

Louisa - Saturday, February 11, 1984 - Robert Williams

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SO WE WERE TALKING ON THE WAY UP IN YOUR TRUCK, BOBBY, ABOUT YOUR GETTING INTO THE ARMY BACK IN WHAT YEAR WAS THAT? 69. AND YOU VOLUNTEERED? I volunteered to keep my dad from drafting me. He was on the draft board at the time and I was trying to take the pressure off of him. I knew they were going to get me anyway. Every month or so they would send a little form—**are you still in school—when do you graduate—so a buddy and I we went on a buddy plan and volunteered and he ended up having high blood and didn't have to go and they took me. AND YOUR FATHER, WAS HE AN OFFICIAL IN THE STATE OF THE COUNTY AT THE TIME?** No. He was on the draft board. **THAT WAS IN 69. HOW OLD WERE YOU THEN? 22. 22? AND YOU HAD BEEN IN SCHOOL?** I went to Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee. I was down there on a basketball scholarship and, so we ended up joining the service. Finished up at Morehead come back and all my friends were graduated Austin Peay so I met my wife, she was from the county here, she went to Morehead so I decided to go to Morehead. **SO THIS WAS AFTER YOU CAME OUT OF THE SERVICE. SO YOU WENT IN WHAT MONTH WAS IT IN 69?** June 1. **JUNE 1, 69, AND THEN YOU WERE DISCHARGED?** 71. April 22, 71. **WHAT UNIT WERE YOU WITH?** I was with the 3rd of the 187th 101st airborne. **101st AIRBORNE AND WHAT WAS YOU MOS?** 11 bravo. Bush Beater. **WHAT KIND OF WEAPON DID YOU HAVE?** M-16? Well, I carried no, changed around a little bit a M-16 basically. I carried a M-79 awhile we just... **M-79 WHAT'S THAT, A MACHINE GUN?** No, that's a grenade launcher. **GRENADE LAUNCHER, YEA.** Mostly M-16, maybe about 3 weeks I carried a M-79 just you know for a change. **LET'S SEE NOW, JUNE 1969, NIXON HAD BEEN ELECTED THE PREVIOUS NOVEMBER, RIGHT?** I'm a Nixon man, I don't care if he is a crook, i Mean I don't care if he is a crook I mean I don't care if he is a crook I'm still a Nixon man. When he was bombing the north here it was doing good. It slowed down and when congress cut out the bombing you know they started, the action started picking up again, so the media, I feel like destroyed Nixon and I don't know how you feel, but I'm still a Nixon man. **I JUST WANT YOUR STORY.** I'd vote for him again because you know what he was trying to do, he was trying to win it and seemed like congress didn't care so I am a Nixon man. I'm a republican to start with, but I'd vote democratic, it doesn't really matter to me I like Nixon. I think the media destroyed him. **WHY I BROUGHT HIM UP WAS THAT HERE YOU ARE GOING TO VIETNAM AT THE TIME WHEN A LOT OF GUYS WERE GOING TOO OF COURSE KNOWING THAT THE WAR WAS WINDING DOWN AND THAT YOU REALLY WERE NOT GOING OVER THERE TO WIN THE WAR, BUT SOMEHOW OR ANOTHER NIXON PUT IT GET A PEACE WITH HONOR. DID YOU REMEMBER, HOW WAS YOUR ATTITUDE AT THE TIME ABOUT GOING TO VIETNAM? DID YOU UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WERE GOING THERE, OR WHAT DID YOU UNDERSTAND ABOUT GOING TO VIETNAM?** Really, teenager, not teenager, just 22 over most of the boys, when you were in college you didn't think that much about it, we were just playing ball, and I felt really good about it in a way because dad was in WWII and my grandfather was in WWI, one grandfather, and one was in the Spanish-American War so we had a history of serving the country and we went in dad told me to do a good job, course mom cried for several weeks there before we went, and there's sort of a tradition in the family and what, had no choice but to do a good job with the pressure on me. **SO YOU HAD THIS FEELING OF PATRIOTISM, THIS WAS YOUR OBLIGATION TO VOLUNTEER SERVE YOUR COUNTRY.** Wouldn't of mattered where it was, Vietnam or what if they, the way I felt about it if you had a job to do and you done the best you could and forget about it,. I didn't listen to the news that much for... **WELL DID YOU HAPPEN TO UNDERSTAND, BOBBY, WHY WE WERE IN VIETNAM AT THE TIME. WHAT WAS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHY WE WERE THERE?** To prevent communist people from taking control of people that wanted to be free, that's just all I knew and all I needed to know I guess. **YES, YES. SO WHEN YOU WENT IN THE SERVICE WHERE DID YOU DO YOUR BASIC TRAINING?** Fort Knox, Kentucky. **AND THEN WHEN YOU FINISHED THAT, WHERE DID THEY SEND YOU?** Went to Ft. Polk, Louisiana, you know _____ Vietnam. Once you went to Fort Polk you knew you were going, that was the infantry school, they said when you went to Fort Polk, you were definitely headed for Vietnam then I went to... **WELL, LET ME ASK YOU THIS WERE YOU, THE FACT THAT YOU HAD ABOUT THREE YEARS OF COLLEGE, RIGHT?** Right. **DID THAT SEEM TO SURPRISE YOU THAT THEY PUT YOU RIGHT INTO THE INFANTRY?** Yes it did, What happened, the infantry at that time they told us, was I guess the educational loss was getting low. They had a lot of colored coming in and so forth and they were trying to build up the infantry, I think I heard

the figure 25%, you know they were trying to get people with college, 25% went into the infantry at that time. And I put down that I would rather go camping than read a book, you know on my on those test scores—attitudes and stuff and I remember that now they said rather read a book than go camping and I said go camping and ended up in infantry and that may have been a mistake. **SO DID THEY RECOGNIZE AFTER A WHILE, YOUR EDUCATION, DID THEY, DID YOU ADVANCE MORE QUICKLY?** I started off as a squad leader. First day in basic and then I went to leadership preparation school. I had three weeks of that before I went to Ft. Polk. Then I was a squad leader in Ft. Polk. Then I went to NCO Academy and Ft. Benning, Georgia which made me a sergeant. They asked me to go to officer's training school which I had to extend to do that and after having basic and AIT I was fed up with rinky-dink part of the army and I didn't want to extend for a year at that time. **SO YOU DID GET WHAT E? E-5. SO THAT WAS EVEN BEFORE YOU WENT TO VIETNAM?** Right. I went in Vietnam as a sergeant. **SO YOUR EDUCATION DID PAY OFF IN THAT SENSE THAT YOU MOVED UP VERY FAST THE IN RANK.** It helped. I think it's the best to go a couple years to college, or a year or so, to grow up a little bit. You know you have problems in the army too. You have to survive I guess you would call it. Then go to service then come back have some extra money cause most of us are poor. I was a very poor boy out on Cants Creek. Have a nice place now, but I grew up pretty rough out there and...**WHAT DID YOUR FATHER DO?** He was a farmer at the time. He's county judge now, but at the time he was just a country farmer and you know very poor person really. **WELL HE MUST HAVE BEEN WELL THOUGHT OF TO BE ON THE DRAFT BOARD THOUGH.** Well, he's...**MUST HAVE HAD SOME STANDING IN THE COMMUNITY, RIGHT?** A good solid farmer is what he was he's went to Morehead, he was a good student and everything at Morehead and he worked hard all his life and he was to get elected judge. After the Nixon deal...**BUT AS FAR AS YOUR FAMILY WAS CONCERNED, YOU DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE UPPER CLASS OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT, YOU JUST SAID YOU WERE...**We were Proud but we were poor. **YOU OWNED PLENTY OF LAND PROBABLY.** About 800 acres of hill. **OF HILL.** Which had some coal on it which helped dad had a little money to campaign on and so forth, I mean he didn't spend about, I'd say \$5,000. **BUT YOU WEREN'T DOING WITHOUT WHILE GROWING UP.** No, we had plenty of food and I hunted a lot and I think that helped me a lot in Vietnam because I was raised like this. The conditions most of the boys probably didn't grow up in the hills like we did in eastern Kentucky and I think it made it a lot easier on us. **IN WHAT SENSE DO YOU MEAN THAT. HOW DID IT MAKE IT EASIER? WERE YOU ABLE TO COPE WITH THE TOUGHNESS OF THE ENVIRONMENT OVER THERE AND SO FORTH?** The environment more than anything else. You know I was used to going over the hills and we were in the mountains and I hunted from the time I was about nine or ten years old I started hunting with a little 22 rifle and I went to a shotguns and I just stayed in the woods every chance I got when I was little then I played sports. I think sports was one of the biggest reasons that you could endure over there and you know cause physically it got touch physically going up those mountains. The guys—I would carry packs—the boys just couldn't make it would be so hot I'd have to take mine up and go back down and carry theirs up cause they just couldn't hack it. **SO HOW DID YOU, WHERE DID THEY SEND YOU TO VIETNAM FROM? FORT LEWIS? Fort Lewis. HOW DID YOU GET OVER THERE?** Went to Japan. **WAS THAT A COMMERCIAL AIRLINE TYPE?** Commercial, yea. **SO WHERE DID YOU LAND IN VIETNAM, DO YOU RECALL?** Uh, Cam Rahn Bay I think. **CAM RAHO BAY? YEA, THAT MUST HAVE BEEN WHEN, SOMETIME IN THE FALL?** No, that was in June a year later. June 70. **OH, IT WAS A YEAR BEFORE YOU WENT TO VIETNAM?** Right, I trained for a year here. We went to, as I say I trained for a year trying to learn how to kill people, then they sent me to there do it is what it amounts to. **DID YOU GO OVER THE REPLACEMENTS?** Really, I they attached me to 101st airborne, yes I didn't take airborne training—I didn't jump out of the planes, but you know I was attached to the 101st. **WHEN DID THEY ATTACH YOU TO THAT OUTFIT, WHEN YOU GOT THERE?** Just, yes, they went from Cam Rhan Bay straight to 101st division. **WHERE WAS THAT LOCATED?** In I Corps, it was up in the northern part of Vietnam, it was around Hue, Quang-Tri, Camp Evans was our home base. **CAMP EVANS, WAS THAT NEAR QUANG TRI?** It was closer to Hue. **HOW DO YOU SPELL Hue?** H-u-e. **OH YES, HUE. THAT'S FROM THE FAMOUS CITIES THAT YOU GET IN THERE, WELL, I'LL ASK YOU ABOUT THAT LATER. SO YOU COME INTO CAM RAHN BAY, OF COURSE THAT'S THE BIG BASE AND DID THEY SHIP**

YOU RIGHT OUT, TO THE 101ST? Approximately a day. **SO YOU FINALLY REACHED YOUR OUTFIT THEN IN JUNE OF 1970 THEN DID THEY ASSIGN YOU TO A PARTICULAR COMPANY OR SQUAD?** Alpha Company of 3 187th Brigade there. **THERE WAS A SQUAD TOO, YOU WERE IN THE SQUAD?** Right, I was a squad leader. **SOON AS YOU GOT THERE, YOU WERE A SQUAD LEADER?** We had, when I first got there they put us on guard duty, we spent a week of getting used to the climate and we'd go on simulated patrols, and we were still in Camp Evans at the time I guess you would say and they had classes told us what to expect and just get used to it a little bit. Then when I went out in the field, yes I had a squad when I went out in the field. I didn't try to do much, I'd listen to the privates or whoever'd been there, I didn't try to be a hero but I was just trying to listen and learn. **THAT'S QUITE A RESPONSIBILITY. I MEAN AN INEXPERIENCED GUY GIVEN THAT JOB. THINK SO?** Well, it had to be that way because we went, as lieutenants-leaders I was platoon sergeant, platoon leader. We went three months without an E-5 was the highest I had in my company. Not company, my platoon. So you had to do it. **WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF VIETNAM WHEN YOU GOT THERE DURING THESE FIRST COUPLE OF WEEKS, WHAT HIT YOU MOST ABOUT THE COUNTRY?** Well, it was hot. I remember it was real hot. I was excited. I wanted to I guess I had been trained I had taken airborne training where you go around yelling airborne, ranger and all this stuff and I was guess I wanted to get into action see what it was like, didn't know any better at the time, I was anxious to do it, be like a cowboy on TV and go out and get him but you soon learn later that bullets kill people and you sort of... last six months or so you try to survive. The first six months I was trying to do a good job. The last six months I was trying to survive is about what it amounts to. I learned my lesson there and saw that people could get hurt and that changes your attitude on that part. **WHAT WAS THE TYPICAL TYPE OF ACTIVITY THAT YOU WERE INVOLVED IN FROM YOUR BASE. WHAT DID YOU DO, WAS IT A TYPE OF SEARCH AND DESTROY?** That's what we did we stayed in the mountains. Well, now I don't know any other people that stayed out in the field any more than we did. We stayed out 83 days one time without even coming in. So a squad. Basically I had a squad like ten men I'd go down to six sometimes. We would just patrol. That's what we did, we stayed in the mountains patrolling, you know you said search and destroy. I learned a little better mine was search out and avoid. You let the artillery do the work. Once you found them you'd let them shoot them up, I had a little different attitude than a lot of men did—a little older—and I'd have some of the boys wanna go up a hill and kill somebody and my theory was when you was up there just—I spent a lot of money on artillery—I did I don't care a bit to say it and I did I don't care if I didn't see anything if I was going to go up and search this hill out I'd call in artillery strike and I thought it was better to go up afterwards than to try to be a hero and go up and maybe get some men killed. **YOU PROBABLY FEEL THAT DID A LOT TO HELP YOU SURVIVE.** I do, I mean I don't feel good about probably spending maybe a million dollars worth of money in artillery and airstrikes and stuff but I feel like I done a good job. I don't have any hang-ups about Vietnam—it's one of the big highlights of my life. **HOW DID YOU GET TO BECOME, DID YOU THINK IT WAS WORTHWHILE WHAT YOU WERE DOING—DID YOU THINK IT WAS SOMETHING TO DEFEAT THE ENEMY—THE TYPE OF OPERATION YOU WERE IN?** For six months, yes. Like I said when we got to the last part and it was surviving. I got to not like the vietnamese people themselves and when I was first over there we, I did work around the village there for about 27 days we were ambushing a river and there was a village nearby and have these little coke kids and they would bring us cokes out in the fields and we got to know some of the kids and so forth and I liked them. They was cute little kids and real poor kids and then the coke kids... **YOU CALL THEM COKE KIDS.** Yea, they would come out and they would steal our cokes and they would bring em out and sell them to us for a dollar. And it was our cokes to start with every truck that went through they was hanging all over the back of the truck throwing off cokes and whatever they—they was the biggest thieves in the world—that's why I say I got to I didn't like em. They got some of my men hurt, got one of them killed, they told where we were at. **TELL ME ABOUT THAT. THIS WAS THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE?** South Vietnamese, right. **WHAT HAPPENED THERE?** Well we were setting up a driving force—a holding force, I don't exactly what the words they call it now, we were the blocking force and we had the other companys driving to us and these coke kids were out there and I know they told where we were at. Set up and that night we got hit. One of the boys from over here at Charleston well he just got killed. **DESCRIBE THAT A LITTLE BIT, THAT BEING HIT. WAS IT THE VC OR THE NORTH VIETNAMESE?** Viet Cong. I respected the North Vietnamese Army. It was the Viet Cong people I didn't like. To

