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Interviewer: M. Downs
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Q. How old are you?

A. 38

Q. When were you born? Where?

A. 4-27-45, Guerrant, Ky.

Q. How many were in your family?

A. 9 of us.

Q. What did your father do for a living?

A. Coal Miner.

Q. Where did you go to high school?

A. Breathitt County High School

Q. What was it like growing up in a small town?

A. Did a lot of hunting, hiking. The biggest thrill was probably going out camping. Pestering people on Halloween.

Q. Are you married now? Any children?

A. Yes. I have twins, they're 14 years old.

Q. What is your occupation?

A. I'm a school teacher and I'm also executive officer in the guard unit here.

Q. When you entered the service, were you drafted or did you enlist?

A. I had already been examined. I had a job cooking on an apple farm in Michigan. I told the lady at the draft board that when they got ready to take some more that I would just go on in. You didn't call it volunteering for the draft, but I just told her I was ready to go and get it over with.

Q. What was the last grade of school you completed before you went into the service?

A. I was going to Lees College. I guess I had a chip on my shoulder because I didn't appreciate being made to go to chapel. I was paying my own way, working in Michigan or Ohio, wherever I could get a job. So they more or less told me not to come back to school because of chapel.

Q. What year did you go into the army?

A. November 1956.

Q. What about the draft, do you think it was fair?

A. No.

Q. Why not?

A. Because we had families here in Breathitt County with six or seven boys and none of them had to go. Because their parents or an uncle was on the draft board. Somehow they'd get out of it. That's my opinion.

Q. You said you were working a little bit before you went into the service, what were you doing?

A. I was working as an apprentice carpenter for two summers. When I was drafted I was on an apple farm in Michigan.

- Q. What kind of a salary were you getting?
- A. I don't remember, it was four or five dollars an hour. They had a bunk house that we stayed in. It was good experience for the army.

- Q. What was your M.O.S. in the service?
- A. Infantry. I think it was 11 Bravo.

- Q. When were you in Vietnam?
- A. Sept. 1966 to Sept. 1967.

- Q. What unit were you assigned to?
- A. 4th Infantry Division.

- Q. What area was that?
- A. Around Pleiku.

- Q. Before you went to Vietnam did you know anything about the country or why we were there?
- A. No, I thought we were freedom fighters, that we were going over there to free a bunch of people.

- Q. Did you see any combat?
- A. Yes.

- Q. Where was that?
- A. Tuy Hoa was the first combat I saw. And then when we got up to Pleiku we ran into the NVA and had several battles with them.

- Q. What was an average type day for you?
- A. It was always exciting because we did a lot of long range recon patrols. If they needed an eagle flight, they would bomb the enemy and we would go in and clean up the mess. Probably, didn't have any routine days.

- Q. Were you ever in contact with any of the Vietnamese people themselves?
- A. Very little. I got to know some of the kids. I used to give them C-rations. The little kids were running around starving. I remember one incident I gave a kid some C-ration and he in turn brought me back some live rounds for the grenade launchers back. Evidently he had taken them from somebody else. But I moved them outside of the perimeter because I was afraid to mess with them because I was afraid they might be booby-trapped.

- Q. What about the ARVN's? Do you form any opinion about them?
- A. They didn't have any cause to fight for in my opinion. To put it mildly I always thought they were chickenshit. Now that I look back they really weren't into it. I guess they thought we were going to do it for them.

- Q. What about the way Johnson handled the situation?
- A. The thing of it was is that they would come over from Laos and attack us and then run back across the border and we weren't allowed to pursue them. It's just like somebody standing on one side of a line and reaching over and whomping you a good one and you're not allowed to hit them back.

- Q. When did you get out of the army?
- A. Sept 1967. I got an early out. I stayed 21 months and 13 days.

- Q. You got to see a lot of the war on television after you came back?
- A. No. I'll tell you, I just went off to myself and I lived in Ohio. I got myself an apartment and I just stayed away from my family until January.
- Q. What did you think about the media coverage?
- A. That's what caused us to lose the war. They came out there once to put them on a show. We actually assaulted a damn hillside just so the cameras could take pictures.
- Q. What about your opinion of the leadership of the individual officers? Were they competent?
- A. I think we had the most incompetent officers I've ever seen. I'm an officer now, but if I would do people the way the officers did us in Vietnam I'd quit. It disgusts me.
- Q. Do you change officers very much?
- A. Yes, they stayed 3 or 4 months and then would go in and spend the rest of their time back there, but the enlisted man had to spend his whole time in the field.
- Q. While you were there did you have any correspondence with anybody back in the states?
- A. Yes. I corresponded with my mother, my brother, and a girl in Miamisburg, Oh.
- Q. I was wondering if you were getting any feedback from them on how the sentiment was changing toward the war?
- A. No, they never discussed it. My brother had sent me a tape player and I got to keep it two weeks before it got busted or something. I sent some tapes home to him and he still has them.
- Q. What about drug use over there? Did you notice any?
- A. To tell you the truth I tried it. I told my son that I smoked marijuana once. But where I was at you didn't get a chance to get much. We were out in the field and there wasn't anybody there except those Montagnards. When we were down to Tuy Hoa some of the guys got ahold of some. I think it was \$5 for 20 cigarettes.
- Q. I'm surprised it was there that early because most research so far that the heavy drug use started after 1970.
- A. We had guys that were on drugs then, but they were the guys who worked in hospitals. As a matter of fact I took a, one of the fellows I took on patrol, he was in my foxhole. His shirt was bulged out and I took a bag of pure heroin from him. It looked like a bag of flour, but I turned it in to the platoon leader and he said it was probably worth a quarter of a million dollars.
- Q. What about racial conflicts, were the blacks and whites having any trouble?
- A. Yes, they did. As a matter of fact they brought us back for 3 days to rest and we started fighting that night so they sent the whole batallion back to the field.
- Q. Most of the trouble was back in base camp, not in the field?
- A. I never had any trouble. I know that before we went to Vietnam they had the company a party and all the black guys went to the party and there were 3 or 4 white guys. All the white guys got knifed or beat up real bad. There were problems.

