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Q. What branch of the service were you in?

A. Army.

Q. What was your MOS?

A. 11 BRAVO, 40 Infantry.

Q. What were the dates you were in Vietnam?

A. October, 1969, through November, 1970.

Q. Were you in the same area the whole time you were there?

A. In the same general vicinity, yes. I was with the same unit the whole time.

Q. What area was that?

A. CuChi, just actually northwest of Saigon, along the Cambodian border.

Q. West of Saigon?

A. Just slightly. Probably about 35 miles. CuChi wasn't a large city, just a small hamlet, but that's where the divisional headquarters were.

Q. What outfit were you with?

A. 25th division, Infantry division.

Q. You graduated from Cumberland college and you got an M.A. at Morehead?

A. Yes. Ana a Rank I.

Q. When did you get your masters?

A. Probably '74 or '75.

Q. And then a rank I, so you're teaching?

A. Yes.

Q. Up here?

A. Yes, at Kenton Co. schools.

Q. It was October of '69 and you had graduated from Cumberland college at that time?

A. I needed my-student teaching, I was going to finish up that summer in fact I only had seven hours to finish. So I dropped out for the semester I was going to finish up in the summer instead. And they drafted me in April. I got my draft notice in April and went in October.

Q. As soon as they knew you no longer had that deferrment they went at you then?

A. Right.

Q. Where were you living then?

A. I was actually working in Michigan during the semester but the draft board I was drafted from was in Letcher County, Whitesburg.

Q. Is that where you come from?

A. Yes, that's where I was born and raised.

Q. So you grew up there and went to high school, what was it called?

A. Kingdom Come high school. That no longer a school.

Q. What about your family, what was your Dad's occupation?

A. He was a miner, he was a lay minister. My parents were older, I was a mistake that came along later in life. They have five children and the next to me is eight years older than I am. The oldest is 16 years older than me. So I was basically an only child really growing up.

Q. Well, you were almost ready to graduate from Cumberland and you dropped out for a semester what was the reason for that, did you say?

A. Well, I was going to finish up in the summer, seven weeks. At the time of course jobs were plentiful and I had a job working on the railroad, making pretty good money and I thought why spend 18 weeks when I can do it in seven weeks.

Q. So you were surprised then in a way. You didn't anticipate getting drafted?

A. Yes, I thought. . . this was before we had the lottery and the draft, I assumed that I would get back in school before I got drafted. Of course I knew that eventually I probably would get drafted.

Q. How old were you at the time?

A. 21.

Q. What did you think about your being drafted, did you think that the process was fair that they'd selected you rather than somebody else.

A. I didn't really think about it, I didn't consider that it was necessarily unfair. I considered it my duty. My father had been in World War I. Not that I was eager to go, by any means. I certainly didn't volunteer, I wasn't looking forward to the situation. But my number was called and I felt that I was no better than anyone else.

Q. What did you think at the time of the situation, here you were being drafted into the army during the Vietnam war. What did you think of what was happening in Vietnam at the time, did you have any realization of what was going on, had you kept in touch with it?

A. Yes. I guess I was beginning to become aware a couple of years before. Not necessarily that I had come of draft age but as you mature you start listening to the news and so on. But the college I went to was pretty conservative and instead of marching against the war I was pretty much a supporter of the war. I felt that at least we should support the boys there and the government. The way I feel whether it was right or wrong we only have one government and each of us can't go our separate way, we can't each make up our own foreign policy.

Q. You still feel that way?

A. Yes, I feel that way still.

- Q. How did you view why we were in Vietnam? How did you understand?
- A. Well, I didn't really understand how our involvement got started to begin with, in fact, I didn't really understand nothing until I got out of Vietnam and read about it I had heard about Dienbienphu but it was just a name in my mind. I really didn't understand the consequences of it. I'd heard of Indo-China but I really didn't understand the Coloneism of France and so on. I did live in some of the villages where the French had occupied it. I lived in a French factory for about three months. So I did see some areas where the French occupied, rubber plantations and so on.
- Q. You were a conservative person and you had some understanding of the reason we were in Vietnam. Precisely what was that reason, why were we in Vietnam, after all the country was arguing with itself over the whole issue of Vietnam and you tended to support the government. How did you see what the government was trying to do in Vietnam.
- A. Well, I thought we were trying to support a democratic government against communist aggression thats how I viewed it.
- Q. Where did you do your basic training?
- A. Ft. Knox.
- Q. This was right in the infantry at that time?
- A. Well no, everybody goes through the same type of basic training, at that time it was nine weeks, whether it was cooks, clerks, whatever. So you weren't really assigned an MOS until you got out of basic training and then you were sent to advanced training or OJT - on the job training - or whatever.
- Q. And they sent you to Infantry school?
- A. Yes at Ft. Polk, Louisiana. As soon as you went to Ft. Pope you knew that you were in the infantry and you assumed, of course, you hoped it wouldn't happen, but you knew when you went to Ft. Polk that you were going to Vietnam.
- Q. Do you think your education may have given you a better. . .
- A. Without a doubt it helped me. I thought maybe it might keep me out of the Infantry but. . . of course you know how you hear rumors. A friend of mine had just been drafted, he was a college graduate also and he told me if you look - you know they give you an opportunity to extend every year and after three years you get to choose the type of training you want. I certainly had no intention of making the army, my career. He told me he had extended the extra year and went to clerk school and he told me because he wore glasses, because of his eyesight, he was AB profile, therefore he couldn't be in the Infantry. So I was smart enough when I looked in my jacket and saw BI profile I said hell there's no reason for me to extend anyway which I probably wouldn't have. But I didn't even give it a thought. Of course, my name was the first one called at Ft. Polk. Then 80% of the people that graduated from Ft. Polk infantry, probably more, went to Vietnam at the time.

- Q. Well, having spent, well lacking a semester getting your degree, that didn't protect you from getting in the infantry did it?
- A. No, but the first day I was chosen as squad leader, you know, I had to do the same thing everyone else did, but I got rank faster. Only 8 people out of my platoon made E-1 which is not any great strides by any means but only 8 of us made E-1 after basic and of course automatically I was one of the eight because I had been a squad leader.
- Q. This going into the Army, you were already in by October of 1969?
- A. Right I went in in May.
- Q. Then in October then sent you to Vietnam?
- A. Right, five months from the day I was drafted exactly.
- Q. Did you go over with a unit?
- A. No, you're completely split up. Now I knew a lot of people because we'd graduated on the same date and we had orders to report to Ft. Lewis, Washington on the same date. And I knew some of the people on the flight. In fact, some of the people I'd been in basic with were on the same flight but none of us were in the same unit in Vietnam. Once you went into a receiving station in Vietnam you were just scattered all over the country.
- Q. So here you are one soldier joining a particular . . .
- A. Totally an individual. You're always looking for someone, a comrade.
- Q. Well there's been some criticism of that procedure you've just described. Contrasted to both World War II and Korea. Men trained together and went to war together. It was somewhat traumatic I suppose you'd say, the way you're describing it. You're a pretty lonely fellow first coming in and having to make friends and so forth at that particular time.
- A. There is one advantage to it I think. For example, in World War II and Korea when you sent a new unit in, they got slaughtered, simply because of combat experience and I think that is one advantage to this in at least you have a new guy and he kind of attaches himself to an older guy for a month, three weeks, until he gets his feet wet. That is one advantage to it I really feel that that does help in that case.
- Q. Well that's a good point. I hadn't thought of that before, nor had I heard it put that way. So then you're with your outfit in the Infantry division, you are soon in combat?
- A. Well actually from the day I landed in Vietnam, they process you in, of course, I anticipated having to fight my way off the plane and this and that.
- Q. Tell me about your feelings at that point?
- A. I was scared of course, coming in. We landed in a large air base, early in the morning. It was totally different than anything I'd ever seen here. I was amazed by the lack of modern facilities I guess, everything wood. But yet there was a modern runway. Then they loaded us on buses with metal grids on the windows. Of course I knew what that was for. We went down to this fairly large city BenHoa which is next to Long Ben. BenHoa Air Base and Long Ben Army Base, very close together. I saw just masses of humanity out in the streets.

