

1. Back Ground Information

Side One, Tape One

Yvonne Baldwin: I'm talking with Jerry Cecil. It's October the third, 1997 in Morehead, Kentucky. Jerry, I appreciate you agreeing to talk with us about your experiences in Vietnam, and I know some things about you, but I'd like for you to share that on tape with us. Tell me a little about your background, where you were born, where you're from, your age, those kinds of things.

Jerry Cecil: Okay, I was born in 1943 in Louisville, Kentucky and I moved to , well we lived around the Carrolton/Owen county area up in Northern, Kentucky. Of course I come from a divorced, split family background. My dad was an alcoholic. But anyway I'll compress that part of my life, it was through the church that I got over to Eastern, Kentucky to Hazel Green Academy, a little town called Hazel Green and of course there I was eventually adopted and so my life really began at Hazel Green Academy as a result of the church. Of course I went to West Point and from West Point of course I got commissioned and did a career in the army.

Baldwin: When did you go to West Point? What years?

Cecil: 1961, graduated from Hazel Green in May and went to West Point and first of July reported in up there.

Baldwin: Is West Point like a college in the sense that you have a major program that you go through?

Cecil: Well, when I was there, Yvonne, everybody was a civil engineer. That was the major program. It was the program. And so they came and they shaped you to fit what they needed and of course the West Point was founded in the early 1800's. It was founded initially, obviously, as a school for engineers as part of the National Defense to

at that time, of course, to open up the country's waterways, roads, those obvious kind of engineering requirements for a building country. So, yes everyone ended up with a bachelor of science in engineering. Now of course we have, here we are 30 years later and now you can get an undergraduate degree in either in the hard sciences or the humanities, so we have about 28 majors now.

Baldwin: And I understand that you're part of one of those groups that was discussed in the book "*The Long Gray Line*?"

Cecil: Yes, that was Rick **Attkinson**'s book about the West Point class of '66. I think he came out with his thing about 1981 or '82, and he had started this interesting enough this book is the result of a bar room conversation and he was out around the Kansas City area and ran into a fella and they got to talking and of course they both had boyhood friends whose parents had been in the service. They came upon a mutual friend and then the discussion kinda went into area about I guess **Attkinson** and the nastiest fellow of the question, well tell me more about your class and soon as a result of that he created a series of articles which won Pulitzer Prize in the Kansas City Paper and he had entitled them the *Blood Brothers*. Of course, reflecting the closeness you built at West Point and those kind of things. It was such a success that he turned it into this book.

Baldwin: Do you think that his portrayal is accurate?

Cecil: Oh, I think so. What Rick tried to do there was he obviously had for the general audience. He was trying to pick out two or three characters in the class that would kind of **be** bookends for the class and everybody else fell somewhere in-between. So, the three characters that he picks in there are probably not the ones you and I would pick but they're representative and I think it's an accurate portrayal. Of course there are two messages in this book. There's a message about the Class of '66, which incidentally for somebody that may be listening to this, it was an all male 2,500 man college at the time. So any of my experiences during this period are strictly in an all male bastion. So, it's the story of a group of men going to college for a very special reason it turns out, as well

as **Adkinson** I think done a wonderful job to kind create the flavor of the sixties and what was going on elsewhere. But if you recall of course, we were in the Cold War, we were all gong to die by nuclear bomb. The great ideological rift, communism versus capitalism all those kinds of things. So, I think **Adkinson's** done for a wonderful job in telling two stories in this. Many people can identify with it. I've been in many settings where people have read the book and it even gave them flashbacks for their college experience in the Sixties.

Baldwin: So when you went to West Point, you were planning on a military career?

Cecil: No, had no clue. I was just a little Eastern, Kentucky boy that didn't have any money for school and matter of fact I got on to West Point by my high school counselor, probably, librarian, Kathleen **Tutt** and her library was probably smaller than your kitchen right here. And to that I'll never forget this one day she said, "Jerry, here's something that you ought to consider." Said you're a pretty smart boy and hard worker and all this kind of thing, but it was an Air Force Academy catalog. Then, so I applied to the Air Force Academy and came up short. I was number two guy, and so the congressman called me, at the time Carl Perkins, and notified me and said sorry you didn't get into the Air Force Academy, but my guy for West Point dropped out. Would you like to go there? And you know when you're a 17-18 year old Eastern Kentuckyian, what's the difference? So anyway that's kinda how I got going to West Point and you know very frankly I didn't even know what a sergeant was at the time. So It was kind of an opportunity to get an education basically, initially.

2. Military Training

Baldwin: What did you do right after you were commissioned?

Cecil: Well, right after I was commissioned back then we all had a pretty straight forward approach, we all went to airborne school, ranger school, I went to a first assignment at Ft. Hood Texas as an infantry Lieutenant and ended up as a second

Lieutenant commanding an armored car troop and that was kind of usual in this regard of course there were plenty of armor Lieutenants. around, but the infantry bridge commander had had bad luck with armor officers at the time. So, he thought he would either teach 'em a lesson or whatever. So her puts a second lieutenant infantry in charge of a car troop and the interesting part of that assignment was that many of my West Point classmates, who were armor worked for me and of course class rank was a big deal then, and they, of course, ranked me in a class so that was kind of hard pill for them to swallow. Then, from there of course I go to Vietnam, Of course, I'd volunteered to go on the first wave. And during this period, by the way, Yvonne, they had curtailed officer basic for our class and 2 or 3 periods there and the idea was to get you to Vietnam as fast as you can, send you to your unit, 6 months of OJT is equivalent to putting you in a school somewhere. So, our generation did not go to officer basic course and so then within a year of graduation I was bound for Vietnam, 173rd airborne.

3. Entering Vietnam

Baldwin: What year was that?

Cecil: 1967, and I joined the outfit on Fathers Day, 1967, joined them about noon and I'll never forget we flew from Bien Hoa we'd been there 3 or 4 days. Of course their climate, climatizing weapons shooting things like that. And we flew from Bien Hoa near Saigon up to Pleiku. And we had a young captain adjutant there and he had all these fresh Lieutenants and then the airplane rolled in and the unit that we were gonna join was coming in from an operation and so the airplanes, the motors are actually running, the engines are actually running, the ramps are down and this captain stands over with the clipboard without even knowing who we are and says you go to that plane and you go to that plane. With no record or clue of who we were or didn't care. Of course, that kinda reflects the tempo of the times. And unfortunately within 4 days, of the 17 of us that went there, were 3 or 4 of us that were already dead. So obviously there's a lot of faith and luck involved in life, we all know that. And so I joined my unit about noon and we fly from Pleiku up to **Dak To** which is in the border region where the 3 countries come together and by 2:30 that afternoon I was on my first combat assault. So, quite an

introduction. And we moved in and to help another unit get out of a fracas and then we got back to **Dak To** about 5:30 and that night we went again. We were called out for a night airmobile assault to go secure a village and so, here I'd been with my unit less than 6 hours and already been on 2 combat operations.

Baldwin: Do you remember, what did you feel like under those circumstances, where you find yourself not only in Vietnam, but immediately in combat?

Cecil: Well, I think the things that ran through your mind. Does anybody know I'm here, I might end up getting killed or get these guys killed and I don't even know their names. Their just people running around in the same outfits I am. And so, what you find out right away is there's kind of a convolution between what the Army had trained you to do. Get to know your men, check 'em out, talk with them. Learn their skills all those great troop leading things that you'd been taught up to this point and then all of a sudden when you get to the battlefield it's all convoluted and it just doesn't make sense. It's either compressed or you know neglected or whatever and so that was one of the impressions that I had. The other impression that I had and we all had, of course, is you have a natural fear and anxiety and sweaty palms and all those kinds of things that I had at that time and still do and so it's not 20/20 hind sight but I felt very confident as most 23, 24 year olds do and I felt that I had been the benefactor of the best training the Army had to offer at least at the time in terms of airborne and ranger school and of course ranger school kind of wares you out and strings you out and you kind of find your personal limits and I've always believed that if you know where your personal limits are in terms of fatigue and energy and those kinds of things then you can always remain in control of the situation. Not that you won't be afraid, but at least you'll know how far you are from the wall. And so, so the idea of my personal fear of course crossed my mind but I very quickly suppressed that and said the only thing you have to fear is feat its self. And all those great, great clichés from history and so subsumed that to the higher notion that my there was to take care of the men who had , you know. For less chance in life to find themselves or to gain confidence or to have been exposed to the training or even do the analysis that I had done mentally to calculate my chances.

Baldwin: How many others were as new as you?

Cecil: Well, I would say the problem with the Army in Vietnam was is the 1 year tour. Of course everybody had a different timetable of course that's very detrimental to unit cohesion, unit purpose all those kinds of things. So I would say in my platoon, a mortar platoon on paper I think we were supposed to be about, oh 34 or something and we were probably 22 active, you know in the field kind of thing. I would say that 1/3 of them were less than 3 months, 1/3 of them were probably less than 3 months to go and then of course the other 1/3 somewhere in-between. And so they out of that 20 men, I would say we probably had a 1/3 about 6 or 7 of us that were brand new, you know, kind of like the opening scene in the movie Platoon, where you see the new guys coming in with crisp fatigues and you see the old guys that have seen the elephant and you know they're got a totally different look, thousand yard stare and those kinds of things. So, I would say that, that's probably the best breakout you had new guys and of course they had a **tercid** name, FNG's, all that thing. But, anyway, let me go back here to this village, this night assault, we went in and of course stayed hunkered down and you know at that point at night when you get time to reflect of course you say "where in the hell am I?" You know, I know where I am on a grid coordinates, but where in the hell is that in relation to Hazel Green. And by that time you had no time to communicate with anything and as you recall, you know MARS, if you could ever get to a MARS station, that was very primitive. It was just a radio speak over the short wave and so that night you know you had that thought that comes to mind. Then the second and the largest part of your thinking was devoted to I better find out when I've got, get to know 'em, and see what area they live in and all those kinds of things. And then the next morning and then it probably the most graphic memory that I have, you know early in my tour was the next morning at 6:34 we got mortared and its kinda like the famous picture of the clock at Hiroshima. You know, it's certainly not on that scale but it's etched in my mind, like the clock stops at 6:34. And we're in this little deserted village in the tree lining and of course there's an open area in-between here and my pit Sgt. And I had just gone across this open field to the command post you get a morning briefing and as we broke up we're

coming back across and we hear foomp, foomp, foomp, you know, as a matter of fact the area I was in was very much like where we're sitting this morning in Morehead. I thought about that coming over all the forested hills and the valleys with fog in 'em and the kind of mistiness surrealness and so, anyway we're coming back up across here, and we hear the foomp, foomp and look up on the hill and you see puffs of smoke coming up and of course my platoon which was a mortar platoon at the time immediately jumps into action. Those were the old guys, the guys with not much time to go and Sgt. **[Woolridge]** I don't know if he's in the picture or not. This was a mortar platoon that I ad and that's an actual fire mission. And these guys were conditioned so they immediately, you know they say, Yvonne, get the Azimuths Jones you count the time and of course they could very quickly. If you know where it's coming from and you know the flight time you can calculate the distance and put counter- mortar fire on 'em and of course that was the idea and so by the time the Sgt. and I got to the middle of the open area the mortars started landing and of course I go what in my the hells going on here? Well, of course, my platoon sgt. gets hit with shrapnel and I drag him over to the timber and he's out of action. So I've been there less than twenty-four hours and lost my platoon Sgt. So, I said boy with this going on, I don't know if I can put with this for a whole year. So, anyway that was kinda my first day and I thought boy I tell you what, I'll be an old man by the time I get out of here. Buy anyway, I had a platoon sgt. From Johnson City, Tennessee, Sgt. **McFale** and he was a, he'd been an old Korean War vet and he knew what was going on and so he had trained me and of course I had all the school training on mortars and how to be a mortar platoon leader, but doing it in a dry classroom, you know on a planning board is a little bit different than doing it on your lap with a folded map and grease pencil and there's a lot more consequences for error.

4. First Graphic Memory

Baldwin: How did the unit react to this, when your first Sgt. Was wounded?

Cecil: Business as usual. We'd simply just, you know, we counter-fired and called for medevac and we stayed there for the rest of the day and then we picked up and went somewhere else.

Baldwin: How long did it take 'em normally, a medevac, to get to you?

Cecil: Well of course it depended on how much stuff was commin in. But I think of course that dimension of the medevacs the thing that really altered drastically the statistics of wounded and deaths in Vietnam. So, it probably seemed to him like forever, but it was probably I would say in 15 or 20 minutes, which you know's about like a mountain ambulance. But of course they know where we are and there are obviously medical helicopters on standby, those kind of things.

