opinions about the peasants?

A. They were very intelligent. They would take what we threw away and put it to use.

Q. As far as their politics, do you think they really cared one way or another who was running the country?

A. They hated anybody that was there than weren't supposed to be. They loved us because of our money.

Q. What about the Arvins, were you in any contact with them?

A. The only contact I had with the Arvins was when we delivered them to the field. They had very little discipline. A lot of times we'd have to push them on the choppers or the officers in command would have to put them on because they didn't want to go.

Q. They weren't very worthy combat troops were they?

A. No, they were not.

Q. You went over in 1970, so you must have been aware that the sentiment at home had already changed by that time. Did you see much of the war on television before you left.

A. Quite a bit I guess. Probably when the war was at its high point in 68 and 69 I wasn't paying a lot of attention to it because I was going to school and trying to work fulltime. And I just didn't have much time to watch much TV. But I knew from the things I was reading in the papers and from the comments that was being made by the instructors at school what was happening. Then in history classes and things we heard quite a bit about it.

Q. What about the way President Johnson was left escalating the war, do you think it was warranted?

A. No.

Q. Of course, when you went in Nixon was President by that time, do you think he did the right thing by really getting out at any price?

- A. He was probably 3 years and 20,000 men's lives short of the time they should have been out of there. He should have gone ahead, when he got into office, and pulled the troops out, irregardless of whether we won or lost. We were fighting a war we could never win, the way they wanted to fight it.
- Q. So you're saying Nixon did the right thing, he was just too late in doing it?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What about in Vietnam. As far as your officers were concerned, do you think they were well trained?
- A. Well, our officers were very highly trained, but of course they had to be because they were pilots. We had the best pilots that you had ever seen. They were young but they were good. You get into the infantry, the artillery, the engineer, armor or something like that I can't speak for them because I didn't come into contact with them. I will however interject something, I was stationed with the 75th Ranger outfit and they were very very highly trained. Their mission was to go out at night -- they didn't go out in the daytime at all. They had a very low casualty rate and that says there's some leadership someplace.
- Q. About how long was the pilots tour of duty over there?
- A. Their tour was the same as ours, they were there a year.
- Q. So you probably had the same pilot for the entire tour. Not like the infantry where our officers changed a lot. You hear so much about drugs over there, were you aware of it?
- A. Yes
- Q. Was it as bad as they say?
- A. It all depended on the type of outfit you were with. Now, we didn't have any problem with it whatsoever. You have to understand the circumstances. I was in an outfit that had highly technical trained and skill-d personnel. I was, I guess that 90% of the outfit I was in were either college graduates or had at least two years of college. When you get to the \_\_\_\_\_ sections the company I was in I would say was 100% in those sections. You get into your flight crew, mechanics, things like that you get very little of it. Because their knowledge and skill and stuff like that, the peoples lives that flew in those choppers depended on them.
- Q. What you're saying is what was pretty common among your base camp personnel but not your people that actually had to go into the field.
- A. No, we just seen very little of it. The people who went to the field, like your pilots, your mechanics your crew members, things like that, I'm going to say that they didn't have time, we were pulling 18 hours a day and some days we'd go two or three days without any sleep at all or rest. Because the mission at the time justified it. I just don't think they had the time to use it.