Q. In the city of BenHoa?

A. Yes, going from BenHoa Air Base to the Long Ben Army Base where we process in, we had to go on buses and it reminded me of the teeming masses you see in the movies about Hong Kong or something of that nature and I expected someone to chuck a grenade at us at any time. But it was pretty calm. When we processed in, every so often they choose a group of Infantry people and we were mostly infantry people on my flight, we had 250 people. And every week or so they'd choose one group, on a certain date and you pulled guard duty around the in processing compound. This was at Bay, which is in the central highlands of Vietnam. Usually most people came into Camrahn Bay, they had two in processing centers, Camrahn Bay and BenHoa. I actually didn't come into BenHoa that was the second time when I came back from my R & R. I came into Camrahn Bay the first time. So usually the people that came into Camrahn Bay went to the North, 101st Airborne.

Q. That was your first Air Base?

A. Yes, Camrahn Bay and not BenHoa.

Q. Did you go through BenHoa to get to Camrahn Bay?

A. No, when I came back from R & R I went to BenHoa.

Q. Then you noticed the people and so forth?

A. Right. I noticed the people in both places really. Camrahn Bay was a fairly large area, probably, I'm not sure if it was as big as BenHoa or not. Of course, you had two bases there together, that made it appear a lot larger too, there at Long Ben. But we stayed an extra week there pulling guard duty, then they sent us to our units, then I went to CuChi. I flew on a small probably C47, 30 or 40 guys to CuChi. Once we got to CuChi they sent us to a special school. The 25th division had a, I guess gave you a little preview, I guess a little extra training which I thought was pretty good, of about 3 or 4 days.

Q. What was the training like?

A. Basically they told you everything runs by the book in the U.S. You know they teach you combat tactics by the book and you don't necessarily fight by the book over here, you fight for survival. So they said you can forget some of the things you have been taught, they are basic things, but you have to ad lib a little bit. They gave you extra training on boobey chops, escape and evasion and things of that nature. Then we were sent, of course we were already assigned to our unit when we went to the school, we knew which unit we were going to be in. We spent the night in our main Base Camp.

Q. Did you think that you'd had enough preparation and training from where you were at that point.

A. I doubt that you could ever really get enough but in comparison to what I've read about World War II getting thin training on ships in six weeks and so on yes. I thought they prepared us well.

- Q. What seemed to be the general morale of the men you associated with?
- A. Generally speaking everyone of course the main thing was survival, we were pretty much a unit, pretty close and after you've been there awhile, at first a newly as we were called is never trusted because you do make a lot of mistakes. Your going to have to learn to walk without making a noise, without falling and so on. So, after you are accepted we were pretty close. My situation was probably a little different than most. With my first unit when we walked into the first platoon, the platoon was of about 30 people, we were working in two fifteen man sections. Each platoon had section A+ section B. Then they decided they would break the platoon into squads after about two weeks into 3 squads of about 10 people each. My squad was except for three of us were all killed within a month.
- Q. All but three, how many were there?
- A. We had a short squad at the time only 7 people. We had three men killed in one night and the other one was seriously injured, actually it was four, one person had been reassigned so that left 3 of us.
- Q. How long after you got there did you have that to happen?
- A. About a month. December 12, 1969. Out of the three that were left, the squad leader re-upped the next day and got off line. That left me the squad leader. I'd been there a month and a half when they made me squad leader. I was an E-3 POC. Not dry behind the ears but that was a unique situation. The next day they sent us three brand new men.
- Q. Describe the action that led to the death of these three men in your squad had happened?
- A. We were out on what we call RIFRS Reconnaissance in Force during the day we worked in company size units.
- Q. Is this similar to what they call search and destroy?
- A. Yes, very similar.
- Q. Were you in jungle or swamp?
- A. I was in swamp, rice paddies. Now when I went into the country it was at the very end of the wet season and I was very fortunate in that there wasn't a lot of rain but the little base that I was on. The hard spot we called it, which was a company sized area was probably about a 100 meters across, any direction you went in you were going to. So every night we pulled ambush in 10 and 12 man units, wait until it was dark, walk out, set up. This was right on the Cambodian border, within a mile.
- Q. What were you looking for?
- A. We were just waiting for re-inforcements and supplies to come across the Cambodian border.
- Q. You were going to surprise them.
- A. Right.

Q. Were you successful in that?

A. Sometimes, not all that often. The best definition I've heard of Vietnam, by a major was hours and hours of boredom punctuated by stark terror. And that's the way it was, you never knew when. I saw most of my action most of my bad action the first 3½ months I was over there.

Q. Did you ever question the way the army was fighting this war?

A. Yes.

Q. What did you say to yourself about it?

A. Of course I'm looking at it from a very small viewpoint, from our area of the mountain I'm covering, I'm not looking at it from a battalion standpoint or from a corp standpoint. I wasn't exactly sure what the orders were in Long Ben or the Southern Part of Vietnam, so I'm just looking at it from my little viewpoint. It seemed to me that everyone was trying to keep from being killed, trying to survive for one year and trying to come back home, to keep themselves in one piece rather than getting the job done. That's the way it seemed to me. It seemed that when we were out doing the RIFs that you just get out and walk around and I didn't know where we were going. I just followed. I never knew where we were going to go from one day to the next or what we were going to do and I guess halfway you felt like hey I'm out here if someone wants to attack me, do that and we'll fight. Of course, they pick their own time if they could. So, in that respect I didn't see no sense in what we were doing. I always felt like we fought the war like a big kid fighting a little kid, come on kid I don't want to hurt you, I'll take defensive measures but no offensive measures, I'm not going to hurt you but I'll keep you from hitting me. That seemed to me like the way we were fighting the war so yes I did question the tactics used.

We'd move around all day in Company units, then at night we'd break up into platoons, that's what we were doing this time. We were staying out three or four days at a time, this time. Everything was on your back. Before we'd go out, do an ambush and come back to our little bitty base and you felt secure, even though it wasn't secure, we'd have ground attacks against that base. In fact, a month before we got to this one base we had a massive ground attack we killed a 198 that night, that was my unit before I got there, but-we lost 13.

Q. You killed 198, was it regular North Vietnamese?

A. Yes, it was both, a mixture. But usually they sent the sappers in first trying to blow the wire and then it was a mass.

Q. This was an attack on base?

A. Yes, just before I got there. After they moved us out of the base, instead of going out during the day and coming back to the base at night they moved us out three or four days at a time carrying all your food, water, and everything on your back. That's what led up to the December attack, what they were doing and I'm sure we found out later, we would split up at night (the company) and some of us would go in each direction, they had probably followed us all day until we split up at night and they were using hit and run tactics, probably four man squads. I was very lucky individual because I'd been the position at one time of each of the men that had been killed. We were moving out in lines of 18-20 and I started out as the last man because I was adjusting my gear, I was the assistant machine gunner.

Q. Was that your weapon?

A. I was given the M16 but I had to carry extra ammo for the machine gunner. I usually walked behind him. I was to assist him in firing, loading and in case he got wounded of course I was to take over the gun. I usually walked behind him, he was about four or five men up and every time we took a break I moved up one guy and I just had stepped in front of him and they ambushed us, from behind, we were going the opposite direction of what we should have been in, we were going to go in and circle back around. ✓

Q. We was killed?

A. He was killed and two others.

Q. What killed him?

A. Shrapnel from the rocket. It landed so close to me I didn't hear it.

Q. Was it an ambush type of thing?

A. Yes. All I remember was an orange flash. It killed him, the three guys directly behind him and I guess it was and then the other guy was shot pretty bad.