5. Vietnamese Prisoner

Baldwin: Who is in this photograph?

Cecil: Okay, we're looking at a photograph where there's a black pajama clad Vietnamese there. And we'd been working though this area in an area called down at **Tuy Hua** and there was during the rice harvest and we'd been sent out to do two things. First of all, secure the area so that they could have presidential elections that year and then, the second thing was, to protect the rice harvest because the local Viet Congs were morning in and extracting both the food of the rice as well as the tax on the local inhabitants and we came across this kid and he's probably not 16, 17 years old. Of course, in this picture he thinks we're going to do him right away, but by now he realizes we're not. He's gonna get a nice helicopter ride here in a minute but turned out to be a pay master for the Vietcong and we found on his persona roster of all the people in the unit, so that's very helpful from an intelligence point of view. Because then you send that back and you know who exactly in the village is by night kind of like in America, who in the town of the Ku Klux Klanners and so that was important this young kid turned

out to be an important capture for that particular area because we had an inside into their organization.

Baldwin: Do you know what happened to him, what became of him?

Cecil: No, and somebody like that we just get them out of the area and then he's interrogated then probably someone that young is probably just released or something like that.

6. Fifteen Seconds of Fame

Baldwin: And the Newsweek article on your West Point Class, When? You say, this came out while you were in Vietnam?

Cecil: Yeah, It's gotta state side date of July 10, 1967. Newsweek issue but of course it gets there maybe a week later or something like that and somebody had the first issue I saw of course somebody has rolled up real tight, how you all used to send stuff in Vietnam. Smallest area you could take, and they came over to me when they saw their own lieutenant in it. They ragged me quite a bit about the whole notion. But anyway, it came out, it was published while I was in Vietnam as platoon leader. The story had been done. They started the story about, I think about, perhaps a month before we graduated and of course the first photo there is all of us gathered at Trophy Point at West Point when we're in our cadet uniforms and then they followed us to our first assignments and then they of course followed us when we got to Vietnam.

7. Misgivings?

Baldwin: Now having come out of West Point background and going into this situation feeling though, you said you felt like you'd been as well trained as you could be and you were very well prepared and not to concerned about your won mortality at that time what was your thinking about the war? I know that traditionally soldiers don't think in terms

of politics, but what was your thinking about the conflict itself at this time did you feel like it was something that we needed to do and obviously you were an important part of or did you have any misgivings?

Cecil: No, I didn't have any misgivings at all. I had by then, certainly you know, I'd been at West Point 4 years, well 5 years actually. Let me go back here for a second. I went to West Point and my freshman year I flunked out because of math and I'd come from a little school in Eastern, Kentucky and it wasn't a question of aptitude, because I tested well, It's the question of not having any schooling at least for what I was about to get into. So, curiously enough when I came back to Hazel Green I had an opportunity to retest after a certain period of time and I came to Morehead. Came to Morehead State University. It might have still been Morehead State College then. I'm sure it was. And, Yvonne, the plan I used was kind of a very simple thing. I went to the head of the math department and told him my dilemma, and I met with him and he said, I'll never forget this, "well, bring in the textbook that you failed last semester and we'll look at it." And so I brought in seven books and at West Point it was a survey the first year was a survey, or course they were covering calculus, **spherical trig**, things that Kentucky couldn't even say yet. And so anyway, he said well the best thing for you to do is enroll in all courses at all levels. And, he said, go to class and he said you'll understand this you may not understand this and we'll get together in the evening and he'd tutor me. Right here in little Morehead and I lived down here on oh right above the little 5th street, I had a little rented room upstairs or something. And so hear as right, I went, I took a freshman, sophomore, junior, senior class in math. And after about a semester it all started to gel. And the bottom line is this, I went to take my reexam at Fort Knox and about maxed the test and by then I knew that West Point was a good deal if you could make it. And I was hungry enough to where they weren't going to lick me at that point in my life anyway. So, I went back and after the experience here at Morehead of getting well grounded in math or well not well grounded but grounded a hell of a lot better than I was, of course I didn't have any problems at West Point. Now I struggled, I mean I worked hard, but at least I made it though and you know I was a 5 year man, I should have graduated with

the class of '65, but I got turned back, but I did it the hard way, I went back and did the Plebe year again, all that kind of stuff.

Baldwin: So you came into the situation in Vietnam not even thinking that there were any misgivings?

Cecil: Oh no, oh yeah, back to your original question. No, by then West Point see the majority of our history for example was political military history and of course the major part of our study was the history of military art, which is you're studying battles and by then I know it was clear in my mind after about the 1st introduction of the first day that this was a school for soldiers. As a matter of fact that was a title of a popular book during the period. During the Sixties School for Soldiers. And though we were being trained to be commissioned officers in the United States Army. Even back then in the Cold War period it was a technical school so to speak and that you were expected to be a career officer. And of course you and I have seen that completely change in your husband's career and my career. You know now it's like working in a convenient store, if we need you, if we got business this week we want you and if we don't we don't. So, no, I had none of those, you know. I saw this thing purely in terms of Communism vs. Capitalism. I obviously was educated along the lines of you know the (NSC) lines the official line of Vietnam and the country about to be overrun by Communists and all those kinds of things, and I'm not so sure that and I'm not so sure as I think back and I certainly wouldn't want to give myself credit for being more brave than I was or am or anything. But at that age you know you're pretty pragmatic You're being trained and your focus is on getting through this class, getting commissioned, getting a degree and those kinds of things. And very frankly by then you just see this as well that's my payoff period. To pay back for your education and things and you knew that going in and it's a guaranteed job upon graduation.

8. Cecil's Soldiers

Baldwin: What about the men who served under you? What kind of solder did you have in these mortar units?

Cecil: Well, I think I was very fortunate. Which is one of the reasons why I chose to volunteer because you pick your unit. I went to an airborne unit and of course in paratroopers you have volunteers to begin with, so there's another filter and another cut. For the average soldier whether he's drafted or volunteered initially once he chooses to go airborne then the number of units he will go to are limited and plus they are all volunteers and there's a great, I always call it the [**Pertorian Garden**] the tip of the sphere and the great thing about volunteer units is when you're tired of it you leave. Or if you aren't pulling your load others will tell you to leave. I realize that the unit I choose to go to had those kind of characteristics. We were basically all volunteers and of course in that kind of a group of men under those conditions you build a lot of camaraderie and a lot of locker room barracks mentalities and those kinds of things. And so all the soldiers that I had and the other things that I'll say about that is I was in the war long before it became, not long before, but before it became highly unpopular, particularly as we became interpreted on the campuses, but my study now Yvonne, years later convinces me that that was all a fluff. But the campuses had no effect and some other scholarship I've read recently says that didn't have as much effect on Nixon and the politics as guys like **Abby Hoffman** would make you start to think. There's some hard evidence there now, but anyway that's another story. So, the men that I had in my unit were all young soldiers who had either volunteered for the service and if they hadn't volunteered they quickly saw that they could improve their chances of who would be around them, if they then volunteered for airborne or whatever. The other thing that was interesting about airborne units at the time is and I've heard Gen. Westmoreland say this many times to us personally since that was his background was that the airborne was his fire brigade which meant that he used us like what we now call today S.W.A.T. teams and all those glorified **Schwarzenager** and Rambo things. And so certain people are attracted to the elite units. And for that reason we had few if any of the problems that become to be associated later on with the big large Divisions cumbersome organizations for the wrong terrain that have 16,000 people and all those elephantitis that's associated with being slugging and then of

course to fill those big outfits, You need a big pipeline. And of course that means that you're gonna get more and more draftier. And it's just like anything, when you increase production you lower quality. I don't care weather you're making wildgifts or making diversions.

9. A Day in the Life of an Airborne Trooper

Baldwin: What was a typical day like for you with this unit?

Cecil: A typical day was kind of like raising tobacco in Eastern, Kentucky. You never knew when it started and you never knew when it sopped cause it was a 24 hour day. Incidentally the Army got a hell of a bargain and I think we got 22,230, I think a Lt. Got something like that remember that? Oh, yeah 22,230. Oh let me go back one of the other incentives of course was the monetary incentive for jumping out of planes you got half again your pay \$110 being a country boy I said "hell I can throw myself out of an airplane every month for that for 110 bucks." Oh, I forgot the question

Baldwin: Lets start where a normal person would start his day. They say the Army does more before 9 O'clock than people do the rest of the day or something.

Cecil: We would have what's known as stand-to about BMNT which is the beginning of morning nautical twilight which is about in your terms if you watch the birds in the morning or something it's that period just as it begins to get light, but you don't see direct light so you're getting light over the horizon. And, of course, in military terms it's as if we were looking out into your woods, it's the first time you could distinguish a person lets say at about a hundred feet out there. Before that it's all shadows and your mind's playing games with you. So we would begin our what we called stand-to and that meant everybody was up and alert because it was said in the revolution the French and Indians attack at daybreak. And then we would go through a series of checks about everybody's still alive, nobody's missing all those kinds of accountability checks and ready to go for the day. I won't bore you with all the details but internally you had a lot of little

procedures where at that point once you got through stand-to then certain people would, you would change your shoes and socks and take care of personal hygiene. This guy would be cleaning his equipment this guy would be standing on guard and then when you got your personal hygiene done then he'd clean his weapon and you'd rotate that. Within about 45 minutes of that time everybody has cleaned their weapon they've done their morning, had their morning toilet, they've fed themselves and gotten ready to move out or whatever. And then normally you would move out, moving out means moving out from where you spent the night. You would move out on a patrol and you were here and needed to go there. And search this area this valley, this hilltop or whatever and so then you would move out probably about 7:30 in the morning and even within that there was a rotation of duties obviously because there's more stress on being on the front of the spear than there is on the back of the spear. And so within all those company procedures you had rotational aspects of duties and things you did all during the day. And then as you moved along and superimposed up on the tactical thing was the administrative thing of the company because you always had people who were getting short, who had to go back or you had people who were sick and so they had to get out on the morning helicopter. So then you had people that needed to go home cause the wife had a baby, you know all kinds of things. Within this organization that gets up and gets ready to move and begins to move you still have internal things that need to go on all through out the day. Totally disassociate with finding the enemy, you know just the cost of breathing and living I'd say. Then, you may or may not stop about 1 p.m. to eat and if you did it was something like trailmix, something you could eat on the trail very quickly, we called it trailmix now. Something you don't have to set up cooking apparatus and all that business. But, generally most people would just munch then , open something like a can or pork and beans and eat kind of on the move. Then you should continue whatever the operation was for that day, then about 3, 3:30 or 4:00 you'd begin to set up your next evening position whether it involved digging holes or returning to where you'd come from, so the period from about 3:30 to about 7:00 before darkness is a period of activity, resupply, you've eaten foods, so you need food for the next day. If you've fired bullets or mortars, if for nothing else other than to keep people away from you, so you have this constant need to replenish. Then you typically have a obviously a command meeting to divvy up

responsibilities for that evening and within that you would arrange things like ambushes and sleep schedules and guard schedules. So, it was kind of like I guess the best analogy you could use today that people understand only because of the popularity of CNN and the Gulf War is the aircraft carrier. You know it's moving from point A to point B, but it's a beehive of activity all through the day. People are baking bread and doing all kinds of things and during the night you would do a number of things you would obviously always try to be alert to keep from being surprised or ambushed. You'd either go out on ambush or would do what we call H and I, Harassment and Interdiction fire, we were firing randomly in certain areas, just hoping to catch somebody there, whatever. And then if you were going to get any sleep you generally could get it between about 10-12 at night. Then of course the worst time was what we called the graveyard shift right before day break, because everybody is at their highest point of exhaustion and the fatigue and if their sleep their probably in their deepest sleep and of course that's the most vulnerable time. And then it was just a series of those kinds of things.

10. Distance from Home?

Baldwin: How far would you be from base camp at any given moment?

Cecil: Well, you would always want to stay within artillery range, obviously. Supporting fires range and so 18,000 lets see 18, 8 km is 5 miles so 10 to 12 miles. But if you were, it was least like what everybody that's probably gonna listen to this tape understand now is the honeycomb of the cellular system, as long as you, you could move from this firebase as long as someone else could cover you. The idea of going from cell to cell, but the thing you never wanted to be is to be uncovered and not be within the range of either your own artillery 105 or above or certainly within air support.

11. Beans and Bullets

Baldwin: One of the things that lots of people deal with when we talk about combat in Vietnam is the fact that units were generally very well supplied and you talk about that bringing in food and bringing in ammunition and so forth. Did the army take good care of your unit at that time?