- Q. You'd have been kind of reluctant to get on the helicopter and flown with somebody that used drugs.
- A. I wouldn't have done it. We had the prerogative to do that. We had a very, very, highly intelligent, matter of fact he had a masters degree, commander over there. He was a major and he just did not put up with it.
- Q. What about racial conflicts, was there any trouble between blacks and whites?
- A. Yes. Again you go to these sections, it wasn't in the field troops, it was in the sections. The motor pool people which was probably 95% black, we just had problems with them.
- Q. Again that was in base camp, not in the field.
- A. Not in the field.
- Q. Do you think its because of the idleness?
- A. I think, personally, that the intelligence is one thing that had to do with it. Your people that was in your motor pool MOS's and things like that, worked on the wheel type vehicles, I don't think they had the kind of intelligence that the people that worked on the helicopters themselves. I think absence of the intelligence, the lack of enough work to keep them occupied and the fact that most of these people were on drugs before they went out there. I think the drug problem caused most of the racial problems.
- Q. You're saying that Vietnam itself is not the cause of the drug problem, but the people themselves were the problem and drug use by them . . .
- A. I don't think Vietnam caused it for the simple reason, we could ask those people and 90% of them would tell you I was taking drugs before I went over here, the Vietnam escalated because they could get the drugs and stuff cheaper, more often, they didn't have any problem getting it at all. I think that's why Vietnam got the blame for most of it. I'm not saying that Vietnam didn't cause a lot of people to go to drugs that maybe weren't on them, not a whole lot. But again you have to assess the situation too., go back to what I said before, we didn't have the time to do it, had we had the time, I'm sure a lot of them would have. Now we did have an alcohol problem, but they straightened up. They drank quite a bit, even myself, I drank a lot over there. But I never drank to the point that I didn't realize what I was doing if I was called to duty.
- Q. Why do you think we lost the war over there, if you think we did lose?
- A. We definitely lost the war and the reason we lost is because of our own beaureaucrats. That's just a personal opinion. I think the war was started because the United States saw an opportunity for economical gain and I think it hurt us because the people in the US got used to the war itself, of keeping their factory's busy, the people working. And once the war stopped they had no needs for the supplies and everything, people laid off, factories closed. I think the war was a political mistake.

Q. My next question was do you think it was a mistake to get involved in the beginning?

A. It very definitely was.

Q. Have we learned anything, has Vietnam taught us anything? I'm asking you in light of the situation like yesterday the eight Marines were killed in Lebanon.

A. Evidently it hasn't. I'm not condemning the President on our presence in Lebanon because I think it needs there, but I think if we're going to be there we need to do a little more besides just sit there and get knocked off like our people are doing. We should have retaliated against the bombing incident over there. Some way or another to date we are the only country that was involved that hasn't retaliated. The French retaliated, the Israeli's retaliated. We need to do that.

Q. Well really 1600 marines or 2000 marines aren't going to make a difference over there. Especially in a defensive posture like they are over there. All that's going to happen is just a few killed at a time.

A. My personal opinion as to how we could ever come out of this Lebanon situation over there is to start with Iran and Syria. Until they do something with Iran and Syria I just don't think we have any business in Lebanon.

Q. Do you think maybe it was the same problem as Vietnam where we didn't go to the heart of the problem.

A. Yes.

Q. Did you support the President's rescue aid in Grenada at the college?

A. Yes, he just didn't carry it far enough, he should have went on to Cuba! No, he shouldn't have went on to Cuba. That's the way the military think and of course with a military background, I think he should have went on to Cuba but I understand why he didn't. We'll let it go at that.

Q. What about El Salvador, do you think we'll eventually send troops down there?

A. No, I don't believe we will because I think they are pretty well taking care of the situation themselves. Through our intelligence, we even know that they've stopped the transportation of weapons that's coming through Nicaragua. I don't think we'd send troops. But I do think we're going to send troops someplace.

