J. Hanrahan
2/4/84

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249 NORBOURNE BLVD
LOUISVILLE 40207
502. 893-9434

Danny Vandivier

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Q. When did you graduate from Morehead?

A. I actually finished up there in Dec. of 74 and then graduated that spring.

Q. 75, in Math, was that what you said?

A. No, actually I had a double major in psychology and Business administration.

Q. What are you working on now, your doctorate?

A. Right in Clinical Psychology.

Q. When did you go into the service?

A. I was drafted in July of 1969.

Q. Where were you at the time, in college or . . .

A. No, I had graduated from high school a couple of years prior to that and at the time was farming with my dad in central Kentucky. I had enrolled a few months before that at U.K. but I wasn't ready to go to college then so I withdrew very quickly and it was just a few months after that I was drafted.

Q. This was in 69, how old were you then?

A. 19

Q. So, another teenager that went to Vietnam.

A. I turned 21 in the jungles of Vietnam.

Q. You said you were drafted but before that you were working for your father on his farm?

A. Right, I was farming with him. I was wrong, I would have been 20 because I turned 21 the following year.

Q. I suppose you might have been able to get a defferment working on a farm.

A. Not at that time. I think of that time I still could have got a deferment for going to college. But most the fellows I graduated with that's how it was running, we got anywhere from one to two years before they got us. And unless there was some way of avoiding it.

Q. You weren't going to volunteer though, were you?

A. No, I wasn't going to volunteer.

Q. So, what did you think about the draft, did you think that it was fair that you went and probably 99 guys didn't go at that time? Do you have any feelings on that at all?

A. At that time or now.

Q. Well, either, looking back at it I suppose in that case.

A. I think there were clearly a lot of individuals who got out of it in ways that I don't necessarily approve of. I don't have a lot of bitterness about that and didn't at the time there are always people who are going to manage to get out of things and thats how life goes, so I didn't feel particularly angry or bitter about that.

Q. You were kind of, well, this is the game we have to play. Of course, at the same time, when you have a draft law, you'd expect it someway or another to be applied equitably. But I think there were a lot of abusers. You probably sensed some of them at the time and looking back at it what kind of an economic situation was it in your family at the time?

A. We've always been I guess middle-class, lower middle class, farmed for years and made a living. But it was tough. But we did okay. We never really went without things and were never anywhere close to being hungry. We got along alright.

Q. I haven't really met any so far, of the middle class or upper lower class, they say that it was the poor mans war, I've read several books that claim that and I think talking with different fellows that it seems to be carried out, not that maybe I'm missing the lawyers son or the doctors boy or the judges son and so forth or the politicians - I haven't seen any of that so far so I think that that seems to be carried out. So any way you went into the army is that it?

A. Right.

Q. And where did you go for your basic training?

A. I went to Fort Knox.

Q. Then you finished that out and went to?

A. Went to Ft. San Houston in San Antonio, Texas. Trained as a medic. It was interesting, I had a fellow in my hometown. We had known for years who happened to be a chiropracter. And I think he told me before hand, maybe after i was going he said, "You'll end up being a medic, that's what they do with all the farm boys." I'm not sure why, but anyway that turned out to be that he was right.

Q. And so, San Houston, they gave you medical training? What was your mos under that?

A. 91B20 or something like that.

Q. Let me put it another way, what was your speciality in the medical?

A. Well, I was just trained as a medical corpman and the training, basically had two areas of focus. One was on serving as a corpman out in the field and the other was serving as a corpman like in the hospital or aid station. Sort of back in the rear. We were trained in both areas, I guess that made it easier for them to put us where they wanted us once we got over there. Some of the fellows I trained with stayed in the rear some were assigned to medi-vac choppers and lots of us then were assigned to an infantry unit - out in the field.

Q. Did you have any inkling that you were going to be assigned to Vietnam at the time?

A. At that time, we figured that the odds were in that direction and pretty well unexpected that most of us and I was one of them asked for anything under the sun, other than that, but pretty well know that the odds were for it. The companys down there - it was unusual, remember we supposedly had about 700 people supposedly, in on training company. I'm not sure why they had it set up that way, but there were just huge numbers of people, and the vast majority of us were sent to Vietnam. It was by far the exception.

Q. Where did they gather you before going to Vietnam?

A. After we finished training we got a short leave time and that was actually over the Christmas holidays, as I recall. Then we had to report to Oakland, California. So I left early in January and flew on to Oakland and from there on to Vietnam.

Q. And when did you get to Vietnam?

A. As I recall I think it was January 12, 1970.

Q. Where did you come in to, Cameron Bay or ?

A. No, I think it was Long Ben area. I'm not sure exactly what airport we came in to but it was down in the Tragor area.

Q. So, wherever you landed, you came off the plane, how were you feeling?

A. Somewhat scared. From the training, at least for me, particularly I expected you know anything can happen, so you might as well be ready for that, so it was scary and it was also very strange. A foreign country, the smell, the need and the smell would would hit you and still I think I would immediately recognize that smell.

Q. How would you describe it?

A. For me it was like burnt fire wood, but a strange kind of firewood. I've never smelled anything like it in this country, it was just totally different. It smelled sort of like smoldering firewood, sort of that falvor to it. It was at the smae time both pleasant and unpleasant. But it was very strong, very distinctive. It was unmistakeable.

Q. You never knew what the origin was?

A. Never knew, really what it was. It was always there and it wouldn't be there - I guess thats what made me think it may be the firewood, because when we got out in the jungle away from any settled areas you really wouldn't notice it. You'd notice other smells and the heat.

Q. Even in January.

A. It was the middle of winter here, but it was very hot there. It was also surprising to me that we just flew in on a commerical jetliner, I thought this doesn't make sense, but we did.