me they were traitors to start with. They were mean, cruel, vicious people, where the, I figured the North Vietnamese Army, they were drafted just like normal people and they were trying to do a job because they were told to do it and they treated the bodies and so forth a lot more respect than the Viet Cong did. I hated the Viet Cong a lot worse than I did the...**WHY WAS THAT, WHAT DEVELOPED THAT ATTITUDE.** Well, like I said just the fact that they would mutilate the American bodies and. **YOU ACTUALLY SAW THAT HUH?** No, no, personally I didn't. All the men would talk, and so forth and I know the armies, like they killed I think it was 10 of our guys of the platoon over there and they layed their bodies out (they totally killed all of them) and they laid their bodies out and wrapped and laid out their dog tags and left them in decent manner, to find, they were going to get them (I didn't go in and get them) but the other guys was—they told us which made me have more respect for the North Vietnamese the fact that they laid them out in a line and laid their dog tags out and left them in a nice order and the Viet Cong just again dog stories they cut off heads and do everything in the world if they got you. In fact, I thought they were traitors to start with. They were living in the south and they to me they were traitors—maybe not as much as I thought then but I know now they were fighting for a cause same as we were. But to me at that time they were traitors. And in the US all through history a traitor was a bad person so that's the way I felt about the Viet Cong. **WAS MOST OF YOUR ACTION AGAINST THE VC?** Yes. I really, most cases I didn't know who I was fightin. They get hit, the jungle, we saw very few people. Only time we would see anybody they was dead. We'd get hit. **WHEN YOU GET HIT YOU TALK ABOUT AN AMBUSH TYPE OF ATTACK?** Yea, on patrol. Well, it's probably not like it sounds. I had the attitude that you crawled off the plane and was fightin and a year later you crawled back on the plane and flew home, but its not like that. You'd go for maybe a month—boring as it could be—it was really boring—you was out there patrolling all the time, work all night. **WHAT WOULD A PATROL BE, JUST WALKING AROUND SEARCHING AND LOOKING FOR THEM?** Squirrel hunting if you want to call it that. You might go a mile. **DID YOU KNOW WHERE YOU WERE GOING—WAS IT JUST A KIND OF A HOPE THAT YOU WOULD RUN INTO IT?** No, they didn't—they just give us—say you're on patrol—give us a certain—had the grids over there—our platoons would be assigned to a certain area and we'd just wander around in that area and we'd call in where we were. **WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU WERE ACCOMPLISHING IN ALL THAT?** Very little. Surviving. The first few months there—this boy named Brown in Panama down there—Panama Bill Brown they called him—he's Panamanian—he's black—real black but he didn't claim to be black—he's Panamanian—and we were anxious to get them and so forth but then after a while it just turned into a case of trying to survive, we didn't really want to find them if you want to know the truth about it 'cause we'd get killed. **WHAT WAS THAT AGAIN?** I said we didn't want to find them. **YOU WEREN'T WHAT?** Didn't want to find them. Go out and find them. Your chances are—you know what I was telling you a minute ago—about it wasn't _____ I was in twelve fire fights shot at 12 different times when I was over there—I know that doesn't sound like very much but still the way I figured it the more often they shot at you the better their chances you got of getting hit and it was luck. You know when you were out—in the jungle there most of our contact was in say 25 or 30 feet. It was just hit and gone. They just usually shot 2 or 3 magazines at you in mid run and it wasn't like WWII when you just went up against a line and you knew you had a objective and you didn't take today you was going to try to take tomorrow or the next day wasn't like that you went out squirrel hunting—really what I'm talking about you went out looking for them. **THAT'S A GOOD DESCRIPTION, I HAVE NEVER HEARD ANYBODY USE THAT EXPRESSION BEFORE.** Well you was looking in the trees and lookin at the ground like squirrel hunting you look at the ground to keep from stepping on a twigs to keep from frightening the squirrels. So over there you were

looking on the ground for booby traps and you were looking in the trees for snipers. **BUT YOU REALLY DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING?** Well, I did, I said I was doing my job, regardless...**THAT WAS THE JOB YOU WERE ASSIGNED TO DO.** Regardless of you know how not saving the world, we were American soliders and we were doing what a soldier is supposed to be doing so as long as I done my job as a soldier I can't beat it. You know that goes back to me I think a lot more than some of the boys the family tradition and proud family and I wasn't going to do anything to disgrace the family and I had to do what I had to do. **YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU WERE IN 12 OF THESE FIREFIGHTS? ANY OF THEM STICK OUT IN YOUR MEMORY, NARROW ESCAPES, OR THE CLOSEST YOU CAME TO DEATH OR WOUNDED?** Well,I saw their tracers hittin real close to me if that's what you mean. I remember when I was laying on the side of the hill one time—most of this was our men shooting at us was the bad part. **SAY THAT AGAIN.** It was our men—it was an accident. The Vietnamese—we had two platoons—was taking two areas and these Vietnamese got in between us and they was shootin at both of us and they got us shootin at each other sort of cause we didn't know who was who and I remember this boy—Tim Huffman—from up here in Sandusky, Ohio, he was young and screaming and trying to tell our guys to cut it out but they couldn't hear him and everybody was shooting and everything was going on and we were laying on the side of the hill with our feet down and head up and they were in front and there was no place to go if you were against the hill and you just had to hope you didn't get hit and here these tracers are coming in these trees and right around us close and I layed down and pulled my helmet down about to my eyes to hope not to get hit in the head and I just couldn't understand and I knowed I was shot and I just couldn't feel the pain cause I never been shot and I didn't know what it felt like but all the bullets around me I had to be hit but ended up I wasn't hit so. That was sort of a funny feeling, was scared, real scared really, and then these, the lieutenant got hit he fell over the hill, it was a real steep hill—I am talking about mountains—and the lieutenant saw the _____ there and he fell over the hill and his pack (you know packs weigh about 100 pounds) on the side of the hill when he started to shoot he toppled over the hill about 25 feet down the hill and then this RPG come in between me and the lieutenant. **WHAT IS THE RPG.** It was a Russian made bazooka, I guess you would call it. The American people would know it more as a bazooka than anything else. But, it was grenade-type-rocket what it was. Tank weapon is what they really are and it exploded and got the lieutenant. Schrapnel in the back and in his hand and so forth. **KILL HIM?** No. It's funny—this is a really good guy he was from Arkansa—good ole country guy—I crawled down there to him—he was scared to death—he was sort of hid underneath some roots and brush that fell over there and I crawled down there and his hand was bleeding and he said they shot me and I was trying to cheer him up and I was saying funny stuff and everything and trying to get his mind off of cause he was really nervous and patched him up and then we had to clear the area—we had five guys get hit there during that time and. **DID ANY OF THEM GET KILLED?** No, not this time. I don't know, see, we didn't see them anymore. If they was wounded if we could get them out of there. **WHAT HAPPENED?** I think some of them died. There was a Gaddy boy from North Carolina, the lieutenant said, you very seldom heard about it, I was asking the lieutenant about it, he went back to the rear and they'd send their checks home—government checks somehow they'd got his check back and this one boy—so we figured he'd died or they wouldn't have got the check back see, we didn't know, once we—well matter of fact those five boys that we sent out I never saw any of them after that. Except the lieutenant, he wasn't hit bad enough, he come back in three weeks and got hit again. He got hit twice in a matter of a month and a half I guess it was. Neither one of them bad. The second time a little piece went through his nose and he was bleeding everywhere but ...

... Pierce boy over here at Charleston, was the standout vet, if that's what you wanted to talk about, that I remember, he hated the service, I mean he hated it.

WHAT WAS HIS NAME, AGAIN?

Andrew Pierce.

AND WHERE WAS HE FROM?

Charleston, West Virginia.

HE WAS IN YOUR SQUAD?

Right, he hated the service. He just really hated it. And when he got killed they hit him in the chest with RPG, right in the chest. And they blew off his leg. He had a frown on his face all of the time, real sarcastic type person. But, after he got killed, I mean he seemed really, he was dead, not a smile exactly, you know, but maybe because we knew he hated it so bad, he knew he was out of it, and in a way he sort of looked peaceful. And that part's bad. But, the guy hated the service so bad, he seemed relieved, to me, to be out of it. We loaded him up on a helicopter there and this was like at dark and, he was blown up pretty bad, and the next morning we found his foot, still had a leg, down below about the center of the knee on down, we found his leg, and we had to call another helicopter to send that in. That was, sort of sad, in a way.

YOU KNEW HIM PRETTY WELL THOUGH? HAD HE COME IN ABOUT THE SAME TIME AS YOU?

Yes, we was pretty close there. We'd, see I'd been out 83 days with him there.

AND HE HATED EVERY MINUTE OF IT?

Oh, God. He hated the service. Just hated it. We had boys reempt. We had some that hated the service and they'd reempt to get out of the field. And they'd reempt 6 more years to get a different MOS and get out of the field.

BUT, YOU COULDN'T SAY YOU LIKED IT, BUT YOU WEREN'T GOING TO LET IT GET THE BEST OF YOU, IS THAT WHAT YOUR SAYING?

Well, I think family life's got a lot to do with that. I mean I had to, I didn't have any choice.

IT MADE YOU STRONG?

I think so. The family. Playing sports. Sports is the best thing. Because I could pick out the athletes. This is really true, I could go down and not even know them and never talk to them, if they'd ever played sports. And I could be with them a week or so and say, "you played sports, you poay sports, and you played sports." And you'd talk to them and they'd either played football or basketball or some kind of enduring sports. Because they could, I mean, the heat was physical, physical was one of the worst parts. I'd go on patrol and you wouldn't have a dry stitch on you. You'd be soaked. I mean every stitch of you would be soaked with sweat. I carried with me, for example, 12 quarts of water you know how heavy 12 quarts of water would be, plus all the other, my pack weighed maybe 125 pounds. That sounds like a lot, but I carried extra, being a sargeant, I carried extra ammunition. Everything I could carry, I was stronger than most of them. And I drunk that 12 quarts of water everyday, and ran out every night. I ran out of water every night, 12 quarts of water everyday. You go on patrol and drink, you'd go on a hill and I'd say maybe every one-half of a mile, I would drink a gallon of water.

THE HEAT WOULD DO THIS, IS THAT RIGHT?

The heat, the humidity. You see when you were down in a jungle you couldn't get any breeze, or, it was hot.

AS THE LEADER THEN YOU'D HAVE TO COPE WITH THESE GUYS WHO WERE NOT AS STRONG, PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY AS YOU WERE. DID YOU FIND THAT DIFFICULT? AN ADDED BURDEN ON YOU KNOWING THAT YOU HAD GUYS LIKE THAT?

I left them out in the field. I left one of them out in the field. I had threaten to have to leave him out in the field. I mean, we left him a few hundred yards there, he just quit. This guy, my wife makes fun of me when I tell things like this. He wanted out. He ended up signing up, thats when I was talking about signing up for 6 years for changing his MOS, he wanted out of the field. I'd have to carry his pack. He'd say, "I just can't do it." I'd go up and carry my pack and then I'd go back down, and I got tired of doing that. So, finally I said that's it. I took his weapon. I said you stay here and we're going on. And finally he caught up. It didn't take long. We, I'd say we got, he was stubborn for a few minutes, he just sat there and we got probably 200 yards ahead of him and he come. You had to. I mean I got tired of babying him around. You couldn't do that.

BUT HE WAS THE EXCEPTION I SUPPOSE? YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO MANY WITH THAT ATTITUDE? No, we had some it was physical. I mean, this boy, I didn't like his attitude. I mean I would have went back and got him , but I was trying to scare him enough to carry his own wieght. That's what I was trying to do.

HE COULD HAVE?

He coule have. But like I say, just a bad attitude. I mean we had some who would just get physically tired. You patrol them all day and night you'd have a 2 man position. Somebody was on guard 2 hours, sleep 2 hours. The in itself would make you tired. Then the next day you'd patrol all day and that night you'd pull guard. So, you didn't get a lot of rest.

YOU WERE DOING THIS FOR 3 MONTHS AT ONE TIME?

We stayed out 55 days one time. They'd just put us out in the field and bring us food and a change of clothes every now and then, and that was it.

AND THIS WOULD BE HOW MANY MEN? ABOUT 15 DID YOU SAY?

Well, its according if we were attached to the patoon, the squad, or the company. Sometimes we'd maet up. We'd have a certain point where we'd meet up with the company. And maybe, like I said, I started out as a squad leader and ended up as a patoon leader, then ended up, well I was patoon sargeant and patoon leader. Then we got lietenants come in. We'd have some come in from West Point up there, I did't care too much about them.

SOO WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE OFFICIERS?

