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Vietnam & Watergate
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An Oral History Interview With Dave Reed at Greenup Kentucky on July 21, 1997

Q: What were you doing before you got drafted?

DR: Going to school.

Q: Going to school, where at?

DR: Jackson County High School.

Q: Then you were drafted right out of highschool?

DR: Yes, Sir, Just a few days.

Q: Right after graduation?

DR: Right.

Q: How old were you?

DR: Eighteen.

Q: Eighteen?

DR: Unhaa

Q: What year was this?

DR: 1967.

Q: Where'd you go from there? Where'd you do your basic training?

DR: I went to basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Then went to at the AIT school at the Fort Pike Louisiana and then I went to jump school at Fort Brags and then I joined the Rangers after that. I started on my Ranger training at Panama, Camp Balboa.

Q: How'd you feel at the time about being drafted?

DR: My father was, my grandfather was and probably his was I thought that it was my duty.

Q: Your family supported...

DR: Oh yes defiantly. I mean they didn't want to see me go but....

Tape Counter: 022

Q: Tell me a little bit about your training.

DR: At the time to me it seemed to be a good extensive combat training, boot camp was more of a orientation to the military life and AIT, I thought at the time, was good entry techniques, but I found out later in Vietnam that the training I got stateside was for conventional war and it wasn't very much good in a jungle warfare. Rangers school, I contribute my Ranger training to survival that's why I feel that I had a better chance at getting through it than the normal soldier did.

Q: What types of things did you do in the Ranger school, what did they train you with?

DR: Camouflage, to be patent, to hide to learn to go twenty-four hours without eating, certain vegetation that was safe to eat, certain animals you could eat, how to prepare for it and the main thing is to learn to stay alive.

Q: What types of vegetation and animals did they tell you, do you remember any of those?

DR: Snake, grub worms, monkey, leaves that had a jagged-pointed finish to it, if I remember right don't ever eat a leaf that was rounded or smooth.

Q: Did they ever teach you the ones to stay away from and all?

DR: Yes, everything that was poisonous, you learn a little bit of first aid for yourself, more advanced than you learned at boot cam, tourniquets, dealing with your feet when you had the jungle rot, just a very good extensive training on survival in a jungle situation.

Q: So do you feel you were luckier than the regular soldiers with the Ranger training?

DR: Yes and they siked you out, we were siked out it was a gunghoe outfit. It was a type of situation where you could quit whenever you wanted to. You could walk in tomorrow and say I want out, but we were young, brainwashed and they kind of hung that John Wayne type stigma on you, where you'd let everybody down if you did that. It was hard, it wasn't easy.

Q: How many people made it that started out?

DR: This is just a rough guess 330 340 maybe it started out; When we graduated, got our Ranger

Tab's there might be about 80 of us. And there was people hurt, some of the jumps they got hurt, some of the mountain climbing they got hurt, one fella was snake bite down there, another fella I think wild boars got him.

Q: What did they do if they didn't make it? Did they go back into the regular service?

DR: Went back to the regular army, yes.

Tape Counter: 060

Q: Where did you get stationed when you went to Vietnam?

DR: When I first arrived in the country I landed in BENWA. We were there overnight, the next day choppers picked me and three other Rangers up took us to FRUITBEND. We were TDY'd with the first calvary, the second to the fifth. FRUITBEND was a small LZ base camp east of the ONATA Pass not too far from ONATA where the first calvary headquarters was.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your platoon?

DR: There really wasn't a platoon it was more of a squad. We operated 6 and 8 man squad teams. When I first got over there we were just responsible we were sent in on ambush, search and destroy, lot of reconnaissances. A few months later I got involved with KEG UNITS with South Vietnamese Rangers. There was about four of us Americans and we were with the South Vietnamese Ranger teams. It was practically the same thing we were suppose to be training them, but I think they trained us, because they were better at than we were.

Q: What kind of things did you learn from them?

DR: Patience, and them people the art to kill. They fine tuned it. To be patient in a jungle, certain gear you throw away, you don't carry with you because it makes too much noise. Don't put on aftershave lotion over there. When your body gets good and nasty the leaches will leave you alone and sometimes the mosquitos will. When your clean and fresh they'll get on ya. To me that's the most miserable thing about Vietnam, was the living conditions.

Q: Where the Vietnamese soldiers you worked with pretty good?