Q. And this was a seven man squad?

A. Well we had been working in squads, but this night the whole platoon was together.

Q. So was it a seven man platoon?

A. Well we probably had 18 or 20 men altogether. We worked in larger units at that time for three or four days.

Q. This was at night?

A. Yes, probably 8 o'clock, just had gotten dark.

Q. What did you expect to find at night going out like that?

A. Well a couple of nights before, in fact, two nights in a row just before this we had made contact with the enemy. It was scary as hell for me because and don't see well anyway, at night especially. It was pitch black. We were in hedge rows you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. I always had the feeling he could see better than I could.

Q. The U.C.?

A. Yes.

Q. It seems to me they had the advantage?

A. They chose the spots. Now when we chose the spot we kicked the hell out of them.

Q. How often did that happen?

A. Not too often, not in large numbers. They were strange, sometimes they'd hit and run, sometimes you'd catch two of them you'd pin them down and hell they'd fight all day. Sometimes just immediately they'd never fire a shot. You never knew what to expect out of them. In large groups they'd always fight I guess because of their officers, probably. But in small groups a lot of times they'd just give up and quit. ✓

- Q. It sounds to me as if, that when you really came down to it, it was the individual soldier on each side against each other as in most cases the North Vietnamese had as much chance to come out ahead as the Americans.
- A. Really they did, especially at night. During the daytime there was no way that they did. The only thing, a lot of people here I think thought we were fighting a little guy that only had sling shots and rocks to throw. They had to same type of weapons that we did except for the Air Power, helicopters, they didn't the artillery, in that respect it was very much to our advantage. Now they didn't have the re-supply that we did, they didn't have the food, they had to live off the people, whereas we had the re-supply. And we had all the ammo we needed anytime we needed some all we had to do was send for it and it was sent out. So in that respect they were a little short, but for a quick fight they were as well equipped as we were to get in and out. But for a long sustained fight no they weren't very well equipped.
- Q. Actually the type of tactics used then?
- A. They use them to their best advantage.
- Q. That type of tactic favored them?
- A. Right, tactically they fought a good war.
- Q. Did you think they were good soldiers, did you respect them as fighters?
- A. I didn't necessarily fear their ability, I feared death. I always felt like if we met under equal conditions, like the old colonels and the Red Coats, if we met head to head we'd beat the hell out of them, but I worried about looking over my shoulder.
- Q. So your comparison their is that the Red Coats in the Revolutionary War were like the Americans in Vietnam?
- A. Exactly.
- Q. That it was the rebels that were firing in ambush and didn't fight fair. I guess it was true this is the way they say Washingtons Army survived by refusing to meet the enemy on the battle field.
- A. I didn't mind his tenacity of what he could live on, how he lived and holes in the ground, I admired, they were very versatile, it was unbelievable some of the things they could live through. I don't know how they could do it, I did admire that.
- Q. What are you thinking about when you say that? The conditions under which they fought?
- A. Well, yes, and the amount of food they had and then when you'd see this awesome fire power that we'd bring down on them, how any of them survived I don't know. You could just throw artillery all around and I don't know how they survived. In a good fight, a good close up fight we'd beat them every time.

- Q. But of course they weren't giving you much of an opportunity that way, were they?
- A. No. Maybe that's not a fair fight either because of the artillery and the gunships and so forth that we had. A lot of people think that this is the hardest war that we've ever had to fight psychologically and I disagree. Its not having a front line and rear line and so forth that is bad, but when you stop and think of those soldiers in World War II laying in a foxhole and being pounded with artillery day and night, to me psychologically that has to be much harder on you than what I was going through. See, we never had to fear an airplane at night, we never had to fear artillery and just imagine, I've been trapped a couple of times with our shells landing to close to us, you see pieces of metal come flying over your head on fire it does something to you.
- Q. Well, you've had other kinds of fears, different fears than the World War II soldiers?
- A. Oh yes.
- Q. Do you think that you fought well?
- A. Me personally?
- Q. And your men that you were with?
- A. When we fought yes. We didn't get to fight often enough.
- Q. When you look back on it are you proud of your efforts to do the best you could under the circumstances. Do you think as a soldier you're proud of your experiences and the way you fought?
- A. I am proud of my experiences yes. Not false pride, I'm not saying that we did anything great. I'm proud of the effort we made. I think we clearer instructions and orders and especially with a clearer direction and a clearer goal. in other words we didn't have a clear goal like you did in World War II, fight till the end. We fought for one year. A man making a decision in Washington, President Reagan or whoever it is a lot of people will say old men send young men to die of course thats always been true, you have to have leaders and you have to have followers and due to the way the human is and our mistakes and errors we will always have wars and you always have to have someone to fight them. That sounds cold and cruel but I think we felt that our main objective was a delaying action. You know I go delay them for a year and someone else will take my place for a year and eventually we'll hold them off long enough until the South Vietnamese can control it themselves, that was the feeling I go so, I don't feel we had a clear cut goal, not each individual. That is one of the bad things, I think, that is where I feel we really made a mistake.
- Q. What you're saying is you were only there for that one year so it is impossible for you to understand why we lost the war except in terms of your own experience that you describe, that this wearing down process seemed in the long run to favor their side rather than ours. The American people at home as well as the soldier in the field just became tired of what was happening with no possibility of victory in sight, would you agree with that?

- A. Yes and No. Not necessarily as much as the soldier in the field it affected but the people at home. It was the weariness of the people at home, not the soldier, that lost the war.
- Q. You fought as well as you could, but you felt that the people at home were not giving the support that you deserved?
- A. Yes. I feel that way, yes. Especially Congress. Maybe the war did drag on too long. I think one of the greatest mistakes ever made, of course like I said I'm a very conservative person. The greatest mistake ever made was Johnson being elected President instead of Barry Goldwater. Barry Goldwater was considered a war monger. He said either we fight the war to win it or lets get the hell out. Thats the greatest mistake we ever made. If we were going to fight the war we should have taken the war to them in North Vietnam and I don't mean simply by bombing. The only thing the North Vietnamese had going for them was fear and they really capitalized on fear. They would to into a village, capture a chief and his family, cut his head off, rape his daughter, cut her stomach open and leave them laying there. We'll be back tomorrow night, if not tomorrow night, the night after.
- Q. Now are these stories you were hearing or is this something you knew?
- A. Well I knew in some cases, not of their cutting the heads off and this that and the other, but yes I knew of situations where they'd come in and demand rice and stuff. Because I was on the Cambodian border. So, they had the fear factor, we didn't. I felt like if we had sent Commanders into North Vietnam and sent units that it would have made a difference. They suffered far more than we did.
- Q. And you blame this on Johnson. the way the war was fought?
- A. And Congress more so necessarily than Johnson. I feel like he made some errors.
- Q. Why Congress?
- A. Because - its a dumb thing to say this was a political war and other wars were not, all wars are political wars. World War II was a political war as far as I understand it, I'm not a history major, but to me any war is a political war, except maybe for the Trojan War, at least it was fought over a woman! When they say it was a political war and the others were not I disagree with that. But what I'm saying is we were fighting it geographically, you can't cross the line. We were expected to follow the rules and they weren't.
- Q. There were restraints on the American side but not on the other?
- A. Right, they would not let us win, Congress would not let us win. I feel that way. Nixon, this again is my own personal viewpoint, I was on the Camobdian border the whole time, I did not go into Cambodia the whole time simply because I was on R&R, my unit did not go into Cambodia. They were walking point, my squad, which I was squad leader. They were walking point for my batallion when they bound one of the major headquarters across the border in Cambodia. Nixon caught more hell over that than a little, that was the best move of the war, only thing was it was about four or five years to late.

Q. Were you involved in that Parrot's Beak attack that you're talking about?

A. I was involved in the Parrot's Beak dog face, angel wing. The angel wing is a little area that extends out, so they could actually come to Vietnam from three directions the Parrot's Beak was just south of that, it was a little narrower. They were right in the same area, the Saigon corridor where they were sending fresh supplies in.