Q. Like a tourist.

A. Yes. And at that point then it was always wandering what was going to happen next.

Q. They took you from the airport to where?

A. We went to - I know we ended up at Long Ben which is a really huge base.

Q. Did you see any of the countryside your first feelings about besides as you described it coming in?

A. I think we probably did go over on some old army buses.

Q. Army buses?

A. I think as well as I can remember.

Q. They're all talking about taht at this scene you have another shock effect that here we are coming into a country that we're going to defend and the first thing you know we're in those buses that had cages around them.

A. I think part of the surprise was, at least they weren't fighting as soon as we got off the plane. It was kind of like here we are. It's a foreign country obviously and the countryside is different and lots of huts and hooch's and all of that very different. Lots of Vietnamese padding along, you could always see them, wearing their thong type sandals. I can remember the young women and girls would wear the silky looking black trousers with the white silky looking top that extended all the way down, it would be slit up the sides so their trousers would show. It was almost like a uniform. I remember that was a stronge part that - you know - because of everything you'd been told that anything could happen and so it was just sort of a mental alertness and at the same time there was this strange feeling that nothing was really happening at the time because this was back on a relatively rear area and it was fairly secure I suppose, even though, also around the camps, been at Long Ben where all the Bunkers, and mine fills and barbed wire obviously they were prepared.

Q. There's no welcome to Vietnam, USO group to meet you? doughnuts handed, coffee?

A. No, if there was I've long since forgotten it.

Q. So in a sense there's kind of a casual low key entrance into what was going to be your life for the next year.

A. Right.

Q. So then you get to the base, what base was that?

A. It was at Long Ben.

Q. What was there?

A. That was sort of the rear headquarters for the 199th light infantry, which I was assigned to along with a lot of them. A lot of the guys I had trained with in Ft. San Houston. We sort of went there as groups. Several of my buddies, even two or three that we had gone all the way through basic training and then medic training, went to that same unit, although we didn't end up all together.eventually. We went there and they put us through another kind of orientation training thing, which lasted several days. That was boring and just kind of heightened the anxiety because again they are telling you the same kind of stuff you've heard before and its like their trying to give you your last preparation. You still don't know for sure where you're going.

Q. Well essentially what were they saying to you?

A. Just telling you the things about what to expect when you go out in the field, watch out for the mines. Stay down and all that kind of stuff, just don't trust people, don't trust the civilians, don't trust the little kids and just sort of reinforcing all that kind of thing that we'd learned all along and talking about the weapons and just all that. Sort of a very brief rehash of everything you had up to that point.

Q. Did they tell you why they were there?

A. No.

Q. Had you made up your mind why you were there? Why you were going to Vietnam?

A. Just the vague notion that we were fighting communism and trying to keep it from spreading throughout South-East Asia, because then that will jeopardize our position in the world even though it was just that country.

Q. That's what you had come to believe by the time that you went into the Army, I suppose? or shortly thereafter.

A. I suppose, more or less.

Q. Of course, the war now in '69 with Nixon in the White House, he announces that there's going to be a withdrawl of forces, Vietnamization.

A. Of course, there were still thousands upon thousands of us going. It was actually only later of that year that they theoretically started withdrawing people which was never really true.

Q. In '69 I guess, he announced sometime in '69 that 25,000 would come out. Did that have any effect on you?

A. You mean early on as to my thinking?

Q. Well you knew that the war in a sense was going to end, how, you didn't know perhaps, but Nixon had run on the promise that he would end the war and here you're going to war. That you know is going to be a war that were not going to fight to win anymore. You were kind of in a holding action I guess, did that have any effect on your attitude at that time, did you think much about it?

A. I don't think it had a strong effect. At least not a conscious one. Particularly of or me anyhow. At that point, particularly by the time you get over there, basically what you're dealing with is figuring out how you can survive. I suppose in many ways there were bad points to that, but maybe at least there was one advantage and that was the notion that supposedly when we went over there we knew that when our year was up if we lived through it we'd get to go home. I think that created a very strange kind of circumstance, but that wasn't all bad there was some good to that too in that you didn't have the sense of being stuck there for the duration. And if you'd had that I think then that the idea that well we're just there in a holding action would have been even more difficult to deal with. But given the way the circumstances were I think for me and for most of the guys that I was with it really didn't make that much difference at least on the surface, how underneath I think it probably reinforced the sense that seemed to prevail that - I guess it sort of fits with what I'm already saying. Its like we're here, were getting the shaft were getting screwed the best thing we can do is try to keep ourselves in one piece and get out of here.

Q. Well thats what I was asking you. You did feel that way that you were being shafted in a sense that you were being used.

A. I think in a sense yes. But it wasn't the kind of thing that was really talked about overtly, it was more kind of an unspoken feeling or attitude that well here we are, we've gotten sucked into this somehow, now the best thing we can do is try to keep from getting blown away and get back home. That may have varied a lot too depending on where people were. But for those of us out in the field, I think that was a lot of the attitude that was there.

Q. I imagine the closer that you were to the possibility of death, maybe the more that would effect you, I would assume anyway. Would you agree with that?

A. Yes. I think it may have varied a lot too depending on the circumstances for any given individual. Those first few days we still had no idea of what we were going to be doing or whatever.

Q. I don't know, this is the first time that American men are called to fight for their ocuntry and their given the understanding that they're really not defending their country, they're being used as part of a diplomatic game to achieve something, if not victory, at least not to disgrace the country before we do get out. I don't know of any other war where young men have been called upon to take up arms for that reason.

A. A lot of that too is in retrospect, at that time, even despite what Nixon was saying, I think, at least for me, I can still remember having the sense that well. however ill defined the purpose we have is still, supposedly, that we're going to stop communists from taking over South Vietnam. And even though we're pulling out, we're supposedly going to build up the South Vietnamese sufficiently so that they'll be able to take our place. And at that point there wasn't really this notion that we were -- I'm sure it was known behind the scenes -- going to pull out of there one way or another and it fell down around their ears, then so be it. At that point it still seems plausible, the notion that well, maybe we can build things up enough for the South Vietnamese that maybe they can hold on.