DR: Yes, they were. A lot of Americans degraded them, talked down to them, stoled from them, beat them. I had a lot of respect for the ones I was with. Especially my KIT CARSON SCOUTS they were ex-Vietcong. Most of them were Vietcong, not by choice, they were forced or pressured into it. The main people I really liked working with was MOUNTAIN YARDS. They were their Indians. These were primitive people, if they saw a wristwatch they just fantasized over them, they couldn't get over it. They were good people. I learnt from them, I learnt a lot from them.

Q: What was the life like in the field verses life in the rear, was it a major contrast?

DR: Yea, when we did come in it was rough. We were dirty, nasty, just to get a bath was worth a months pay. To get clean and get clean clothes. The troops were different. A big controversy between us and a lot of what we called Garrison soldiers at the time. The Garrison's were cooks, mechanics, clerks, professional people. They had a lot of idle time they weren't out getting their asses shot at, but on the other hand at any night at any moment a mortar could come in on them or a rocket. I can't sit here and tell you that they were safe. They weren't. A lot of these people died in their own base camps, at different times.

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Q: What was some of the equipment you took out when you went out on missions?

DR: Plenty of water, plenty of ammo, a little bit of food, that's about it. Very little equipment. You didn't want anything that rattled or made noise. Ammo and maps, radios were real important.

Q: Going back to those animals, did you kill a lot of animals while you were out there to eat?

DR: We shot a water buffalo a couple of times to get fresh, good steak. We didn't have to there was a lot coconuts, a lot of vegetation to eat. The guys just killed a monkey and tasted it and I'd eat dog with the Vietnamese more to show friendship towards them. I didn't want to insult the chieftain by not sitting with him and eatin his dog. Water buffalo was real good.

Q: You don't think a lot of soldiers shared that same attitude?

DR: No, they never got to know the Vietnamese the damn, the GUTES were the GUTES, it made no difference if they were north or south. I couldn't feel that way, I guess because we worked closer with them. We weren't your standard day regular soldier then.

Q: Do you think that was a problem?

DR: That was a big problem, they were poor people. They did, I will admit the Vietnamese probably did steal a lot from American soldiers. You take people who were poor, underprivileged, uneducated, they see something, they take it. We have that here in this country today. We have more crime here today than those people ever thought of doing over there. American just went in there and thought he was so much better and I think that made a lot of bitterness between us and the Vietnamese, but I personally never had no bad run ins with the South Vietnamese at all. I didn't.

Q: Do you think that led to a lot of the senseless killings of the village people, do you think that contributed a lot to that?

DR: Yes, I think that the American soldier didn't want to be there, he was drafted and some of the ones that enlisted, which I reenlisted, I went RA after I was drafted cause I at the time was going to stay and make a career of it. Like I said I was brainwashed, but the average soldier they didn't want to be there they was drafted and he didn't have no support back home and maybe in his mind every GUTE that he killed that was his way of fighting back. A lot of times when you walk into a village you don't know if it's friendly. The average village people were Vietcong sympathizers and they'd kill ya. In that situation you shoot first, cause if you don't you ain't coming back. Vietnam was like I said if we was to have a Revolution here today all these houses around here. Some will be sympathizers with the government and some will be sympathizers with the rebellion and you just don't know. It was a chaos. One household you could be welcome and the next one you'll be shot.

Tape Counter: 174

Q: Made for an uneasy situation?

DR: Very uneasy, very uneasy. Some of the Vietnamese wanted us there, some of them didn't. Some of them thought that the Communists offered them a better deal than what we did. I know our government lied to them people. They promised them people some things they didn't care on with so I don't know.

Q: What was a typical day like for you?

DR: You woke up, if were lucky enough to have a toothbrush that wasn't worn out, you tried to brush your teeth if your gums weren't swollen so bad. My gums use to swell and bleed and the pus would run out of them. Peroxide was the biggest thing that we wanted more than anything. Then you went on down if you were in a LZ and had a mess hall you ate. Whatever you had to eat was eggs and beef, or a lot of times seeds. When you got up first thing at dawn you check your perimeter, check your claymores and make sure that nobody tampered with anything or maybe you might be sent out on a search and destroy or reconnaissance run. If you did choppers picked you up and took you to the zone or if your LZ and close to where you're patrolling you made your patrol from your LZ. You'd be out maybe all day, all night, part of the next day, you may come back you may be out longer. You go on a lot of patrols and you never made enemy contact at all. A lot of times you'd go out and never find nothing. Just search and search, patrol. Other times you'd go out and you'd be out ten minutes and you'd walk into 'em. It's just, you can't say everyday is the same. Could be one of these mornings that the Charlies zeroed in on you and run a few mortar rounds out on you. I think it got called harassment. They might sent two mortar rounds in on you and everybody'd head for a bunker or head for your hole. Then nothing else. Half hour goes by and maybe they'd lob two more in on you. Just kept the harassment up.