Q. And your outfit was part of the attack on that?

A. Yes. Well before anyone here knew about it, I don't think it was on the news here, three weeks before we sent in the South Vietnamese, before any Americans ever went in. They sent us to the border and we pulled a blacking action on this side of the border, on the Eastern edge. They sent in the South Vietnamese, their soldiers. Especially into this one village. We were there three days. And all of our intelligence mentioned this one village just across the border, probably had 600-700 people, so they sent the South Vietnamese in behind trying to push them into us, they chose to fight the South Vietnamese rather than come across and fight us generally speaking. They pounded the hell out of the village for about three days. Killed a large number of people. Definitely there were North Vietnamese there, because when you start getting planes shot down, you know that they are well entrenched. The South Vietnamese lost a couple planes, couple helicopters. They did try to sneak across the border and get by us at night in small groups. We were strung out along the border but then we'd move out a little at night trying to pick up small units coming across.

Q. Now this is the kind of thing you thought should have been done earlier?

A. Oh yes. It affected their supply lines, it's unbelievable the amount of rice, weapons and so forth.

Q. Cambodia was neutral?

A. No it wasn't neutral. They claimed to be, but it wasn't.

Q. In what sense do you mean that?

A. The North Vietnamese didn't respect their neutrality did they?

Q. Well that's different from saying the Cambodians are neutral, you had the North-Vietnamese violating this neutrality is that what you're saying?

A. Yes.

Q. Then you felt that the Americans should be violating this neutrality also?

A. If you're going to fight a war, then fight it to win.

Q. I think that was one of the restraints wasn't it? Of course, we wanted to respect Cambodian neutrality, we found ourselves at a disadvantage here. But you would have just chucked that?

A. I sure would have. I would have told the Cambodian government that I was coming, which they were too weak to do anything about it. I would have informed them, I'm not saying I'm the Hitler type but I would inform the Cambodian government if you can't get them out I will.

- Q. I think part of it though, even when Nixon invaded Cambodia, the reaction at home was to call it just that, an invasion and criticize the President for what he did. He did not get public support at all they just saw it as a widening of the war.
- A. We did cross the boundary, I wouldn't classify it as an invasion because we made no move whatsoever on the Cambodian government, we made no move to occupy any Cambodian town, we were there to fight the North Vietnamese.
- Q. So your argument is that you use whatever you have to, to at least protect yourself?
- A. Right. If they wanted to bring us home fine, I can live with that today, bring us home but don't just set us out there and let us set there defenseless.
- Q. You've got strong feelings on this?
- A. Yes, I do.
- Q. What - it certainly has done something to your attitude about America and its government and so forth. How do you feel now as a result of going through this experience, what has it done to you?
- A. I think we're weak. We were weak at the time we went into Vietnam. You asked earlier what kind of a job we did in Vietnam. We were weak emotionally, each person. To me this was the age of the individual, which I do believe in individual rights, don't get me wrong but sometimes the individual rights have to take a back seat to what is good for everyone. So when we were going through the "me" state in the late '60s, early '70s, this led - this was one of the reasons that the war wasn't fought well.
- Q. People thinking only of themselves?
- A. Right. And by that I mean, let me do my own thing, don't tell me what to do.
- Q. Some say part of the reason why that occurred was the Vietnam war?
- A. No, I disagree. It was coming on before that. I think the Vietnam war probably magnified it. And it would probably never have been as bad without the Vietnam war, that just gave it a focus. To me if you look at all of society, the way things are changing very fast and it started I guess with World War II - Family situations, divorce rate. I think all of it's tied in together.
- Q. Well you certainly have thought about this.
- A. Yes.
- Q. Let me go back, you mentioned the South Vietnamese Army. What did you think of the ARVN? Did you work with them much?
- A. Well, I didn't work with the ARVN that much. I worked with popular forces which would be almost like the National Guard here. The ARVN I didn't really think that much of. They were just like our army, but I lived for six months in two different villages - we stayed right in the village during the day time - we didn't have a big compound of our own. And we pulled ambushes with them, they were nice people. They fought well. That was one thing we were supposed to do really, was to work with the popular forces. The thing is we left within a year. They were still fighting but we left. I became friends with a lot of them.

Q. Of course, they're still there.

A. Oh yes. I've often wondered about that.

Q. Do you think we deserted them?

A. Yes. Well, you've got to look at it realistically but I feel for some of them.

Q. Well they put a lot of faith in us right? Is that what you're saying?

A. Yes, they did. Some of them in particular, I say I was good friends, I guess as good a friend as I could be under the circumstances. Of course, we always had a little place there where we drank coffee - hepatitis we called it - made with local water. They even extended credit to us and most GI's, we paid it.

Q. Did you trust them?

A. Pretty much.

Q. There seems to be a whole range of feelings on this from men when I talk to them about the South Vietnamese, from your sympathetic and favorable view of them to the other extreme that none of them were any good. I hear this.

A. Do you hear that more often than the other?

Q. I can't say that I hear it one way or the other because I hear your views, the sympathetic view trying to understand the South Vietnamese and what they were enduring and trying to understand them as you are expressing it I've heard that several times. I've also heard the other extreme. That you couldn't trust any of them. One man said he was at Cameron Bay and the barber, a Vietnamese was one that they caught coming through the perimeter one night with a satchel full of explosives. That kind of thing.

A. I can understand that but still, you never know a guys motives.

Q. And another fellows told me about an eleven year old kid, the best mortar man that the Viet Cong had. They paid him 50¢ a night and how many Americans he killed at this particular base it'd be hard to say. And this man that had to endure all this knowing that this was the kid who did it. I guess he just looked at that kid and attached his anger for him towards all Vietnamese. But you don't see it quite that way?

A. No. It didn't bother me at all to see a dead one it didn't bother me at all when we killed one. Of course I look back and thats why they want 19, 20, and 21 year old boys. You have knee jirk reactions, thats what they teach you. You react swiftly and don't think anything about it. When you're in that state, of course, my parents were very religious and my mother wrote a couple of letters once mentioning killing kids, we didn't do that. We had a few people that were somewhat morbid, they'd cut a finger off when they seen one but as far as being overbearing with the Vietnamese people, we had one of two people that would be but in most cases not. You do get a little calloused. But I met some really nice men in fact a VC, I loved him. He came over to our side, his name was Phiut. He couldn't speak a word of English when we got him.

- Q. You captured him?
- A. Yes. Well actually we called it Chieu Hoi then. A Chieu Hoi program. He'd been in the VC for eight years. We called them Chieu Hoi or Kid Carsons. He worked as a scout with us, couldn't speak a word of English, 32 years old. He's the one I really think about. I wonder what happened to him. I always felt the same way in my squad. He worked in my squad.
- Q. What did he do in your squad?
- A. He worked as an advisor, of course, he spoke Vietnamese he'd walk point, he stood guard duty at night just like everyone else. But he was there to boost our morale as much as anything, knowing that he knew the terrain and it was kind of like the old Indian scouts they hired in the West.
- Q. You trusted him?
- A. Yes.
- Q. He never betrayed you?
- A. No.
- Q. But you left him there and he survived, at least your time?
- A. Yes. We had a man killed and he cried. I wonder what happened to him, I really do.
- Q. Do you know, were there others like him?
- A. Sure, many of them. Now some of them weren't so good. We had another one that showed up, he was there three days. He asked me to borrow my hat, he had to go into Saigon for something. So I gave him my brand new hat, they were hard to get, the booney hats they called them. He never did come back. They weren't all like Phiut. I liked him. Some of the kids were nice kids. Phiut had a wife.
- Q. Where was he from?
- A. Trang Bang.
- Q. He was a South Vietnamese?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Was his wife with him?
- A. No. She lived in the village where he was from. I learned a little bit about the Vietnamese culture from him, how different it was from ours. He said if a woman didn't have a child within 10 years, 8 years you could divorce her. She eventually had one though. He'd get a three day pass once a month to go home and see his family. We helped him out with the black market, we buy cigarettes for him - he'd pay us. We could buy them whereas he couldn't, that was wrong but it was a way of helping him.
- Q. Did he get paid?
- A. Yes, I don't know exactly how much, it wasn't much. But we bought him a TV.