I liked the one from Arkansas, Lietenant Davis, you know I was telling you the one who got hit. He come there and he'd played football for Arkansas, he was on there swim team, and he was a real good guy. He didn't know anything. You know I told you about first going in there, I mean I didn't either, but I knew a little more than him, because, I guess the fact I'd squirrel hunted and did a lot of these type things I guess I fit in pretty quick. But, he come in and he was scãred to death of everything. He was an officier but he didn't know anything about Vietnam, and at that time we hadn't had any new men in there for a while and at the time he was real green. But, he was real smart. I mean he would ask the lowest privite, the lowest person there, what did you think about this, what do you think about this. And he wouldn't do anything unless he'd come and ask some of us.

HE WAS LEARNING FAST?

Oh, yes. A real good guy. And I said I'd follow this guy anywhere. Because, he'd make sure you had your malaria tablet, it would be raining and cold and I'd see him come out and his teeth chattering and he'd come aroud and make sure each person had had there maleria tablet. I really liked him. But, he had the West Point people come in there and they were going to be in there and they wanted boky counts, so they could get metals so they could get promotions. Most of them, I guess wanted to be generals, so they wnated body counts.

We had this one, the men were real scared of him, I'd come back from R and R and he'd come in while I was gone and they meet me as soon as I was dropped off because they wanted to talk to this guy cause, he was, they was afraid he was going to get them killed. He was wanting body counts that was what he was wanting. So, I went and talked to him, I used a good example I think, we had a colonel.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO A GUY LIKE THAT?

Well, I told him, people back home if he goes out there and gets killed, the only people that are going to miss him is the people back home, his mom and dad, then the next day someone was going to replace him. I used the example, we had a colonel, that was real gun-ho I didn't like this guy either. I didn't like most of the officers and the colonel and the major were out flying the helicopter around there, and it was a foggy day, and they crashed into a mountain and then the next day.

KILL THEM?

Yes, it killed them both. Well the next day Brown and I, Panama Bill Brown I was telling you about, I called him Panama, we were going on R and R so we had to go get, we come back to the rear, so we had to get some clean clothes. So, we went they put them all on a big bat. You just go pick you out come that will fit and we ended up, Brown did, with the colonel's clothes, he was killed and they took his duffel bag and threw his clothes in the pile, he was just like everybody else. Still had the rank on it and everything. The name plate and everything. I mean they were the colonel's clothes. So that's what I told the lieutenant, you go out here and you be a hero and try to win metals and all of this kind of stuff and you get killed, or get one of my men killed, I didn't care about him at the time, so much as I did the guys who'd been there. And the next day somebody's going to be wearing your clothes and then nobody's going to miss you except your parents back home. And then we go hit there.

AND HOW DID THE ANSWER TO THAT?

He just listened mostly, in that case. Of course, he said, well he started bragging on me. I mean he said I was a pretty smart guy. And he said the men liked me and everything, and he was glad to meet me, and we started talking like that. Then we got hit, and this was after this a little bit there, and he told me there was a bullet that went so close to his ears he heard the vibration and it sort of hurt his ears. I guess, I never did have it happen to me, it was so close that the vibration from it hurt his eardrum, so he realized a few more inches left or right there he'd been dead. So, he sort of knew then what I'd been talking about. He could have been killed and somebody wearing his clothes and nobody missing him except his parents. And, you know, a few of his friends back-home, that he would have, maybe. Like I said, survival was the main thing, if, I didn't care to spend that artillery money, or whatever it took to keep, I knew my men. The way I figured it, if we went out there and killed a hundred of them, and I got one man killed, then we still lost, because I knew that one guy. I didn't know that 100 gooks over there. If I even got a guy with a leg shot off, or something, you know, we lost. Because, one of our guys hands or legs was worth a lot of them guys. You know, of course, I didn't know them.

SO, THAT WAS KIND OF A CONFLICT THEN BETWEEN THE WAY YOU WERE FIGHTING THIS WAR AND THEN CAME THE OFFICERS WITH THEIR AMBITIONS AND THAT GET A BIG RECORD.

Another example here, I had some men done their job. I didn't write them up for metals, you know, like everytime we had an accident I had to write a report on it, I didn't, if they just did their regular job, I didn't think they deserved metals or anything, now if I had to do it over again I'd recommended more of them because it would have meant more to them later. Like I

said I just raised up military, not military attitude, but Dad didn't like the war, none of them liked it, but they went and done it, so I figured if a man was doing his job he didn't deserve any metals. But these officers, we had a colonel this colonel I was telling you about. We got hit, this guy was with another patoon, that was one-half mile away. And this lietenant wrote this colonel up for a metal, he got a silver star for doing nothing, just because he was out in the field, he was trying to buddy up with him and be friends with him and he wrote him up for a silver star just for being out in the field, and my men was the ones getting hit, and he got a silver star out of it and my men got nothing because they didn't do anything above and beyond and thats what I thought metals for. Like I said if I had to do it again I didn't find this out to later. I'd wrote them all up, I don't care, I'd wrote them up. To be proud for familys and stuff. But, this guy got a silver star and didn't even get shot at. Course, that was a feather in this lietenant's cap. You know, naturally the colonel turned around and was taking care of him, wrote him up and he probably got some metals or something out of it. And they didn't do anything. But, it would come out here in the United States in the paper, out on his record. Big colonel "out in action gets silver star." Their introduce at these, like Fort Knox, at these parades, winner of the silver star and he didn't do anything. Thats not right, I didn't like it.

LOOKS LIKE THAT MUST HAVE CREATED A PROBLEM THEN IN YOUR PARTICULAR OUTFIT. I HEAR THERE WAS QUITE A BIT FROM OTHER GUYS, THERE WAS KINDA OF TENSION BETWEEN THE G.I.'S THAT WAS TRYING TO SURVIVE AND THESE OFFICERS WHO WERE THERE ON ROTATION BASES OR FOR A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME AND WERE TRYING TO MAKE A RECORD FOR THEMSELVES.

Yes, I resented it. Ireally did. I didn't really pay a lot of attention to them out there you weren't spit and polish, they survived just like we did out there we didn't watch, we took care of each other out there, rank didn't mean anything. Lt. Davis or any of them. You didn't dnow except you knew them personally, they didn't wear any rank or anything. They were just surviving like the rest of us. The new ones, they learned, like I was talking about that lietenant came in he almost got shot, he calmed down a little bit then. But, when he came in, like I said they rotated, we had I guess 3 or 4 there that would come in and when they first come in was what it was, they wanted body counts, they wanted metals, the lifers was that away, the regular 2 year men was trying to survive. I can understand it you was going to be in for 20 years, you wanted a good record, but like I said that didn't concern me much. I was, I liked my men I did, I liked my men, I like people, I always did like people. I just sort of got a soft heart. I hate to see...

...anybody get hurt, that don't have to. I guess as far as the blood part, we butcher hogs, we butcher beefs out on the farm, all my life I helped do it. Kill squirrels and clean them, I guess I was a little more use to the blood part than some of these city boys and so forth was.

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SO THIS ROTATION SYSTEM, WHERE THESE OFFICERS WOULD COME IN FOR A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME, THAT DEFINITELY WAS A HANDICAP FOR FIGHTING THAT WAR. IS THAT THE WAY YOU FELT ABOUT IT OR SUGGESTING IT?

Well, someone had to be in charge. Most of them were intelligent, they were smart people. But, that didn't help you much over there in a way. I mean, out in the jungle I don't care how smart you were, if you couldn't shoot, or couldn't, wasn't strong enough physically to carry your pack and so forth, intelligence didn't help that much. We had some good men that really wasn't that smart, but I thought a lot of them. But, could do a good job out in the field. We had a captain, I give you another example, Captain Bobby Dilla was a, he'd been there before. And I saw him one time there we went to the river and he had to take a bath and he'd been blown up by a granade, and he had scars all over him, I mean he was super conscious about taking care of the men.

WHAT WAS HIS NAME AGAIN?

Captain Bobby Dilla.

DILLA?

Yes, he was from California I believe he was, and he was on you all the time. He wouldn't let you relax a minute, because he knew what it was like, he'd been hurt. Well, we had another, he rotated and we had a R.O.T.C. captain from, I don't even remember his name, he didn't last long, from east Tenn. He was a teacher or something down there in R.O.T.C. in east Tenn.

He came in there and he'd been teaching by the book and doing all that stuff. We had Kit Carson Scout. I guess you talked to other guys and know what Kit Carson Scout - it was North Vietnamese. We captured and retrained for our side. He was walking point and came upon a booby trap. Well, he said freeze, when he said freeze, we like the rest of us, we didn't move. Here goes this captain running up there saying what's going on, what's going on, you know, that guy tried to tell him, don't move, don't move, and, here he goes, steps right on it, and blows his leg off up to his knee, because he was trying to do something he shouldn't been doing, is about what happened. Then he was gone, like I said he didn't last to long.

TELL ME ABOUT THESE KIT CARSON SCOUTS. WHAT I HAVE HEARD ABOUT THESE BEFORE?

Well, they were North Vietmanese that had been captured. I guess. I don't know what they done to them, but I didn't see that part of it. But, they took them back and brain washed them for our side, gave them better food, the didn't care what side they's on as long as they were eating and thats a thing about the people over there. They didn't care about the Americans so much, they liked the American money and food and soforth. So, we got then and put them on our side.

I GUESS LIKE YOU THEY WERE TRYING TO SURVIVE TOO?

They were trying to survive too, they were good though, they were good.

RELIABLE?

Oh, well, I can tell you a couple stories on that. Had one named Lun, that was really good, this guy was really good. He'd find booby traps, he just knew he had this, they were much better soldiers, they have to say that, the North Vietnamese, they were survivors, they could live on practically nothing where the Americans, we were used to having everything in the world we wanted and everything. If they had the same amount of equipment we would have, well we ended up not winning the war anyway. We got it while we were there, they ended

up taking it later. But, if they'd had the same equipment we had, we wouldn't have had a chance. We'd been goners, they were good. Like I said it was nice to have one on your side. They'd go out and find the booby traps and seems like they could just sense when something was going to happen. And old Lurn, this is a story - we was about there and we had this guy following us. We intercepted and went on patrol, we found this peanut butter can that had a message in it. Well, we went it back to have it translated. They come back out, what it was, was that this guy was telling every place we was a camping. We were right at the edge of the mountains, this was between the villages, it was close to the low lands and the mountains. We intercepted that message and had it translated.

THIS FELLOW WAS WATCHING YOU?

Yes, he was watching us.

THEN HE WOULD LEAVE A MESSAGE?

To the people back in the hills, where we were and what we were doing, so forth.

HE'D PUT IT IN A PEANUT BUTTER JAR?

And left, had some branches covering it up and in a certain place there. We got that and sent it in and had it translated and he was telling like one night we camped by a big hole, which was a B-52 bomb crater. The next night we was by his fishing hole.

THESE WERE THE MESSAGES?

Yes to the people back there, so we were trying to get this guy. So, they took us out in the middle of the night, we came in there in the middle of the day in helicopters south, like we were leaving the area. So, that night we walked back in there this was like 2 am in the night, and it was dark, you couldn't see anything, here I was getting my pancho over my head lighting cigarets, trying ot see my compass to take us on the map and plot it out, and get back in this place. And we were falling everywhere. So, finally this Kit Carson Scout, his name was Luhn, her would just laugh at us, he'd say G.I. dickey now, G.I. dickey now, where we was at, I couldn't see anything.

WHAT WAS THAT HE WAS SAYING NOW, G.I. WHAT?

Dickey now, crazy. Dickey now meant crazy.

OH I SEE.

So, finally I said, "Luhn, you know where we want to go. You just take us, okay?" So we just reached up and got a hold of him the guy behind him each of us would hold on to him.

PITCH BLACK?

Oh, black as it could be, I couldn't see anything. I mean I really couldn't see anything, and he took us right were we wanted to go. Just like I was trying to use the-compass method. Make sure we was there I said, I just got tired, I knew he was good. I just said, Luhn.

HOW DID HE DO IT?

I don't know, like I said I don't know, these guys, they just had a sense about them. They were good soldiers they were good, they lived in the mountains they-

WAS HE FROM THAT AREA HIMSELF?

Evidently. I don't know he didn't, no, he was from a little further north, someplace.

BUT, IT WAS NORTH VIETNAMESE, HE HAD BEEN IN THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY?

Yes, he had been in the North Vietnamese army. And, well he had worked in that area. I think he was from a village up north, but he had worked that area. He'd beem with us, we'd been working that area quite a while. He just knew it better than we did. We had another one, I just about killed him, he was, he didn't trust us, what had happened before I got there. Claiborne mine, you

probably talked to other boys and know what a claiborne is. He and this sargent had gone out to put their claiborne. Evidently there had been an electrical storm. They sometimes, it would blast a cap, some how it went off. And he thought one of the guys, see there on a 100 feet cord, the claibornes are, 100 feet chicken, they call it, exploded in his hand, and he thought someone had clicked that and blew them up and he had a steel plate in his head. I was scared of this guy.

THIS IS-

Kit Carson Scout - So, we started on partol there one day and he didn't want to go. As I said he resented us after that happened. You could just he didn't like the Americans very good.

WHY DIDN'T HE LIKE YOU?

Well, he had been with North Vietnamese to start with, then the thought some Americans had blown him up. They'd took that claiborn and -

OH, TRIED TO KILL HIM?

Yes tried to kill him. The sargent did get killed, it would have one of the men, it could have happened. They could have just been mad at the sargent and that was thier chance to knock him off. And got this Kit Carson scout, it hurt him I think they had to operate on his head to. He went crazy. I don't know if be went crazy or not, it worried me, because I thought he knew something he wasn't telling us. And he just started shooting. Went up there just shotting. He went up there and just started shooting, no reason in the world for it. And I thought, he'd been operated on in the head, there, and I though tthat he was out of his mind. So, Davy Jones and I went up there to get him and I though the guy was crazy and I told Davy, I said, "if he swings a least bit our way go ahead and kill him, because we can't afford to take chances with an automatic weapon." If he swings around there he could have got 5 or 6 or our guys, maybe before we could have stopped him. So, I told him it he even moved go ahead and kill him. So, we went up there and I had to take his weapon away from him, and so, I called a helicopter and sent him back in. And another one quit on me, and I took his clothes, I just left him, I just took everything he had, I just left him right there naked. I didn't like him too much either. But, he was, I had them that time, he was just, that what I say, you just didn't really trust them. Because, I thought maybe we were going into the intermediary and he just didn't want to go, and he was using that for an excuse, he was doing this so I would send him in. I was really watching out after this happened, because, like I say, I didn't trust them 100 percent. I did him, but, the rest I didn't care much about.