Q: What was it like, days and nights that you were out in the jungle?

DR: Mosquitoes at night, heat, heat, heat in the daytime and mosquitoes in the daytime.

Mosquitoes and leaches was the main thing that I hated. I had jungle rot real bad and I couldn't get no socks. I put my boots on always without socks, cause we couldn't get socks. I was told that they black-marketed them and that was probably true. When I wrote home I asked for my folks to mail me socks, cause we couldn't get socks. I'd see the medics they'd give me stuff to rub on my feet and it didn't work. The old Ranger taught me to use the grease from sea ration cans, keep your feet lubricated and don't wash them. I listened and I made it, cause it did work it kept the blisters off. I lost all my teeth a few years ago, I contribute it to that over there. I went to the Va said well we can't help you. So I just saved and bought my own teeth.

Q: Do you contribute any of that to...

DR: Agent Orange, it's probably most likely. They told me I had dioxin poisoning. The Veterans Administration said that they wouldn't recognize it. That don't surprise me.

Tape Counter: 237

Q: Did they keep you pretty well supplied when you were out in the jungle?

DR: Supplied with what? What we needed?

Q: What you needed?

DR: There's always things we needed. We were a lot of places where they couldn't get to us with what we needed. Medics were always complaining that they needed more medications, more antibiotics that we couldn't get. My big thing was getting peroxide and socks and I couldn't hardly get it. Most of the time we had plenty of ammo, they keep our ammo up to us. There was a couple of times we went short when we was out on patrol, especially during tet and we had nowhere to go into and we were running pretty close. Food, you never got a hot meal. You just, or if you did get a hot meal it was always roast beef. I was years and years before I could even eat a piece of beef.

Q: Did you have individual medics going out with you each time?

DR: Tried to every time, we'd go out on patrol we always had a medic with us and a lot of us learnt from the medic how to take care of ourselves. Like if you get hit and get shrapnel, then you were going to need a medic. Desk officers were pretty good they tried to get in and get us out.

Q: Were they mostly young kids too?

DR: They were all 18 or 19 years old. When I was 20 over there I was the old man. I was the old man at 20.

Q: Did you find that most them listened to what you had to say if you tried to help them out?

DR: Yea, my squad like I said, they were Rangers, we all worked close together. I guess the regular army, they had a lot of problems I didn't experience them.

Q: Did you have any particular missions that stand out in your mind or you said you got ran through a couple of ambushes, do you want to talk about it or can you remember any of it?

DR: It's almost 30 years ago, you know. I can remember some. I can remember certain ones where some fellas didn't make it, but to sit right here, right now. There was a night raids over the Cambodia probably stands out more, because we weren't allowed to be over there and we went over there on raids. It was a political thing. Up INCHON Valley we were up there and the Ho-chi-mhen Pass run from in North Vietnam into Cambodia. We'd sit on the ridges and watch the N.A. movements moving troops, supplies, equipment legally we weren't allowed to fire on them, but we did. That's when we made our night raids over there.

Tape Counter: 289

Q: They were search and destroy missions? Destroy what you could find?

DR: Whatever we could find, we destroyed. Politicians would have probably court-marshaled us if they knew it or our commanders. It was the type of war they didn't want you to win. They just wanted to keep it going. There's another thing I really wanted, food. Everyone of us craved food, coffee, good hot coffee. I use to sit at night and think about double cheeseburgers. Be worth a months pay just for one of them. That was something you just didn't see over there. I spent many a night on ambush patrol waiting and my mind would flashback to a certain restaurant back home, about them french fries and there was a sandwich called a club burger, it was great big, double patties with cheese, lettuce and tomato. A months pay I'd give for just one of them and a good, good cup of coffee. When I got home that's the first place I went. And guess what the place went out of business. They went out of business, I never did get it. That's what I'm saying, the worst part of the war, home, cause home changed. Your buddies were gone, your friends was gone, your old girlfriend was married and gone, places you enjoyed eating was gone, bars you used to go to was gone, had changed hands. You know most of us guys that was over there had fathers that was in World War II and in Korea. They came home as heroes. We come home and there was nothing. We were baby killers. No jobs, they wouldn't hire us. They felt that we were walking time-bombs. So most of us when we got back we just done the same thing we had done over there, just learned to survive. To live with it. A lot of them committed suicide, a lot of them went to drugs, drugs wasn't a combat soldiers thing over there, it wasn't. All them movies they show, the books they write that's bullshit, if you were out there in the boonies you better keep a clear head. I was platoon Sergeant if I caught one of my people drugged up I'd shoot him, cause he's not going to risk my life and the rest of the squad. I'd take him off. Some of them when he got home depressed, drinking, drugs I'd say more so