Q. I've often wondered about this, wat was on the minds of the men? Because I can picture people almost getting to the point of being rebellious because they would say well were being victimized by our own government. You can almost see mutiny as a result of it. I guess there was some of that much of a demoralizer, except of course that the war seemed to be for each individual the question of how can I come back alive. Not to put words in your mouth but is that somewhat like you were thinking?

A. Yes, very much so. And even that was limited. In a much more real way, it was I've got to get through this day and get whatever comfort I can have something to eat, not run out of water. Maybe if we're lucky we can set up away from some trail tonight and put up our hammock and sleep happily, comfortably. Maybe we won't run into anybody. Maybe we won't run into any action just kind of going day by day. Life reduced to just a very simple kind of existence. Again, I'm sure it differed tremendously, but at least for me and the group I was with -- we had a pretty good unit -- I think it was also tempered by a lot of other factors. When I got out to the field a few days later, the platoon that I ended up being a medic for had just been decimated a few weeks before and the few guys that were left, they were just falling apart, but doing their damnedest to survive, and that had an impact on those that were coming in. Half the platoon was replaced all at one point with me and a bunch of others. And we listened and we learned from that because it was still so real for those other guys. So very quickly we all pulled together and it was very much we've got to survive this thing somehow. And that was primary. All this other stuff I know had an impact but I think it was very much in the back of everyone's mind. It was not a conscious, overt, kind of think at that time.

Q. Well, I'm going to pressure you a little bit considering what you're studying and all the rest of this. I find this attitude very strange and I'm not arguing with you, but just look at it this way from a historians point of view. In 1968 there was the Ted offensive, out of that came this great uproar in the country the President decides not to run again and we know that the war finished Johnson's career and then you had the assassination of Robert Kennedy, you had what became known as the war in Chicago, at the convention, the anti-war guys getting beat up by the Chicago police and then you had that very bitter 1968 Election campaign and Election. This had no effect on you at all?

A. Certainly it had an effect, but it wasn't ____ you see I think part of what you need to understand is that there were a lot of us who came from just the working class. The working class sort of expects to get the shaft. Its only after it really gets severe and blatant, that you begin to really step back and question it. So there was still a lot of attitude and these screw-offs back there are causing trouble. They ought to be over here with us and it wasn't like we were supporting the folks who were protesting the war, in many respects I think a lot of people were still supportive of the notion that their hampering the effort. their sympathizing with the communist.and probably reacted against them and the fact that they were somehow circumventing the whole thing. We hadn't been able to do that.

Q. So you didn't see the Anit-War people as being right at all? (You saw them as being wrong)

A. Not at that point in time, no.

Q. Despite the great anti-war movement of 1968, it just didn't bowl you over that way?

A. There was clearly a big lack time and I think some of that has been lost in retrospect. It's been a long time now. I think even for a lot of us taht were over there its easy now to kind of think back and sort of intregrate it all as not being for it, and being much more sympathetic to the protest against it. Maybe that was really the case, most of the guys I was with this wasn't the issue, the real issue was after you got over there well here you are in this hellhole, how are you going to get out of here. All those other issues didn't carry much weight.

Q. Why wasn't it a big issue, was it because you were dumb? Here all this stuff was going on around you, didn't you read the newspapers, listen to television, watch the war? There's the television, the war is on and its being driven home to the American people. Walter Conkrite goes against the war and her you are 18, 19 years old, all this simply washes over you guys and you're not paying attention, is that another factor?

A. I think there are on several factors involved again think there was a lag time between the development of all these attitudes and the understanding. Much of it are that we didn't have until several years later, about what really took place, what really happened, what was really involved. There was really a lagtime for a lot of your middle of the

road, working class folks who basically early on and for a long time, and out go all the ideas, that is we're here for a noble cause, that is to stop communism. And all of the protestors are just getting in our way. It was a long time before we finally began to question that, so that is one factor. Another factor is that that is sort of coupled with the attitude when your country calls, you go and do your duty. You don't ask a lot of questions, you're there to do you duty and live up to your responsibilities. You're not there to question in a rebellious kind of way.

Side 2

Maybe it was different for some of the guys who got to sit in the rear and had some time to think. But for those of us who were sent out into the field it was reduced to a simple kind of thing - how are we going to stay alive and get the hell out of here. And that's all, who cares about any of the rest. Whatever shaft you got for being here, its happened, you're here the only thing you can do buddy is try to hang on until your time is up. That's all that really mattered, how are you going to exist from day to day. Because you knew that there was a darn good chance that you wouldn't. Guys reacted in all kinds of different ways. That's what was to infringing to me, was to see all the pathology that it would ellicit from us and how we would handle that how we would deal with that. But getting back to this other issue, it loses a lot of relevance even if you are beginning to really question it, when what truly matters for that given day is if you're going to live through it.

Q. Do you think that the fact that you were all very young, just out of high school, this is in addition to the factors you just mentioned, about economic status, acceptance of authority and so forth. Do you think the fact that you were young, unsophisticated. . . .

A. Certainly, no one had taught us to question, particularly those kinds of issues.

Q. Well, I think it was there to learn, but you weren't learning. All of it was there in newspapers, television, this was all happening, back to the point now of all the factors you've given me that it was ingrained in you to accept authority and to respect your government and do what you're told and then this other factor of your youth and perhaps as young Americans - they don't generally try to learn very much of whats out in the world. I suppose in a way it escaped yoy, that's what I'm thinking. I'm still puzzled about it but in some way you've helped me to understand it. It seems to me that practically everybody that went to Vietnam bought what the government was telling them at the time. Obviously, those who didn't were making every damned effrot they could not to go to Vietnam. So I suppose in a way those who were selected to go to Vietnam were those that were left that were willing to accept their fate, as it were. Is that?