- Q. What percentage of your unit was black?
- A. Not very many because we were a combat unit. Most of them would stay back in base camp. Would sham. Not most of them, but 1/4 of them would find some excuse to stay back or get sick.

- Q. A lot of studies have shown that the war was fought mostly by the blacks and the poor.
- A. Well, they saved my rear end sometimes and I saved theirs. We never had any trouble with them in the field. I never had any problem. But I know we were sitting up one night listening to some country music and the blacks were listening to their music and one of them came back with grenade and acted like he was going to pull the pin and throw it at us. I rolled out of the tent and when I came back in I put a stop to it.

- Q. Why did we lost in Vietnam?
- A. We lost the best caliber, most loyal, trustworthy boys in Vietnam, I think. It turned a lot of boys who were in Vietnam against the whole system. We lost face. Korea started it and we truned around and did the same thing in Vietnam.

- Q. But why do you think we did lose?
- A. Well, the media. That's putting it as bluntly as I can. That was the big thing. They really hurt us. When I got back I watched some of that stuff on T.V.

- Q. Do you think the military was allowed to fight? A lot of people said they had their hands tied?
- A. We did not. We were not that restricted. I guess you would be around a bigger town.

- Q. Do you think it was a mistake for us to get involved over there?
- A. Well, like they say, there's a lot of oil in that Tonkin Gulf, and that's what the Russians & Chinese are there for. I think if they would have left us alone we would have been all right.

- Q. Do you think we learned anything?
- A. No, I think it even made a bunch of people more afraid to try again. It's just like a prize fighter when he loses a championship bout, it's hard to come back.

- Q. How do you feel about the way President Reagan is handling Lebanon and El Salvador?
- A. He should have done something in Lebanon. All this started with Kennedy. If Kennedy had put his foot down a long time ago, and had backed them in the Bay of Pigs and took care of Castro. If he had cleaned out this Western hemisphere you wouldn't have a lot of these problems that you have today.

- Q. What about Grenada? Do you support what the President did there?
- A. Yes I do, very much. I think it's about 25 years too late.

- Q. When you came home did you need any medical treatment?
- A. No.

- Q. How did others treat you?
- A. I thought I would come home to the red carpet treatment, but I got back and there were all these chickenshit asses who claimed they were conscientious objectors against the war.

- Q. One of the biggest objectives was that Vietnam veterans didn't get any recognition when they came home, no parade. Did you want that?
- A. I certainly expected the people would, but when we landed at Oakland the people there were cussing, just get us out of there as fast as they could. If I had something wrong, I'm probably just like everybody else, just wanted go get out as fast as I could.
- Q. When you came back, did you feel you had been misled, were you disillusioned?
- A. No. I was angry with, maybe I'm wrong, but all the politicians that we have are just a bunch of featherbed people. They've been fed with a silver spoon. They are crooks or got crooks backing them or else they couldn't have gotten to where they are today. As a matter of fact, when I got back they tried to get me to go to reserve camp. I was under the impression that you did not have to go if you served in Vietnam. So I did not go and this guy wrote me a nasty letter and I wrote him back, I wrote him a nasty letter. This captain more or less wrote me and said they wanted me there. I told him if they wanted me to go and fight, I'd go, but I didn't need to put up with this other bull after I'd come back from Vietnam.
- Q. How do you feel about the volunteer army today, as opposed to the draft?
- A. Well, you know, it's like that Grenada thing. People are saying that so and so got killed. The army is here to defend this country and to carry out the policies of this country. If you're paying these guys to do this. You're paying a cop to stop crimes and he goes out and gets killed doing it you don't hear a thing about it. But just let a couple of soldiers get killed. That's their job. In Vietnam, that was their job. That's their line of duty.
- Q. Do you think we need a draft?
- A. You are not going to get a better caliber of people in there. As a matter of fact if you look at the studies of the regular army now, they are getting very, very strict. Like if a guy gets caught for one drug abuse he gets kicked out, or one drunken driving. I don't care if he's an E-6, E-9 or whatever, he's gone. They're getting stricter, and of course with the economy the way it is.
- Q. When you returned from the army, did you go back to your old job?
- A. No, I didn't want to go back to an apple farm.
- Q. Did you go straight to school?
- A. No. I tried to draw unemployment for a month or so just to lay around a while and get some money, but the lady down at the unemployment office wouldn't let me draw it, so I had to go to work.
- Q. What did you do?
- A. I went to work on construction, pipe line construction. I worked at that until January and I came back here and started to school.
- Q. When you went back to school, you started out at Lees again.
- A. Yes. I was trying to get my record straight. Mr. Frazier Adams talked to the board for me and they agreed to let me come back to school.
- Q. What year was that?
- A. 1968, spring.