here than over there. Your duty soldiers, your Garrison Soldiers they had a lot of idle time. I'd say they were your dopers. Combat soldiers, unhun. I can't buy it.

Q: What was it like when your tet was going on?

DR: Hell, it just, they were coming from everywhere. There were a couple of N.A. divisions that moved south, there was, I know for a fact there was Chinese involved. They hid at all base camps, I'm trying to remember one we were close to. We was going to come in and draw more ammo, more rations and we got close to it and we heard it go up. They just pretty well took it and I can't remember the name of the place it was North Big Red One out a place called Bearcat, but that wasn't the name of it. I just, you know certain places I can't remember.

Q: The whole camp was destroyed?

DR: Oh yea, yea. Yea, in the noon Charlie got in there, the N.A. did infiltrate it at noon, they killed Marines right there. Even BENWA was infiltrated. I heard that there was GI's that had their throats cut right in their barracks. They were a month getting them flushed out of there, but out in the open, out in the jungles we were probably safer than the ones at the base camps, because they were concentrated, in the large base camps. Everything that was bad with us, we had nowhere to go, just stay put. Stay put.

Tape Counter: 373

Q: Do you think that the war changed a lot after the tet offensives? Did you see a lot of attitudes change or

DR: Not with us, other units... you could probably talk to a hundred different GIs and get a hundred different answers. Everybody's opinion on that war is probably different. I can only tell you about what I seen and somebody else'd be totally different. They may say, we had no business being there, I think we should have. We did have a reason for being there, but we should have went there to win, not to play politics.

Q: What do you think it would have took to fight the war?

DR: Politicians to leave us alone. Our military commanders, West Morlane, was very capable of running the war. Go back to World War II, President Roosevelt left the Pacific Theater in the charge of MacArthur. The European Theater involved Eisenhower. He kept his nose out of it and let them win. Our government didn't do this in Vietnam. Too many politics.

Q: We talked about that the older Generals were still trying to fight the war, the way they did in World War II.

DR: Right, A lot of your Marines was really bad about that. A lot of your regular army Generals

were too, Commanders, Colonel, they were veterans of World War II and even our basic training here, a lot of our AIT involved World War II techniques and this was a different war. A lot of your Marines their main thing was real estate. Establish perimeters, establish ground, and you just don't take ground over there. You take a piece of ground here and the next thing you know Charlie has the ground behind you. You don't fight a conventional war in a jungle or a guerilla type situation. The only thing you can do over there is take body count, that's all that mattered. You just don't take ground. A lot of our commanders that was under their rules or their warfaring train of thought or school and there's no school for jungle warfare.

Q: Do you have specific body counts, did they issue a number to you or did you know.....

DR: No, No, No, We just.....

Q: Was that the regular infantry commanders or....

DR: Body count is after firefight you take count of enemy dead or wounded. A lot of times they's pull their dead off so you couldn't make an accurate count. All you done was turn it in... G3 whatever they done with it. Like a lot of the captured weapons they wanted us to turn in, intelligence wanted to study to find out who sold the weapons to them and where they got them at. A lot them weapons were our M-16 rifles. A lot of their weapons were bought right here in the United States. People made money off of it. That was a good money making war. People got rich off of it, except for us.

Tape Counter: 441

Q: Was there a big black-market?

DR: Yes, food, weapons, some American currency, clothing.

Q: was it mainly from soldiers or stuff that had been picked up, or did they sell it to them?

DR: It was probably supplies from quartermaster that was sent over there and a crooked supply Sergeant, lined his own pockets. He knew the politicians was doing it, so he'd figure he'd get his cut out of it.