A. Sure, clearly there was a selection process that went on apart from the literal one.

Q. If you protested you stayed home, somehow or another I suppose to get out of it.

A. And also once they get you and they get you over there. . . .

Q. Yes, your a prisoner.

A. It's not very adaptive really, you know, what's going on here, this is wrong, it just doesn't make sense.

Q. If you stick out like that you're afraid that your chances of survival would be even less.

A. And you know that you don't have any good way of getting out of there unless they let you out.

Q. I always pictured it in a sense as almost like a prison, one guy will tell me, now he was in this hill for nine months surrounded by the VC pouring in the mortars all the time and all the rest of it. And there was no escape, that's where he was all the time, there was no way to get out. In fact Vietnam in a sense was that way, you're caught, almost like a man in jail, you've got a years sentence to set down and just wait it out, hoping to survive it. I don't know of any other war that Americans fought that did that to American soldiers somehow or another. I just suppose it says something about us as Americans, I don't know whether its good or bad that we're able to take it. Of course, its astonishing to think that given everything you've said, there wasn't mutiny, rebelliousness. There was some I understand from what I've read and so forth but there was nothing sweeping over American soldiers of that particular time, maybe for some of the reasons you've just given me. It was an unsophisticated war to begin with and the major thing was to just save your life and your friend would help you and you'd help him and it was just a survival, then when you leave where did you go from the base that you went to - did you stay there or did they give you another assignment?

A. No, we stayed there only a few days, some of my friends stayed back at that base, but most of us were sent out into the field.

Q. Yes, let me follow your story, what happened to you?

A. We got packed up and I knew at that point we were going out into the field. They loaded us onto choppers and here we went out into the jungle. That was scary I had no idea what to expect. I was expecting we're going to be fighting when we go in because they're shooting at us when we go in, but that wasn't the case. We landed, actually we were just out in flat lands, sort of bush land type country. It wasn't thick jungle.

Side II

Q. Could you locate it for me? Were you in _____ were you in that area? That north area?

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A. No _____. Most of the time I was there we operated around Siagon, Within a 100 miles or so. Sometimes we'd go over towards Cambodia and sometimes to the other side of the country. They moved us around a lot. What they'd try to do with us is anytime they got signs that there was something going on, they'd load us up and stick us in. I don't remember exactly what area we were in, that was the broad area, I don't remember more specifically than that.

Q. Did you stay in the one place?

A. No, we stayed - we went out and joined the company on operations - they were out in the field. We went first to some fire base, we drove by convoy - way out. I remember at the base there was just a huge, long mountain that just kind of stood out in the plains by itself. It was called fires base _____ and that was our rear operations area for quite awhile. That was where we got packed up with supplies and stuff and from there they took us by choppers out to the field.

Q. You were assigned to a particular . . . ?

A. Just in the infantry. I was a medic with the infantry.

Q. A medic with the infantry, so when they went out on a search and destroy mission you went with them?

A. Right, I was always with them.

Q. You were not armed?

A. Yes, I was armed. That was your discretion as a medic. All the ones I knew always carried a gun.

Q. So, you may not have been shooting your gun, but you were with the group involved in all of this. Was it this kind of search and destroy mission, is that how you described it?

A. We ambushed, that's basically what we did. We would go out and look for any signs of the enemy and whenever we would find some signs of them, we'd set up and ambush.

Q. Were you successful?

A. We were pretty successful.

Q. Weren't they just as successful with you?

A. Not with us, no. We were pretty good. I can remember them talking about the ratio and we had a pretty good ratio. I think it was 40 or 50 to 1, something like that.

Q. Many of the men have described what they did under the search and destroy type of tactics. Did it get to you after awhile?

A. Yes, it got to me right away.

Q. Okay, tell me what you mean by that.

A. Well, we were, this first area we went to they had been out there for three or four days and we went out there and stayed in that area just another day or two, there wasn't anything going on there, so they quickly came and got us and took us somewhere else. That was when they took us to what was called War Zone D, it was always infamous, at least for our unit because several times we went in there ans as the term was then kicked ass. They'd get really upset, the VC and VA then they'd hit back. There was alot of animosity tied up about us going into that area. So they sent us in there that time and we had just gone in that morning and moved a few _____ during the day and the second platoon usually, the platoons were split up our company would go out by itself and there'd be 3 platoons with maybe 10-15, at the most 20 in each platoon. We'd split up by platoons. The 2nd platoon made contact during the middle of the day while we were moving sometimes that would happen too. We liked to set up and wait, but sometimes you'd make contact on the move. They made contact and killed 2 or 3 cinluding one woman and they were over maybe a couple hundred yards or so from us, so we weren't involved. Then after they made contact we set up that night, all three platoons together, because we weren't sure but what they might not hit back hard and so we decided to group together. And I remember so vividly reacting to a couple of things, one was - I didn't see it happen, but so the reports went - a couple of guys in the second platoon had mutilated some of the boys, particularly the women and at that point that seemed so hard for me to understand. the guys that had done it had been through a lot of hell I was in pretty bad shape themselves. That was bad enough, but the part that I saw that was so difficult for me personally was - our company commander was real gung ho _____, who just lured for body counts and was a real irritable SOB and that was evident from the outset. He was good to have as a company commander because he kept everybody straight, kept people from doing stupid things but after we got a little body count that day, he was so happy, I mean this guy was standing up, laughing and joking, he was elated he was so happy. and I just couldn't understand that at all. I can remember my Lieutenant trying to talk with me about it, because he could see I was just really distressed about it.

Q. Why were you distressed?

A. Because, so what it's a war, but why should you be happy when you're killing somebody. Why should it have that kind of impact on you?

Q. Do you think maybe that was the reason why he felt happy?

A. Yes, his mission was to kill the enemy and he had done that. Satisfaction - I think it was genuine, he enjoyed it, relished it.

Q. Some of the men have told me something similar to that, and after you've been through that body count business, you can say well, really what does it matter, we're still here, we're no better off than we were before. We haven't captured anything, we haven't moved the line one mile one way of the other. Did you have that feeling too?