Cecil: Well, Oh I think they did oh absolutely, there were some days when we couldn't get resupplied, but I mean, hell, we weren't a bunch of school kids anyway, we knew we weren't at a picnic or a parade ground. Then there were times when you were in terrain where you literally couldn't cut on of these hover holes and get a helicopter in, but then our units were trained for those kinds of things. We would drop, they would drop us water re-supply. Then you're operating on the spine of a mountain near the Cambodian Laotian border, you know there aren't a whole lot of water holes up there and yet you and I know what a soldier in oppressive jungle heat in the rainforest needs about believe it or not about 8 quarts a day. But you got to make him drink, now we all people listening to this tape, you know we all saw the bottled water of the Desert Storm come out, but see that had to go on in every war. It just wouldn't commercially purchased in the Vietnam war. And so the resupply thing. I could best say it this way you had to plan for it everyday, but you better be prepared if it couldn't get in. There were higher priorities somewhere, resupply of certain items came far behind medevac, other operations and particularly and of course what affects that if helicopters were down not working or if helicopters had been damaged and so you had as a commander, you had always to be aware of that. You could always get a resupply of ammo, it may just be kicked out of the door on top of your head, but you as a commander part of your job obviously was to plan for re-supplies and when, where will I be and when do I need to get my order in. What I was going to finish up on. In those remote areas where we didn't have water spicket to fill our canteens with, was they would drop us, what we now know as all this high spook stuff, this special operation stuff is they would drop us water in what we called elephant rubbers, and they were long, rubber bags and there were 6 or 8 layers ro em and they held five gallons of water. And it was inside of a cardboard box and it had kind of a cone on front of it. So it would just go through the trees and that thing you could drop that thing from 2, 3 hundred feet and unless something pierced it it would make its way to the ground and then you could peel back all these, basically condom looking bags. There were about 7 layers and you could peel that back and then pour your water out and then of course the benefit of that was we never tried to waster anything, because those rubber bags obviously came good to cover equipment and things like that from rain, so there was

a very practical use to them also. So the supply thing, I think we were very well supplied. We were never short of anything we needed.

12. Vietnamese Brethern

Baldwin: Different units handled the individuals differently and what was your training in terms of how you dealt with the Vietnamese?

Cecil: Well, this picture's a good example that the picture we're talking about here is of the one where we just captured this young paymaster that I mentioned earlier. Our dealing with the Vietnamese was very simple, we were rarely in an area where there were any friendless. It was pretty clear. If they were there, they weren't raising rice, now everybody didn't have the benefit of operating in an area like that and that was all part of what I said earlier about being in the airborne, being put out on the edge and being in a unit that'll be aggressive and go after things as opposed to sit back and let em come to us as some other units did and had far more disastrous results. Our interaction wit people who were noncombatants came primarily in dealing with the **Sadong** tribes , the mountain tribes of Vietnam called the Moatagnards and the **Montgnards** are a group of people that have lived in the mountainous area there for centuries and of course they all wanted to do was to be left alone. These mountain villages as the NVA and the VC came through there it was disruptive. And then the South Vietnamese of course would disrupt their lives in another way. At the time the _____ **Ky** and land of gentry of South Vietnam were exploiting the natural resources of that area very much like Eastern Kentucky it's stripped. The mountain people were very good people and they just wanted to continue their tribal existence. They were very helpful, but also very cautious, because they knew that they were caught in the jaws of a vice. But our relationship with them was very good in the sense that they were always glad to see us come. Because they knew they wouldn't be abused.

Side Two, Tape One

Interviewer: We were talking about the Vietnamese that you encountered.

Jerry Cecil: Yeah, I said basically that we encountered two kinds of Vietnamese, the Montagnards, who were the indigenous people, who wanted to remain as non-combatants but realize they were caught in the jaws of the vice. And of course, the other Vietnamese were combatants in the area, that we were, there was very little difficulty in sorting them out. And the one thing that I would say in this regard, is when we move to the coastal area around **Tuy Hoa**, let's see there's Dak to and **Tuy Hoa** is kind of over here by Qui Nhon. When we moved to the coastal area, we of course encountered Vietnamese there in the villages but and I would say this, just like in Kentucky or anywhere, there are regional differences in the people, totally different mind set. There lowland based and we know that lowland people have different mentality than upland people and all this kind of things, so those are the distinctions, but once again my experience was that we were always out in the areas that were being contested, and so there was very little doubt on which side of the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese that were friendly would stay out of your way, and of course the others would get in your way.

13. Earth Shattering Event

Interviewer: What was your most memorable experience in terms of a combat experience with this unit?

Jerry Cecil: I think that without a doubt that our, the battle of Dak to as it becomes to be known, and that's the period of about November third through Thanksgiving. There's no question about it, as a matter of fact, Ed Murphy's recently published just that series of battles in Vietnam. And this is a whole campaign to prevent the North Vietnamese from cutting the country in two again, with an invasion force across the Pleiku **Kontum** Quarter. And so without a doubt that was my most memorable experience of my tour with the company, but within that I would say probably the day I got wounded, or the day we got the we got our fiercest attack was obviously the one that's most, most etched in my memory. And you know for, for a variety of reasons, one because I'm here today to talk about it, that's the main reason, but I think even, even more so than that you know

I've said this for years and have given many, many talks about it both to people who understand it and to people who don't understand it. And, you know I would say its memorable for three or four good reasons. First of all, I would, it totally convinced me that all the training I had been through at West Point then Airborne, Ranger school in my early days worked. So it kind of, you know, confirmed any lingering notions you had in that regard. It convinced me that just like in life there's, there's an element of luck involved in survival or success, but you know like they say when your on a golf course if you got a chance between luck and skill, I'll take luck every time. And so I would say that comes out of it, realizing that the training works and the tactics are sound and the principles are there and that if you do all the things they tell you to do you know it will work, but you still need an element of luck. The other thing that I think came out of that experience for me was it showed the importance of small unit actions the importance of team work obviously, and that we had, had a chance as a platoon, by this time I'm in a rifle platoon my first three months were in a weapons platoon, but I was in the same company, I spent the whole year with the same company, and I think that the lesson that team work, works and the benefit to our platoon heading off that battalion size ambush, and we were on the tip of the spear, we were the first unit to hit 'em, the lesson there was that we had not wasted training time, we had trained back in the lowland area, I was telling ya, back in **Tuy Hoa** we had worked very diligently on different game plans, setting up ambushes what the procedures were, just like a football team would on scrimmaging or working out different plays. And so the absolute necessity for developing team work and of coarse what you see in Vietnam or Korea or whatever war, what you see is in incidences where that training period has been wasted or didn't occur, but you have terrible consequences, of coarse that's what you see in many of the larger formation that we employ with far, with fewer trained men and fewer trained leaders and well this less time is less forgiving, I mean it's unforgiving. So then I think probably the, one of the other lessons that I learned was that , and I wasn't the first to coin this, but I was reminded about it the other night. I saw a program, I forgot what it was, but the point was there certainly, the other thing I realize is that men don't fight for there country at that point, they fight for each other. And so, you know what's the purpose of that for someone listening to this tape who doesn't understand it. Well, it kind of takes life down

to the barest nub, that the only thing that really matters is community, and that point your community is the people that you roam with, because you are physically and literally isolated from everyone else. And so, its kind of like a family in Eastern Kentucky, kinda like a klan. That's was **indelible** and engrained in my mind, and re-enforced in my mind. And then the, lets see, the other lesson I got out of this and this is more for the Armies, to tell the Army this, and this is nothing new in this war, this, farther you get from the battle field the easier it seems, OK, and I would say that probably the best way, the metaphor for that is Teddy Roosevelt's great, the Man in the Arena. There's the guy, the gladiator that's in the arena is the guy that deserves the credit at that point. You know, not the guy sitting back putting pens in maps sayin' go here and go there. And so, and that really certainly didn't bother me at the time, I just told the guy to kiss my ass or something, get off the radio, but anyway you know, its that kind of disconnect between his, or his meaning collective his the interpretation of what we are trying to do is totally different when your down there and can't see ten feet in front of ya' than it is with a guy with a neat acetate board back there, and he's worried about whether or not get chow for this gun crew or whether or not mail came in or he didn't get two letters from his wife or something like that. We're at that point the survival level, so those are things that I think I've been, been fair to and I **blame** those out of there and I guess the point of that is as you go through and all the stuff you see and hear and all the stuff you partake of that most people when they get to the end of their life or when they have time to reflect they can sift their life down to three or four simple rules or three or four simple guides or whatever.

14. Purple Heart

Interviewer: Tell me about the time you were wounded.

Jerry Cecil: Well, that was on the eleventh of November, boy how's that for an irony, Veterans Day. I will never forget, Lyndon Johnson, somebody had a "Stars and Stripes" in the outfit, and maybe read it that morning or that night I forgot which, but Lyndon Johnson was at Ft. Benning, Georgia hoorahing the troops telling us why we were about

to win it and needed one more load of troops and all this kind of stuff and so you know there was irony built in there. So we go on the morning of the eleventh, and I end up with point. And I told you earlier, that you kinda had a rotational setup with in the company. So the company commander, great fellow from West Virginia another mountain boy, Tom **Malcowin**, whoever's turn it was, I forgot which platoon was on its ass. But anyway, he said, "Cecil get up, get moving we should be out and the other guys 'bout ready" and of coarse I immediately, as I am suppose to, remind the company commander that we did it yesterday and it's not our turn to cover for the men and be fair and he said, "I don't want to hear that shit get on out there" so we start leaving our night position and of coarse we had, and I always insisted that I was the only ranger trained officer in the company but of coarse I'd always insisted, that was the only reason I got point. I found out summer at Tucson thirty years later, "hell you know the only reason I sent you is because the other guy couldn't do it." So anyway we go out through here you get the proverbial push, push the guy pushing the pins, "You only gone that far" you bastards come down here and try to do it from down here. So anyway we leave the morning **logger** sight, Yvonne and we hadn't gone from here to your car out there, and I could sense that we were not only being watched but people were pretty close to us. And so the company commander on the push wanted to get everybody on the move, you know how you do a line, anytime you push a line it's like following traffic on New Circle road. So the company commander wanted a push and I told him if you want me up here on point we're going to do it my way or it's the highway for me, because we got something here. We hadn't gone much farther than I first described in this **spoil** right here, fuck were is it, John Roth. I was on point at that time with John Roth and my RTO and, anyway we're up there on point and Roth's ahead and Roth turns around and goes.....and shoots one time. That's part of the hand signals we worked out where you don't use a lot of, oh this guy right here, he's now a rural post master, a rural postman runs a rural route in Texas, and so we had gone from here to that where that road or whatever that is over there, and we knew there were other people in the area. So he shoots this guy in the back, hit's 'em one shot dead in the spine. So we check this guy out and he's North Vietnamese, in new cloths, new rifle and all that business. So we knew he was what's known as a trail watcher, and of coarse he's suppose to get up close to an American unit and as he moves

back he leads 'em into an ambush or whatever. So we moved on off of a hill and we're going down into a kind of saddle area, but it was pretty treacherous terrain when you look at it. See it's all those are hill tops and pretty treacherous terrain and you can't really depict it and we're moving off of a hill top and you just get an eerie sense if you ever hunted or been in the woods a lot you kind of know when things change. And certainly, if I was ever going to know I was going to know then and so were moving on down and at this time I got what we are doing what were doing what we call a clover leaf. So I got a squad, I'm basically following the trail so to speak, the middle of the column. I got a squad of five over here and a squad over here of five and there out here kinda protecting out flanks. And to this day I don't know what did it, but of coarse it's probably providence, but I called them back in, and I just had an eerie feeling, sensing of the silence, and the smells, and all the things that happen to ya. Call 'em back in and I said I think we're right on them, I think we're here. The Idea Yvonne was very simply this, as they set up a, we were sitting here, the Americans for a time, and they had set a battalion up here in a horse shoe ambush. And of coarse the unit comes trickling out and the idea is, when our unit passes a certain point then the sides of this thing close up. There stated purpose then was annihilate American unit. And so, by us killing this trail watcher we had kinda thrown off there, they were kinda waiting for him to come to a certain point and they just hear one shot. And so we're movin' down through there and I call the company commander and said we can't go through there until we find out what's up here. So I pulled in my two squads and we formed like a , just basically a bent line, and I said I think we're right here, and I said when I tell ya to start firing, fire at your feet like a water hose, and go out. We started firing and they were right there, right there. I don't mean from here to your truck, I mean they stood up right there. I mean the place erupted, if we'd gone from here to your truck we wouldn't be having this interview today. I mean literally, and what I tell people who have no idea what its about, it's like if you ever gone into a darken room or darken house and the instant you turn on the light someone is there, you can't avoid having a flush or and it was just like that. So anyway, we of coarse, the best way to get out of an ambush is you got to get fire superiority first, if you don't your just, that's the purpose of an ambush is to just do you in. So we initiated the fire, so we were literally right here shooting people this close. And then of coarse, we hear the , then

their [NVA] plan, they hear the firing so then the mortars start firing, their mortars up on a hill, because they say when you hear them start firing small arms then so then we got about ten or twelve seconds 'for mortars start landing among us. And now this is just mortars coming down through the trees just splattering and things like this. So we get, that first barrage we get several guys hit naturally, 'cause your just to close to 'em, point blank range. So we try, we get our people as quick as we can in this confusion and it kinda threw them[NVA] off too, because it was a an immediate burst which we started, and their counter burst and then you figure my study of this stuff you know even before this is. Well, after the burst is over the sky it's like two fighters you got a breather, it might be two seconds, it might be thirty seconds, but you got to do something during that period of time. So we immediately retreated, probably from here to my truck, which then seemed like a long way, but it took us forever to go that few feet. Then they come with their second wave, so now the guys behind these first guys started contacting are coming forward, fresh troops. So they come up start shootin' at us again, and shootin' wounded and things like that. So we had, we of coarse using grenades and things like this, the thing, and we were down in the saddle then, we come off the hill so we were in a very vulnerable place. Well about that time the rest of the company started to gettin' attacked along the line, because this thing was suppose to close up. So you know whose gonna come help me, because everybody is gettin' it now. So the thing that I had done that saved us to this day was we gone out, and I insisted that everybody in my platoon carry a claymore mine, which is an anti-personnel mine with Bb's in it, its about the size of, probably six by ten plastic thing, and of coarse it blows out pellets like a side.....