Q: The Arvn, do you think they were a good military unit or

DR: Yes and no. There was bad units and there was good units. To sit here and say all of them a whole, you can't say their all bad and you can't say that their all good. I'm personally more inclined that they were more piss poor than they were good. I don't think, that's hard for me to say. I meet some that had a will to fight, and I meet some that didn't.

Q: Did you have any, Did you ever come I contact with the rots of South Korea?

DR: Yes, we were right next to the rots. At FRUITBEND, the rot soldiers was real close at FRUITBEND.

Q: How were they?

DR: Striped, pure striped. That was the only bunch I ever seen that would stand parade rest standing in a chow hall, in a combat zone. The Vietnamese hated them and they feared them. They would commit atrocities and got by with it as where the Americans couldn't. They got down brutal, they got down right brutal.

Q: Was this the people that they captured or...

DR: Yes, yes, yes. They caught a Mamazun and like the Mamazun would be hired working around the base camp to clean, fill sandbags, they'd work in the mess hall. If a rot caught one of them stealing they'd just pull out a 45 and shoot them right there. They didn't care, they just didn't care. They didn't have to answer for it where we did. Them rots they were robbed, we trained them after the Korean War. Military started changing it's different today than what it was. Now they're saying that we've got a humane army. Maybe it's good that we've got a humane army, but does humane soldiers win wars? That's yet to be proven, to be seen. That's like Iraq, to me that wasn't a war that was just one battle. We won it because we had better equipment, better air support. The odds was against Old Saddam. If we got to a real tight, big war you're going to need your old, hard-core soldiers to fight it that's going to win it. Maybe it's bad for me to say this, but there's no humanity in war and these big professors that says there is, I'll be happy to disagree with them. You fight to win, if you don't win you've lost and that's it.

Tape Counter: 519

Q: You don't think that the government let you fight to win in Vietnam?

DR: No, they, nope could have been over right after tet. We could have been HANOI and took it over, but they didn't want it to stop, that's my opinion. We didn't win and solve it, we fought one battle and quit, the man's still alive, he's still got an army, he's still got an air force, he's still a threat. George Bush's gone and lied to the people. We didn't win a war all we did was win one battle. The man is still there, he's still in charge. He still has a standing army. Next month, next year, they're going to have to send a couple divisions back in there, but politicians gets glory and famous for making decisions like that.

Q: What was the race relations like?

DR: Well, we didn't have that in our units, but in the regular army and Marine Corp there was a lot, there was a lot. A lot of racial tensions over there. Especially amongst the Garrison soldiers. We'd come back in and we'd hear stories where black GI's wanted to fly a black flag and that was a red flag with a fist on it that meant for black power and I think Martin Luther

King was shot while we were over there. Blacks, whites in a combat unit they stayed together, they depended on one another. You might hate them, but you didn't show it. You took care of one another. Most of the people in my outfit were Mexicans or Indians and Cajuns and Red necks. They knew who to pick for these Ranger schools. They knew which backgrounds would function better. We didn't have no New Yorkers or Bostonians, and we didn't have nobody with a college degree. We had Suez Indians, Apaches, we had Cajuns and people who, living of the land was an instinct. They were from rural areas and country areas and it fit, it fit us. It really fit us. We were all strong, we were all in good physical shape.

Q: Couldn't get out of the draft either.

DR: We didn't really want out, like I said it was a duty. Our fathers and grandfathers, I wouldn't have the nerve. I couldn't come home and face my family if I was to get out here and protest or go to Canada. I'd be disgraced, I feel that way today.

Tape Counter: 592

Q: By '68 was a lot of people coming over that just didn't want to be there, that was really forced?

DR: Yes, there was a lot of them. There was, remember that was you're hippie movement here in the states and your free love and your free drugs. To me I think that, that was a Communist movement to infiltrate the country. I still do. You got a lot of American youths and at that time I was a youth. They don't want to face responsibility or duty. It's better to have fun than to face responsibility and your duties. Everybody has their duty, and you've got to do your duty. The only thing that pisses me off today, and I've said this before, there's two types of youths in the '60s. The youth who accepted duty and responsibility and those who didn't. The ones who didn't, who went to Canada or refused to go, that dodged the draft, they are the successful people today. They are bank presidents, they're our teachers, our professors and even our Presidents of the United States there. Their philosophy is what's teaching our kids today. So we've got a group of professional people who refused their duty and responsibility 30 years ago, leading the country today. Turn on your news tonight and look what's going on in our streets. That's what I attribute to what's going on in the '80's and 90's right now. A bunch of leaders that when they were young they never meet their duties and their responsibilities. I went to college on the GI Bill when I come back. I heard professors make statements that sickened me. They were just college teachers at the time, they were draft dodgers, resisters, long hair, big hippie look and I won't name them, but I can name them, right now their today their in our state Senate, our House, our politicians or they're higher up in our learning institutions and I know they're teaching at the university laying it on. There's nothing I can do about it, but I can see why the countries in the shape it's in today.