Q. When you came home, did you need any kind of medical treatment?

A. No.

Q. How were you treated by others?

- A. Well, I read in the paper and hear on TV how the Vietnam Veteran has been persecuted and stuff like that, again I was treated well. I came from a rural area, a small town, and I've been treated well. When I went back to get my job it was just like the day I left there. When I went back to school at Morehead, of course I had grown up some and some of the things they said did hurt, when I did come back, but basically I've been treated well.
- Q. A lot of Veterans have complained that they got no public recognition when they came home that they weren't given a parade or things of that nature. Did you ever want something like that?
- A. No.
- Q. Why not?
- A. We were fighting a war we didn't want to fight so why publicize it?
- Q. Did you notice any attitude change on your part from the time you got back opposed to before you went?
- A. I think so, the Vietnam War made you grow up. I had a very dim view of the military even before I went into the army. It had changed a little bit when I got out, I understood what the military man was up against, because I'd been in there for two years. How they're treated. I think the military people are treated terrible, of course we bring a lot of it on ourselves. But I think the reason we bring a lot of it is the way we're treated.
- Q. So you were a little bit disillusioned after you came back?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You found out that you weren't over there for the reason that you thought.
- A. I think anybody that was over there would answer that question in that fashion, unless they were a marine.
- Q. How do you feel about the volunteer army as opposed to the draft? Is the volunteer army accomplishing its purpose?
- A. No, its defeating its purpose, and I'll go off the record and say this, when your national guard troops which are part time soldiers out perform your volunteer army, what's a bad indication. And we have proved it through this unit here -- we are better, better trained, better disciplined, we don't have the "???" problem that they have in the military. The company that I'm with here is affiliated with the 100 first airborne division down at Ft. Campbell and we train side by side with those people and there's a difference. I don't think the volunteer army's worth it. Now statistics show's it is, but the reason statistics shows it is because the unemployment rate is the way it is. The army's got this policy now that they aren't taking anybody now but high school graduates. But go to any regular army post, I don't care which one it is and tell me what the ratio is of minority to white. It's staggering.
- Q. Most of the people in the volunteer army now are minority. Would you like to see a draft again, reinstated.



A. The draft should be reinstated with the stipulation that you don't draft X number of people every month. You keep the draft open, not like it is right now, where its going to take 30 days to get it started back. The draft needs to be practiced. My feeling here is . . . that's one thing I do agree with the Soviet Army on. They draft their people over there for a year, whether they want to be or not, each and every man. At the end of that year they are not discharged from the military but they go home. Everybody should at least have the basic training portion of it, so that they'll at least have the basic military skills behind them. And if we do have a military escalation where we're going to have to go to a war or fight a war or something, then the technical skill would be the only thing these people would have to be taught. Thats the only reason I would call for a draft. I don't think the American people would ever stand for conscriptions similar to what the Soviet Union has got where they do draft an X number of people every year. But I think we should have it where they can mail out 30,000 notices tomorrow and in two weeks have those 30,000 people going through the (AP) stations to be in the military.

Q. You obviously feel that the military was a positive influence on you? A positive experience?

A. Yes.

Q. I know, the trouble with an area like this is when you've got a young kid coming out of high school and no job, maybe that's the best place for a kid like that.

A. Yes, the military makes you be dependent on yourself, not on mom and dad.

Q. Or the government.

A. Or the government. I don't want to see all the young kids get drafted into the military, I still believe in freedom of choice. I know myself, I'd much rather be in the military doing active duty than going down here to pick up a welfare check. Of course, that's a personal opinion.

Q. What did you do when you got home?

A. Believe it or not I went back to the U.S. shoe corporation the very next day and got my job back. I went to work.

Q. You were working there before you got drafted -- you went to school and worked both?

A. Yes.

Q. Where was that at?

A. Flemingsburg, KY.

Q. What about your schooling, did you go back to college?

A. I got out of the Army on the 19th of Feb, 1972, of course it was too late to get in on the spring semester at Morehead, so I had to wait until August of 1972. Yes, I went back. I completed my undergraduate work and went a semester on my graduate work.

- Q. So you completed your B.A. in 1972.
- A. Actually I completed my work in 1972, but didn't get my diploma until May of 1973.
- Q. And your major area was political science?
- A. Yes, and History, I got a double major
- Q. Did you join any veterans organizations after you got out?
- A. No.
- Q. Do they have any local ones here?
- A. Yes, they've got an American Legion and a VFW both.
- Q. Any particular reason why you didn't join?
- A. No, not really, I just never did do it.
- Q. Have you ever taken part in any kind of protest?
- A. No.
- Q. Are you still working now at U.S. shoe?
- A. No, I started work with the Kentucky Military dept., the National Guard, on the 6th of June, 1973. I graduated May 17, 1973 from Morehead and went to work the 6th of June here.
- Q. So you've been here about 10 years then?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Just exactly what do you do here?
- A. Well, I'm a unit administrator. I take care of the personnel records of 165 people as of today. Recruiter. We've got a job description that we follow, but it's got a last line on it, other duties as assigned. That's what gets you. We do everything, maintenance, whatever the job requires, we do it.
- Q. Do you think your degree helped any in getting this job.
- A. It sure didn't hurt.
- Q. When you went to college, why did you decide to go to Morehead? Because it was convenient?
- A. No, not really. The late Mr. Raymond Westwood was the superintendent at Nicholas County schools at the time. He was the one that convinced me to go to Morehead State University. I really wanted to go to Eastern or the University of Kentucky. But he convinced me to go to Morehead for the very reason of the personal atmosphere of the school itself. You're not just a statistic.