- Q. Why is it if you can get one man like that the other South Vietnamese couldn't work with the American army the same way? Why was there not any cooperation? I think your case, from what most people have told me is unusual.
- A. Most people there were peasants.
- Q. Well lets say the Arvin, the people that were trained. Couldn't they have done the same thing with them, highly motivated to work with the American Army? Instead of you people floundering around the countryside, not knowing the language, not knowing the terrain and then going out at night.
- A. I think it would have been much more effective. The people that we worked with, we called them PF's and RF's, popular forces and regional forces. When we went out on ambush at night, if they got through us and went into the town that was that was their house. One of their houses could have been hit. Whereas the Arvin forces were just like us. They were drafted, they went to a unit, you didn't know what part of Vietnam you were going into. And they were weary, they fought for 20 years and I understand when you say maybe communism would have been better for some of the, I disagree. I don't think communism is good for most people, except possibly China. I still don't think its good for anyone. Not in the form we have it surviving anyway in the World. But I guarantee you if you go back and ask the people in South Vietnam, and I would stake my life on it, as to which they'd prefer, everyone of them would choose our system of government. Not all of them, but a big percentage of them. If they could truly vote the way they'd like to see it. They deserve better than what they got I think. It was a Civil War to a point and I don't think that we were pushing our ideas and viewpoints down their throats, I don't believe that because those people I really feel that they wanted democracy.
- Q. Now this is South Vietnam?
- A. Yes. Otherwise why did you have the people flee North Vietnam trying to get into South Vietnam. Which I met a couple of officers that were born in Hanoi and they kept moving South.
- Q. Did you have any trouble with black Americans and white Americans getting along?
- A. Well, I hadn't really been associated with blacks that much and I wasn't prejudiced. Well, I was to a degree, I think anyone probably is to a degree. I certainly wouldn't have wanted to have dated one at that time. I thought they had been treated rather badly, but I grew a little harsher in Vietnam. At first, there were nice ones as well, but a lot of them expected more than a lot of the whites did. As far as drug users, I'd say maybe at a higher percentage of blacks than whites, not that much. They say that the black soldier proved himself in Vietnam. I would disagree with that.
- Q. You didn't think they fought well?
- A. No, most of them shirked their duty. That sounds very racist but I feel that way. Not all of them, most of them. The problem was this, when you get a new soldier in, a new black soldier he was just like anyone else. He was a good soldier for about three weeks then the old time black soldier would say hey man you better start hanging around us. Peer pressure turned them around the other way. I've seen it happen a number of times.

- Q. Turned them around to what direction?
- A. To the black militant viewpoint. In other words, "Don't give me an order, don't tell me what to do. The only reason I have to do this is because I'm black." So, usually you just went ahead and did it yourself.
- Q. You didn't find too much of this contention that sometimes you hear, that when you have men whose lives are in danger they tended to forget race and help each other?
- A. You didn't worry about race at those times, no. During fighting I had no problems whatsoever. It was, for example, back at the main base camp. When I say a lot of them shirked their duties I don't mean that they were cowards and would hide when you would start fighting - there was no place to hide to begin with, I mean that they would try to get out of the field or they would refuse to go to the field. I've seen that a number of times, that really hurt morale when you have a group of people standing out on the helicopter pad waiting to be picked up and there's a guy shows up, no weapon or anything else and you say I'm giving you a direct order to go the field with them and he'd say hey man I'm not going.
- Q. So what would happen to him?
- A. The first time they'd give him an article 15 which is a fine whereas in World War II he probably would have been shot on the spot. The second time you'd court marshal him, maybe the third time. A lot of them eventually then would be sent home for the benefit of the service. I've seen that happen a number of times. Not always black, but usually black.
- Q. You mentioned the drugs. What was the drug situation like when you were over there?
- A. Of course, I was naive I'm sure. I'd never smoked pot and I didn't smoke it there, I didn't see any reason too - not for a moralistic reason - I did drink. I still have alcoholic beverages. But then, there's no doubt in my mind but what it caused people to be killed. And booze would have done the same thing had it been available. It just wasn't available like pot. People can say whatever they want to, but I know of a few people that were killed because of it. The army knew it too but they couldn't prove it. That's why I say that we were weak people emotionally. All the people I noticed that were potheads, that smoked all the time, I think it changes you psychologically in that most of them, maybe again it was the sign of the times but, they never had any ambition to do anything.
- Q. Do you think they were taking these drugs or would have taken these drugs even if the situation were turned around from the criticism you have of the way we fought the war to the best kind of situation. In other words the war itself had nothing to do with the war?
- A. No. A lot of them had smoked pot before they went to Vietnam. I heard a conscientious objector, we kind of had words, don't get me wrong we had 2 or 3 conscientious objectors in my unit who were fine soldiers. You don't suddenly stay out in the field for six months and then decide that your religious viewpoint keeps you from carrying a gun or killing someone. These people came into the army as CO's, they didn't refuse to go to the field, they refused to carry a weapon that takes a lot of guts to stand out there without a weapon.

Q. And they were in the infantry?

A. They were medical people and they were good. I saw a guy crawl for a hundred yards one day to get to a wounded guy. And they were shooting at him but he went after him. These other people I'm talking about and we had a number of these too they were looking for an easy way out. This is why I think the problems we had in Vietnam were just a mirror of society as a whole. It wasn't Vietnam that caused it, I don't think. ✓

Q. You don't think the whole atmosphere of people just thinking of their own survival and frustrations of the type warfare you had to endure was a contributing factor?

A. I'm sure it was somewhat of a contributing factor, yes. But it wasn't the instigator. I think most of them would have smoked pot no matter where they were at. They'd say you have to have something and I'd tell them I'd been there two months longer than they had and it didn't bother me.

Q. How long were you actually in the combat area?

A. I was over there almost 14 months, but after 8 months I got an off line job back in the rear. Again my education helped me.

Q. But in that 8 months, you were really fighting all that time?

A. Not really. Well, there was a possibility all that time. But you'd go weeks and weeks and never see anything and then maybe three days in a row you would. But, I was never in any sustained combat for a long period of time, 5, 10, 15 minutes and then it was over. It was very intense for those few minutes.

Q. And this one time you talked about of the three or four men that were killed, that kind of thing did not repeat itself?

A. Well, January 3 we were, instead of receiving the ambush, on the other end, it was a lot more fun being on the other end. We killed eight I think.

Q. How did it happen, was it at night too?

A. Yes. We got screwed up. We were working out of this village and we had a ground radar unit that two men set up all night and could pick up any type of movement. We were going out, we had two squads, probably fourteen men. (In between those two times we had other bits of action too. That was my busiest point really the first three months was when I saw just about all my action except for a few sporadic things now and then.) But, we were going out on an ambush, it was pitch black couldn't see anything, it was dry - rice was being harvested so the rice paddies were very dry. We were going out and we got a message we had two radios, we had two squads with two Vietnamese in between, which was unfortunate, they should have been on the end. They called us and said they had picked up movement from three directions around us. They were on three sides of us so we stopped and they sent up illumination flares from the artillery. We were probably there 10 minutes and they kept sending flares up. Of course, you can't stand up, we were down.

The squad leader up front was an Indian from New Mexico, Super good. For some reason while we had stopped this radio man from this squad worked up to where they were at so we had two radios together. So they called us in and told us to try and get cover. These two guys crawled on up there a ditch about a 100 yards in front of us. Well we kept passing the word back and the last guy in my squad was a new guy, hadn't been there long and he didn't realize that these two Vietnamese followed him just barely spoke English so the two Vietnamese followed him but they didn't tell the squad behind them so all of us got up in the ditch and looked back and the rest of them hadn't followed us, so we had eight people hanging back in the dark with no radio or nothing.

Q. They'd lost contact?

A. Yes, total contact, we had goops on three sides. The Indian, of course, I didn't know this at the time, but he crawled back a hundred yards in the pitch black to get them and they almost shot him. Just as they were coming to the ditch where we were at the Vietnamese came after them and they didn't know we were in the ditch though. In fact, I was afraid when we opened up that we'd hit some of our own men. They walked right into us. I know we killed at least eight and carried a lot of the others off. I was wounded that night slightly. Three of us were. They got both machine gunners.