SO ALL IN ALLL THE KIT CARSON WAS KIND OF CHANCY WEATHER HE, IT WAS GOING TO TURN OUT?

Well, I'll tell you this, this happened in another patoon across there from me. He was living sides, they had one who was still on the North Vietnamese side, he was leading our guys but, he was leaving trail signs, he ended up wearing a LRRP (long range reconnaissance patrol) bag, you probably talked to some other guys, and know what LRRP's are, the food we ate, he truned it inside out and stuck it on the back of his pack. Well, the guys couldn't understand why he was doing something silly like that, so he went out to supposedly use the bath-room and the guys called him out there and he was using trail markers pointing in the direction they were going, so they just killed him. You know, for doing that. So, I said you didn't trust them.

SO, IT REALLY WASN'T A GOOD IDEA HAVING THESE GUYS WORKING FOR YOU?

Well, yes, I'd have to say it was a good idea. I'd rather had them than not to have them. Like I said, finding booby traps and stuff, they could do it. Because

they could have got killed, too. They helped when they were with you. But, like I said, they would tell what direction you were going, as long as they were with you, you were probably safe. Because, they wouldn't want to hit them with them there. Yes; I'd rather had them. They were good. They were good soldiers. But, still if they didn't speak English you didn't trust them. That's what a guy told me when I went over there, he said, "Bob, if they can't speak English, shoot them." He said, "I mean don't take no chances." He went to Austin P. And he'd just come back, as I was going in the service, and he figured I'd have to go, and we got to be friends there and that was his statement. He said, "if they can't speak English, shoot them." Now, I mean that sounds sort of cruel, and he was sort of kidding. But, that was a pretty good law to live by, if they...

THERE WAS A LOT OF RELIANCE ON THE KIT CARSON SCOUTS BY THE AMERICANS?

Yes, I'd say we used one at least half of the time.

HOW DID YOU GET ALONG WITH THEM, THE BLACK GUYS?

I hated them, hated their guts. I hated them worse than I did anything. There is a difference now, I take that back. The black guys I liked, to me there's, I don't know what your going to do with this tape, but theres nigger's and there's blacks. I mean the niggers I hate. The black are okay. I had about, I'd say in a years time and maybe, 100 that I liked.

But, I didn't like them, they wouldn't do their job. I was on them all the time, they'd turn around and throw away equipment. To me, they were lazy. I was in charge, say patoon sargent, I'd go around and make sure they'd have their claibornes, enough ammunition, and they would throw them away. Like a claiborne mine was a very deadly weapon, of course, it weighed 4 or 5 pounds, 4 pounds or something and the packes were heavy to start with, they'd throw them away. I'd go up at night and say, "you got your claiborne out," they'd say, "I lost it." They lost their claiborne in the jungle. Well, I told you before the gooks followed us every where we went, so they didn't have much equipment, thats why they done this, anything we threw away or lost or dropped, they used it against us. So, they turned around and made a booby trap out of it. So, my theory was the next day I'd order them to walk point and they'd refuse their way of getting back at me. They wouldn't do it. I'd say, "you lost it." They should be the first one to walk into it. So, the next day it came time to walk point. I'd say like, "Smith, you walk point." He wouldn't do it. He'd say, "no, man I'm not doing that, get someone else. Get one of these honkey's to do that." I'd say, " that's fine you just get your right back here in line." I'd just smile because I knew once he refused to do that, they were going to jail, and so as soon as we come in I'd write them up. And they went to L.B. jail. I took one of them to L.B. jail one time. I laughed.

WHAT'S L.B. JAIL?

Long Bend Jail, I don't know what your using this for, but it is a good story anyway.

GO AHEAD.

They'd stay back in the rear, you know the colored, you couldn't get them out in the field. They were sick, used every excuse in the world not to go out in the field. So, we called them Reps, I don't know what the other guy called them or what other men talked to called them, they was Reps back in the rear. Thats the resentment you where talking about, there's more resentment between them than the officers in the field, but if they were in the field at least they were doing something as you were doing. But, the officers back in the field like the colonel and the people that fly out in helicopters. I'll another story about that in a few minutes. You resent them kind of people back in the rear. Well, most of them were black, to the regular soldiers back in the rear were black and I just came in from R&R and one of them had refused to go to the field and everything. So, they headed and escort to take him to jail. Well, I was there so they asked me to take him down to the prison. And, this guy was, had tapes, like we were using now, from back home. He didn't write letters, he sent them tapes back and forth. He had black marked over there, he had this big card cue stick, real pretty, he had 5 pair of silk pajamas, he had a big diamond ring and so forth. He was just laying back there in the rear just talking - he liked it he - there's a lot of difference in Vietnam, there's 2 Vietnams. There was field Vietnam and back in the rear Vietnam. The rear Vietman had more than we have here in Eastern Kentucky. They had golf courses and pools you know, nice.

YOU COME IN AND SEE THAT?

Oh, you resent it, yes sir, you resent it. I beleive I left this story in a minute, not another. Well, we went back there the colored had baracaded himself in the barracks, they wouldn't let us take him. There was about I'm talking about 50 black people now, said we wasn't going to take this guy to jail. And they got out there and burned their shirts and everything, right in front of the colonels and majors, like I said, I was patriotic and I really resented this real bad. So, I was this prison guard. The major asked me if I was his guard. I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "get him." I had to wade in these guys, I was scared, I really was scared. I had to wade in there and get him, but I'd say 30 to 50 black guys.

YOU HAD TO MOVE IN AMONG THEM?

Yes. I had my pistol and I would have killed them. I really would have, because I was scared to start with and I didn't like them and if they tried to hurt me, I was going to take care of myself first, I really was. Because, I figured the colonel and people there watching, it was a mob so I figured I had a right to so it if they bothered me. So, I went in there to get him, they had this, I grabbed him by the arm because they were cussing, a lot of bad language going on. And I said, "let's go." He said, "can't a guy say goodbye to his friends. I said, "well, tell them bye." Well, they had this hand clapping deal, I don't know if any of the other juys meantioned it or not. It took at least 2 minutes to go through, they clicked their hands, fingers, they slapped hands they'd elbows, whole big routine, they done this. It took a long time. I was telling Brown, Mobile Brown, he wouldn't fool with them he'd just see them coming and he'd just duck his head and leave because he didn't want to fool with that. Well, he started that, went through a couple of them, he was going to go through the whole crowd. I said, "let's go," and grabbed him by the arm. We go the the jeep and had a driver there, and here they come, the whole mob running at the jeep. I thought, I didn't know what was going on so I told him just take off. So, we took off and started running, now this is the funny part, went down there, he had this big duffel bag full of tapes, like I say, silk pajamas. We went down there to the jail, we walked up to the prison gate. It had this big white sargent, I mean he was a big dude. This prison guard there. And what can I say on this tape?

ANYTHING YOU WANT.

Kids in there. Walk in this sargent looked at him, looked in that duffel bag, because he probably seen this happen before. He was wanting to put pressure on him at first and he grabbed that black guy and slung him against the wall. He said, "what the hell do you think this is, some kind of God damn vacation." Here you know, he's using all this bad language, he said, "you think your are coming down here to wait out the war, don't you, these other guys out here in the field, you are going to go spend some bad time here and let the war get over with them. You going to go home? He slung him against the wall. He'd open up the duffel bag there, pull out a pair of silk pajamas, he'd took at that and say. "silk pajamas," you know and he'd grab him again and slung him against the wall, and I'd love it. And I really did like this and I was laughing and enjoying this so much and he got that cue stick out of there, big carved, hand carved, it's really pretty. He'd act like he was going to break it over his head and he'd shove him against the wall, and he'd say, "you come down here, you think this is a recreation vacation place," you know and he went through everything in there, throw it on the ground. Them nice silk pajamas he'd bought there, his tape he's going down there and listen to all the music, and sit in his bunk and take it easy, he did plan that so he took his ring off, and all his jewelry off, so I had to carry all this back to the company, and check it back in for him. But, I didn't resent it a bit of that. Just the fact that he wasn't going to use those things made me feel good. So, I ended up taking it back to the company there. We was talking about tesentment there, a little resentment story here. While I was down there. We was in Saigon, on the way back, we went to this night club. Oh, it was nice.

WHERE'S THIS?

This was in Saigon, thwy had a band, this was a night club. As big as, oh probably 200 feet by 200 feet. Night club, you know, nice place and they had

hands in there, come in from Korea. Drinks were 25¢. Then guys they really had it made and we was feeling pretty good, we had the field long time. Us got some drinks, if you don't tell Daddy you just don't do striff like that around here. But, I had to be the men, not wilder, but I had to be, we went to one of these. Come field that, I guess I was the worst one of the bunch, far as getting that, because I just felt I needed to do that to, if your going to last you got to be the wildest while your in the rear. So, when you the field, they will come more near listening to you, that away, went feeling pretty good. It was on my mind how these guys had it made. rear, we were down, what, near Saigon, that was way down south from it was dark there, I come outside, this guy there said, "100 and " And that just went all over me.

SAYING?

and first sucks," you know I had that 100 and first patch on my I thought you remp, I started around there just getting ready to know, I really was feeling good enough and drunk enough, I guess I'd been thinking about it anyway. As I said there was 2 Vietnams om back in the rear, and out in the jungle. And I thought, Oh God I just squared around there just to kick him, and looked and he first patch on too. Well, that was alright. I was the first one him after I saw he was from 100 and first.

WIDDING YOU?

what 100 and first was. And so, I was the first one to agree with you, "yes thats right I agree with you." Put you out in the field you there, you know, it was pretty bad. Long as he was 100 and was fine. But, I thought he was a guy back in the rear like I said that it didn't suit me at all. Give me something to drink, hon, I just a pop or something, I'm talking to much. Something else I was you about resentment there. But, the blacks, I didn't finish

I had this, Smith boy, tell me I don't know if this goes on tape he let a bunker bull upon me. We was on fire base Raka San there have you ever talked to Win Hayes and them that was on Ripa as right across from Rip Cord. You could see Ripa Cord from Raka was guarding there for about a week. And this colored guy, I was bunker, they was pretty bad about that, dope and everything. You these black guys was, and it had a front and two wings off of it. ed our ammunition over here in left wing, and there was a cupboard road tile cut in half. That was what you slept in. That had top of it and there was about 2 feet of dirt between where we wing of that bunker, where we had ammunition stored. And this e I said, had been taking dope and everything and he was pull- I saw him I'd sent him up, I know he was, you can tell by his forth. But, you couldn't prove it, so he was pulling guard and a flare that didn't go high enough, it hadn't burned out by the own.

FLARE?

fire base on top of this mountain back there. And it was a and it didn't burn out and it came down on our ammunition and had a whole box of grenades, loose grenades, that was taken out everything, just like a bussel basket full of grenades. That

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this Korean bands in there, come in from Korea. Drinks were 25¢. Them guys had it made, they really had it made and we was feeling pretty good, we had been out in the field long time. Us got some drinks, if you don't tell Daddy about it, you just don't do strff like that around here. But, I had to be wilder than the men, not wilder, but I had to be, we went to one of these. Come in from the field that, I guess I was the worst one of the bunch, far as getting wild. Like that, because I just felt I needed to do that to, if your going to be the wildest you got to be the wildest while your in the rear. So, when you go out in the field, they will come more near listening to you, that away, went outside, got feeling pretty good. It was on my mind how these guys had it made. Back in the rear, we were down, what, near Saigon, that was way down south from us there. It was dark there, I come outside, this guy there said, "100 and first sucks." And that just went all over me.

WHAT WAS HE SAYING?

He said, "100 and first sucks," you know I had that 100 and first patch on my arm there. I thought you remp, I started around there just getting ready to kick him, you know, I really was feeling good enough and drunk enough, I guess you'd say too, I'd been thinking about it anyway. As I said there was 2 Vietnams there was them back in the rear, and out in the jungle. And I thought, Oh God I feel good. I just squared around there just to kick him, and looked and he had a 100 and first patch on too. Well, that was alright. I was the first one to agree with him after I saw he was from 100 and first.

HE WAS JUST KIDDING YOU?

Yes, he knew what 100 and first was. And so, I was the first one to agree with him, so I said, "yes thats right I agree with you." Put you out in the field and just leave you there, you know, it was pretty bad. Long as he was 100 and first, that was fine. But, I thought he was a guy back in the rear like I said a remp, said that it didn't suit me at all. Give me something to drink, hon, I am getting, just a pop or something, I'm talking to much. Something else I was going to tell you about resentment there. But, the blacks, I didn't finish telling that. I had this, Smith boy, tell me I don't know if this goes on tape or not. That he let a bunker bull upon me. We was on fire base Raka San there which I don't, have you ever talked to Win Hayes and them that was on Ripa Cord? This was right across from Rip Cord. You could see Ripa Cord from Raka San. When we was guarding there for about a week. And this colored guy, I was on a corner bunker, they was pretty bad about that, dope and everything. You know some of these black guys was, and it had a front and two wings off of it. Well, we stored our ammunition over here in left wing, and there was a cupboard like a regular road tile cut in half. That was what you slept in. That had dirt over the top of it and there was about 2 feet of dirt between where we slept and the wing of that bunker, where we had ammunition stored. And this black guy, like I said, had been taking dope and everything and he was pulling guard. If I saw him I'd sent him up, I know he was, you can tell by his actions and so forth. But, you couldn't prove it, so he was pulling guard and they shot a up a flare that didn't go high enough, it hadn't burned out by the time it came down.

WHO SHOT THE FLARE?