Q: Did you run into any of them protests at the college you were in?

DR: Oh, no. You know I never went to college for years after I got back. Oh no I was sick of them, I had no use for them. I was back home eight years before I ever started. I figured I better go on and try to get a little bit of an education. Family, my wife and everybody else kept urging me to go up and sign up and go to school and so I did. I think I started in '74 or '75. See the war was over before I, I wouldn't have made it in college if the war was still going on. I'd have been in jail. Just I didn't want to be around them. To me they were more of an enemy than what the enemy A was or the Vietcongs.

End of Side One

Tape Counter: 688

Start Side Two

Tape Counter: 692

DR: It was about four or five of us , ah, got off the airplane. It was a mixture of army, marines, ah maybe a navy, er, airman. I can't really remember, but I remember the snow that was Christmas 69. Ah, O'Hara was full of snow. Now I had on light khakis. Back in them days, ah, we were issued short-sleeved khaki shirts, ah khaki trousers with blouse boots and everything. It was so cold and I ain't seen cold weather in years. Ain't seen snow in years. So we get up there and we want coffee, you know, I craved coffee. The guy that waited on us here at the airport looked at us, said I don't serve baby-killers. So I just turned and walked away, ah, one of the guys with us, I don't remember who it was, he grabbed him by the throat and jerked him over the counter and slapped him real good. Well, he didn't slap him, he slugged em, good. Well the terminal police got there, and I thought we'as all goin to jail. After everybody started talkin, you know, them cops released us, cause I think they were veterans to. But, we, we couldn't get our coffee there. Ah, jobs when we got home, I run into a couple guys...who were vet's ah, couple months later, they were like me, no jobs, no body wanted us.... Thought we were walking time-bombs.

Tape Counter: 710

Q: What did you think about the television coverage that went on over there? Do you think that...

DR: I thought they lied to the people. Ah, I know when I got home in 69, I 've always, well, it was the last part of 69, cause I left there on Christmas day, Especially in '70, I turn the tv on every night, every night every news I couldn't miss it, I just wanted to see if there was anybody that was in my unit , you know, what was going on. I even wanted to go back at one time. I really wanted to go back. I felt I was letting my people down by being home here , when I should be back there with them. And I lived that way for over a year. I felt bad, you know. I should be there with them. They always said casualties was light and I'd talk to other people and

they always said that all the time casualties was light. A lot of times they weren't light. I don't even know how many names is on the wall, that ought to tell ya; were the casualties light? I've never went and seen the wall I don't even know how many names is on it, but casualties weren't light. They weren't, but the hardest part was coming home. My first year back home was the hardest year of my life. The hardest year of my life. I felt guilty being home, especially at news time. I couldn't sleep at night, had a lot of nightmares at night. I had to learn to eat in public all over again. I'd want to take four and five showers a day. I mean to me little things meant so much, like good clean cold water, gettin a good hot shower, aww that's, I could stay in a shower all day. That's something you just didn't, you learnt to respect things like that, not to take them for granted. Clean clothes, not to be checking yourself for body lice all the time, you know, you're always, over there you had body lice constantly. I'd be in public and I'd feel self-conscious or maybe there was bugs crawling on me or something, you know. The first year home was the hardest, the guilt of being home when you've got buddies over there. Got to a point you hated yourself for being home. A lot of them went back. I picked up the phone several times trying to wantin to go back. But time heals if you let it and all these guys that has problems, I think that the government causes them to have problems. I don't go to the VA, I don't go to these groups, I don't want to hear that shit, cause all they do, if they get your mind messed up that's created jobs for the Veterans Administration. If I sit here and listened to that silly stuff all the time, I'd probably have problems. But I think the government introduces that to people to have problems. You just got to forget it and go on.

Tape Counter: 757

Q: I've heard from doing these interviews some of these, a lot of them say that the guys that do have a lot of problems probably would have had problems anyway with or without ya know, with or without their Vietnam experience.