Q. Where were you hit?

A. In the rear end. I don't know how, we were laying in the ditch and there was nothing sticking above that ditch but my head. I got hit right square in the tail.

Q. Was it a bad wound?

A. No, it was sore, it hurt for some time.

Q. You still stayed with your unit there?

A. I went later that night they sent in a helicopter simply because it would have been too sore for me to walk, it was in the muscle. Almost like a Charlie Horse only a little sorer. At first I thought someone had kicked me, hit me with the heel of their boot in that muscle. It didn't keep me from shooting or anything. And I asked the medic, I said check my butt back there, it sore, somebody kicked me or something. See if its bleeding and he said no I cant' see anything. I said OK. It was burning by then and after a few minutes I had him check it again and he said yes you're bleeding. I could have walked then, but since one of the other guys was wounded they told me to go back on the helicopter with him. I could have stayed but I'd have had to have gone in anyway to have it removed.

Q. Was the bullet in you?

A. It was a piece of metal. They got it out without any problem. The other guy that got hit was a tall guy, he was a machine gunner as well. He got hit in the front part of the leg and he was lying on his stomach. Now how in the world it went in the fleshy part of his thigh I'll never know. He said he had no idea, he was lying down with nothing sticking up but his head and he got hit in the front of the leg. And one of the Vietnamese got hit in the eye. The Indian, Brown Lightfoot, he was talking on the radio and his rifle was beside him within six to eight inches at all times and, of course, he didn't know it until the next day but a bullet went right through the sights just like you had aimed it on his rifle.

Q. Did he survive, do you know?

A. Yes, he came home. You mentioned, they talk about the black proving themselves in Vietnam and they say a disproportionate number of blacks were killed in Vietnam in comparison to the whites. I saw one black killed and one wounded out of my platoon. Everyone out of my squad, except one person, was wounded at one time, slightly, but at least they were. There was only one killed. We didn't have all that many blacks and a lot of, 90% of our court marshalls were black. After I got off the line I worked in the battallion headquarters. I was the casualty clerk, everytime we had a casualty I had to go to the hospital and see who it was and take records and so forth. I was also the awards clerk, I wrote up all the medals and citations. So that's the reason I know about all that too and the one's wounded and so on and the court marshalls too, because I worked in the same office with the two legal clerks. And again they would say that it was racist, the reason that they had more court marshalls, but theres nothing more you can do. A lot of times to keep from giving them court marshalls they would give them an off-line job something of that nature. They wouldn't show up for it. They wanted out. We had a lot of whites the same way, like I mentioned with the conscientious objectors. Usually the chaplins would believe everything they told them.

Q. What about the officers, do you think you got good leadership?

A. Not particularly. In some instances, it was just an individual thing. We had two that were great.

Q. Were they Lieutenants?

A. One was a Lieutenant and one was a Captain.

Q. What made them great?

A. They were men. They'd do anything you'd tell them. If they told you to do something they expected you to do it. But they'd be in front of you they wouldn't be behind you. One of them was a physically big person, the lieutenant he graduated from the University of Massachusetts. He was good. He could laugh and joke with you but when he told you to do something he wanted you to do it. I could respect that.

Q. Did others give him the same kind of respect?

A. They learned to. That might not at first but they learned to. The Captain was OD seven that was his second tour in Vietnam. He received the battle-field commission. He took over, he was good. We had the greatest morale ever was, we were a good unit. After six months of course they took him back. They try to give as many people \_\_\_\_\_. He was just a good leader. Some people have leadership personalities and other people don't. To give you an idea of what he was like and how other people felt about him. After he got off the line they sent another captain out - he was a nice guy, but he wasn't a leader and at this time we weren't getting any action at all. All of our injuries were by booby traps - there's nothing more demoralizing than that, you'd love to have someone to fight. But you can't fight a tin can. That is why I understand what Lieutenant Cally did - There's no way I could kill a defenseless baby but we killed women, it didn't bother us at all because they were there and they weren't innocent civilians.

Q. You knew they were guilty?

A. Oh yes.

Q. How did you know?

A. You knew the next morning when you found the bodies, a lot of times we'd kill them at night and we didn't know who we were killing.

Q. But they were often selling the booby traps?

A. Some times and usually well to show you how the North Vietnamese felt about life as well. That's the thing, we don't understand the Asian mind I guess and we expect them to behave the same way we do and they don't. A lot of times you'd have two columns, the women would be carrying supplies and be unarmed. Of course we didn't know this, they always moved at night, the other line would be men, all armed. As soon as you sprang an ambush on them the men would run. Well the women were so loaded down they couldn't run, they were the ones that got killed. So that shows you the amount of respect they have. We didn't know who we were killing we just shot at the enemy.

Q. Of course, that's a different type of killing than the Calley which was cold blood.

A. Right, but the reason I say I can understand what he did. I don't condone it by any means, but after three or four months what had happened with him, he'd lost 15 -20 men off and on by booby traps. Now you know that the people setting those booby traps have to be in the area, they knew that they were coming from the village. He had orders to go in and kick the hell out of the village, there's no doubt in my mind about that. They weren't written orders and they didn't tell him to go in there and kill the people the way he did. They knew what was going on long before it ever surfaced though. They knew what had happened, at least a colonel or higher had to have been on the cover up, so in that respect he was railroaded.

Q. You're recreating this out of your own experience because you had similiar circumstances and you could see how it could explode?

A. They went in and after it got started and they saw some of the people, no doubt they had one or two that were guilty, the rage just kept building. Of course -it had been building for two or three months because of the booby traps. There was a catalyst or whatever that got it started and it got out of control. As I said I'm not condoning it by any means but I can understand how it would happen. There is no way, it happened in World War II, I'm sure. The only difference between the war crimes, the Germans and Japanese did some terrible things, the Russians did too. Its a difference of whose put on trial as to who wins and who loses. I do think we're more honorable than most. Again that's totally a personal viewpoint.

Q. Getting back to the officers you mentioned two that were fine officers. Are you suggesting these are the exception? You mentioned the ROTC officers were not particularly good officers, is that what you're saying?

A. Yes. In most cases they weren't, we even had a couple of West Pointers that weren't that good.

- Q. What was their problem, why weren't they good?
- A. In most cases they weren't professional soldiers. They were like me. They were going to be in the army for three years and get out. I think a lot of the officers in World War II became officers, simply due to attrition, they didn't start out as officers. They did it out of necessity, and they were in certain situations some people would exhibit leadership abilities and they became the leaders. I think that was probably part of it.
- Q. Where was your leadership coming from, then for the most part? You had these fellows not demonstrating leadership. Some have said for example the non-cons, the first sergeant and so forth that you looked to for leadership. Did you find it that way?
- A. Most of our non-cons were just like me they came up through the ranks. I was a squad leader without any great experiences at all, even those that had been trained to be non-cons weren't any good. We called them Shake and Bakes' or some people called them puff and dough boys. They were similar to the 90 day wonders back in World War II, instead of becoming officers they became enlisted men. E-5's or E-6's. They weren't capable of taking over a squad. That is one of the differences. They weren't trained leaders, they didn't come up through the ranks in most cases.
- Q. So lets see you came home in 1970, what month?
- A. November.
- Q. And where did they send you there, where did you come back to the states at?
- A. I extended in Vietnam two months so I would be released as soon as I came back to the U.S. If you had 150 days or less left in the service when you landed in the U.S. they didn't feel it was enough time to reassign you. So since I was off line I assumed that I would be almost as safe there as I would have been in Ft. Carson, Colorado, or anywhere else. So I extended for two months. I would have gotten out in October, so I extended up through December but I got an early out because they were reassigning, this was during they were phasing a lot of units out trying to scale down the war. Supposedly it had been Vietnamized particularly by that time. So I got to come home about three weeks early.
- Q. And where did you come into?
- A. I came into Ft. Orp, California, well Oakland.
- Q. Did they discharge you at that point?
- A. Yes, we landed that morning about 11:30 or 12:00 and about 11:00 that night I was out. Which in some ways was bad because I was a dangerous person probably when I first came back, looking back on it now. I would have killed a person without thinking. If a person had stepped in my door and threatened me in anyway I wouldn't have hesitated on pulling the trigger - that's what I mean by being a dangerous person. I was, I think they probably should give you some time to. . .