Interviewer: and weighs what?

Cecil: About four or five pounds, but it's electrically detonated. And so I insisted that we all carry these just for a situation like this. And the other thing I insisted that we carry, and the men bitched and griped all of the time was we carry a couple of D-handle shovels rather than just entrenching tools because if you have to dig in you can do better with that.

We get have this law and I tell every man to set this claymore to get ready for the next wave. We're talkin' about settin' something about the size of that tape recorder and then backing up getting behind anything you can get behind so you don't get killed by the back blast, and you have a little light cord and has like a generator. And so when the next wave comes we set off some claymores and literally cut these guys to pieces. So that gives us another law, we have to figure out how in the hell to get out of there. So by then we have our own kind of mortars coming in on them from **Ann** 105 the fire base and hell the rest is just pure chaos. Well anyway the way I got wounded was we had my Rto and I, well we had all pulled back. We were laying in a Bamboo picket, probably about as big as this little breakfast room. All of a sudden a grenade drops right down in between us and so we push each other away and we both hear it explode, we both get hit in the side with shrapnel. I look up in there and there's a sniper up in the tree, tied up in there. So we had to kill him of coarse, but they were everywhere. So it's interesting how these people get up in these trees, there would be this big tree and there might be a fork in it like that and you never see it if you walk through the jungle. And what they do is take a big piece of bamboo, about twenty or thirty feet long, and they would lash a T to it at the top. And the way they would do is go up to a tree where they was going to be a spotter or something and they would raise that up, turn it, hook it in the V. Climb it like a fire pole, they would get up to where they were going, they would pull the pole up with them, lash it to a tree. So walking at this level you couldn't tell anything. And of coarse there job was, his job was a couple of things, first of all would be a sniper and secong would be a spotter for when the helicopter came in for resupply, so he could shoot at them from above or he could relay here come the helicopters.

Interviewer: So how badly were you hit?

Cecil: Well I was , you know I felt the pain and I was bloody and had stuff in me but I didn't even seek aid until that night, simply because you know the minds a wonderful thing you can block, block things out and all kinds of things and there were people much more, much more...

Interviewer: What were your casualties like out there?

Cecil: Well that day lets see they, I got this written down, lets say we had twenty-one people, everybody got hit except for one person. As it turns out we had far fewer KIA's than other platoons up the line because we were prepared and this counter action immediately, we gained surprise back. So while we were hit in the initial barrage, the subsequent actions we took that kept our casualties so low, and three guys killed were killed almost instantly 'cause they were getting hit in the face point blank.

Interviewer: What sort of damage did you do?

Cecil: We did a body count the next day and we found a hundred fifty five dead I think it was, something like that.

Interviewer: Now what kind of folks were they?

Cecil: North Vietnamese

Interviewer: where they NVA regular uniform?

Cecil: Yeah, yeah NVA regulars.

15. They were real soldiers

Interviewer: Was that the case with most of the encounters you had?

Cecil: Oh yeah, we were up In the border there, where they were infiltrating across and North Vietnamese were the name of the game up there. So we were fighting uniformed soldiers like ourselves.

Interviewer: Did you ever encounter women in the NVA?

Cecil: no, they were back, we knew they were back in the hospitals because we would send propaganda and things like that so we knew they were there. But we encountered these young kids like I say either impress or whatever to make look for them, those kind of things. But now the VC, the VC organized coastland, yeah you had several women in those organizations. And there were woman in these but we saw no combatants, of coarse we would occasionally find advisors with them and we all know that, its been so long since its been proven , that they had Chinese advisors, and Russian advisors.

Interviewer: How did you view the NVA? Did you see them as well trained and effective and did you respect them?

Cecil: Well you respect anyone that's got a gun. But well of coarse the NVA were employed very much like we envisioned it would happen Europe, they were part of the Communist, the communist side of the equation and so the um, I think we viewed them as, of coarse we all knew about Korea or at least I did, they come at ya with sheer numbers. And so no I would say there's no question about it I mean I always felt this way about it, individually there weren't nearly as trained as we were as individuals because they were going to rely on simply smothering ya, you know overwhelming ya. As a matter of fact there are great stories of units were standing and I think this has since been confirmed that there were units just across the border who hadn't been supplied weapons yet, who were counting on getting either weapons from us or counting on people killed. So that kinda reinforces my point about not trained individually to the level we were. I think that this is been confirmed in everything I have ever studied about the warfare between the communist and the capitalist is that we obviously place a greater premium on lives than they do, no doubt about it. I mean the extent we go through to evac a person or to take care of them or prevent a disease or you know injury from taking them down.

16. Medical in the Unit

Interviewer: With speaking with that, when did you get medical care?

Cecil: Well I got medical care that night and of course you know and I'll tell ya very frankly I had so many things going on, I knew I had been hit, I couldn't hear you know a grenade goes off to ya, if you ever had a firecracker go off in your hands, the little pinky when a grenade goes off, it just **rearrear** ring your chime. Well anyway I knew I had to many things to do and I figured that adrenaline will you know overweigh any pain and very frankly there was no pain, its kinda like a close hit in a car wreck, you know until you get time to think about it you don't think about it. I figured that because at this time you see what sets in when you get in one of these terribly frightening situations is that a people when they see blood where they see injury you have to, when your the leader, you have to get a hold of the collective emotion very quickly. If someone is screaming you shut them up because that just permeates and affects other people. And so you can all give up and die for sure, or you can try to get out of there and maybe not die. You know its the classic case of kinda understanding human behavior really going off instincts at that level of coarse. But you have to either say your going to succumb to it and feel sorry for yourself or whatever, but my concern obviously was getting these, getting my outfit out of there. And so we grabbed guys, and I drug two or three guys that hell at normal times I couldn't even lift their arm. I know enough about the power about adrenaline and those kinds of things that the people can do some things when their excited , scared or nervous that they can't do normally.

Interviewer: Did you spend anytime in the hospital?

Cecil: No, I went back to battalion aid station, and the medic had give me a pain killer, but we used morphine on guys who were really badly hit, but I went back to battalion aid station they dug out piece of shrapnel out of my hip. Remarkably the thing that save me was I had a leather holster, the biggest piece of shrapnel had gone through part of that, and had wedged into my leg and had just missed the, you know the major artery and once again luck, and then I was peppered with a lot of small stuff.

17. Less Cavalier

Interviewer: Did that experience change you in anyway in terms of how you approached day to day life?

Cecil: mmm no, I think well no, no, I think if anything it made me certainly less cavalier about certain aspects of it. I mean its one thing, and you know how I'm going to tell you this, its one thing if a group of people who had come and experiences sit around telling war stories and bullshittin' and things like that. Its quite another for one of those same people to go in an audience and tell those kinds of things and have them misinterpret or misconstrue because you survived or because your standing there. And that why I have always been very reluctant to do something like this because there's a great tendency to hear this later on and think one its easy, two its quick, or three you know is that all there is to it or four what ever, whatever four is. So I think there's probably out of that I became yeah I think that the best word today that comes to mind. You had to be much less cavalier about, about, Sidney Berry was the greatest guy he's gone to the vulgarity to the battle field. I think that's the best phrase I ever heard. He used this phrase incidentally when he was **soup** at West Point when congress decided to or was toying with the possibility of admitting women and of coarse he was of the old school thinking we were all trained in Vietnam to be combat leaders. And so it's nothing against him for his mind set because that was his age and he said, he said very simply when ask by somebody he said, "Women do not need to see the vulgarity of the battle field." I guess the point of that is yeah its shaped and changed, when I left Vietnam I went to the ranger department, wonderful place to decompress you know go from the jungles, and a lot of people who were non-lifers didn't have the opportunity and that's where you get all this business about the Vietnam Vets syndrome. Those kids that were draftees or enlistees they came and went, they went back they were braves, and you and I and Allen were re-absorbed in the Army culture and so we were around people with you know people with a community within a community.

18. No Racial Tension in this Unit!!

Interviewer: Speaking of that in this photograph there are a number of soldiers here, there are let's see one, two, three, four, five white guys and then a black soldier and a Hispanic, what was the nature of race relations in this group?

Cecil: Not a problem, because our single unifying thing were the Airborne, the paratrooper wings. That went above everything else. As a matter of fact we used to kid around, it doesn't matter what your color is, everybody's green. I am sure you heard that many times. You just don't have time to fool with that, and certainly at this gut level you don't, and what you would have none of that crap you saw in Stones or Platoon. Now we didn't have and that doesn't mean it wasn't there, that it wasn't there later on when the National purpose became fuzzy, less focused, more contradictory, illogical, during this period of time it was clear cut who you were, it was clear cut who they were, and all the bullshit in between that goes on in the White House doesn't matter a thing because as I said earlier men fight for their buddies. O.K.

Interviewer: Perhaps in your situation too you mentioned earlier this was a volunteer unit, this was sort of an elite unit, not as much as the man off the street.

Cecil: That's right, that's right, and now back to your point on race relations. While we didn't have a problem in our unit on day to day, when you went back to a base camp when people had nothing to do all day but sit around and worry about what their biggest problem was. Whether they had catsup in the mess hall or then you would see kind of a segregation take place, that might have not been possible in the field because organization. For example there's a black in every squad, and now they would get together and drink a beer. So what's wrong with that? So the white guys, so race at least in our unit wasn't no big deal, it wasn't no deal. Of course as we all know later on it becomes a very big deal. Now the one thing that I can remember very vividly because I was there, is I can remember when Martin Luther King was killed in April '68. I think it was April, yeah April fourth or something like that. And you know I could sense at that point, and the only reason, reason this is apparent is because weren't in this kind of

situation then that I just described to ya, we were in Komtum and kind of a base camp situation, a kind of R&R and cleaning up peoples jungle rot and stuff like that gettin' 'em out in the sun. But during that period I can remember there was a lot of tension, but that still didn't come from our men directly, we were part of a bigger base camp at that time so there a lot of support people, and service people that just loaded trucks and things like that, they just had a lot of time on their hands. They had never seen the things these guys had seen. The point of all of that is the only guys who want fight when they go in base camp is the guys who never fought. The fighters want to do something else. And of coarse many of them used to say, "You think you tough boy, take my ruck sack." So I would say my experience race was not a big deal.

19. How Short Can You Get?

Interviewer: So you spend a year in this kind of environment. What did you think, say you got down to the eleventh month?