Q. You think the smallness of the University was an advantage then?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you believe you get a well rounded education?

A. Yes.

Q. What about any disadvantages Morehead might have had?

A. Well, they didn't have any of these super duper football teams or anything like that, but here again it goes back to the financial portion of it. They're spending it on education, rather than sports activities.

Q. One of the reasons for this research project is Dr. Hanrahan's concerned about a lack of recognition that the Vietnam Veterans are getting, especially by those institutions that normally honor the warrior so to speak. Would you like to see some kind of a memorial at Morehead for Vietnam Veterans, say in the form of a plaque hanging in the student center or an exhibit in the library, some section set aside for an exhibit?

A. What would this plaque say on it?

Q. I really don't know. In memorial for service performed by our Alumni.

A. Yes, I would go along with that. All Vietnam Vets do not deserve the recognition that some of them do.

Q. Why do you say that?

A. Too many section eights. There were probably 40 people in my company discharged in the one year that I was there through section eights, and that's drugs, strictly drugs. Of those 40 people not one of them was in the technical field. All forty of them were in those sections that we talked about before. That's a really staggering amount for the number of people we had.

Q. Really, you think a lot of these problems, though, people just brought them on themselves or just doing anything to get out?

A. Yes.

Q. Along that same line, you know, you see a lot of negative media coverage now. Most everything you see on TV is about a Vietnam Veteran with a mental problem or a drug problem. Do you think maybe some of these have used this as a crutch, any personal problem they just blame it on the war.

A. Yes, you didn't see the individuals from WW II carrying on like this and they went through much worse than what we ever thought they did.

Q. I've always made the statement that I don't see how Vietnam could have been any worse than Korea. Looks to me like that would have been far worse than anything we went through. Just the weather alone would have made it worse. You rarely hear about those vets.

A. By being a Vietnam Vet I don't have a chip on my shoulder. I went and pulled my military time like any young man should. I don't want a pat on the back. I don't need one. And like you said, I think the biggest part of the problem is the Vietnam Vet has brought it on himself.

Q. What we're thinking about is a lot of Veterans have brought back souvenirs and pictures or things of that nature. We were thinking maybe if we could get the library to give us a section for an exhibit, maybe use some pictures and souvenirs and have it a permanent part of the library. Maybe having some kind of dedication. I don't know if you could call it a reunion or not, but where Morehead Alumni who were veterans can come up for the reunion or dedication. Would you participate in something like this?

A. Yes.

Q. Are there any final comments that you'd like to make, a statement or maybe a question you'd like to address that I've failed to ask you?

A. Well let me ask you a question. You were in the infantry. What was the drug problem in the infantry?

Q. Nonexistant.

A. That's right. I think the drug problem has been blown out of proportion.

Q. Do you think the media coverage has really been negative?

A. Yes. I think the media should show their movies and stuff on TV and do their jobs in their aspect and I think they should let the military do their jobs in their aspect. I know myself I don't want nobody with a camera or a tape player breathing over my back when I'm doing my job. That's the way I feel about it. I would tell any of them that. I think that's the greatest thing the President ever did was when he moved into Grenada and left them out.

Q. So you agree with that then? and the Media screaming, of course they're hollering about the right of the public to know but I don't think that includes the right to know at the precise time something's happening.

A. I think the public let the news media know that they didn't want the right to know about that. That they didn't deserve the right to know.

Q. Public opinion is overwhelming or Reagans side, there's no doubt about that.