- Q. Was there any substantial reason to feel this way, did things happen or come close to happening that made you feel like a dangerous person?
- A. No, just instinct. In other words you're trying to shoot danger, you don't think, you don't have time to think, survival depends on shot thinking. Reacting is what survival depends on.
- Q. You were dangerous person at least to yourself when you look back on it and to those who came in contact with you?
- A. Not that I was mentally disturbed or anything of that nature, psychologically disturbed. Just going from a warzone to the community. Not an army community, back to society. Civilized society within 24 hours.
- Q. Well you could see yourself then getting into an argument with somebody and if you got angry that's the instinct you would have had?
- A. I probably angered easier then, part of that was probably due to youth more than anything else. I don't mean that I would have killed someone over an argument. I don't mean I was dangerous on that point, but if I had felt threatened in the least, you if I felt my family threatened today I'd protect them but what I'm saying is I wouldn't even have stopped to think about it at that time.
- Q. How long do you think you had that?
- A. I don't know, probably 5 or 6 months. I didn't even realize it at the time until I stop and think about it.
- Q. So you do feel that the transition was too abrupt?
- A. Yes. Even though at the time I couldn't wait to get home.
- Q. But it wasn't really the best thing for you?
- A. No, I really don't think it was. I think you probably should have stayed in uniform a while. With liberal leave. Let you go home but make you report back.
- Q. Do you still live with any of that? Has it affected you right up till now?
- A. It's made me appreciate a democracy much more, freedom. It's made me appreciate material things in life a lot more. You do soon forget though.
- Q. You don't have what they call the flashbacks and reliving those times?
- A. No. I have dreams. I did dream some the first year or so, nothing bad. I did wake up once almost choking my wife, I was dreaming that they were attacking and I was shooting and shooting, kept firing, couldn't hit anything, they just kept coming, I could not hit one and then I saw one of them go behind the bush and I shot into the bush and saw him roll out and I was very relieved I'd finally hit one and then I saw it was one of my buddies. (It wasn't a friend that had been killed though.) I had that same dream twice, I don't know why. One thing that doesn't bother me today, see you don't think of them as having kids or having a family, I didn't think of them as being human, when one of them was killed it didn't bother me in the least, it didn't necessarily make me happy - I didn't feel anything. I never killed one face to face, if I

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killed one I don't know it. I didn't feel elation but I didn't feel badly about it either. To me it was like a mannequin in a store window when you'd see the body laying there. When we would get a prisoner I didn't feel no animosity toward him, I didn't feel like going up and shooting him. I didn't feel like going up and kicking him if he wanted a drink of water. And I didn't see anyone in my whole outfit. Oh we might crack a joke. You could tell he was scared to death, in shock almost. If he wanted a drink of water we gave him a drink. I didn't feel any animosity toward them that way. But one night in between Dec. 12 and Jan. 3 we went out with 2 Vietnamese (7 of us) toward the Cambodian border, we always set up facing the Cambodian border because that was the direction they always came at us. We were basically bait for the main base camp, early warning for them. They told us, if you ever see five people don't fire on them because they usually walk point for a company. Intelligence tells us that we have two companies out there somewhere but we don't know where. We don't know exactly what area but two companies have infiltrated recently. So we went out and because of the way they had harvested the rice (from east going west) all the open fields were to the east (we usually set up facing west.) The fields that were still high in rice were facing west so we set up facing East for some dumb reason. The tall rice was behind us though, we were at the edge of the rice and something told me, the two rice paddies burns. We always got behind a burn gave you a little protection, of course, they sue them for trails too, all of them intersect coming from all angles. I took my claymore mine and I just happened to turn for some dumb reason. If they were to come down this path behind us we would never know it and they would see my claymore and they would know our position before we would know theirs. So I pulled my claymore mine back about seven or eight feet and it wasn't five minutes before they came right down that path, five of them. Of course, we didn't dare fire. They went out of sight in front of us and about two minutes later two of them came back. You know you always hear these stories of 300 walking by you and you're hidden and can't move, I felt that was the situation we were in, they came back to get the rest of them. So they knew we were close in the area but they didn't know where we were at. I would have sworn one of them stared me right in the eye though as he came back - it looked like it. He came back to get the rest of them and they came through.

Q. How many?

A. Thirteen, but I didn't know that, I couldn't fire on them, by the time I knew it was the last one, they're spaced five meters apart, the front part was out of sight, so I had no idea where they were at plus they had us outnumbered like 18 to 7. We didn't fire on them, they were heavily armed. Of course, we were setting there shaking. I was so scared my teeth were chattering. I don't think I was a coward but I was certainly scared. Any man that says he's not I think is lying. About 3 or 5 hours later I looked up and here came the same guy again, five of them, didn't have a thing, didn't have a weapon.

- Q. Just at that crossroads, well how could you see them?  
A. Oh the moon was hanging in there just like a hanging light.
- Q. How far back from the crossroads were you?  
A. 10-15 feet.
- Q. And they couldn't see you?  
A. No, I don't know why. Like I said I would have sworn he looked me right in the eye. Of course, we were down. I had the machine guns, but all five of them came by me and they didn't have any weapons at all. I was waiting for the rest of them to come back and then I was going to open up on them, no more came. He'd taken these recruits I guess. And I resented that forever that I didn't kill those five people.
- Q. Your orders were not to?  
A. No, it wasn't orders, it was my decision mainly as to whether I wanted to open fire or not. There was only three of us that could fire on them, that's another reason I didn't fire on them. The others were hidden away from us and didn't have a radio. There was only three of that could see them.
- Q. You could have ambushed them?  
A. Yes. But really these people didn't know anything about it, by the time they were upon us, we couldn't move, we couldn't whisper or pass a word, they were that close. Only three of us could fire on them anyway, the other people would have killed us trying to shoot at them anyway. So it was my decision.
- Q. You probably could have wiped them out though, when you think back on it?  
A. Yes. And I resented it forever that I didn't. The second time around. The first time I had no choice.
- Q. Too many, even with a machine gun?  
A. Yes. I could have killed some of them but I didn't want to trade three to one. I didn't feel that was a good trade on my part, so I decided not to do it. But the second time around I could have killed all five of them. It really bothered me that I hadn't even I after I came home I worried about it for two or three years. I can see that that was terribly wrong of me to have felt that way.
- Q. To carry it with you?  
A. Yes. I don't feel that way now, but I did then.
- Q. Well for the most part you're not the type that would sometimes think that many of the Vietnam veterans were - that they had all these hangups, and were not able to make the adjustment back into civilian life. You went back to school, finished up, that next January and got your degree?  
A. I worked for three weeks - I'd been married for three weeks when I got my draft notice. I got married March 22 and I got my draft notice April the 13th and then May the 6th I was drafted.