Cecil: Well I, one of the things you have to do as a leader, and is there's no dead line for you. Unlike the soldier, an officer shouldn't count days except between his wife or his girlfriend or his notebook or something like that. Because as a leader if you make a big deal about here's the starting point and here's the ending point then everybody can have one, so then in my case, as a matter of fact these guys at the thirtieth reunion kidding me still to this day thirty years latter, about being a lifer. And yeah its used to be begrudging , but now its a respect I was investing in then, that has lasted thirty years anyway. These guys out of Tucson came up to me and incidentally we had about three-hundred fifty people from our whole brigade which was about, in those days let's see a battalion was about five-hundred and there's four battalions, so there's two-thousand men and three-hundred fifty come back thirty years later. It's kind of remarkable. Our company alone which is Charlie Company, we had I think either twenty-three or twenty-five plus most spouses, so we had the largest single company size group there. And the thing that got me, and I though I had heard all the stories, I really thought I heard all the stories, and some of these pictures, you know no one has the same view when they look through a

camera. So now people are starting to share snap shots, but you know because I never had any pictures of me, and all of these pictures of me were coming from these guys with pictures of me, and I give them pictures of them and that kind of thing. And so the point of that is the quilt is being made I think, and I would say, hell I'll bet some of these pictures weren't some of the ones I took. These are all just hand me downs. The point I was going to make about that begrudging respect, and officers counting time was that I had three people during this reunion, never said this to me before that either emotionally, that didn't feel a need to be said or were just not at a point where they could say it or whatever. But three people came up to me and very privately too, and bring tears to your eyes and say, that would tell you, how much, that how much your example meant to them.

20. A Time for Reflection

Interviewer: That must be a very special bond, one that, at that time were there other lifers or were you the only one in your about the only one in your unit?

Cecil: Well, let's see, Ed Kelly, I see Charlie Brown was OCS, Ed Kelly was ROTC out of Auburn, oh Alabama he'd kill me for that Alabama. Tom **Macelwain** was former enlisted, so he's up from the ranks guy, he was company commander. Ray Flynn was platoon leader at the time, he was ROTC out of somewhere in Southern California. No he was OBV2, is that right, is that what you called 'em then? Yeah. Then I was a lifer, I was the West Pointer. All of us were Airborne qualified, as I said earlier no one else was Ranger qualified. So everybody else was holding on to their corner of life. So that, and so out of that, let's see Kelly, let's see if can figure this out, Brown goes back, well back to the Advance Coarse, Brown gets rifted because the college thing comes along, he doesn't have college. So he gets rifted, maybe he makes it to Major, Kelly is a boozier, he has some adjustment problems, but he was a boozier before he came, so I can't attribute that to Vietnam. He's a boozier, so he ends up his career as a warrant, flying helicopters for the aviation, but I think he got rift as an Officer and came back as a warrant and flew. **Macelwain** ends up as a Lieutenant Colonel in El Paso, still lives down there by the way.

Came back from this experience, gets hooked up with these anti-war people, and first of all he's brought back on his normal rotation, he sit around the country with a white flag. And then somehow he gets hooked up with the anti-war people and throws his medals away and becomes anti for some reason. Then Flynn, Flynn got killed tragically after Vietnam in a car accident or something like that, but Flynn's not a lifer, he gets out after his times up.

Interviewer: I know you have been active in some veterans organizations and groups and I want to talk about that in a minute, but tell me a little bit about this thirty year reunion you went to. What was it like?

Cecil: Well it was, first of all let me preface it by saying that this guy right here, by the way this was taken about July 1967 a big bamboo thicket, this is where emulsion came off, these were some old slides that had gotten deteriorated. This guy right here Sergeant **Bolrich** he was my Platoon Sergeant, after **Farrow** leaves, he's the guy that's kept our outfit together, he's responsible for thirty years keeping everybody together, connecting rosters, called people up and insist they come to the reunion, and so he's spent most of his time since Vietnam because that was a very important part of his life. And just to show ya that every one has a different time table in the brain, or in their head, about when things really start to effect them or not, he just had his first round of depression right before this reunion. His son called me up, this is the guy who is up just helping other people do the same thing, and I don't know whether it was a um, and I called his wife and his son too, I said what is this, what's wrong with **Wards**, we all looked at **Wards** to keep the rest of us straight. He said he doing a lot of thinkin' about Vietnam. It turns out, I see him at the reunion and he looks different, he's not as confident, he's kinda staying in the back ground and things like that. But I did get a chance to talk to him, and now I said, "now I'm a lieutenant, now what the hell's going on." He said, it turns out he lost his mother and her mother in a short period of time as well as all this. Everybody had kinda looked to him to get everything organized and all this business, you know life kinda closes in on him. But anyway the thirtieth reunion he sets this up in Tucson and I wasn't going to go. I had gone to several of them the twentieth, the twenty-fifth and its

hard to try to do everything every year kind of deal. Plus as you well know you reach plateaus in reunions where there's nothing new to report and you know you have their things on your plate, but the thirtieth was a big deal. So I was not going to go, but what he does of course is sets up a telephone chain is so all the guys calls the Lieutenant and make sure he goes, and the beauty of it was that **Macelwain** the company commander, it was the first one he showed up to thirty years later. This guy right here, three guys standing on the helicopter, and so he kinda pushed it all out of his mind, and you got a big reunion guy or whatever. This is Charlie Brown, this Tom **Macelwain**, I've got the thirty year picture, but anyway I can get some for ya. So **Macelwain** shows up thirty years later and Charlie Brown didn't make it there, Ed Kelly came there, Ed Kelly looks like a rock.

Side one tape two:

Cecil: For guys who were associated with the military for as long as I was. Because that was their snap shot in life, that was their fifteen seconds of recognition.

Interviewer: That's an interesting point that you bring up and a lot of historians and analysts of all wars have looked at that, that fifteen minutes or one hour or that one day, Did you see that often, did you see people living that moment?

Cecil: Oh yeah, the interesting thing, I been kind of a fan of this moment for a long time and you know exactly what I mean when I say it. You and Alan have had Army friends that you don't see for years and the minute you get together the conversation picks up the minute where it left off, years before. And it's that same kind of emotion and it's that same kind of connection if you want to call it that, and these guys who haven't seen each other for thirty years, show up, and pick up the conversation where they left it thirty years ago. Isn't that incredible, it had to make a mark in your brain. It's not how are you or how are you doing, it's "Hi **Gram** do you remember that day I article fiteened you the day we left Vietnam," or something like that.

21. They Cannot Drop the Things They Carried

Interviewer: And that brings up another issue and that is the kind of soldier that is never able to lay it down who never really fully gets past it ,and whose life becomes dominated by it.

Cecil: Well first of all let me get the legitimates out of the way. There's no question in any kinds of warfare because we're taking young men, we're taken young men whose life are either reformed in that period of time we're taking a guy, quite like it was with a high school drop out, who has never held a full paying job, who has never succeeded in anything, and we whipped him into this mean fighting machine. You and I know there is contradiction there, because we kind of talked earlier before we went on tape about the trouble raising kids period. And so your taking someone, an embryo, that's not fully shaped in terms of there own boundaries, and your putting them into a pressure cooker. And of coarse the irony is the pressure cooker has fire and heat, and you don't make steel without fire. Unfortunately, a lot of slag comes out of that, you know a lot of stuff that didn't come out of steel. So when your talking to audiences your taking all these young kids and your doing all these things to them and your ripping them up away from mother's milk so to speak, and your putting them in this intense all male environment where the last thing you want to do is what? Let down your buddies. Well, that causes people to stretches the boundaries of their own sanity, in terms of what they would normally do. So your basically in many ways requiring someone to stretch the boundaries of their behavior. And sometimes when your out there with that behavior, and you cut them off and they can't get back to where they were. That's what I see in a lot of the career guys who can't let it go. They went out to the boundaries of their behavior and either got cut off by the rejection coming home or wife had left them and so on and they never gotten back to where they were. That's just Cecil's interpretation. In so the point of all that is, is their were some people who were legitimately were affected by that. There's another explanation that I have for it, well all of us were effected by it, then there were those who were affected by it who chose not to make anything out of it, in other words space it locked in time. And they were going to stay locked until someone

said thankyou, or good job, or someone said kiss my ass or whatever. They were going to stay right where they were, because they were going to do what the Country had asked them. In their mind don't you know I'm out here. So you got that group. The majority of the group stretched beyond those limits and sprung back. And they sprung back and continued to grow because they either had family to come home to, they matured emotionally, they realized they was a snap shot in time, they was a brief and tense chapter in their life, and so forth and soon. So they were able to snap back into what we call normalcy, because it's not normal for people to kill other people. And I would say that's how the majority of the people are. Unfortunately, or fortunately however you want to look at it depending on which side of the logical spectrum your on, is that those ones that stayed out their played right into the hands of the stones and the media, because it was see I told you so. But if you look at the facts, or at least the facts I have looked at, the incidence of what we call shell shock, and I don't like al the psycho-babbling phrases of the **PTSD** and everything, you know school bus didn't pick me up this morning so now I have **PTSD**. Others may like that, I don't mean it out of disrespect I don't believe it's just shell shock how your effected by an intense situation, and it could happen to ya if you have a near miss on an interstate. But I think those people were used by the press to re-enforce their point, or the media, or the anti-war, or the people who thought we were wrong. To prove a point they become, they think they are being adopted and protected by these people, and yet they are being used. Cottage industries have been built up over MIA issue, and POW issue and all the other issues of Vietnam, that's my own interpretation. The other thing is I'll say in that regard of coarse, of all those people that returned from the re-union there are not many of them still out there, I mean they are still out in those lands we are talking about. I mean they made peace with themselves, and its no different if you look at it in an abstract psychological, its no different than a family who developed a rawl, or a feud and quits talking to each other, or never returns, or never joins in the good like before, or never moves on, or never gets past a marriage that didn't go right. That's nothing unique for the guys who went to Vietnam, there are lots of people who are locked in time. And in defense of these guys they have had a hell of a lot of reasons to be locked in time than these others. Because they had little choice in it, they were snatched from America, either with the threat of service or whatever. The

dimension in all of this that bothers me most though I would think as I get older, is that, and I hate to admit this, I know realize that Vietnam was a class war in terms of those who served. I hate to say it, because it forces me to admit that, you know I was obviously down the trail with the others who wouldn't want to serve their country and dadadada. But Vietnam for the soldier was a class war, and in the case of the guys I served with, infantry other the these guys who volunteered airborne, infantry in general, armor, artillery in the combat arms those where the guys with the least number of choices. I mean from the draftee not the volunteer point of view, because you know by volunteering you got your choice. That kind of thing is a little bit harder for me to understand, of course my boy from UK has made me appreciate that, because historians especially **better disciplined**. Anyway, especially the bend in the history department at UK, you know he loves the social history and the **talitan** and all that. Of course they always want to teach history as a class struggle and all of this. That's all new to me and you and I have talked privately that's troubled me at times in my first couple of years. So I would say that part about it, and I would say the other thing that probably bothers me is what I label, for a lack of a better word is, because I have analyzed it in other areas of how we operate as a two party system is what I call a **hypocrisy** of liberalism. There are so many fundamental **hypocrisies** of liberalism, and just like there is on other sides, conservatism. In the Vietnam war is a classic example and the hypocrisy of it is, you know that Ted Kennedy's and things, they are always exempt. They are exempt from hardship, not in their personal lives, and I guess what forces me to admit is that privilege permits exclusion. So you know that, and the other side about hipocracy of liberalism and the media in the regard, and the context we are talking today, very simply is about this issue of how important are the college campus's, and they were trumped up to have a lot more importance than they really had in changing any policies. The reason I say that is that, yet if you don't want to go down this way just tell me and we will shift gears here. If you look at the hard facts of the people who were eligible to be drafted, men and women, women couldn't be drafted I mean of the age pool, were twenty-six million kids. When you sort that down with all the exclusions you find a couple of things. First of all we had plenty of man power, we are talking man power then because women were wax and we had plenty of those anyway. So running out of man power was never the issue, and the

other thing that comes out of that is the exclusions for being drafted had been the same as they had been before. So contrary to what the anti-war people want to make you think, that everybody in college was going to be stripped of their mother's milk and shipped to Vietnam and die the facts do even come close to supporting it. I don't know if you have done any work in this area, but the only way you got pulled out of college is if you were flunking, if you had misdemeanor or felony, and that about the only way you could be pulled out of college. All these that were married, agriculture, there were twenty-six categories. the other great thing, great hipocracy of the liberals, they were telling all this business about everyone dying in Vietnam like country hill on the fish and Woodstock and all that crap was that they never really told people how you got drafted, and I am amazed today that the American people don't understand what the American system of conscription was all about. This as a very simple thing, your friends and neighbors draft ya, the government doesn't draft ya, the state doesn't draft ya, the army doesn't draft ya, and I think years for that to really come out. But if you, it's a very simply motion, quotas are sent down to states and they broken out of coarse, so when they come to Rowan county they have to send ten men to the **waffle** this morning. So who the draft board? It's your friends, the school teacher, former mayor, the banker, and they get around a little table like this a say we need ten bodies. Get the sheriff, get the chief of police in there, and they say, "OK, who's eligible." Well you can send my son, the bankers son, or you can send her son whose not in college, and who got a misdemeanor. Well guess who they send? And if you go back and look and most of these guys will tell ya, a great number will tell you that's why they volunteered, they were one step away from the draft and once they got in they realized everything was OK. So not only idealism and finally admitting that Vietnam was class was. Of coarse none of that was available when we went to the Vietnam war, when Alan and I came back and went on with our Army lives and other jobs, we didn't think in those terms. You just hump along everyday trying to make a **fruit**. And so you know that was probably as troubling as anything, and then of coarse we benefited or benefits the wrong word, Mcnamera's Hundred Thousand that was another effort if you go back and read the literature a certain way it was effort to solve inner-city riots and problems, scrape them out of there.