DR: Possible, but there's some that's had problems from over there. You take a young eighteen year old kid that lives in a city whose dad was very successful, makes good money, living in a nice, nice home, he was never exposed to anything violent outside the home or you know and he gets over there in something like that, that marks him the rest of his life. You take rural people, you know, their more world educated, I won't say world educated more nature educated or more basic you know I'm use to seeing a hog being butchered and killed. A steer, I've deer hunted, I've gutted deer out, things like that you know that's the little things that leads up to maybe conditioning ya, I don't know. But you get some poor kid, like I had cousins that lived in around the city. They wouldn't drink our milk when they come to visit because it come from a cow. You see they thought that milk came off of a store shelf. Now he went over, he went to Vietnam and he's messed up, he's really messed up. Yea, I think just the shock of what happened over there, cause in his mind his family never taught him, or he's never experienced anything other than a soft home life. His dad had a good job at International Harvester, he made good money, he was going to go to college, you know and have a good job, you know they were meek and mild people. They all had good educations, drove new cars, and that was a culture shock to him. He was placed in a culture that he couldn't accept, and couldn't handle, and that's just my

opinion.

Tape Counter: 786

Q: You think they could have prepared them more mentally before going over there or would that have been almost impossible?

DR: Not in no sixteen weeks. (Laugh) , Like I said I volunteered for Rangers, you don't get drafted in the Rangers, or Special Forces, er, Marine force recon, you enlist into that. And that type a person and that type a person would never ever dream of enlisting in somethin' like that. I think a lot a the guys that was havin' a problem, like I said was due to culture shocks. They were exposed to a lifestyle that they didn't even know was going on. You know, they'd never seen no body killed before... in their lives. You know, only on tv, in a western. I kinda growed up rough. I've seen guys knifed in bars. I've seen um' shot in bars. You know.... pretty well knowed what to expect. My dad, he was a Ranger in world war two. I learned a lot from him. That's probably the main reason I joined the Rangers cause my old man was one. And he was over there almost five years. He was in Cypan, Guam, ?,. I knew what to expect.

Tape Counter: 806

Q: Did you ever talk with him about the major differences from when he was in and your experience ?

DR: No. Not really. No, he knew what I went through and I knew what he went through. I didn't know what he went through before I went, but I knew after. We didn't have to talk. I just knew. I just knew. Me and the old man was alike, see my dad was not white. He was a full Indian. He was more of a people person. I guess during World War Two a lot of the islander people was mistreated by American solders. They were stomped, gunned down, beat on, mistreated. The old man never would mistreat anybody, and I kinda got that from him.

You got a duty to do, you do your duty and let it go. You don't kick a man when he's down.

Tape Counter: 821

Q: Its interesting, you don't hear about that stuff in World War Two, You never hear about it.

DR: No. Because the old newscasters made light of it. They made big light of it in this war.. To turn the population here in the United States against us. That's why I say the news media was a communist trick, it was a communist backed situation. Oh! Lord yea, American solders done atrocities in Europe, in the islands during World War Two, just like Vietnam. They sure did. They sure did. Dad went in on an operation on Makon Island, early 1942. I believe he was with the Third Ranger Battalion and there was a lot of natives there. Islander people. Now the Japs brutalized and mistreated them. When we took the island, or they took the island,

Americans did some of the same things went on. They raped their women. Stole off of them.

Tape Counter: 835

Q: Did you ever witness any of that stuff in Vietnam? Was there anything you could do?

DR: My people...(Loud sigh)

Q: Were different?

DR: No. If you'd go in on a village on a search and destroy, you go in, you enter a hooch, and you got that selector on "Rock & Roll" and your burst fire, sometimes you hit people you don't want a hit. You can't let it bother ya'. At other times, your interrogating somebody, you got a hunch feeling, hey, he's lying he's VC, sometimes you do things that maybe you shouldn't have. But if you didn't try to make him talk, maybe you walk into an ambush as soon as you leave there. I mean it...its, its just a different world over there. That's why they all say, you know, "When you get back to the world" cause you wasn't in the world over there. Things were just different, just different. A young Vietnamese girl can be just as deadly as a NVA soldier and some of them were. You learn how to pin-point them and find them and that is the big question how. You feel bad if you've got someone who didn't know or was innocent, but there's no way of knowing. There's just no way of knowing.

Q: Had to survive.