Fire base the fire base on top of this mountain back there. And it was a windy night, and it didn't burn out and it came down on our ammunition and we had to, we had a whole box of granades, loose granades, that was taken out of the crate, everything, just like a bussel basket full of granades. That

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flare came down right on tip of those grenades. Well, this colored boy left us, me and Paul Screwcraft, from over here in Man West, Virginia, were sleeping inside the bunker, and the colored guy took off and left us right there in the bunker. I woke up, but I didn't know how long it had been burning. I didn't know wheather to try to run, I knew it was on the ammunition. I could just tell it was on the ammunition. But, there was about 2 feet of dirt in between us, well about the time we got up, them grenades are going to start going off. So, I really didn't know what to do so I grabbed him and thought we'd better run, so I grabbed him and we took off. We got to them, there's a ditch about from here to the end of my room down the way. We got in that ditch and it blew up. And it left a whole as big as a room here. We had claiborne mines and everything there. I'd say just about the size of this room here was the hole where our bunker was. Where we were sleeping. And we had to go ahead and finish pulling guard again, he was, I couldn't wake him up, if you've ever seen a drunk person you try to shake them, you know like that so I took this, they had this 5 gallon can of water setting over there, so I just jumped up, wanting to fight and everything. Then later he wouldn't do it, but I was really wanting him to a chance to get at him but I couldn't do it like I said I had the rank, sargent there, I just couldn't do it. So, later there he got me out there and told me if anything ever happened, he'd kill me. He said, I'd better be watching him, because I threatened him, too. I said I had a lot of me that liked me if he did accidently get me then i had some men that would kill him. So, it was sort of a stand off type deal there, he wanted to, but he was afraid so one would see him or something. I ended up sending him to jail, because he was one of them that refused to walk point. So, he had to spend 6 months in jail, and I loved it too. Because I'd taken that other guy down there and I knew what he was going to have to go through. So, that, what I told you when I smiled when they refused to do that, see, I knew what was going to happen to them, so I just smiled because I knew they was gone.

WAS THERE MANY TAKEN OFF THE LINE THAT WAY?

Six, I had six that I wrote up to send us.

HOW ABOUT SOME OF THE OTHER BLACKS, WERE THEY BETTER SOLDIERS THAN THEM?

Oh, yes. I had three of three of them, Pananama Bill Brown, like I said he was black but he wanted to do his job. I had a boy named Garrist from Texas, I wrote him up for a silver star, he was a good man, he was my, he case, he didn't like that because he was scared, he was wanting to come home. He come to me he told me that those people was not doing their jobs. He said, "I want to go home and I want you on them." He was on me wanting me to be on them all the time, I was on then but as I said it didn't do that much, because they'd go to sleep on guard, just wouldn't pull their weight. Now, I'm telling you there's a difference between blacks and niggers, far as I'm concerened Garrist was black, Johnson was black, Brown there, Pananama Bill Brown was real black, the three of them I liked. I shared canteens of water with them and everything else, because I pretty well had to them other guys I didn't, I wouldn't do nothing with them. I didn't like them. I still here, in the United States, I still resent them, because I know, I don't mean to, but I just can't help it. I don't like them.

WAS THERE MUCH CROOKS AT THE TIME, YOU MENTIONED THEY BEING?

Anytime we got close to a village there was drugs, most of the time we was 50 miles from nowhere. There was nowhere to get them. But, if they were around villages, the blackes were pretty bad for it. One of the best men I had, Tim Huffman, up there in Sandust, Ohio. He was the best man I had, he loved to smoke marijuana, he walked point the majority of the time. He was the white honkey that the guys say let walk, he loved it. He was good, he was just about

6 feet 2 inches, he had this Daniel Boone look about him, he just reminded me of what Daniel Boone would be in his day. He thrived on that walking point. I can tell you a couple of stories about that. Anyway, he like them marijuana, and I'd say, and he wore beads all of the time. All the time he had these beads on, I got into all kinds of trouble over that. I come in, this colnel back in there with starched fatiques everything. And that wasn't real soldier like, and they'd come get on me. Come jump on me. Get on that man. You don't do that stuff. But, he was the best man they had.

DID YOU TELL THEM THAT?

Oh, yes, I told them he was the best man they had. Of course, I couldn't say to much then. But, still get rid of them beads, and straighten that guy up. Oh, Huff, I call him, Huff, The Magic Dragon. I had nicknames for about all of them. He'd say, " I'm going to sneek off here," and I'd say, "Huff, you'd better not let me catch you. If I catch you, I'm going to have to write you up because that's just what I've got to do and I'm going to do it. He said, "you won't catch me," and then he'd just smiled. He'd come back and be a little glassy-eyed, but he never caused any trouble. He liked it, he'd go smoke it, he'd come back and we'd go to the field. He didn't do it in the field. I mean this was only in the rear, where there was no responsibility, no lives on the line or anything like that. I had three one time, this was the same time that the Coke Kids, this was another reason why them Coke Kids, the 3 blacks. One of them died, one went into a coma, and another one went completely out of his mind. And remember when I was telling you Pierce got killed, this was the same time we were holding, they come out there and sold them the drugs. One of them we saved him, the one in the coma we got him back to the rear. He ended up, later, doing a good job. I ended up writing him up for a metal, he ended up doing a good job and I gave him credit for what he did do. That particular day he was in a coma, I put smelling sauce capsules down his mouth and up his nose, he didn't even flinch. The guy, I thought he was dead. They sent him in and they pumped out and he did live. His name was Thompson. He helped us but one night there in a pretty bad case. But, overall, I said that blacks, I didn't like them.

WHERE WERE THEY GETTING THE DRUGS?

Coke Kids. You could buy it on the street corner.

WAS IT USUALLY MARIJUANA?

They sell cocaine, just anything you wanted. Little kids, 12 years old said, "you want to buy cocaine." They sell everthing.

THIS WOULD BE IN THE VILLAGES?

Yes, in the villages. Like I said. I done this less than a lot of people did. We were on the field. But, you could get anything you wanted around the city way. It was a pretty big town and you could get anything you wanted.

THIS STORY ABOUT GOING INTO LOUSE?

Yes, our outfit. I couldn't go into louse. I was in louse one time, offici-ally I wasn't in louse. We went into, I was on the first helicopter, we had something like like 80 helicopters. We flew into, to open up to let the Armors go into to louse, the road and bridges. On the map I know I was in louse, I know I really was, but only about one-half a mile. Just checking out the boarders is what we were doing. I was going to tell you a drug story. This is what this leads up to. There was something like 10,000 armors come through there, this boy was guarding the bridge and he was talking to him, he'd just bought some marijuana off of him, but we were up on the hill, we had a camp up there in the hill, just smoking that marijuana, just...

WAS THE OFFENSE?

No, this was our guy. This was our, he was from North Carolina, a boy from North Carolina. He just came up the hill in broad day light smoking this marijuana joint. Sargent Staren, a boy from over here in West Virginia, this was a patoon operation, he had another squad there. He hit on him and started jumping all over and I went up there and I jumped on him there and the boy was honest, really honest, and he said I, " I thought everybody smoked it over in Vietnam." He didn't think anything was wrong with it.

THIS IS WHAT YOU WAS SAYING EARLY ABOUT GUYS JUST COMING IN?

Yes, this guy had just been there about a week. A new guy, and here he came up that hill smoking that mauijuana joint right in front of the officers. Officers and sargents and stuff and Staren said, "son you going to jail." Then I started talking and said now Staren the boy didn't know any better, let us give him a chance, and see if he does. Later, we can't put up with this, we told him we don't do this stuff. He really serious, he thought on the radio, ' he thought everyone smoked on TV and news everyone does, so he wouldn't try to hide it or nothing. So, here he comes in broad day light, so I said let's give him a chance, and he turned out to be a good soldier. But, he was just new and you could walk around and do it anytime you wanted to, in front of anybody. Of course, he found that out, if we saw he do it we got him.

SO, THIS WAS THE TYPICAL ATTITUDE OF NEW GUYS COMING IN?

Yes, you just wild and like I said, I resent that of United States people, but it's not their fault. That's the only thing they heard on the media. The Vietnam war was a media war on the news at night, demonstrations, big news. So, they would put them on there, anything bad we done, like Lt. Cally, when he went into the village there and took it, and he had to kill some women and children but thats, what people don't understand is that it was a poor country out in the villages, and if you went into the villages like I said, I didn't do this, I was more in jungle person. I wasn't involved in taking villages. If you kill their parents, they'd starve anyway, little kids, personally I rather see them kill the kids, then leave them in the jungle to starve. That is why I say the Americans don't understand, they got orphanges and welfare to take care of it here, see, over there they didn't. If their mom's and dad's and ways of surviving were gone, well the kids was going to starve anyway, probably. So, it was probably less cruel to go ahead, that was probably the lucky ones that died when they invaded the village. Then the ones that were left there to the end, ended up starving later. American people don't realize that. The news media playsit up you take Lt. Colly as a baby killer and all this stuff, now I don't like that but you will never change it. I think the veterans of Vietnam are banging their heads against a tree that won't help anything because you will never get the American public to accept it. It is not like World War I or II, there's no way we will get the recognition we, I think we deserve. I really don't expect anything, but I don't like going around thought of as a bad guy. I don't care if they don't brag that we did a good job, but I just don't want them to think there's people over there that did a bad job. We had some good men over there, they did the best they could, declared or not when people are shooting at you that's war. I don't know what the official thing for war is, but to me when people are shooting at you that's war. We thought of it as war, how did I get in this.

YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT THE NEW GUY SMOKING A JOINT, BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT THE MEDIA PORTRAYED, THEN YOU MOVED ON TO SAY THAT THE MEDIA PLAYED UP THAT WOMEN AND CHILDREN WERE KILLED?

But they had that in World War I and II. But, people don't think of that, think of that bomb they dropped, but they were hero's. Our guys, were bad guys. The media played it, it was the difference of attitudes of the media. In WW II we bombed Germany and so forth and we done good, we killed a lot of people, we done good. But, over there it was mostly hand weapons, and they didn't have as good media back than as...

YOU COULDN'T SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DROPPING A BOMB AND JUST , AH... There dead, when there dead, there dead, it don't matter how you die. Your dead. When you go into a village you can't stop and say, no, don't shoot you, them automatic weapons they shoot, like the M-16, they shoot 18, normally shot 20, but you keep 18 in them to keep wicking the spring, in 2 seconds. You'd be shooting 18 rounds when your spraying them, you don't have time to stop and say I'm going to shoot this shot. This you shoot everything and them M-60's, there putting 700-800 rounds a minute. When they come in there with them helicopters there spraying everything, it's a solid stream of firing from a M-60 and them mini-guns off them helicopters. It's a solid stream of fire and naturally there's going to be innocent people, who is the innocent fellow, that's the thing of it. If they were harming Vietnam were they innocent? They enemy is the enemy even if their, the Coke Kids they were young but they got my people killed. I'm sure they did, so after that to me, I wouldn't let them come out after they, I gave them orders not to come, because they were out there they was going to be wrong.

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE ARVN YOU MENTIONED ABOUT THEM?

I didn't like them they were lazy. I just didn't care much about them.

DID YOU HAVE MUCH TO DO WITH THEM?

Very little operation-wise in the field. Like that village we was working around we went in there a few times, looking for girls, you could say. They resented us real bad, they'd be laying around there when I thought they should be out in field. I guess they needed a rest too. But, they wanted our money, I learned that after a while. I'll give you an example. Like girls when the guys went over there first, you could take a bar of soap, candy bar, get all the girls you wanted but, it got inflation. They was wanting 35, 40 or \$45 every time you went out there. When I was over there and here I've was over there fighting for them, so forth. And inflation hit them, they loved our money. They's all the time had their had out. I don't care what they was doing, they was after the GI's money. I guess that was just the nature of people. I guess.

YOU PRAISED THEM AS GOOD SOLDIERS, BUT YET THE ARVN, YOU THINK A LOT LESS OF THEM?

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Well, what I saw, I didn't see them that much they were laying around. Like I said, you go into the village, laying around, not doing anything and it was their war, here we were fighting it, they were back in the rear taking it easy. I guess I didn't hear about as many of their people getting killed as ours. Seems to me like they weren't doing anything. I don't know of them doing anything around in our area. No big battles, no, never run across them in an operation in patrol, doing anything. I didn't hardly know they were there, except when I came back to the rear and saw them. It was our war, as far as I knew about it. We were doing all the fighting and it was their country, they should have taken the lead. Of course, I know we were the leaders as far as technology, weapons, supplies, only thing they had was what we gave them to fight with. The South Vietnamese, now the Korean soldiers were good soldiers except for the ROKS. Only way I know about them, I didn't do any operation with them but like our North Vietnamese Kid Carson Scouts, they's scared to death of them. They didn't like them Koreans, because they were just as good as they were, because they would follow them to their caves. Once they got on their tracks, they were good trackers, good everything, they would follow them into their caves and hoochies of jungle and kill them, they were scared to death of them ROKS. Evidently they were good soldiers, but there weren't very many of them. Just special trained units that would go in there, they were good.

SO THAT WAS FROM JUNE 1970 or JUNE 1971?

April 22, I got leave.

APRIL 22 OF 1971. WAS THAT ANYTHING THAT WAS HAPPENING AT HOME BOTHERING YOU AT, FOR EXAMPLE, IN 1971, THERE WAS...

I tell you the day I got out I tell you what happened. I still don't have them, as I get older I want them for my little boy. I got a little boy growing up, he just happen to find a metal that they sent me that I'd won, that hadn't been processed while I was there, they sent it to me later.

WHAT METAL WAS THAT?

Bronze star with a V on it, they sent it to me, he ran across it the other day. He was asking what it was. When I got out the news I was getting that was when the veterans, you might look up the date. They went to Washington and was throwing their metals in the capital steps, this was the day or day before I go up. It came on the radio over there that they were doing that. I had to go pick my metals up at Camp Eagle, as I was processing out going home, whick was costing me a 4 hour delay going to Camp Eagle. Well, I thought the veterans are throwing on these steps anyway what good are they. So, I didn't go get them. I've never picked them up. This one I got because they had processed it them and I didn't have a chance to pick it up. So, they sent it the other day. I'm going to write and get them one of these days, just for my kids, but at the time I said 4 more hours over here going to get a bunch of metals, they were throwing anyway, it's not worth it. Just get me one home and I went straight on to Cameron and forgot about going to Camp Eagle.