- Q. So you were a married man. That must have been hard on you?
- A. Yes, if I had had kids it would have been much harder, a couple of my friends did. I can imagine how it must have felt. Of course, I missed my wife. It was almost like I'd spent my whole entire life there. I couldn't really see the light at the end of the tunnel. There were days when I'd almost forget what my wife looked like. It would have been much harder if I'd had kids. I feel for those that do have hang ups, I'm not sure they're all legitimate. I think some of those people would have had hangups in any circumstances. That sounds harsh and unfeeling. I don't think it was all due to the war.
- Q. Well certainly people couldn't have had any worse experiences than you had. You were right in the middle of all that time, your life in danger.
- A. Some of them I'm sure had it much worse. I never lost a limb, I have good friends that did. I saw good friends die. I didn't have it all that often. I've been scared a number of times but as far as life and death situations everyday, no I certainly didn't have anything like that. Maybe some of them did. But, I mentioned the ground attack where they had a thousand men attack us. I wasn't there, but the one Indian I mentioned Brown Lightfoot, he was and he said it certainly wasn't any worse then, than the night we got ambushed when they wiped us out.
- Q. Was that after that?
- A. Yes. He told me he'd never been as scared as he was that night.
- Q. Do you think that the Vietnam Veterans didn't get the recognition they deserve? Do you feel that?
- A. Yes, I do. Not in that they deserve special recognition. People's been going to war for years. I don't think that they deserve a parade or anything of that nature but they don't deserve the scorn of the people.
- Q. Did you feel that personally?
- A. Not so much, but yes a few times. A good friend of mine, a guy at Morehead he'd been a captain, a cornett guy told me he got back in Texas, told me that a guy just back from Vietnam, with his uniform on was in town and some person walked up, slapped his face, and called him a baby killer.
- Q. But you didn't have any of that personally?
- A. Not exactly like that. But some people kind of looked at you out of the corner of their eye, like you were different.
- Q. How did that leave you, what kind of feelings did that give you?
- A. I resented it. I don't resent going to Vietnam at all, still don't. The only thing I resent is Jimmy Carter and his animosity program. I don't resent, I didn't particularly like it, I didn't mind Gerald Ford's as bad, at least they had to spend two years in public service. When they choose to go to Canada as far as I'm concerned they left . . .

- Q. So you had resentment against that group. But then you had resentment against the American people generally because of their failure to recognize what you had done for the country?
- A. Well yes, and no. When you put it the American people generally, I don't feel that everyone but those people marching up and down the street, yes I do. Those deserters and draft evaders.
- Q. I had one person tell me recently, he's a teacher, last semester they had that 13 part series on TV. Well he happened to mention it to his principle that he'd seen one of the programs the night before and the principle turned around and said when are you ever going to forget about Vietnam.
- A. That's the thing they want to do, even if it was a mistake I still don't think we ought to forget it. I don't care if you view it as a mistake or the greatest thing ever done. How can you forget it, it's part of our history.
- Q. It seems to imply that the blame is on the soldiers of the war.
- A. On us. This is the way I look at it you can't choose the war that you want to fight. I'm saying me as an individual, as a citizen. If your government, which is an elected government, now if I was shanghaied for example maybe in Afghanistan, they don't have a democracy, but here we have an elected government and that is your right to go out here and vote with all the other citizens, you're the one that elects the government. If they're the ones that decides the policy whether you're for it or against it or whatever, each individual can't make up his own foreign policy. When your government, which is elected by you, when they decide a certain cause of action, if you're against it, you vote against it. You try to get them out of office to change policy. But you can't, it's illegal. That's just my own personal viewpoint, that's illegal and if its illegal, I think you ought to be punished for it. A couple of people in the Army told me I was just a little bit to the right of the attilla the hun. I was 22 or 23 when I was in Vietnam but a lot of the people at that time considered me in the over 35 group.
- Q. Well it was a teenagers war wasn't it? You were an old guy married and so forth at 21.
- A. Even those that were my ambition, as I said the pot smokers and so on it seemed to me as if they had no ambition of what they wanted to do when they got back. I was ready to, of course I never went hungry, but I was raised with the idea that I wanted to better myself. I certainly wanted to live better than my parents did. I was ready to get a job and work and be able to afford some things in life. All they wanted to do when they got back was to bum around, they wanted to draw unemployment from the army and bum around for a year.
- Q. Did you watch that series on television?
- A. I watched most of it. I learned some things.

- Q. Do you think it was an accurate description of the war?
- A. Probably the most accurate. I didn't watch some of it -- I watched up to 1969-1970 and I missed two or three parts in a row. I learned a lot about the French involvement and so on, probably I would say more now than ever before we probably shouldn't have been involved. We got involved for the wrong reasons maybe. I'm not saying we shouldn't have been involved, but I think we got involved for the wrong reasons. But for the time I was called on we were involved.
- Q. Have you read any books on Vietnam?
- A. Not a great deal. Some. I don't think anything really good has been written.
- Q. Oh yes there has.
- A. I'm not a, I'm interested in politics more so than . . .
- Q. Well, I'm talking about say people that were in Vietnam that wrote books about their experiences or historians writing about Vietnam and officers writing, politicians, there's been a lot written about Vietnam.
- A. Well I belong to four book clubs. They have three or four that I almost bought. I don't know why. It's out of my system probably more than it use to be. I use to think about it a lot. Maybe it sounds like I'm bitter about going. I'm not bitter at all but I'm bitter at those who were called upon and didn't go. I'm not bitter about the guy who got a deferrment. I don't necessarily view it as a poor man's war, fought by the poor man, not nearly so much as it was in some of the earlier wars. As far as being able to pay, in the Civil War you could pay someone to take your place and I'm sure it happened in World War I and World War II because of politics.
- Q. Well not quite the same way.  
You went to Morehead for your education, your masters degree and what was the other?
- A. Rank one.
- Q. What did you think of your education there, was it helpful, was it valuable to you?
- A. Well yes, I think any type of education, it may never help you that much, but it certainly can't hurt you. I think any of it is valuable. And I think they say youth is wasted on the young, I think that is probably true. The older you get you appreciate the value of it more. I appreciate it more now than I did then.
- Q. What about some of the present day things that are happening, that involve us around the world? Lebanon of course comes right to mind. How are you reacting to all the arguments pro and con on Lebanon?
- A. That is one thing that I'm not completely sure about. I really don't know.
- Q. It really seems to be clarifying at least when you get to two camps. Reagan on the one hand, who insists that the marines are going to stay there because they are necessary to prevent the Lebanese government from falling apart. The results of that being the Syrians and Soviet Backers coming in and taking over.

- A. I tend to lean in that direction. I would like to see them home really. For this reason, personally I like Reagan, I think he's got a lot of guts where as I think that's one of the reasons a lot of our politicians have tried to do the expedient thing rather than sometimes the necessary things. But I really don't know. I don't think we should be run out, after we're there. The problem is getting there in the beginning. I think we did go there under honorable conditions at first, we were asked to go. And really I think its the liberals that put us there to start with, simply for the reason that a lot of them are clamoring for something to happen because of the Israelies. A fanatical person is kind of hard for a lot of us to understand. Israel, they have lived with them for 30 or 40 years and they pretty well understand them. I don't think we have an understanding of their philosophies and I think that is a big problem. I think we went there to help the PLO to get out and then of course we went back in again because of what had happened in those refugee camps so the reason we went in there is not the reason we're there now. That's over and done with. But I don't think that we should let them scare us out, the fanatics I'm saying. I think we should try to help stabilize the government. Most of those people have no choice they are there in the middle of a war. Our Pediatrician is a Lebanese and I've wanted to talk to him in greater detail about it, everytime I see him he is busy. But, he goes to visit and he was there two years ago and got trapped for three weeks and couldn't get out. Of course, he's Catholic so I'm sure he would probably take the . . .
- Q. Is he a Malionittes Catholic?
- A. I'm not sure. I wouldn't think so, I don't that much about the Marionite.
- Q. They are Catholics. They're kind of a section of the Catholic Church.
- A. Now I know all his kids attend parochial schools the traditional catholic schools here. And he was educated in France.
- Q. How about, you say you support Reagan's policy's generally, how about the policies over the arms control issue, how do you feel about that? Do you share the opinion of many that Reagan is being too confrontational with the Soviet Union, that over the last three years he doesn't seem to be willing to be serious about an arms control agreement?
- A. No, I don't feel that way. For this reason. There will always be simply due to their differences in philosophy, there is going to always be confrontations. I think we could peacefully co-exist, possibly but if you look at the ideals and philosophy of communism, I think that we will always have confrontations. We're in the same boat, if our oil gets cut off we're going to do something about it. Eventually someone sees something that they want something someone else has and they're going to have to try and take it. Basically I think that's part of what happened to WW II. To me, there's no way that you're ever going to stop wars.