DR: That was the name of the game. Whatever it takes to survive. You know, if you've got a buddy, and you try never to make buddies, you have acquaintances, try don't never have buddies over there. That's a bad thing to do. You see him laying there with his guts blown out or the top of his head shot off you get angry. You need to take it out on somebody. Especially them. And that's when it happens. That's when it happens. They talk about the American atrocities, the Communist forces was way worse than us. They went in to villages to recruit Vietcong they'd take a village chieftain maybe he proclaimed he was neutral, didn't want no part of it and one village I can remember they took his daughter, his little nine year old daughter and hung her up. They took a bayonet and slit her belly open to her little intestines hung out. That's how they recruited, now if that chieftain don't order seven or eight of his people to go with them, they'll take his next daughter or his son or his wife. But see the news media never told that. They didn't tell that. That didn't sell newspapers. Communism is brutal they are brutals. But during the war the only thing that they could show was us. Just like My Lai I was older when that happened I wasn't close there or nothing I didn't know nobody involved in that. From everything I've read and heard that was just an average search and destroy and he carried out his orders. And they made an issue out of it. But I can assure you the Communist did a whole lot worse. But the news media would never see our news media and the critics made us look like we were the bad ones. Not them. That's why I say they won that war we didn't. They won. They made us look the villain, we came back as villains we didn't win it Communists took over

they run Vietnam today. A lot of people says well it's better that way. Well why did we have so many hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese that's flockin to come to this country? To get away from there, if that was better than the Communists. Vietmnese people over there today are doing everything they can to get away from Communists rule. Come over in boats, little old boats that wasn't safe to put on a creek and cross the ocean on it to get away. That ought to tell you something. Up here where I work I have five Vietmnese that's in a cellblock where I work. I get all the Vietmnese that comes in, they put them in my cellblock. Cause I can get along with them, I can talk to them, I can communicate with them. They've committed crimes here in this country most of them is drugs, but they were learning to survive here. And everyone of them says that they'd rather be in prison here in American than to be in their homelands. That's their biggest worry right now, with all five of these people that they're going to be deported back. They'd rather stay here in prison. Everybody has their own philosophies on it, everyone has their own attitudes on it all I can do is just give you what mine is. But I've seen through my eyes over there could be totally different than the next person that you talk to.

Tape Counter: 926

Q: How were the veterans treated by the government?

DR: Screwed, Screwed over and they still are today. We've got nothing in common, they'll lie to you. Just like I said I tried to buy a home on a GI Bill. It'd cost me more payment on the GI Bill than gettin bank loan downtown. All they told me, I had a year to get my teeth worked on and fixed at the VA. I kept going out there and signing up and well we'll call ya. Months went by I'd call again well we'll call ya you're on the list. Well when I went out on the third or fourth time they said well it's been over a year your years up. You go in to get treatment they act like we're wards of the state or we're you know a burden to the staff there at the VA. Then they lost our, my medical records was lost over there. I've got shrapnel in my legs, my stomachs was messed up over there and they don't have no record of it. I had to give them certified notarize copies of just what I had. Then they turned around and lost them.

Q: What was the story you told me the other day about the Indian after he got back?

DR: Oh, Seen a, he, the one that drank himself to death, he no job he was still an Indian. He there was no VA nearby to where his reservation was so he started drinking heavy he had cancer, it was probably an Agent Orange related cancer. There was several of them that I talk to a friend of mine in Texas. I still communicate with a boy in Texas. Then I find out from him, from different ones. Like I said he's the only one I know of that's still alive today, if there's anymore alive I don't know where they'd be. Cause you know it's been almost thirty years. We're getting old now, I'm going on fifty.

Tape Counter: 966

Q: How do you feel about the problem with Mac Amara, especially with him publishing the

book?

DR: I didn't read his book. Only what I've heard people say I don't look at Vietnam movies, I don't read Vietnam books. I just ignore it. He's just another politician, he made money off of the war while it was going on, he's still making money off of it now. I don't even know actually what he said in the book, somebody did tell me that he knew we couldn't win it. Am I correct, is that what he said at the time? Politicians will say or write anything that will make a fast dollar, he ain't no different today then he was twenty years ago. Him, the Johnson's, the Kennedy's, they were all, they made money off of that war. If I remember right, Mac Amara even owed stock and interest in a plastic company that made a lot of wet gear and canteens and certain supplies for the military. He made big money off of it.