Another thing too, I had to go out of my way to get my metals. Here I have to go say give me my metals, they didn't give them to me. I had to go some place to pick them up, it wasn't no cermony or nothing like that. You just went into some clerks office and he read your orders and said you got this metal, this metal, this metal here you go. So, to me they were throwing them away anyway, what was the point of getting them.

WAS IT A SHOCK TO YOU WHEN YOU HEARD THAT THEY WERE THROWING THEM AWAY?

Well, I didn't understand the reason for it. I wasn't back here and didn't exactly know what was going on. That was a little news bulletin that came on over there that they were doing that. I didn't keep a picture of Vietnam, I took 1 roll of film when I was first over there and didn't even send it off to be processed. I didn't have a picture.

WHERE DID YOU COME IN FROM VIETNAM?

Fort Lewis.

HOW WERE YOU PROCESSED OUT FROM THERE?

Yes, they just let me out, that's was it, you got off the plane, we went and got our orders. I took about 30 days to get home.

DID YOU HAVE CIVILIAN CLOTHES ON AT THAT POINT-FROM YOUR UNIFORM TO YOUR CIVILIAN CLOTHES?

I didn't have any civilian clothes. I wore my uniform till I got some. Then from then on I never had any since then.

YOU DIDN'T BUY ANY WHEN YOU WERE THERE IN FORT LEWIS?

I think I took 30 days getting home. I had a good time coming home. I just sort of figured I had a little money, I couldn't spend it while I was out there jungle, so I had a little money saved up.

ONE GUY WAS TELLING ME THERE WAS SOME KIND OF DECOMPRESSION COMING HOME. THAT YOU WERE OUT FIGHTING IN THE JUNGLE FOR SURVIVAL AND THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN YOU WERE OUT WALKING IN THE CITY.

Yes, I know exactly what he's talking about.

THIS GUY WAS SAYING...

Yes, I miss it.

THIS GUY WAS IN THE SAME OUTFIT YOU WERE, BUT AT A DIFFERENT TIME. HE SAID HE FELT FOR QUITE A WHILE HE WAS A DANGEROUS MAN. BECAUSE, HE SAID HE WAS SO USE TO PULLING THAT TRIGGER THAT HE KINDA WORRIED ABOUT HIMSELF.

Everything is a Devil anymore. I've never had anything that reaches, wife and I fight a lot, we really do now we have. I get bored, I really get bored, I don't have anything, I'm a outgoing person, I really am. I'm not a mean, I don't fight. I believe in talking around things if I can, and so forth. My life is pretty dull, it really is, compared to when people shooting at you. I tried hunting when I came back. Well, I said I'm going squirrel hunting it was dull, I went out and shot a couple of squirrels. Well, I said, I looked down at them, only two squirrels I killed since I been back. I looked down at them, there weren't any excitement in it. I shot them, they would not do nothing back at me or nothing, that's the only 2 I ever killed.

YOU MISSED VIETNAM AFTER YOU CAME BACK?

Well, I didn't like it, I'm not saying that, I hated the weather, the blacks, the mosquitos. I'm talking about the excitement. What can we do here that is exciting as what we was doing there. When people are shooting at you, I mean your blood's flowing, your trying to survive. It's well, it's just like I said you don't do things in normal life that's that exciting. Maybe having a little baby, or something is pretty exciting, but still your life's not being threatned. When your life's threatned you realize how important it is. You are scared to death at time, but when it's over with and alone, I didn't get hurt or anything. I guess you, it's exciting, it was exciting. Why does people like to ride roller coasters? They like to get that excitement, it's the same feeling when people are shooting at you, even when it's over it last quite a while.

DO YOU STILL FEEL THAT THAT WAS THE ROLLER COASTER TIME? DO YOU STILL LOOK BACK AT IT WISHING YOU WERE BACK THERE?

Oh, yes, but I wouldn't do it. I've thought when I first came out of there. Mercenary type deals like Elvis Irow, go down, and help them. But, or something like that, but I wouldn't do it, because I couldn't stand. I don't see now, living pretty comfortable here. Living over there in that heat, very little food, not enough water to drink, we went a day and one-half one time, and they had us trapped. We was up on the hill we didn't have any water, they was between us and the river, and we couldn't get water. We ran out of water for a day and one-half, which don't sound like very long, but when it's like 100 degrees or so, no water, it gets pretty bad. Well, even that is exciting. Talking to you right now, I'm excited right now. Just the fact we are talking, sort of get things stirred back up here, feel pretty good really, you know sort of exciting like.

WHAT, COMING BACK THEN, WHAT WAS YOUR GENERAL ATTITUDE COMING BACK TO AMERICA? Well, it felt good, but it didn't turn out that way. Nobody here, I was. NOBODY SLAPPING YOU ON THE BACK?

Nobody, here I was coming home, and I done a good job. Had 6 men killed. Which wasn't a whole lot of them, I don't think, I'm talking about company wise, this was the whole company now. And we had 50 some wounded. I think, I had figures counted up when I first came back here. I don't exactly remember exact figures, but I'm sure that's pretty close. Here I done a good job, I thought it was a good job, felt proud, first few weeks home here ran into a bunch of people, here, I was feeling good, they said where you been, I hadn't seen you in awhile, right than that killed it right there. For you even started they didn't come up and say glad your back, all this stuff. Where you been, they didn't even know you was there. Here you was over there and they didn't even know you was gone. How can they worry about you. I guess people like to be thought of and stuff sometimes. It's not the metals like I said, I didn't even pick mine up, it wouldn't that it was the fact, here you are wasting your time because nobody knew you, knew nothing, that's sort of the bad part. My wife right now, she don't know the first thing about it. I mean, she don't know.

YOU GET THE FEELING PEOPLE DON'T CARE EITHER IS THAT IT?

If your not there the only GI's, the people normally talk to people are GI's.

TO EACH OTHER?

Yes, with the Vets club back in Morehead. You probably talked to a bunch of them. Bob Smoot and people like this. You ever talked to them?

NO.

We go out to the Vets club and drink a beer or something and we get to talking, it makes you feel good, because those people know what you are talking about. You know, I mentioned while ago about the wife making fun of me when I started telling about Mirdeir, that's one of the guys. I told you I left him back in the jungle. His name was Mirdeir, that's a funny name. I started saying something there and they started sort of making fun of me telling Vietnam stories or something. I can't talk to them, you go to the Vets club, start drinking beer or something, everyone starts to talking, and you don't care to say anything to them. Even people gettint killed or something, because they done it too. It just sort of makes you feel better to do that.

BUT, YOU DON'T FEEL THAT THERE'S ANYWAY TO TALK TO PEOPLE WHO, I DON'T CARE OR DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

Well, you can tell them but, they don't think you are, like I said, telling them war stories, or something like that. They don't know they don't care if they didn't live it. There is no way they can ever do that, you can never make them understand because they have never been there. I don't care, you have talked to a lot of people, but if you weren't there you can never get the same feeling that...

OBVIOUSLY, I WASN'T THERE, BUT I'VE LISTENED TO SO MUCH. I KNOW, I CAN ALMOST TELL WHAT YOUR GOING TO SAY. ALMOST AS IF I'D BEEN THERE. ONE OF THE GUYS ASSISTING ME, MICHAL MANNS, I THINK YOU TALKED TO HIM ON THE PHONE, MICHAL HAD BEEN WOUNDED FOUR TIMES. SO, IF HE HAD BEEN HERE THE TWO OF YOU WOULD PROBABLY BEEN UP NEAR THE CEILING PROBABLY BEEN EXCITED ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING ON. I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT.

I'm saying just that fact living it, it's not the fighting, people think in Vietnam it's fighting, that's not the hard part. To me it wasn't, you go patrolling for weeks, your tired, your miserable. The mosquitos, you set on patrol. I've set their with tears running down my eyes from mosquitos tring to get in your eyes. You sat there in guard, like this, constantly grabbing your face tring to get them out of your eyes, they go straight for your eyes. You use bug juice on your face so the eyes was the weak spot, mosquitos too and then your ears. You'd just sat there and they'd go for your eyes. You'd just sat there like this I'd get aggravated, just plain old aggravated, that tears run down my cheeks, trying to keep mosquitos out of my eyes.

MISERABLE.

It's hard to explain to somebody unless they sat there. Like I said, patrolling all day. Like this is for weeks at a time, not just a span of time, is hard to explain, we talked for a few hours or so, then go out a few hours 8 or so, we come home and rest and everything else. See, over there we didn't do that. That night was just as miserable. No TV, no nothing. You start guard, as soon as it got dark you would start guarding. Wet, stayed wet. No way to get dry, even if you are on patrol, you are either sweating wet or rain wet, it was one or the other. Then at night, your body heated, you'd get in your poncho and wray up, about the time your body heat dried your clothes out a little bit, someone wes shacking your time to get up and guard. You sat out there and got wet again. You'd lay down your body heat would just about dry them out, then you'd get up and get wet again.

A LOT OF RAIN?

Oh, God, I hated that rain. 6--it went 23 straight days one time it never stopped, it sounds like a Noah's Ark story, it either missed it was raining all the time sometime a little bit harder then it would slack up but, it was constantly raining there for 23 straight days. We had the diarrhea, the whole company there just about was back in the mountains there, we didn't have any tablets. We'd just drink the water coming off the hills there, 80% of them had the trots, and you'd go on patrol, and this is the funny part. I like to tell it, and you wouldn't go 50 feet and someone would have to stop and use the bathroom, and you had to guard them and everything.

USE THE BATHROOM AT WHAT?

You just sorta stopped, you didn't go to far out, you stayed with the group more or less, because everyone done it, you didn't worry about that.

THEN YOU'D HAVE TO STOP?

It wouldn't nothing but green water, anyway. And that was sort of a saying, you'd just shoot out there green water, everybody say, four foot 10 inches, you know then the next guy would squirt it out farther, and it was 6 feet 7 inches. You go for the record of diarrhea. That sort of sounds sickening

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to you but that like it, something you had to do. God, you'd get weak, you get weak, you were tired and it was raining on you. No TV, no hamburgers, no milkshakes. I didn't like that part of it.

SO, YOU MENTIONED YOU CAME BACK TO MOREHEAD TO SCHOOL THEN?

Right.

WHEN DID YOU START BACK?

That fall.

OF 1971?

1971 there, I guess it was.

YOU MENTIONED, DID YOU REMEMBER SOME OF THE GUYS NAMES THAT WERE IN THE VETS CLUB WITH YOU?

Yes, Bob Smoot, Dwight Thomas, these were good leaders, there's a lot of difference in our club over there.

TELL ME FIRST OF ALL, THAT BOB HOPE...

Bob Smoot.

SMOOT, SMOOT. I CALLED HIM SMOOT, I DON'T KNOW.

I have a list back I'm going to try to check some of these out and see if I can get in touch with them. Yes, he's a good, he teaches at U.K. right now. Bob does, he's a real top-notch guy, good leader. Dwight Thomas, was president of the Vets club when I went in.

DWIGHT THOMAS?

He's from Letcher County, real top-notch guy, now these real good leaders, and there was Phil Bear from Greenup County.

BEAR?

Bear, I think, I believe so, I don't know exactly, I just heard them call that I don't know how to spell it. Lonnie Castle, you probably talked to Lonnie over there. He lives in Morehead now, he had some Vets reunions that summer we had our, well this summer Vets club reunion over there. Winn Hayes, he was wild, he was on Ripcord, he had it rough. We set there and watched them they took Ripcord, it was one of the big victories for the North over there they, about the time they needed a victory, they decided to take Ripcord, they just, I they took Ripcord they walked over top of it. Killed hundreds of people there I imagine.

IS IT THIS COMING SUMMER YOUR GOING TO HAVE YOUR REUNION?

Well, we had it this last fall, now. I take it back now, it was fall of Morehead Homecoming over there we had Vets from...

DO YOU GOT THE ADDRESSES OF THESE GUYS?

Lonnie Castle does.

LONNIE CASTLE?

Yes, he was the one-head of it, he lives there, he lives right down from college there, he works.

CASSEL?

Castle.

CASTLE, LONNIE CASTLE?

Yes.

I CAN GET IN TOUCH WITH HIM?

Oh, yes, you need to get in touch with Lonnie. He knows all, he lives there now, so he...

SO HE KEEPS THE GUYS TOGETHER?

Yes, he's the wild man. He just that kind of guy, you sort of like he's...

WHEN THE INVITATIONS COME OUT TO GET TOGETHER IT COMES FROM LONNIE?

Yes, he's the one that started it. We went over there last year. Winn Hayes

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and them got pretty drunk. but I was embarrassed. to tell the truth about it. they was plum wild. I was kinda staring, I tried to duck. He was yelling, screaming all this stuff, having a good time, nothing bad. But, you need to talk, like I said that be a good guys to talk to. Like I said it releases you to talk to these kind of people. We go out, we had it out on 60 them had a good club, had some good leaderd, now they changed. I went down there a period of 4 summers, getting my Rank I and I don't know if drugs more in it, I think there's more of them in it at last. The leadership after Dwight, Bob Smoot, so forth, I think myself, one of them after we quit being with the club, they dissolved the club more or less. They got into drinking too much. I think the State Police even raided them, so forth. The younger bunch coming in after, we were there we were older to start with, Bob's older when he went to Vietnam and I was a little older because I'd already been to college. But, the 18 year old guys coming in started as freshmen they were pretty wild bunch, now compared to what we were. Them they took over leadership of the club, it went down, pretty bad. I could tell every summer I went back, it got worse.

WORSE IN WHAT SENSE?

Well, less Vietnam people for one thing. Just regular people. Our group now, was basic, all of them was Vietnam, these other boys were Vets but, just regular Army and they'd come in, they drunk more and they seemed like a wilder bunch.

DID YOU KNOW CARL KENDALL?

Carl, yes, he's from Blane from out where I live. Carl is big, tall and blond fellow.

YES, DID HE COME TO THE VETS CLUB ONCE IN A WHILE?

He did, he was out there pretty much, quite a bit at first.

HE'S THE COMMANDER THERE AT THE AMERICAN LEGION THERE AT MOREHEAD.

He is. I havn't seen him, he wasn't there at homecoming. I didn't get to see him. Last year I was the first one, I went to, they had one the year before last. We've had them for 2 years now. I didn't get to attend the first one, so my wife and I went this time. Carl wasn't there, he was there the year before. There was another one we called Quick Carl, he wasn't a Vietnam Vet, he was I forgot his name, I don't remember his name now. I liked him real well though.