A. Well, yes, you never really accomplished anything by doing that, you made the higher ups happy, you made them look good, they could call in a body count. And there were times when the men, some of them men at least, they'd be happy, they'd be pleased. But, I think it was different for them, I think - it seemed to me clearly different from what I saw in the Company with the Company. I think it was pure satisfaction, elation at doing that. Without any sensitivity.

Q. It would help his career, is that what you had in mind?

A. Yes, that too. For the men I think they - the ones who came to have enjoyment from it, just became twisted and warped by it. I never felt any harshness toward the men when they would react joyfully because we had killed some gooks.

Q. I've read a lot of accounts where this body count business was corrupting the whole army, from your unit, all the way up. Some say 8 reported at that level maybe 80 by the time it got up to where it was more . . . . I've read this many times - and thats the way they measured progress. So I guess it got to the point that they became so elated, that there can't be anybody out there to kill anymore, we've killed every north Vietnamese at least twice.

A. I'm sure it varied a lot depending on the time and also where you were. But I know for us the whole time we were out there it was sort of a nickel and dime stuff. They would get some report that there was something going on and they would stick us in there and thats what happened there, we went in there, we made contact the first few days and that was it. As soon as the VC or the VA realized that we were there they left they avoided us like the plague. It was always that way all the time but we would come in and hit them, then the surprise element would be gone and they'd leave. Then it would be dropped from then on and they'd pull us out and send us some where else. Just over and over like that just constant.

Q. I meant to ask you before to identify the outfit that you were with.

A. It was the 199th light infantry _____.

Q. Was it with a particular division?

A. 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry.

Q. 7th Infantry.

A. Right, Custers.

Q. I didn't realize that. Somebody told you that at the time?

A. Somebody told us that. I'm sure that was a good thing to tell us. But as it turned out, at that time it was a good unit because people had their head on straight, at least about being careful.

Q. Well, you survived. How did you survive?

A. I was fortunate. I suppose and even though we had contact numerous times, again I was mostly just the slight stuff and as I also mentioned we were very careful and I frankly think that made a difference. We didn't have guys smoking grass out in the field, doing drugs out in the field. We were a parnoid bunch. We played it by the book, I mean the book modified by what we knew and I think that made a difference. We stayed off trails, we were just very careful and that helped.

Q. Did that keep casualties down as a result?

A. Yes, Because, well it happened in our company after about 5 or 6 months that Co. got transferred and we got another one, who was a nice guy but he was too nice, and we kept getting new people coming in who hadn't been through as much crap and they started getting coreless, then they started getting hit and that was just shortly after I finally got pulled out of the field there, Medics were supposed to get pulled out after only six months although usually it was longer - they got hit and took some casualties. But more, while I was actually in the field more of our guys got killed by our own guys than anything else. I mean accidents. But just shortly after I got there we were going through clearing out a bunker complex. The guy goes in one end of the bunker and one of his buddys doesn't know it and he pops out the other end and blows him away. That kind of stuff, helicopters going down just crashing - a lot of guys were lost that way. And all the time I was there we lost more that way, Well, my particular unit, then we did to the enemy.

Q. Do you think that was due to poor training or just it would happen to anyone?

A. Just the nature of the war, all it would take would be one mistake, just like that example I described, that was a mistake to go in and not let the buddys around you know that you were going in. Because the instant anything moved you were going to blow it away and that's just what happened.

Q. You were talking about the officers. What did you think of the officers you had, the leadership and so on. You mentioned the one CO with the body count and then the next one. They kept rotating them in and out didn't they?

A. Yes. The first guy was a real bastard, but he was real good as far as keeping people straight. The only bad part about him was, he always wanted us in the thick of things and of course we always wanted to avoid it if at all possible. The Lt's who were platoon leaders were pretty good - a lot of them and the seargeants, we called them shake and bakes. They'd send them to little training schools and then sent them out. So they'd come in green and not try to stir things up too much until they had a chance to learn and most of them did that.

Q. By the time they learned they'd be gone though, wouldn't they?

A. Yes, they typically rotated in about every 6 months or so. They were a little more consistent with them then they were others of us. I always felt sorry for the _____ because those poor suckers were out in the field for the duration. The only way they could get out was to get terribly lucky, get blown away or get sick. I had a lot of them to try deliberately to get sick. When I went in I had one ole guy, he became a good buddy, he was walking anxiety. He had been in the group that had got blown away just a few weeks before we got there. Some of his best friends had gotten wiped out right beside him and he had survived and he was just chain smoking, shaking all the time, but he'd still do his job. And that man he had a ringworm all over his body and I found out they'd do that kind of crap just to try and get out of the field, they'd try to catch maleria to try and get out of the field. Anything at all, because it was that bad. I can't blame them - they were there for the whole year, it was just day after day to try and see if they could survive. And you'd always hear the stories of the guys getting blown away the day they were scheduled to leave or a couple of days before.

Q. Was there much of that that you remember?

A. Well, I never knew of any personally, but there were certainly a lot of stories, I know it happened.

Q. Did this other fellow survive?

A. As far as I know. You see, what happened was about 8 months into my tour he went home. Our unit went home which meant I think maybe 15 or 20 guys out of the entire brigade literally went home and the rest of us just got shipped out some where else. So as far as I know he made it but I don't know for sure.

Q. Of all these fellows, including yourself, you did come home. Do you feel that some of them have had, still do have they tell me difficulty making adjustments one way or the other, - do you think you could buy the argument well that's the way they were before they went there, do you think that Vietnam itself was just such a terrible experience that it did really shake them up and make wrecks out of them?