Interviewer: yeah, that whole thing that Mcnamera's Hundred Thousand I think is a very interesting phenomenon.

Cecil: Yeah, it was aimed at two things. First of all, satisfying needs, and solving the **mystic** violence. It's just remarkable.

Interviewer: You can sort of couch it in those New Deal terms, see, see, see terms.....

Cecil: Oh yeah, we'll help ya out boy, we'll get ya out the getto and you know that has nothing involved with my personal experience in Vietnam, this is all late game knowledge and the guy just discovered fire..

22. More Reflections

Interviewer: And you were in a volunteer unit?

Cecil: Oh sure, but the thirtieth re-union, the thing that everybody you can well imagine, because if you went to your thirtieth highschool re-union you would have the same thing. Everybody's more mellow, testosterone's gone, more reflection, no one escapes good and bad luck in their personal lives, all these people have stories of kids going to foul, death's to early, sickness to early, job problems, so no one escapes good and bad luck. They were just, they just kind of represented America in the end, which I haven't really sorted through because it contradicts what I said earlier, it's class war so all these guys would be down here. And yet know if you look at there success post Vietnam they satisfied their American dream, at least in their own mind. Because if you look at what these guys do, they do all kinds of things, they are every where like the pictures of the guys I showed you before. You know relative success, so what does that tell ya? That tells ya they became steel slag or became something, you know. It had a beneficial effect on them.

23. Oppressed?

Interviewer: Well there is this sort of interesting, what I think is a mis-apprehension of the public today and that is that somehow Vietnam Veterans are somehow damaged goods and there had been a lot of statistical presentations of x number of homeless, x number of unemployed, and essentially portraying a generation of soldiers as having never recovered, and our interviews, obviously people have contacted us perhaps its a different kind of soldier. Your re-union indicates that, that a lot of folks did survive and certainly did very well.

Cecil: See, well I think that's all part of that left over sixties agenda and see right now all the great society has been disproven, and I don't want to get political on this thing. I mean if you just look at it objectively, just last night on the evening news, **Brocow** and every news carried it, the latest thing is the even Blacks are admitting that bussing was a failure, I don't know if you saw that story. They want segregation, they want neighborhood schools, that great liberal experiment of public housing, what were we doing going back to individual houses. People have to say this is my little corner of the world and I am responsible for it. We proved that failed, and if you look at if public housing starts you have a rise in **travails**, people prey on people of their own race, drugs, rapes, kids thrown out windows. You just look at the progress and if you go back to **abringarian** in Chicago, you see a waist land of millions and millions of dollars our dollars to prove the liberal experiment. Back to your point, I am trying to bring this thing around for ya, is the liberals are grasping now, I mean the really deep intellectual liberals, that think they think they are in the best position to tell me and you what we should do with our lives and how we should help others. And so what your seeing now is, your seeing a rear guard action being fought and unfortunately the guys, the Vietnam Vets who have been labeled with this nery well, never recovered kind of thing does the last people they cam point a finger to. They were accessories in creating this image because they had to have the symbol of human suffering. So they had to symbol these Vietnam Vets to human suffering and like I say and the Vets were tripped because they thought the liberals were genuinely taking them under and the liberal were simply using them as a symbol.

24. Kentucky Vietnam Memorial

Interviewer: You do a lot of work with veteran organizations, and are very active with one particular group that was working on memorials, is that right?

Cecil: Yeah, Kentucky Vietnam memorial, KVMF, Kentucky Vietnam Memorial Foundation.

Interviewer: how did you get involved in that?

Cecil: Well, I got involved in it by accident, of course I am from Eastern Kentucky, it seems like everything either happens in Louisville or well the gold triangle. I got called on day as a Vet from Eastern Kentucky, so for about four years I trudged to Louisville on every free weekend I had, and they had a group of guys set up and we were obviously interested in covering the state in terms of representatives. So I was the guy who basically took everything from I-75 east, 45 counties over here. It was just a group of kindred spirits of all services and different periods of service who, one were picking up this notion of "Don't wait for the government to give you this recognition." If your going to do it, do it yourselves just like in Vietnam. Take the bull by the horns and create whatever you want to create. That's how I got started, I was trying to think who was my first contact. Maybe there was a big fund raiser, I know we had a big dinner down there, but I was on the board then and Westmoreland came down and spoke to us all. But that was mainly to Veterans statewide aware of the need to. We struggled around for three or four years looking for ways to raise money and trying to figure out how many arguments we would get into internally when we decide what this thing was going to look like. Believe me the Veterans were not unified on the image they wanted to keep out of this war on this. What I want to retain is these memories I have been describing to you of these people and how their lives were effected. In my case they were mostly good, because the people who come to the re-union are people who survived mentally, emotionally, physically, things like that. So that's how I got started in the Vietnam Veterans thing and then of course just my general interest in coming from this area, I was

always aware of a high density of Veterans from all wars over here. I joined in all the things nationally because you get drug in by your friends and neighbors. How you do you turn down ole' Chaney who lives on the next farm to ya and says, "Jerry do you belong to the VFW?" How much do I owe ya, how do you turn down a guy when he calls ya and says, "I heard ya got a purple heart, why don't ya join the purple heart society?" When a guy from the American Legion says, "I knew your daddy, how about joining the American Legion?" So over the years like you get to much junk mail to these subscriptions, you get literally drug into the organizations of these things. Then even within Nam , and quite frankly organizations within the Vietnam Veterans, even other veterans will prey to the liberal notion of Vietnam Veterans as prize. Many, many, and I have heard this story to many times, and I know it as fact in our own legion in our own legion, and I am a member of post 22 in Mount Sterling, that Vietnam Veterans never step up to take the leadership roles and the old guys are dying and that kind of stuff. There's very good reasons for it, that's how VVA, Vietnam Veterans of America. That's how these splinter groups of Veterans come about, because they don't feel excepted, they never got excepted, and plus they generation thing frankly. Now some people take that harder than I do, I don't because I am looking at long **deray**, the long march, hell that's how the American Legion started. American legion comes out of WWI primarily as an officer created thing. So the VFW comes out to represent the enlisted side, so you know you get all these kinds of splinterings, but the point is they get done. You tend to emotional needs of Veterans, whether it's beer drinking in the VFW, or creating a college scholarship like we do in the American Legion in Mount Sterling. So you know, you satisfy some need.

25. Final Recollections

Interviewer: Is there anything that I have not thought to ask you, that you would want to include in this study?

Cecil: Well I think you may have ask this at the beginning, but if you did it would be on tape. I think that probably I would like to say, and you know somebody listening to this

that doesn't agree with my position, what would you expect him to say, and that would be that you I am certainly at peace and ease with myself and totally confident in that what we did when we did it was the proper course of action. It was proper, it was not that it was the best answer, but it was the best answer we had at the time and so I have no apologies for why we were in Vietnam, because as we all know we were, to paraphrase country music you will fall for anything if you don't stand for something. Although from an abstract sense I'm certainly not dumb enough to know that the Gulf of Tonkin was a **rouse**, and that the way that countries get involved in disputes or sometimes **fishes** at best, and you know look at the Mexican War, look at anywhere you want to go. the reason I say I'm comfortable with it, is because at the time my place in the line up is that I was a young officer who was trained and who was trained to do something else, they were not coming to me to ask me about strategy. They were coming to me for battle field tactics and to save lives or losing no more lives than was absolutely necessary. The reason I say that is I think that we were on to something and that I feel no great remorse for my role or for the role of the country. Is the recent information coming out of Vietnam from the North Vietnamese themselves, and I don't know if you have seen the latest, but it reaffirms many of things that we suspected, although these were not the reasons Johnson used to get in. I mean it's just as big a surprise to us, but it does refute a lot of the liberal business about we killed too many of our boys for no gain, and were having no effect, and that's just some new information coming out of Vietnam where they admit they lost about 3.7 million people. In that they had 300,000 MIAs. And we are still tinkering with 1900 we were probably really gone, you know there's been too long. If we haven't found them by now they are probably not there, but anyway I guess that's way by vindication or whatever. Is that 300,000 thousand are missing, and the part of that is it vindicates my personal direct knowledge that we inflicted more casualties than we took. Far greater, because I can take you places where we buried lots of people in bomb craters. Then you know and even know an interesting thing in this regard, I talked to Dr. Herring about this the other day, he gave a brief talk about his recent trip to Hanoi. I sent him some stuff on these very points that I was making here about this final admission and I told him what we had found out at the reunion this summer was Veterans, Vietnam Veterans will be the link in answering their questions. Have you been

keeping up with that, about how the Vets are returning things, and I told Dr. Herring I can take you right here to this spot on the map and tell you where your going to find some bones and carcasses. And that's the way this thing, it's not going to get resolved by governmental secrecy, it's going to get solved on the internet and the web. It's going to be done by Vietnam Vets, because were there and we know which hill top and this kind of thing. So that's one of the dimensions that comes to mind, like I say I feel no remorse I think we are on the right track, as I know more about the political stuff. It's kind of like watching sausage being made you never want to see that. I think the final analysis is I am certainly proud of my service to country and for all these other people I served with, I am.

Interviewer: Well thank you so much.

Cecil: Well alrighty.

Yvonne Baldwin: I'm talking with Jerry Cecil. It's October the third, 1997 in Morehead, Kentucky. Jerry, I appreciate you agreeing to talk with us about your experiences in Vietnam, and I know some things about you, but I'd like for you to share that on tape with us. Tell me a little about your background, where you were born, where you're from, your age, those kinds of things.

Jerry Cecil: Okay, I was born in 1943 in Louisville, Kentucky and I moved to , well we lived around the Carrolton/Owen county area up in Northern, Kentucky. Of course I come from a divorced, split family background. My dad was an alcoholic. But anyway I'll compress that part of my life, it was through the church that I got over to Eastern, Kentucky to Hazel Green Academy, a little town called Hazel Green and of course there I was eventually adopted and so my life really began at Hazel Green Academy as a result of the church. Of course I went to West Point and from West Point of course I got commissioned and did a career in the army.

Baldwin: When did you go to West Point? What years?

Cecil: 1961, graduated from Hazel Green in May and went to West Point and first of July reported in up there.

Baldwin: Is West Point like a college in the sense that you have a major program that you go through?

Cecil: Well, when I was there, Yvonne, everybody was a civil engineer. That was the major program. It was the program. And so they came and they shaped you to fit what they needed and of course the West Point was founded in the early 1800's. It was founded initially, obviously, as a school for engineers as part of the National Defense to at that time, of course, to open up the country's waterways, roads, those obvious kind of engineering requirements for a building country. So, yes everyone ended up with a bachelor of science in engineering. Now of course we have, here we are 30 years later and now you can get an undergraduate degree in either in the hard sciences or the humanities, so we have about 28 majors now.

Baldwin: And I understand that you're part of one of those groups that was discussed in the book "*The Long Gray Line*?"

Cecil: Yes, that was Rick **Attkinson**'s book about the West Point class of '66. I think he came out with his thing about 1981 or '82, and he had started this interesting enough this book is the result of a bar room conversation and he was out around the Kansas City area and ran into a fella and they got to talking and of course they both had boyhood friends whose parents had been in the service. They came upon a mutual friend and then the discussion kinda went into area about I guess **Attkinson** and the nastiest fellow of the question, well tell me more about your class and soon as a result of that he created a series of articles which won Pulitzer Prize in the Kansas City Paper and he had entitled them the *Blood Brothers*. Of course, reflecting the closeness you built at West Point and those kind of things. It was such a success that he turned it into this book.

Baldwin: Do you think that his portrayal is accurate?