THERE'S SOME OF THE GUYS, TAKE A LOOK AT THAT LIST AND SEE IF YOU?

Don Davis.

WHICH ONE?

I know that name, Don Davis.

DON DAVIS?

I can't place the face on him, but I heard that name. Is that Carl Butler?

IT MIGHT BE.

I bet it is.

ONE OF THE THINGS I'M TRYING TO GET, BOBBY, IS A COMPLETE LIST OF ALL THOSE WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM IN THE MSU ALUMNI AND WHAT I WANT TO DO IS TO GET A RECOGNITION OF THESE MEN WHO GRADUATED FROM THE UNIVERSITY AND WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM AND GET A TABLET OR PLAQUE, PUT IT UP SOMEWHERE, HAVE A NICE CEREMONY, HAVE AS MANY GUYS COME IN AND MY PROBLEM IS, HERE IS MY LIST I HAVE SO FAR. AND I'M SUR IT IS ONLY A THIRD OF ALL THE GUYS.

There's Phil Bears you was talking about there

WHICH ONE?

Phil Bear, you had.

Oh, YES.

Lonnie Castle, that's one more here. Lonnie, here.

OH, YOU HAVE THEM. I WONDER IF HE IS ON THE LIST THAT THE GUYS ARE GOING TO TALK TO US. SOME OF THESE FELLOWS HAVE TALKED. SOME HAVEN'T. IS THERE ANY WAY THAT YOU KNOW THAT I COULD GET IN TOUCH WITH MORE OF THESE PEOPLE, THAT YOU KNOW?

Vets club, Bob Smoot, Bob Smoot will know more than anyone else.

O.K.

I would think, because I would think he teaches at University of Kentucky, he is a real intelligent person, he's the one that sorta kept the club going at first.

IS HE TEACHING AT U.K.?

Teaching at U.K., he's a top-notch guy.

SMOOT?

H, I think.

SMOOTH?

I think it is, I'm not positive. I don't even remember seeing his name put down in writing, I was wondering what you was doing, I thought.

THAT'S WHY I'M DOING I THINK THIS WILL BE A GREAT SATISFACTION TO THE VETERANS THEMSELVES. I TEACH THE COURSE UNDER VIETNAM WAR. AND I KNOW THE VIETNAM WAR FROM THE BOOKS, I'VE BEEN TEACHING THE COURSE UNDER IT FOR THE LAST.

Where were we over there tell me, as I said, I was over there trying to do a job. Why were we over there? I'd be interested to find out some information from you as well. Why were we over there? You've already said why the government said we was over there, mainly over there to defend South Vietnamese from the take over by the communist of the North. Correct? Well, that's what I thought.

TO DEFEND, THAT IS WHAT OUR GOVERNMENT SAID. GOVERNMENT OF KENNEDY, JOHNSON, AND NIXON, DEFENDING DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH VIETNAM. NOW, THAT WAS A GOOD REASON, SHOULD WE HAVE BEEN THERE IS WHAT THE ANTI-WAR POSITION IS, THAT THIS WAS A MISTAKE.

It's a war you never win. Right now the communists are having the same problems right now. You got a certain group of people, you mentioned there a little bit, this guy you talking about I knew there, the excitement of war their still doing it. Their fighting them communists, their raiding the villages, their outlaws. Your Jesse James Gangs over there, were some of the people we were out there chasing them in mountains, their still in the mountains I guarantee their in those mountains, their raiding them villages, their raiding them communist they lived that way for a long time and their going to keep on doing it. I guarantee right, them same people out in mountains are fighting them communist, because they've been raised doing it, that's all they know. Because, they don't have any livelihood except steal, kill, and rob. And their just as well under communist as they would have been under us. And the people, as I said, I got to not like South Vietmanese time I left there. They don't care, their go out in the rice field and walk either way. They didn't have nothing but dirt floors, and straw huts to start with in the villages. What difference does it make to them if it was communists or democratic? It didn't make no difference to them. Like here, I don't think anybody could ever occupy the United States, because we have had it pretty good, and they come in here changing our way of life, even my wife and anybody else would be out there with a shot gun trying to do something, but I just don't think they could. But, over there it didn't make any differences one way or another. They didn't have that much pride, they didn't know what was going on. The billages was just like the rest of us, they didn't know what was going on, they were changing governments. About 63 they'd change there, so forth a couple of times. These villages, people probably didn't even know, it probably out there, they probably didn't even know who was the president. They didn't care who was the president, they had the rice fields and they didn't have radio, newspapers, or TV, so they didn't even know.

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I WANT TO TELL YOU TO THAT. BESIDES THE RECOGNITION OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS,
I THINK YOU SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED AT THE UNIVERSITY. ANOTHER REASON I'M
TALKING TO YOU AND 25 OR SO OTHERS. BETWEEN MYSELF AND MICHAEL. I'M
TRAVELING AROUND GOING ALL THE WAY TO FLORENCE, KENTUCKY AND TO LOUISVILLE
THE SAME SATURDAY AND THEN DOWN TO FRANKFORT. ABOUT 500 MILES TALKING TO
4 GUYS IN 2 DAYS. WHAT I AM DOING IS GETTING A MODEL OF HISTORY OF THE
VIETNAM WAR THAT I WANT THESE STORIES TO BE PRESERVED. I WANT PEOPLE FOR
THE MOST PART, DON'T WRITE DOWN WHAT THEY EXPERIENCED.

I thought about writing a book.

EXPERIENCE, EXPERIENCE, VERY FEW WROTE LETTERS OR KEPT DAIRY'S, WHAT, THIS
WILL BE AN ARCHIVE.

SO WE WERE TALKING ON THE WAY UP IN YOUR TRUCK, BOBBY, ABOUT YOUR GETTING INTO THE ARMY BACK IN WHAT YEAR WAS THAT? 69. AND YOU VOLUNTEERED? I volunteered to keep my dad from drafting me. He was on the draft board at the time and I was trying to take the pressure off of him. I knew they were going to get me anyway. Every month or so they would send a little form--are you still in school--when do you graduate--so a buddy and I we went on a buddy plan and volunteered and he ended up having high blood and didn't have to go and they took me. AND YOUR FATHER, WAS HE AN OFFICIAL IN THE STATE OF THE COUNTY AT THE TIME? No. He was on the draft board. THAT WAS IN 69. HOW OLD WERE YOU THEN? 22. 22? AND YOU HAD BEEN IN SCHOOL? I went to Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee. I was down there on a basketball scholarship and, so we ended up joining the service. Finished up at Morehead come back and all my friends were graduated Austin Peay so I met my wife, she was from the county here, she went to Morehead so I decided to go to Morehead. SO THIS WAS AFTER YOU CAME OUT OF THE SERVICE. SO YOU WENT IN WHAT MONTH WAS IT IN 69? June 1. JUNE 1, 69, AND THEN YOU WERE DISCHARGED? 71. April 22, 71. WHAT UNIT WERE YOU WITH? I was with the 3rd of the 187th 101st airborne. 101st AIRBORNE AND WHAT WAS YOUR MOS? 11 bravo. Bush Beater. WHAT KIND OF WEAPON DID YOU HAVE? M-16? Well, I carried no, changed around a little bit a M-16 basically. I carried a M-79 awhile we just...M-79 WHAT'S THAT, A MACHINE GUN? No, that's a grenade launcher. GRENADE LAUNCHER, YEA. Mostly M-16, maybe about 3 weeks I carried a M-79 just you know for a change. LET'S SEE NOW, JUNE 1969, NIXON HAD BEEN ELECTED THE PREVIOUS NOVEMBER, RIGHT? I'm a Nixon man, I don't care if he is a crook, I mean I don't care if he is a crook I mean I don't care if he is a crook I'm still a Nixon man. When he was bombing the north here it was doing good. It slowed down and when congress cut out the bombing you know they started, the action started picking up again, so the media, I feel like destroyed Nixon and I don't know how you feel, but I'm still a Nixon man. I JUST WANT YOUR STORY. I'd vote for him again because you know what he was trying to do, he was trying to win it and seemed like congress didn't care so I am a Nixon man. I'm a republican to start with, but I'd vote democratic, it doesn't really matter to me I like Nixon. I think the media destroyed him. WHY I BROUGHT HIM UP WAS THAT HERE YOU ARE GOING TO VIETNAM AT THE TIME WHEN A LOT OF GUYS WERE GOING TOO OF COURSE KNOWING THAT THE WAR WAS WINDING DOWN AND THAT YOU REALLY WERE NOT GOING OVER THERE TO WIN THE WAR, BUT SOMEHOW OR ANOTHER NIXON PUT IT GET A PEACE WITH HONOR. DID YOU REMEMBER, HOW WAS YOUR ATTITUDE AT THE TIME ABOUT GOING TO VIETNAM? DID YOU UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WERE GOING THERE, OR WHAT DID YOU UNDERSTAND ABOUT GOING TO VIETNAM? Really, teenager, not teenager, just 22 over most of the boys, when you were in college you didn't think that much about it, we were just playing ball, and I felt really good about it in a way because dad was in WWII and my grandfather was in WWI, one grandfather, and one was in the Spanish-American War so we had a history of serving the country and we went in dad told me to do a good job, course mom cried for several weeks there before we went, and there's sort of a tradition in the family and what, had no choice but to do a good job with the pressure on me. SO YOU HAD THIS FEELING OF PATRIOTISM, THIS WAS YOUR OBLIGATION TO VOLUNTEER SERVE YOUR COUNTRY. Wouldn't of mattered where it was, Vietnam or what if they, the way I felt about it if you had a job to do and you done the best you could and forget about it. I didn't listen to the news that much for...WELL DID YOU HAPPEN TO UNDERSTAND, BOBBY, WHY WE WERE IN VIETNAM AT THE TIME. WHAT WAS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHY WE WERE THERE? To prevent communist people from taking control of people that wanted to be free, that's just all I knew and all I needed to know I guess. YES, YES. SO WHEN YOU WENT IN THE SERVICE WHERE DID YOU DO YOUR BASIC TRAINING? Fort Knox, Kentucky. AND THEN WHEN YOU FINISHED THAT, WHERE DID THEY SEND YOU? Went to Ft. Polk, Louisiana, you know Vietnam. Once you went to Fort Polk you knew you were going, that was the infantry school, they said when you went to Fort Polk, you were definitely headed for Vietnam then I went to...WELL, LET ME ASK YOU THIS WERE YOU, THE FACT THAT YOU HAD ABOUT THREE YEARS OF COLLEGE, RIGHT? Right. DID THAT SEEM TO SURPRISE YOU THAT THEY PUT YOU RIGHT INTO THE INFANTRY? Yes it did, What happened, the infantry at that time they told us, was I guess the educational loss was getting low. They had a lot of colored coming in and so forth and they were trying to build up the infantry, I think I heard

the figure 25%, you know they were trying to get people with college. 25% went into the infantry at that time. And I put down that I would rather go camping than read a book, you know on my on those test scores—attitudes and stuff and I remember that now they said rather read a book than go camping and I said go camping and ended up in infantry and that may have been a mistake. SO DID THEY RECOGNIZE AFTER A WHILE, YOUR EDUCATION, DID THEY, DID YOU ADVANCE MORE QUICKLY? I started off as a squad leader. First day in basic and then I went to leadership preparation school. I had three weeks of that before I went to Ft. Polk. Then I was a squad leader in Ft. Polk. Then I went to NCO Academy and Ft. Benning, Georgia which made me a sergeant. They asked me to go to officer's training school which I had to extend to do that and after having basic and AIT I was fed up with rinky-dink part of the army and I didn't want to extend for a year at that time. SO YOU DID GET WHAT? E-5. SO THAT WAS EVEN BEFORE YOU WENT TO VIETNAM? Right. I went in Vietnam as a sergeant. SO YOUR EDUCATION DID PAY OFF IN THAT SENSE THAT YOU MOVED UP VERY FAST THE IN RANK. It helped. I think it's the best to go a couple years to college, or a year or so, to grow up a little bit. You know you have problems in the army too. You have to survive I guess you would call it. Then go to service then come back have some extra money cause most of us are poor. I was a very poor boy out on Cants Creek. Have a nice place now, but I grew up pretty rough out there and...WHAT DID YOUR FATHER DO? He was a farmer at the time. He's county judge now, but at the time he was just a country farmer and you know very poor person really. WELL HE MUST HAVE BEEN WELL THOUGHT OF TO BE ON THE DRAFT BOARD THROUGH. Well, he's...MUST HAVE HAD SOME STANDING IN THE COMMUNITY, RIGHT? A good solid farmer is what he was he's went to Morehead, he was a good student and everything at Morehead and he worked hard all his life and he was to get elected judge. After the Nixon deal...BUT AS FAR AS YOUR FAMILY WAS CONCERNED, YOU DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE UPPER CLASS OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT, YOU JUST SAID YOU WERE...We were proud but we were poor. YOU OWNED PLENTY OF LAND PROBABLY. About 800 acres of hill. OF HILL. Which had some coal on it which helped dad had a little money to campaign on and so forth, I mean he didn't spend about, I'd say \$5,000. BUT YOU WEREN'T DOING WITHOUT WHILE GROWING UP. No, we had plenty of food and I hunted a lot and I think that helped me a lot in Vietnam because I was raised like this. The conditions most of the boys probably didn't grow up in the hills like we did in eastern Kentucky and I think it made it a lot easier on us. IN WHAT SENSE DO YOU MEAN THAT. HOW DID IT MAKE IT EASIER? WERE YOU ABLE TO COPE WITH THE TOUGHNESS OF THE ENVIRONMENT OVER THERE AND SO FORTH? The environment more than anything else. You know I was used to going over the hills and we were in the mountains and I hunted from the time I was about nine or ten years old I started hunting with a little 22 rifle and I went to a shotguns and I just stayed in the woods every chance I got when I was little then I played sports. I think sports was one of the biggest reasons that you could endure over there and you know cause physically it got touch physically going up those mountains. The guys—I would carry packs—the boys just couldn't make it would be so hot I'd have to take mine up and go back down and carry theirs up cause they just couldn't hack it. SO HOW DID YOU, WHERE DID THEY SEND YOU TO VIETNAM FROM? FORT LEWIS? Fort Lewis. HOW DID YOU GET OVER THERE? Went to Japan. WAS THAT A COMMERCIAL AIRLINE TYPE? Commercial, yea. SO WHERE DID YOU LAND IN VIETNAM, DO YOU RECALL? Uh, Cam Rahn Bay I think. CAM RAHO BAY? YEA, THAT MUST HAVE BEEN WHEN, SOMETIME IN THE FALL? No, that was in June a year later. June 70. OH, IT WAS A YEAR BEFORE YOU WENT TO VIETNAM? Right, I trained for a year here. We went to, as I say I trained for a year trying to learn how to kill people, then they sent me to there do it is what it amounts to. DID YOU GO OVER THE REPLACEMENTS? Really, I they attached me to 101st airborne, yes I didn't take airborne training—I didn't jump out of the planes, but you know I was attached to the 101st. WHEN DID THEY ATTACH YOU TO THAT OUTFIT, WHEN YOU GOT THERE? Just, yes, they went from Cam Rhan Bay straight to 101st division. WHERE WAS THAT LOCATED? In I Corps, it was up in the northern part of Vietnam, it was around Hue, Quang-Tri, Camp Evans was our home base. CAMP EVANS, WAS THAT NEAR QUANG TRI? It was closer to Hue. HOW DO YOU SPELL Hue? H-u-e. OH YES, HUE. THAT'S FROM THE FAMOUS CITIES THAT YOU GET IN THERE, WELL, PLL ASK YOU ABOUT THAT LATER. SO YOU COME INTO CAM RAHN BAY, OF COURSE THAT'S THE BIG BASE AND DID THEY SHIP