A. I think there were a lot of us who had our problems but were reasonably well put together before we went over there and that was a real advantage. I think there were a lot of guys who were vulnerable before they went over there and that did them in. And this probably overlapped too. But there's no question that - I can't imagine a more intense experience, life in the world is never liek that, that was intense all the time and thats both good and bad. I have no question that there are a lot of guys still bent out of shape badly and probably will be the rest of hteir lives because of that. I don't know if that different from how it was in other wars or not. I mean we hear the press that it is. I think probably it is in some ways, I'm not sure that I fully understand why.

Q. Why its hitting the Vietnam Veterans this way?

A. Yes, If it is really different, if it is really a lot worse than it was before.

Q. I believe it is. What their calling the Vietnam syndrome. I don't recall World War II a Korea, people coming back with that kind of - just shaking part. If there was any of it, it didn't seem to be labeled, all of the men coming back. a large segment coming back running into all kinds of problems, psychological problems of all kinds as it seems to be with Vietnam. In talking with the men about their experiences, I've already met one man that I would put in that category of being so broken up inside, I think he'll be a wreck the rest of his life. Although externally he seems to be doing quite well, he has a wife and child a nice teaching job and all the rest of it. But there is a certain fear and apprehension and anxiety about it. He was telling me that before I came to see him that he just paced the floor, nervous, wondering and just talking about it, how would you react. The kind of guy I asked him about the Vietnam television stories and he said "I wouldn't watch it," "Couldn't stand it." That kind of floored me, apparently he's going to feel that way all his life. The wars made him a wreck, no doubt about it. He was telling me they were starting a VVA group; a couple of years and he says you wouldn't believe the grown men standing there crying. I don't know of anything like that in the American Legion _____.

A. We weren't, this part I don't think anyone could have escaped. We weren't fighting hte enemy away from out shores. Nothing like had been the case before. That part was clear and I guess it was like the old Indians Wars. Most of the time nothing was happening and you knew it could change in the next split second. And that part of it never changed, it never went away. So you never could really relax you never knew when all hell was going to break loose, I think that had an impact too. I don't know about a lot of guys, but I think for me it had an impact too, just to see how absolutely insane and fertile it all was - not just that war, but any war - but in that one we blew away women, kids. One day we set up a wiped away about a half dozen kids in a dry river bed that had spent, by the papers we got from them, about six months treking down, by foot from North Vietnamese. These were kids that were about 12 or 13 years old, they were NVA . I used to go out periodically to see just to remind myself what stupidity it was.

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For others, like myself, I flew back home - within two days I was from Vietnam, back home and out of the service - that's it. And as far as I know they didn't do anything to screw out out those poor fellows who were falling apart and had been for months. They truned them loose, what did they expect. Are they supposed to suddenly get back together. It's ridiculous. Not a chance, I grew up on a farm and when I got back home I used to spend a lot of time walking through the countryside. We'd drive on tractors and trailors and go back and work I didn't feel comfortable; I'd get out and walk away from everybody and look around - I knew nothing was going to happen but you couldn't get away from that feeling - I'd been out of the field a few months, I'd supposedly been in the rear, it does'nt go away that easily. I remember just shortly

after I got home we were sitting at the dinner table with my folks and a thunder storm came up - occasionally the electricity will come in and kind of run in and go pop and it did that - I started to hit the floor. You hear the stories - now I was always kind of afraid of that that guy would be walking down the streets and cars would back fire and they'd hit the deck. That doesn't go away easily. But that intensity, the emotional intensity of it, irrespective of whether its bad or good, just that itself. I can't remember the name but the movie that _____ made about Vietnam. I think it was really bizzare although probably not that far fetched. I think that kind of captured some of the intensity, the intensity was there no matter where you were and it never went away - it was there whether it was good or bad and there's just nothing like that here and its hard - I think that's part of what I still hear coming through with some of the guys having trouble. It's like they can never come down from that. They can never get rid of that and it almost kind of pulls you to hand on to it in a way. It has a perverted kind of seductive quality to it.

Q. The army must have been cruel to men to do that . . . ?

A. Or stupid.

Q. Or stupid. That they couldn't recognize what they were doing to people - you know its an army, American army, you're supposed to be a pretty sophisticated army, educated. They've got plenty of medical people in it, psychiatrists, all the rest of it. I don't remember - recalling those days - that people even understand how the men were being treated as they were being discharged that it was done in such a casual fashion that somebody was in Vietnam and all of a sudden, pop, he's home. The day before he might have been in Vietnam trying to survive and a day or two later he's setting in a bar somewhere at home and there he is.

A. Luckily they took the weapons away before they came home.

Q. One person says he came back and fe felt that he was a very dangerous person.

A. And he was probably right. In some ways we've probably been fortunate that there hasn't been a lot more and because guys learn how to react and kill and to do that very effectively, out of fear, out of necessity. There's no real way that I've ever heard of to diffuse any of that. Send them home. The only policy I ever knew about was what its always seen for the army. When somebody falls apart you get them right back out there as quickly as possible. Thats the adaptive thing. But I never heard anything ever said or addressed at all about trying to help screen people or bring people down or whatever when they go home. They screen for drugs, that was all I ever knew of. Take urine samples. There were guys in my own platoon, guys that were friends with me - and I know I could, in retrospect, now after I've studied a lot about psycholoyg. I can look back and see that the was a hell of a lot worse than I realized then. But even then I knew that they were walking wrecks, I mean just a mess. And some of it affected worse that way than others. It depended on the experiences you had too.

Q. I suppose its not only their own experience in Vietnam you're talking about, its the realization that what they went through was not either understood or appreciated at home. Would you say that that had an affect on them and maybe yourself too?