Cecil: Oh, I think so. What Rick tried to do there was he obviously had for the general audience. He was trying to pick out two or three characters in the class that would kind of **be** bookends for the class and everybody else fell somewhere in-between. So, the three characters that he picks in there are probably not the ones you and I would pick but they're representative and I think it's an accurate portrayal. Of course there are two messages in this book. There's a message about the Class of '66, which incidentally for somebody that may be listening to this, it was an all male 2,500 man college at the time. So any of my experiences during this period are strictly in an all male bastion. So, it's the story of a group of men going to college for a very special reason it turns out, as well as **Adkinson** I think done a wonderful job to kind create the flavor of the sixties and what was going on elsewhere. But if you recall of course, we were in the Cold War, we were all gong to die by nuclear bomb. The great ideological rift, communism versus capitalism all those kinds of things. So, I think **Adkinson's** done for a wonderful job in telling two stories in this. Many people can identify with it. I've been in many settings where people have read the book and it even gave them flashbacks for their college experience in the Sixties.

Baldwin: So when you went to West Point, you were planning on a military career?

Cecil: No, had no clue. I was just a little Eastern, Kentucky boy that didn't have any money for school and matter of fact I got on to West Point by my high school counselor, probably, librarian, Kathleen **Tutt** and her library was probably smaller than your kitchen right here. And to that I'll never forget this one day she said, "Jerry, here's something that you ought to consider." Said you're a pretty smart boy and hard worker and all this kind of thing, but it was an Air Force Academy catalog. Then, so I applied to the Air Force Academy and came up short. I was number two guy, and so the congressman called me, at the time Carl Perkins, and notified me and said sorry you didn't get into the Air Force Academy, but my guy for West Point dropped out. Would you like to go there? And you know when you're a 17-18 year old Eastern Kentuckyian, what's the difference? So anyway that's kinda how I got going to West Point and you know very frankly I didn't even know what a sergeant was at the time. So It was kind of an opportunity to get an education basically, initially.

Baldwin: What did you do right after you were commissioned?

Cecil: Well, right after I was commissioned back then we all had a pretty straight forward approach, we all went to airborne school, ranger school, I went to a first assignment at Ft. Hood Texas as an infantry Lieutenant and ended up as a second Lieutenant commanding an armored car troop and that was kind of usual in this regard of course there were plenty of armor Lieutenants. around, but the infantry bridge commander had had bad luck with armor officers at the time. So, he thought he would either teach 'em a lesson or whatever. So her puts a second lieutenant infantry in charge of a car troop and the interesting part of that assignment was that many of my West Point

classmates, who were armor worked for me and of course class rank was a big deal then, and they, of course, ranked me in a class so that was kind of hard pill for them to swallow. Then, from there of course I go to Vietnam, Of course, I'd volunteered to go on the first wave. And during this period, by the way, Yvonne, they had curtailed officer basic for our class and 2 or 3 periods there and the idea was to get you to Vietnam as fast as you can, send you to your unit, 6 months of OJT is equivalent to putting you in a school somewhere. So, our generation did not go to officer basic course and so then within a year of graduation I was bound for Vietnam, 173rd airborne.

Baldwin: What year was that?

Cecil: 1967, and I joined the outfit on Fathers Day, 1967, joined them about noon and I'll never forget we flew from Bien Hoa we'd been there 3 or 4 days. Of course their climate, climatizing weapons shooting things like that. And we flew from Bien Hoa near Saigon up to Pleiku. And we had a young captain adjutant there and he had all these fresh Lieutenants and then the airplane rolled in and the unit that we were gonna join was coming in from an operation and so the airplanes, the motors are actually running, the engines are actually running, the ramps are down and this captain stands over with the clipboard without even knowing who we are and says you go to that plane and you go to that plane. With no record or clue of who we were or didn't care. Of course, that kinda reflects the tempo of the times. And unfortunately within 4 days, of the 17 of us that went there, were 3 or 4 of us that were already dead. So obviously there's a lot of faith and luck involved in life, we all know that. And so I joined my unit about noon and we fly from Pleiku up to **Dak To** which is in the border region where the 3 countries come together and by 2:30 that afternoon I was on my first combat assault. So, quite an introduction. And we moved in and to help another unit get out of a fracas and then we got back to **Dak To** about 5:30 and that night we went again. We were called out for a night airmobile assault to go secure a village and so, here I'd been with my unit less than 6 hours and already been on 2 combat operations.

Baldwin: Do you remember, what did you feel like under those circumstances, where you find yourself not only in Vietnam, but immediately in combat?

Cecil: Well, I think the things that ran through your mind. Does anybody know I'm here, I might end up getting killed or get these guys killed and I don't even know their names. Their just people running around in the same outfits I am. And so, what you find out right away is there's kind of a convolution between what the Army had trained you to do. Get to know your men, check 'em out, talk with them. Learn their skills all those great troop leading things that you'd been taught up to this point and then all of a sudden when you get to the battlefield it's all convoluted and it just doesn't make sense. It's either compressed or you know neglected or whatever and so that was one of the impressions that I had. The other impression that I had and we all had, of course, is you have a natural fear and anxiety and sweaty palms and all those kinds of things that I had at that time and still do and so it's not 20/20 hind sight but I felt very confident as most 23, 24 year olds do and I felt that I had been the benefactor of the best training the Army had to offer at least at the time in terms of airborne and ranger school and of course

ranger school kind of wares you out and strings you out and you kind of find your personal limits and I've always believed that if you know where your personal limits are in terms of fatigue and energy and those kinds of things then you can always remain in control of the situation. Not that you won't be afraid, but at least you'll know how far you are from the wall. And so, so the idea of my personal fear of course crossed my mind but I very quickly suppressed that and said the only thing you have to fear is feat its self. And all those great, great clichés from history and so subsumed that to the higher notion that my there was to take care of the men who had , you know. For less chance in life to find themselves or to gain confidence or to have been exposed to the training or even do the analysis that I had done mentally to calculate my chances.

Baldwin: How many others were as new as you?

Cecil: Well, I would say the problem with the Army in Vietnam was is the 1 year tour. Of course everybody had a different timetable of course that's very detrimental to unit cohesion, unit purpose all those kinds of things. So I would say in my platoon, a mortar platoon on paper I think we were supposed to be about, oh 34 or something and we were probably 22 active, you know in the field kind of thing. I would say that 1/3 of them were less than 3 months, 1/3 of them were probably less than 3 months to go and then of course the other 1/3 somewhere in-between. And so they out of that 20 men, I would say we probably had a 1/3 about 6 or 7 of us that were brand new, you know, kind of like the opening scene in the movie Platoon, where you see the new guys coming in with crisp fatigues and you see the old guys that have seen the elephant and you know they're got a totally different look, thousand yard stare and those kinds of things. So, I would say that, that's probably the best breakout you had new guys and of course they had a **tercid** name , FNG's, all that thing. But, anyway, let me go back here to this village, this night assault, we went in and of course stayed hunkered down and you know at that point at night when you get time to reflect of course you say "where in the hell am I?" You know, I know where I am on a grid coordinates, but where in the hell is that in relation to Hazel Green. And by that time you had no time to communicate with anything and as you recall, you know MARS, if you could ever get to a MARS station, that was very primitive. It was just a radio speak over the short wave and so that night you know you had that thought that comes to mind. Then the second and the largest part of your thinking was devoted to I better find out when I've got, get to know 'em, and see what area they live in and all those kinds of things. And then the next morning and then it probably the most graphic memory that I have, you know early in my tour was the next morning at 6:34 we got mortared and its kinda like the famous picture of the clock at Hiroshima. You know, it's certainly not on that scale but it's etched in my mind, like the clock stops at 6:34. And we're in this little deserted village in the tree lining and of course there's an open area in-between here and my pit Sgt. And I had just gone across this open field to the command post you get a morning briefing and as we broke up we're coming back across and we hear foomp, foomp, foomp, you know, as a matter of fact the area I was in was very much like where we're sitting this morning in Morehead. I thought about that coming over all the forested hills and the valleys with fog in 'em and the kind of mistiness surrealness and so, anyway we're coming back up across here, and we hear the foomp, foomp and look up on the hill and you see puffs of smoke coming up

and of course my platoon which was a mortar platoon at the time immediately jumps into action. Those were the old guys, the guys with not much time to go and Sgt. [Woolridge] I don't know if he's in the picture or not. This was a mortar platoon that I ad and that's an actual fire mission. And these guys were conditioned so they immediately, you know they say, Yvonne, get the Azimuths Jones you count the time and of course they could very quickly. If you know where it's coming from and you know the flight time you can calculate the distance and put counter- mortar fire on 'em and of course that was the idea and so by the time the Sgt. and I got to the middle of the open area the mortars started landing and of course I go what in my the hells going on here? Well, of course, my platoon sgt. gets hit with shrapnel and I drag him over to the timber and he's out of action. So I've been there less than twenty-four hours and lost my platoon Sgt. So, I said boy with this going on, I don't know if I can put with this for a whole year. So, anyway that was kinda my first day and I thought boy I tell you what, I'll be an old man by the time I get out of here. Buy anyway, I had a platoon sgt. From Johnson City, Tennessee, Sgt. **McFale** and he was a, he'd been an old Korean War vet and he knew what was going on and so he had trained me and of course I had all the school training on mortars and how to be a mortar platoon leader, but doing it in a dry classroom, you know on a planning board is a little bit different than doing it on your lap with a folded map and grease pencil and there's a lot more consequences for error.

Baldwin: How did the unit react to this, when your first Sgt. Was wounded?

Cecil: Business as usual. We'd simply just, you know, we counter-fired and called for medevac and we stayed there for the rest of the day and then we picked up and went somewhere else.

Baldwin: How long did it take 'em normally, a medevac, to get to you?

Cecil: Well of course it depended on how much stuff was commin in. But I think of course that dimension of the medevacs the thing that really altered drastically the statistics of wounded and deaths in Vietnam. So, it probably seemed to him like forever, but it was probably I would say in 15 or 20 minutes, which you know's about like a mountain ambulance. But of course they know where we are and there are obviously medical helicopters on standby, those kind of things.

Baldwin: Who is in this photograph?

Cecil: Okay, we're looking at a photograph where there's a black pajama clad Vietnamese there. And we'd been working though this area in an area called down at **Tuy Hua** and there was during the rice harvest and we'd been sent out to do two things. First of all, secure the area so that they could have presidential elections that year and then, the second thing was, to protect the rice harvest because the local Viet Congs were morning in and extracting both the food of the rice as well as the tax on the local inhabitants and we came across this kid and he's probably not 16, 17 years old. Of course, in this picture he thinks we're going to do him right away, but by now he realizes we're not. He's gonna get a nice helicopter ride here in a minute but turned out to be a

pay master for the Vietcong and we found on his persona roster of all the people in the unit, so that's very helpful from an intelligence point of view. Because then you send that back and you know who exactly in the village is by night kind of like in America, who in the town of the Ku Klux Klanners and so that was important this young kid turned out to be an important capture for that particular area because we had an inside into their organization.

Baldwin: Do you know what happened to him, what became of him?

Cecil: No, and somebody like that we just get them out of the area and then he's interrogated then probably someone that young is probably just released or something like that.

Baldwin: And the Newsweek article on your West Point Class, When? You say, this came out while you were in Vietnam?

Cecil: Yeah, It's gotta state side date of July 10, 1967. Newsweek issue but of course it gets there maybe a week later or something like that and somebody had the first issue I saw of course somebody has rolled up real tight, how you all used to send stuff in Vietnam. Smallest area you could take, and they came over to me when they saw their own lieutenant in it. They ragged me quite a bit about the whole notion. But anyway, it came out, it was published while I was in Vietnam as platoon leader. The story had been done. They started the story about, I think about, perhaps a month before we graduated and of course the first photo there is all of us gathered at Trophy Point at West Point when we're in our cadet uniforms and then they followed us to our first assignments and then they of course followed us when we got to Vietnam.

Baldwin: Now having come out of West Point background and going into this situation feeling though, you said you felt like you'd been as well trained as you could be and you were very well prepared and not to concerned about your won mortality at that time what was your thinking about the war? I know that traditionally soldiers don't think in terms of politics, but what was your thinking about the conflict itself at this time did you feel like it was something that we needed to do and obviously you were an important part of or did you have any misgivings?