YOU RIGHT OUT, TO THE 101ST? Approximately a day. SO YOU FINALLY REACHED YOUR
 OUTFIT THEN IN JUNE OF 1970 THEN DID THEY ASSIGN YOU TO A PARTICULAR COMPANY
 OR SQUAD? Alpha Company of 3 101st Brigade there. THERE WAS A SQUAD TOO. YOU WERE
 IN THE SQUAD? Right. I was a squad leader. SOON AS YOU GOT THERE, YOU WERE A SQUAD
 LEADER? We had, when I first got there they put us on guard duty, we spent a week of gettin
 used to the climate and we'd go on simulated patrols, and we were still in Camp Evans at the time
 I guess you would say and they had classes told us what to expect and just get used to it a little
 bit. Then when I went out in the field, yes I had a squad when I went out in the field. I didn't
 try to do much, I'd listen to the privates or whoever'd been there, I didn't try to be a hero but
 I was just trying to listen and learn. THAT'S QUITE A RESPONSIBILITY. I MEAN AN
 INEXPERIENCED GUY GIVEN THAT JOB. THINK SO? Well, it had to be that way because we
 went, as lieutenants-leaders I was platoon sergeant, platoon leader. We went three months without
 a E-5 was the highest I had in my company. Not company, my platoon. So you had to do it. WHAT
 WERE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF VIETNAM WHEN YOU GOT THERE DURING THESE FIRST
 COUPLE OF WEEKS, WHAT HIT YOU MOST ABOUT THE COUNTRY? Well, it was hot. I
 remember it was real hot. I was excited. I wanted to I guess I had been trained I had taken airborne
 training where you go around yelling airborne, ranger and all this stuff and I was guess I wanted
 to get into action see what it was like, didn't know any better at the time, I was anxious to do
 it, be like a cowboy on TV and go out and get him but you soon learn later that bullets kill people
 and you sort of... last six months or so you try to survive. The first six months I was trying to
 do a good job. The last six months I was trying to survive is about what it amounts to. I learned
 my lesson there and saw that people could get hurt and that changes your attitude on that part.
 WHAT WAS THE TYPICAL TYPE OF ACTIVITY THAT YOU WERE INVOLVED IN FROM YOUR
 BASE. WHAT DID YOU DO, WAS IT A TYPE OF SEARCH AND DESTROY? That's what we did
 we stayed in the mountains. Well, now I don't know any other people that stayed out in the field
 any more than we did. We stayed out 83 days one time without even coming in. So a squad.
 Basically I had a squad like ten men I'd go down to six sometimes. We would just patrol. That's
 what we did, we stayed in the mountains patrolling, you know you said search and destroy. I learned
 a little better mine was search out and avoid. You let the artillery do the work. Once you found
 them you'd let them shoot them up, I had a little different attitude than a lot of men did—a little
 older—and I'd have some of the boys wanna go up a hill and kill somebody and my theory was when
 you was up there just—I spent a lot of money on artillery—I did I don't care a bit to say it and
 I did I don't care if I didn't see anything if I was going to go up and search this hill out I'd call in
 artillery strike and I thought it was better to go up afterwards than to try to be a hero and go
 up and maybe get some men killed. YOU PROBABLY FEEL THAT DID A LOT TO HELP YOU
 SURVIVE. I do, I mean I don't feel good about probably spending maybe a million dollars worth
 of money in artillery and airstrikes and stuff but I feel like I done a good job. I don't have any
 hang-ups about Vietnam—it's one of the big highlights of my life. HOW DID YOU GET TO BECOME,
 DID YOU THINK IT WAS WORTHWHILE WHAT YOU WERE DOING—DID YOU THINK IT WAS
 SOMETHING TO DEFEAT THE ENEMY—THE TYPE OF OPERATION YOU WERE IN? For six
 months, yes. Like I said when we got to the last part and it was surviving. I got to not like the
 vietnamese people themselves and when I was first over there we, I did work around the village
 there for about 27 days we were ambushing a river and there was a village nearby and have these
 little coke kids and they would bring us cokes out in the fields and we got to know some of the
 kids and so forth and I liked them. They was cute little kids and real poor kids and then the coke
 kids... YOU CALL THEM COKE KIDS. Yea, they would come out and they would steal our cokes
 and they would bring em out and sell them to us for a Jollar. And it was our cokes to start with
 every truck that went through they was hanging all over the back of the truck throwing off cokes
 and whatever they—they was the biggest thieves in the world—that's why I say I got to I didn't
 like em. They got some of my men hurt, got one of them killed, they told where we were at. TELL
 ME ABOUT THAT. THIS WAS THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE? South Vietnamese, right. WHAT
 HAPPENED THERE? Well we were setting up a driving force—a holding force, I don't exactly
 what the words they call it now, we were the blocking force and we had the other companys driving
 to us and these coke kids were out there and I know they told where we were at. Set up and that
 night we got hit. One of the boys from over here at Charleston well he just got killed. DESCRIBE
 THAT A LITTLE BIT, THAT BEING HIT. WAS IT THE VC OR THE NORTH VIETNAMESE? Viet
 Cong. I respected the North Vietnamese Army. It was the Viet Cong people I didn't like. To

me they were traitors to start with. They were mean, cruel, vicious people, where the I figured the North Vietnamese Army, they were drafted just like normal people and they were trying to do a job because they were told to do it and they treated the bodies and so forth a lot more respect than the Viet Cong did. I hated the Viet Cong a lot worse than I did the...WHY WAS THAT, WHAT DEVELOPED THAT ATTITUDE. Well, like I said just the fact that they would mutilate the American bodies and. YOU ACTUALLY SAW THAT HUH? No, no, personally I didn't. All the men would talk, and so forth and I know the armies, like they killed I think it was 10 of our guys of the platoon over there and they layed their bodies out (they totally killed all of them) and they laid their bodies out and wrapped and laid out their dog tags and left them in decent manner, to find, they were going to get them (I didn't go in and get them) but the other guys was--they told us which made me have more respect for the North Vietnamese the fact that they laid them out in a line and laid their dog tags out and left them in a nice order and the Viet Cong just again dog stories they cut off heads and do everything in the world if they got you. In fact, I thought they were traitors to start with. They were living in the south and they to me they were traitors--maybe not as much as I thought then but I know now they were fighting for a cause same as we were. But to me at that time they were traitors. And in the US all through history a traitor was a bad person so that's the way I felt about the Viet Cong. WAS MOST OF YOUR ACTION AGAINST THE VC? Yes. I really, most cases I didn't know who I was fightin. They get hit, the jungle, we saw very few people. Only time we would see anybody they was dead. We'd get hit. WHEN YOU GET HIT YOU TALK ABOUT AN AMBUSH TYPE OF ATTACK? Yea, on patrol. Well, it's probably not like it sounds. I had the attitude that you crawled off the plane and was fightin and a year later you crawled back on the plane and flew home, but its not like that. You'd go for maybe a month--boring as it could be--it was really boring--you was out there patrolling all the time, work all night. WHAT WOULD A PATROL BE, JUST WALKING AROUND SEARCHING AND LOOKING FOR THEM? Squirrel hunting if you want to call it that. You might go a mile. DID YOU KNOW WHERE YOU WERE GOING--WAS IT JUST A KIND OF A HOPE THAT YOU WOULD RUN INTO IT? No, they didn't--they just give us--say you're on patrol--give us a certain--had the grids over there--our platoons would be assigned to a certain area and we'd just wander around in that area and we'd call in where we were. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU WERE ACCOMPLISHING IN ALL THAT? Very little. Surviving. The first few months there--this boy named Brown in Panama down there--Panama Bill Brown they called him--he's Panamanian--he's black--real black but he didn't claim to be black--he's Panamanian--and we were anxious to get them and so forth but then after a while it just turned into a case of trying to survive, we didn't really want to find them if you want to know the truth about it 'cause we'd get killed. WHAT WAS THAT AGAIN? I said we didn't want to find them. YOU WEREN'T WHAT? Didn't want to find them. Go out and find them. Your chances are--you know what I was telling you a minute ago--about it wasn't _____ I was in twelve fire fights shot at 12 different times when I was over there--I know that doesn't sound like very much but still the way I figured it the more often they shot at you the better their chances you got of getting hit and it was luck. You know when you were out in the jungle there most of our contact was in say 25 or 30 feet. It was just hit and gone. They just usually shot 2 or 3 magazines at you in mid run and it wasn't like WWII when you just went up against a line and you knew you had a objective and you didn't take today you was going to try to take tomorrow or the next day wasn't like that you went out squirrel hunting--really what I'm talking about you went out looking for them. THAT'S A GOOD DESCRIPTION, I HAVE NEVER HEARD ANYBODY USE THAT EXPRESSION BEFORE. Well you was looking in the trees and lookin at the ground like squirrel hunting you look at the ground to keep from stepping on a twigs to keep from frightening the squirrels. So over there you were

looking on the ground for booby traps and you were looking in the trees for snipers. BUT YOU REALLY DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING? Well, I did, I said I was doing my job, regardless... THAT WAS THE JOB YOU WERE ASSIGNED TO DO. Regardless of you know how not saving the world, we were American soldiers and we were doing what a soldier is supposed to be doing so as long as I done my job as a soldier I can't beat it. You know that goes back to me I think a lot more than some of the boys the family tradition and proud family and I wasn't going to do anything to disgrace the family and I had to do what I had to do. YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU WERE IN 12 OF THESE FIREFIGHTS? ANY OF THEM STICK OUT IN YOUR MEMORY, NARROW ESCAPES, OR THE CLOSEST YOU CAME TO DEATH OR WOUNDED? Well, I saw their tracers hittin real close to me if that's what you mean. I remember when I was laying on the side of the hill one time--most of this was our men shooting at us was the bad part. SAY THAT AGAIN. It was our men--it was an accident. The Vietnamese--we had two platoons--was taking two areas and these Vietnamese got in between us and they was shooting at both of us and they got us shootin at each other sort of cause we didn't know who was who and I remember this boy--Tim Huffman--from up here in Sandusky, Ohio, he was young and screaming and trying to tell our guys to cut it out but they couldn't hear him and everybody was shooting and everything was going on and we were laying on the side of the hill with our feet down and head up and they were in front and there was no place to go if you were against the hill and you just had to hope you didn't get hit and here these tracers are coming in these trees and right around us close and I layed down and pulled my helmet down about to my eyes to hope not to get hit in the head and I just couldn't understand and I knowed I was shot and I just couldn't feel the pain cause I never been shot and I didn't know what it felt like but all the bullets around me I had to be hit but ended up I wasn't hit so. That was sort of a funny feeling, was scared, real scared really, and then these, the lieutenant got hit he fell over the hill, it was a real steep hill--I am talking about mountains--and the lieutenant saw the _____ there and he fell over the hill and his pack (you know packs weigh about 100 pounds) on the side of the hill when he started to shoot he toppled over the hill about 25 feet down the hill and then this RPG come in between me and the lieutenant. WHAT IS THE RPG. It was a Russian made bazooka, I guess you would call it. The American people would know it more as a bazooka than anything else. But, it was grenade-type-rocket what it was. Tank weapon is what they really are and it exploded and got the lieutenant. Shrapnel in the back and in his hand and so forth. KILL HIM? No. It's funny--this is a really good guy he was from Arkansa--good ole country guy--I crawled down there to him--he was scared to death--he was sort of hid underneath some roots and brush that fell over there and I crawled down there and his hand was bleeding and he said they shot me and I was trying to cheer him up and I was saying funny stuff and everything and trying to get his mind off of cause he was really nervous and patched him up and then we had to clear the area--we had five guys get hit there during that time and. DID ANY OF THEM GET KILLED? No, not this time. I don't know, see, we didn't see them anymore. If they was wounded if we could get them out of there. WHAT HAPPENED? I think some of them died. There was a Gaddy boy from North Carolina, the lieutenant said, you very seldom heard about it, I was asking the lieutenant about it, he went back to the rear and they'd send their checks home--government checks somehow they'd got his check back and this one boy--so we figured he'd died or they wouldn't have got the check back see, we didn't know, once we--well matter of fact those five boys that we sent out I never saw any of them after that. Except the lieutenant, he wasn't hit bad enough, he come back in three weeks and got hit again. He got hit twice in a matter of a month and a half I guess it was. Neither one of them bad. The second time a little piece went through his nose and he was bleeding everywhere but ...