Q. What was your major?

A. I don't know, I guess I was majoring in elementary education.

Q. When did you get to Morehead?

A. After I went to Lees for a semester. I married and moved to Cincinnati. I got a job with Cincinnati Gas & Electric. I had tried to get a job and couldn't get one anywhere. My brother had met this guy from Cincinnati C&E and he told me to come down there. I never saw the fellow before in my life. He was a World War II veteran and he spotted me right off. I got a job there and worked for 3 years and just missed one day and that was when the kids were born.

Q. When did you start back into Morehead?

A. July 1971.

Q. Did you live here on campus?

A. Well, what it was is they had a program here in Breathitt County called the Career Opportunities Program. And they specified that they were supposed to have so many veterans in this program. So Mr. Ted Edmonds, he was in charge of it. I was in visiting and Ted told me about this program and I applied and he told me to come on lack. I took 2 weeks vacation to just try it and see if I would like it. I moved back here on Friday and started school on Monday. I drew the GI bill plus they paid us a stipend. We lived with my parents for 3 or 4 months until we found a place to live.

Q. One of the reasons you ended up in Morehead was because of that program.

A. Yes. And another thing is, see we had to go to school during the school year about 3 hours a night. Plus, we had to work all day long in the school room as a teacher. I taught physical education on year and reading and math the next when I was in the program.

Q. You went there from 1971 to 1973, was there any sign of campus unrest or demonstration?

A. Well, I was there with a bunch of more veterans. We really didn't like the long-hairs, or hippy types. I never had much to do with them.

Q. Were there any types of Veterans Organization on campus at that time?

A. I think they had a Veterans Club there but I didn't participate.

Q. Have you since that time joined any Veterans organizations?

A. Yes, I joined the VFW in Hazard.

Q. Are you an active member?

A. No, not really. If they called me up and ask me to do something, I'd do it.

Q. Have you ever taken part in any kind of protest?

A. Negative. No sir, I wouldn't either.

Q. Do you think you got a good education at Morehead?

A. Yes I do, very good. As a matter of fact, I think I got a lot of special attention. I always ask a lot of questions and any professor I ask always took the time to help me.

Q. What advantages did you think Morehead had over any other institutions?

A. The size of it.

Q. What any disadvantages?

A. The biggest disadvantage was that I couldn't take my wife and kids.

Q. Would you like to see a memorial of some kind at Morehead for the alumni who served in Vietnam?

A. Well, to tell you the truth, it doesn't matter to me. I'll help you all I can.

Q. You all are putting up one here locally, aren't you?

A. Yes, we are trying to get the names of everybody who was drafted from Breathitt County who served in Vietnam. We're getting a plaque and at the top we have a special place for the ones that were killed, I think there were 10.

Q. How are you raising the money?

A. Donations.

Q. Are we as patriotic today as we were 20 years ago?

A. I am, more so. I think the parents are the ones who instill it in you. I wanted to go AWOL so bad when I was at Ft. Lewis, Washington, that I had my bags packed. But I knew that if I left I could never come back to my father's house because he wouldn't let me in. He probably would have, but that was what I was thinking.

Q. What about communism today? Is it a threat to us?

A. You better believe it. They operate on torture. I know when I was in Vietnam this village chief wouldn't do what they told him and they took his little kid and wrapped him up in concertina wire and shot him. He was 4 years old. People had damn well better wake up and realize this.

Q. What's the best way to combat communism?

A. The only way to meet force is with force. If a man smacks you today, and you don't do anything he'll come back tomorrow.

Q. Do you believe in this espionage and CIA?

A. Yes sir I believe in the CIA. Everytime you're in a non-war like now, that's the number one people that they're constantly hounding. If they would leave them alone I think we could get things done faster. I think the CIA is too soft, but of course they have to watch everything they do.

Q. If the draft was re-instituted, would you want one of your children drafted?

A. I'd be just like the old man. If he didn't go he'd never be back here, he'd never darken my door again. I've told him that on several occasions.

Q. Is there anything you'd like to add?

A. Well, I'd just like to add, you know we're always talking about the bad things we do, I always try to be involved in anything in the community that I can help with. And that don't mean always something to make money on because I'm not that type of person. I've got the Scout troop here. I've had it for 5 years and I try to spend at least one Saturday a month plus 6 nights in summer camp. Just anytime I can help out at school with the ballgames I do that.

Q. Do you think Americans today have a negative image of Vietnam veterans.

A. Not the true Americans, I think they admire us and think a lot of us.

[The text in this section is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly related to a historical record or a collection of documents. The entries are too light to transcribe accurately.]