Cecil: No, I didn't have any misgivings at all. I had by then, certainly you know, I'd been at West Point 4 years, well 5 years actually. Let me go back here for a second. I went to West Point and my freshman year I flunked out because of math and I'd come from a little school in Eastern, Kentucky and it wasn't a question of aptitude, because I tested well, It's the question of not having any schooling at least for what I was about to get into. So, curiously enough when I came back to Hazel Green I had an opportunity to retest after a certain period of time and I came to Morehead. Came to Morehead State University. It might have still been Morehead State College then. I'm sure it was. And, Yvonne, the plan I used was kind of a very simple thing. I went to the head of the math department and told him my dilemma, and I met with him and he said, I'll never forget

this, "well, bring in the textbook that you failed last semester and we'll look at it." And so I brought in seven books and at West Point it was a survey the first year was a survey, or course they were covering calculus, **spherical trig**, things that Kentucky couldn't even say yet. And so anyway, he said well the best thing for you to do is enroll in all courses at all levels. And, he said, go to class and he said you'll understand this you may not understand this and we'll get together in the evening and he'd tutor me. Right here in little Morehead and I lived down here on oh right above the little 5th street, I had a little rented room upstairs or something. And so hear as right, I went, I took a freshman, sophomore, junior, senior class in math. And after about a semester it all started to gel. And the bottom line is this, I went to take my reexam at Fort Knox and about maxed the test and by then I knew that West Point was a good deal if you could make it. And I was hungry enough to where they weren't going to lick me at that point in my life anyway. So, I went back and after the experience here at Morehead of getting well grounded in math or well not well grounded but grounded a hell of a lot better than I was, of course I didn't have any problems at West Point. Now I struggled, I mean I worked hard, but at least I made it though and you know I was a 5 year man, I should have graduated with the class of '65, but I got turned back, but I did it the hard way, I went back and did the Plebe year again, all that kind of stuff.

Baldwin: So you came into the situation in Vietnam not even thinking that there were any misgivings?

Cecil: Oh no, oh yeah, back to your original question. No, by then West Point see the majority of our history for example was political military history and of course the major part of our study was the history of military art, which is you're studying battles and by then I know it was clear in my mind after about the 1st introduction of the first day that this was a school for soldiers. As a matter of fact that was a title of a popular book during the period. During the Sixties School for Soldiers. And though we were being trained to be commissioned officers in the United States Army. Even back then in the Cold War period it was a technical school so to speak and that you were expected to be a career officer. And of course you and I have seen that completely change in your husband's career and my career. You know now it's like working in a convenient store, if we need you, if we got business this week we want you and if we don't we don't. So, no, I had none of those, you know. I saw this thing purely in terms of Communism vs. Capitalism. I obviously was educated along the lines of you know the (NSC) lines the official line of Vietnam and the country about to be overrun by Communists and all those kinds of things, and I'm not so sure that and I'm not so sure as I think back and I certainly wouldn't want to give myself credit for being more brave than I was or am or anything. But at that age you know you're pretty pragmatic You're being trained and your focus is on getting through this class, getting commissioned, getting a degree and those kinds of things. And very frankly by then you just see this as well that's my payoff period. To pay back for your education and things and you knew that going in and it's a guaranteed job upon graduation.

Baldwin: What about the men who served under you? What kind of solder did you have in these mortar units?

Cecil: Well, I think I was very fortunate. Which is one of the reasons why I chose to volunteer because you pick your unit. I went to an airborne unit and of course in paratroopers you have volunteers to begin with, so there's another filter and another cut. For the average soldier whether he's drafted or volunteered initially once he chooses to go airborne then the number of units he will go to are limited and plus they are all volunteers and there's a great, I always call it the **[Pertorian Garden]** the tip of the sphere and the great thing about volunteer units is when you're tired of it you leave. Or if you aren't pulling your load others will tell you to leave. I realize that the unit I choose to go to had those kind of characteristics. We were basically all volunteers and of course in that kind of a group of men under those conditions you build a lot of camaraderie and a lot of locker room barracks mentalities and those kinds of things. And so all the soldiers that I had and the other things that I'll say about that is I was in the war long before it became, not long before, but before it became highly unpopular, particularly as we became interpreted on the campuses, but my study now Yvonne, years later convinces me that that was all a fluff. But the campuses had no effect and some other scholarship I've read recently says that didn't have as much effect on Nixon and the politics as guys like **Abby Hoffman** would make you start to think. There's some hard evidence there now, but anyway that's another story. So, the men that I had in my unit were all young soldiers who had either volunteered for the service and if they hadn't volunteered they quickly saw that they could improve their chances of who would be around them, if they then volunteered for airborne or whatever. The other thing that was interesting about airborne units at the time is and I've heard Gen. Westmoreland say this many times to us personally since that was his background was that the airborne was his fire brigade which meant that he used us like what we now call today S.W.A.T. teams and all those glorified **Schwarzenager** and Rambo things. And so certain people are attracted to the elite units. And for that reason we had few if any of the problems that become or be associated later on with the big large Divisions cumbersome organizations for the wrong terrain that have 16,000 people and all those elephants that's associated with being sluggish and then of course to fill those big outfits, You need a big pipeline. And of course that means that you're gonna get more and more draftier. And it's just like anything, when you increase production you lower quality. I don't care whether you're making wildgifts or making diversions.

Baldwin: What was a typical day like for you with this unit?

Cecil: A typical day was kind of like raising tobacco in Eastern, Kentucky. You never knew when it started and you never knew when it stopped cause it was a 24 hour day. Incidentally the Army got a hell of a bargain and I think we got 22,230, I think a Lt. Got something like that remember that? Oh, yeah 22,230. Oh let me go back one of the other incentives of course was the monetary incentive for jumping out of planes you got half again your pay \$110 being a country boy I said "hell I can throw myself out of an airplane every month for that for 110 bucks." Oh, I forgot the question

Baldwin: Lets start where a normal person would start his day. They say the Army does more before 9 O'clock than people do the rest of the day or something.

Cecil: We would have what's known as stand-to about BMNT which is the beginning of morning nautical twilight which is about in your terms if you watch the birds in the morning or something it's that period just as it begins to get light, but you don't see direct light so you're getting light over the horizon. And, of course, in military terms it's as if we were looking out into your woods, it's the first time you could distinguish a person lets say at about a hundred feet out there. Before that it's all shadows and your mind's playing games with you. So we would begin our what we called stand-to and that meant everybody was up and alert because it was said in the revolution the French and Indians attack at daybreak. And then we would go through a series of checks about everybody's still alive, nobody's missing all those kinds of accountability checks and ready to go for the day. I won't bore you with all the details but internally you had a lot of little procedures where at that point once you got through stand-to then certain people would, you would change your shoes and socks and take care of personal hygiene. This guy would be cleaning his equipment this guy would be standing on guard and then when you got your personal hygiene done then he'd clean his weapon and you'd rotate that. Within about 45 minutes of that time everybody has cleaned their weapon they've done their morning, had their morning toilet, they've fed themselves and gotten ready to move out or whatever. And then normally you would move out, moving out means moving out from where you spent the night. You would move out on a patrol and you were here and needed to go there. And search this area this valley, this hilltop or whatever and so then you would move out probably about 7:30 in the morning and even within that there was a rotation of duties obviously because there's more stress on being on the front of the spear than there is on the back of the spear. And so within all those company procedures you had rotational aspects of duties and things you did all during the day. And then as you moved along and superimposed up on the tactical thing was the administrative thing of the company because you always had people who were getting short, who had to go back or you had people who were sick and so they had to get out on the morning helicopter. So then you had people that needed to go home cause the wife had a baby, you know all kinds of things. Within this organization that gets up and gets ready to move and begins to move you still have internal things that need to go on all through out the day. Totally disassociate with finding the enemy, you know just the cost of breathing and living I'd say. Then, you may or may not stop about 1 p.m. to eat and if you did it was something like trailmix, something you could eat on the trail very quickly, we called it trailmix now. Something you don't have to set up cooking apparatus and all that business. But, generally most people would just munch then , open something like a can or pork and beans and eat kind of on the move. Then you should continue whatever the operation was for that day, then about 3, 3:30 or 4:00 you'd begin to set up your next evening position whether it involved digging holes or returning to where you'd come from, so the period from about 3:30 to about 7:00 before darkness is a period of activity, resupply, you've eaten foods, so you need food for the next day. If you've fired bullets or mortars, if for nothing else other than to keep people away from you, so you have this constant need to replenish. Then you typically have a obviously a command meeting to divvy up responsibilities for that evening and within that you would arrange things like ambushes and sleep schedules and guard schedules. So, it was kind of like I guess the best analogy you could use today that people understand only because of the popularity of CNN and

the Gulf War is the aircraft carrier. You know it's moving from point A to point B, but it's a beehive of activity all through the day. People are baking bread and doing all kinds of things and during the night you would do a number of things you would obviously always try to be alert to keep from being surprised or ambushed. You'd either go out on ambush or would do what we call H and I, Harassment and Interdiction fire, we were firing randomly in certain areas, just hoping to catch somebody there, whatever. And then if you were going to get any sleep you generally could get it between about 10-12 at night. Then of course the worst time was what we called the graveyard shift right before day break, because everybody is at their highest point of exhaustion and the fatigue and if their sleep their probably in their deepest sleep and of course that's the most vulnerable time. And then it was just a series of those kinds of things.

Baldwin: How far would you be from base camp at any given moment?

Cecil: Well, you would always want to stay within artillery range, obviously. Supporting fires range and so 18,000 lets see 18, 8 km is 5 miles so 10 to 12 miles. But if you were, it was least like what everybody that's probably gonna listen to this tape understand now is the honeycomb of the cellular system, as long as you, you could move from this firebase as long as someone else could cover you. The idea of going from cell to cell, but the thing you never wanted to be is to be uncovered and not be within the range of either your own artillery 105 or above or certainly within air support.

Baldwin: One of the things that lots of people deal with when we talk about combat in Vietnam is the fact that units were generally very well supplied and you talk about that bringing in food and brining in ammunition and so forth. Did the army take good care of your unit at that time?

Cecil: Well, Oh I think they did oh absolutely, there were some days when we couldn't get resupplied, but I mean, hell, we weren't a bunch of school kids anyway, we knew we weren't at a picnic or a paradeground. Then there were times when you were in terrain where you literally couldn't cut on of these hover holes and get a helicopter in, but then our units were trained for those kinds of things. We would drop, they would drop us water re-supply. Then you're operating on the spine of a mountain near the Cambodian Laotian border, you know there aren't a whole lot of water holes up there and yet you and I know what a soldier in oppressive jungle heat in the rainforest needs about believe it or not about 8 quarts a day. But you got to make him drink, now we all people listening to this tape, you know we all saw the bottled water of the Desert Storm come out, but see that had to go on in every war. It just wouldn't commercially purchased in the Vietnam war. And so the resupply thing. I could best say it this way you had to plan for it everyday, but you better be prepared if it couldn't get in. There were higher priorities somewhere, resupply of certain items came far behind medevac, other operations and particularly and of course what affects that if helicopters were down not working or if helicopters had been damaged and so you had as a commander, you had always to be aware of that. You could always get a resupply of ammo, it may just be kicked out of the door on top of your head, but you as a commander part of your job obviously was to plan for re-supplies and when, where will I be and when do I need to get my order in. What I

was going to finish up on. In those remote areas where we didn't have water spicket to fill our canteens with, what they would drop us, what we now know as all this high spook stuff, this special operation stuff is they would drop us water in what we called elephant rubbers, and they were long, rubber bags and there were 6 or 8 layers ro em and they held five gallons of water. And it was inside of a cardboard box and it had kind of a cone on front of it. So it would just go through the trees and that thing you could drop that thing from 2, 3 hundred feet and unless something pierced it it would make its way to the ground and then you could peel back all these, basically condom looking bags. There were about 7 layers and you could peel that back and then pour your water out and then of course the benefit of that was we never tried to waster anything, because those rubber bags obviously came good to cover equipment and things like that from rain, so there was a very practical use to them also. So the supply thing, I think we were very well supplied. We were never short of anything we needed.

Baldwin: Different units handled the individuals differently and what was your training in terms of how you dealt with the Vietnamese?

Cecil: Well, this picture's a good example that the picture we're talking about here is of the one where we just captured this young paymaster that I mentioned earlier. Our dealing with the Vietnamese was very simple, we were rarely in an area where there were any friendless. It was pretty clear. If they were there, they weren't raising rice, now everybody didn't have the benefit of operating in an area like that and that was all part of what I said earlier about being in the airborne, being put out on the edge and being in a unit that'll be aggressive and go after things as opposed to sit back and let em come to us as some other units did and had far more disastrous results. Our interaction wit people who were noncombatants came primarily in dealing with the **Sadong** tribes, the mountain tribes of Vietnam called the Moatagnards and the **Montgnards** are a group of people that have lived in the mountainous area there for centuries and of course they all wanted to do was to be left alone. These mountain villages as the NVA and the VC came through there it was disruptive. And then the South Vietnamese of course would disrupt their lives in another way. At the time the _____ **Ky** and land of gentry of South Vietnam were exploiting the natural resources of that area very much like Eastern Kentucky it's stripped. The mountain people were very good people and they just wanted to continue their tribal existence. They were very helpful, but also very cautious, because they knew that they were caught in the jaws of a vice. But our relationship with them was very good in the sense that they were always glad to see us come. Because they knew they wouldn't be abused.