A. I think it does. Its like nobody wanted to own up to it, nobody wanted to admit it. It was just like, lets pretend it isn't there, lets ignore it and it will go away. That doesn't happen too easily. I consider myself fortunate because I went through the crap, mainly because I was a medic and that was my primary role. I don't have hanging over my head that I killed somebody, that I blew somebody away. Especially a woman or kid, something like that. But I know guys who had that to live with, and still have. Always will have that to live with. Its bad enough to go and kill some grown man who's supposed to be your enemy. It gets worse when the enemy turns out to be a woman or a kid and that was often the case. Then you come home and everybody wants to kind of ignore it, pretend it isn't there and it will go away and leave us alone. Well, it doesn't go away and leave those poor suckers alone. I saw guys get broken up because of that while they were still over there out in the field. Now I hate to think what its like once they come back home and they're kind of trying to relax and maybe they've got families or they get them later on, they see some little kid you know, their 12 years old they blew away. What do you do about it, especially when everybody has kind of said well lets leave this whole thing alone - nobody is saying, we understand, but it was for a good cause - nobody is saying that.

Q. Not getting any support that way?

A. No.

Q. The American, the way it turns out they're the scape goat.

A. Yes. The _____.

Q. I suppose, do you have much to do with other Veterans?

A. Not really.

Q. Do you belong to any organizations?

A. I have worked some with them, not a lot. I'm sure I will again.

Q. I suppose it depends on what type person you are, how sensitive you are to how much of that you can take and still keep your head on straight. I find a lot of them were really very religious men coming out of simple religious beliefs the Bible ingrained into them by their family and had something to keep them together. I get that impression.

A. That was a major factor.I think for me. And I don't have any illusions about coming through unscathed or anything by any means. And I'm not sure I understand yet all of the impact it may have had. I'm probably still learning about that but I think it helped a great deal in my own case to be able to come through it and not get completely torn apart by it.

Q. Well, you came back then in 1970?

A. 1971.

Q. 71. Did you go to Morehead at that time?

A. Yes, I got back in March of 1971 and I started Morehead in August.

Q. As a freshman then at what 22?

A. Yes, I turned 22 that summer.

Q. What did you think then, coming back to school 1971, there was a lot of anti-war. . . it was about that time that it hit Morehead. Was Carl Kelly there in your time, the head of the _____.

A. Sounds familiar.

Q. I'm going to see him tonight, he's a good friend of mine, but I was talking to him about Vietnam. What I can recall was a fellow by the name of Mike Green. Do you remember Mike by any chance he was a kind of leader of the anti-war group - the hippies and so forth. They kind of camped out they had a - right next to the Presidents house there was a lawn _____. And they gave Doran and Kelly and others a hard time. Did you get involved in any way in that, just pass you by?

A. Yes, for me it was you're back in the world. By then I wanted to get an education and I wanted the experience of college and that sort of thing.

Q. You didn't become anti-war yourself then, you didn't join this group or anything like that, and denounce the government and the administration.

A. No. I think part of what I have done with the whole thing and I think some of that relates to a religious perspective about it. In some ways it may be a rationalization or a way of intellectualizing it but part of what I have integrated about it is such a hatred and sadness over war period. So "ive kind of in my own mind I've tried to take it above the Vietnam war. May be its easier for me to process it that way. Probably has, but when I get upset about it even now its in the sense of all the suffering that I saw first hand going on for all of us on both sides and how senseless it was. Not just then, but how senseless it always is. Irrespective of what the purposes are behind it, and yes its made a lot worse when they're aren't any purposes, when its absolutely that stupid, that there's not even a reasonable purpose that people can point to or feel supportive about. But, no I never became really anti-war, I don't think. I guess in a way too, I sort of wanted to leave it behind and get on with my life. And thats probably helped me, because, unless you can do that, I don't think you ever have a chance of escaping it, in a halfway _____.

Q. Those that have, that might be the key way, people like yourself have been able to survive. Not only in Vietnam but the after math which is just as bad in a way. But some of them have not been able to. O.K. you then graduated from Morehead, what year was that?

A. 1975.

Q. Did you come up to University of Louisville at that time?

A. Right, I came to start graduate school in August of 1975 and that was sort of a semi-last minute thing. I switched - I had majored in Business and psychology all the way through but was planning to go into business, but about my senior year I began rethinking the whole think and switched, I focused more to psychology and started applying to graduate school and got in U. of L. and went down there. I went through the first year and was just really in turmoil about whether I wanted to do that and took a years leave of absence then went back and basically been struggling along with it ever since.

Q. You get your masters?

A. Yes.

Q. Then went into the doctoral program.

A. Well, we were accepted into the doctoral program basically from the outset because that was the way it was set up. You had to satisfy the masters requirements, but it didn't really matter if you took a degree or not.

Q. So where are you now, whats your prospect to have a degree, when hopefully?

A. I hope in the next couple of months, if I can get my dissertation written.

Q. I see, what are you writing on?

A. Its an _____ research project basically, a cognitive research project on the block design task which is a subtest of the Wexler intelligence scale.

Q. Wexler, vaguely I know something about that. So then, your wife and child?

A. I married when I was at Morehead and that was in 1974 I guess and divorced after a couple of years and then remarried about a year after that and I'm still married. I have a little boy that's 3½.

Q. Is you wife working now?

A. She is teaching dancing part time. She has been going through the same program at U of L that I have been, that's where we met.

Q. Is she still there?

A. Yes, technically, she still has to do her dissertation and her internship and she's having a lot of _____ about finishing. She's got her masters but she needs to do the other. . . .

Q. Do you have an assistantship of some kind?

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A. No. We've been in Alabama for the last two years and returned here in September. I went down there at the University of Alabama and did my internship. We have to do a years full time internship. Then I stayed a second year and did a fellowship in neuro psychology. Then we wanted to move back to this area so we did in September and we've been trying to hold on until I can get this dissertation finished, then I'll go to work full time. I've got a job thats waiting for me but I have to finish my dissertation first.

Q. What did you think of your education at Morehead, how would you grade us?

A. Well, I have very clear feelings about that one the one hadn I have a tremendous amount of regret, and part of that is just my own personal quirks or whatever. What happened was because I can out of Morehead I was at a disadvantage for competing at really top line graduate school. Particularly the clinical psyche because its extremely difficult to get in the clinical psyche doctoral programs. I came out of Morehead with a 3.9 GPA and I had good GRE's and the whole bit. But it was always discounted. It was I think discounted less for some of the universities that are around close by and know that it is a decent sort of school. I have of ten regretted not going to some big name school in order to have avoided that disadvantage. In terms of the education I got, I got a very good education at Morehead. I can't complain at all. I learned a lot and I've been around enough to realize that I probably got as good an education here as I would have most anywhere else. And I had a good time there. It was a good place to go to school.

Q. Its a little bit unfair that people jump to the conclusion that it was inferior education. That it hurt you.

A. It is. Hut thats the way things operate sometimes.

Q. So tell me are you going to vote for Reagan? I'm trying to probe where you stand politically now, perhaps as some relationship to your Vietnam experiences.

A. There probably is. I tend to be fairly conservative particularly when it comes to economic kinds of things. But I tend to be more liberal when it comes to civil rights kind of things.

Q. How do you see of foreign policy for example. One image is the quick draw McGraw type. Others see him as well its about time we got somebody tough in office to tell those off. I get both of these do you land anywhere among those two?

A. I think there is merit in becoming somewhat stronger militarily although I'm sure the discrepancy is often exaggerated. I think we have to be realistic we have to be practical about it in many respects whether we like it or not there is a great deal of military and political competition within the world and to change things too much too quickly is destablizing and that's dangerous. I think it's a mistake and I think that's a mistake. Reagan has continued to make - engage in a lot of political Rhetoric that he directs oustensively to the Russians and their allies, but really is directed toward the conservative portion of the American public. Because all that does is unflame things the Russians are parnoid enough without rattling sabres and we probably are too, without adding to that. I think we need consistency and stability in terms of foreign policy and perhaps Reagan has added a little more of that than we had during Carters tenure but I think its still very much misguided in a lot of ways. I think one of the clearest examples is Central America and the midEast right now. We have said to hell with Central and south America for years and thumbed our noses at them and now we stand back and wonder why they are upset with us. And then think that its just because of all these bad Cubans and Russians are running in there and stirring things up. Well, they probably are taking advantage of those situations when they can but I don't think thats the half of it. I think much of it is purely internal and we're kidding ourselves if we think we're going to go down there and force our version of place and stability in that area. It's not going to happen. In that sense it is somewhat analogous to Vietnam because unless you're willing to go in and completely take over and subjugate and you're also always able to do that - the Russians haven't even been able to do that in Afghanistan, that's right on their belly - unless you're willing and able to do that than you might as well forget it. As long as there's a source for weapons to come in, and that's whats going to happen there. I think we're making some mistakes there and I think we're making some mistakes too with Lebanon. All we're doing is stirring things up thats setting ourselves in the middle. In answer to your initial question, I don't know, I probably won't.

Q. Well, I was just kind of provoking you a little bit. I was just kidding in a sense. So we have the arms race, here we have the Soviet Union and the United States and they're not talking to each other, In fact it becomes big news when _____ and _____ were forced to get together as they did at _____ and talk. Do you see this that are relations have got to the dangerous point? Are you concerned about that or do you agree with Reagan what he's doing that we can't expect the Soviets to come back to the table until they are convinced that we have equal (armiment and Nuclear armiments) with them. Would you say thats how you see it?

A. The Russians are never going to bargain in good faith unless they feel like they can get some advantage and we operate the same way, irrespective of what we tell the American people. I mean that's how it works. I frankly think the Russians would be absolutely foolish to make any serious efforts until after the elections they've always got the chance that Reagan going to lose and that would certainly be to their advantage.

But, I think, I'm not fearing that we're going to have a nuclear war breakout right away between the U.S. and Russia but I think what is happening is that things are getting stirred up a lot more and what thats going to do is bring all sorts of unpredictable pressures to bear in all parts of the world and its going to change things and it may change things too much too quickly and thats the frightening thing because thats when it can break down things can decompensage on an international level. And probably the best example of that right now is in terms of Europe. Where we're seeing lots of turmoil because they are caught in the middle between us and the Russians. And the Russians happen to be right on their back too. I'm not so sure how much longer they're going to continue being strong allies for us or vice-versa and how distabilizing that might be on the world scene if Europe somehow is forced into assuming a more dominant posture of their own. That might be more stabilizing even than what we have right now between us and the Russians. I think whats going on between us and the Russians is greatly contributing to those kinds of potentials.

Q. Do you find as a member of the Vietnam generation that your experiences there shaped or influenced your view of the world and the war foreign policy is conducted? Specifically one of these things we found was a reaction against a very strong President that Vietnam was a presidents war. So you had such things as the war sources act limit his ability to operate without a restraint. Do you take a position on that at all? Do you think this is a move in the right direction? or do you think that it isn't - do you think along those lines at all? You know if you were to blame the war on the Presidents as many do, then it would be wise to keep those restraints on the President, such as congress right now threatening not to support the Presidents Policy in Lebanon? Do you think of that at all?

A. Yes, I do and I have mixed reactions to it and part of what I react to is my own belief that there are really some inherent advantages in having strong leadership that isn't overly hampered by lots of committees or whatever and at the same time there's clearly a lot of risk in giving anyone, President or whomever else a lot of power. But maybe more than that I think part of what may be sort of an underlying attitude for me and probably a lot of other people in this country and a lot of that I think has grown out of Vietnam. A lot of it is attributed to Nixons crap. But I think a lot of it is rooted even more deeply in the whole Vietnma thing and a lot of it is just almost a sense an expectation of it all being futile anyway and not really having much confidence in any of the politicians. the so called leaders. Just expecting that they're all going to bungle things one way or another and maybe it doesn't make any difference. Almost a kind of fatalistic attitude. Thats very unhealthy. But I think there are strong elements of that there for a lot of us. I think a lot of that came out of the whole Vietnam experience.