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WEST VIRGINIA VIETNAM VETERANS

WVVV.31a, b

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: Douglas Johnson

CONDUCTED BY: John C. Hennen, Jr.

May 15, 1986

TRANSCRIBED BY: Sally Keaton

TYPED BY: Gina Kehali Kates

They started picking things up and our weapons and so on and I got back mine and the firing mechanism didn't work. And what they had _____ had messed with our own weapons, (uh-nuh) So they would malfunction and me and a bunch of other guys got together, I been doing something while I was in twenty-nine palms California, like the un, army units looked x-bars marine corp knives you get anything I trained a lot left x-bars we had on order. I'd been doing a lot of supply work, what you call a seven-eight two gear, some _____ some brand new packs and stuff I been trading that stuff for grease guns and lots of 48 caliber ammunition. So, when they started taking up the m-14 mess with them, I said, let them take them, I gradually let the word get out, people I trusted I said tell people don't let the brass know what the shit is going on, we know what's going to happen and our jump was we were the first _____ land battalion and we had a shoulder patch made and some of the guys later on to Okinawa had this sheep on it covered with a red hammer and sickle on it.

Hennen: Now was this to ensure total resistance on it? why (inaudible)....

Johnson: Yes! As far as I could understand as far as I could come up with,...other than what it was an excuse to send troops to Vietnam, what they needed more ...an excuse to send troops to Vietnam despite what happened at _____ or central highlands that fact every air base in _____ have been rocketed and mortared. They need some other excuse to send american troops, (uh-nuh) That is the only thing that I could figure out, I'm sure about this and right also but I couldn't prove this you know. Later on we tried to get this information from people we knew, it was hushed up and we continued our little journey across the pacific. On a boat it was a called a A-k-A-O-N, I guess because I don't remember the name of it, we were a day from landing in Saigon. There were two snips and a day from landing in Saigon, we got when the orders came and I was still in the officer country with everything but away. The Navy brass knew we knew what was going on and any way, we got our m-14 back and they worked well and one snip had part of the battalion went back to Okinawa. We went to Da Nang and we were there December 17th. it took us thirty days to get across the pacific. we disembarked on December...on the 17th, off Da Nang Harbor, and made a modified beach landing you know, that kind of biz. Praying games and unloading equipment and sitting most of it up around the Da Nang airstrip and we were there, let's see, I don't know...I guess, about March. But in the mean time, they went on to his three-twenty-five where they made you find these stakes, but I wasn't not with them, they sent me back to Okinawa, sent me to armour school. I had to spend Christmas 1964 in Okinawa with the rest or half of other battalions and part of my company they had a lot of this radar equipment and missiles stuff the weather was messing it up and it wasn't made to be there, make known mistakes...it's not made for the humidity, or that kind of atmosphere condition. There were larger major breakdowns in some of those monsoon storms, it had a lot of major electrical damage _____ back and place it on a

Hennen: Okay, Douglas, let's start out with your personal family background and give us your date of birth, and where you grew up, and where you went to school; take it from there.

Johnson: Okay, my name is Douglas Johnson, my date of birth is 1/5/43. I grew up in Huntington, West Virginia. I was born in Scottsville, Illinois, which is now Scott's Air Force base. Uh I moved to West Virginia when I approximately two years old; has lived here off and on all...ever since. I went to school at Aldicer Elementary and Beverly Hills Junior High in Huntington, West Virginia and went to Barboursville High School in Barboursville, West Virginia.

Hennen: Did you graduate from Barboursville?

Johnson: Yes, I graduated when I was 18.

Hennen: Was that in 1963?

Johnson: Uh-huh.

Hennen: What about brothers and sisters, and other side of the family?

Johnson: I have one sister, let's see, who is 37 years old now. I'm 41 up, my father is deceased and my mother is still living and she will be 70 in August.

Hennen: She lives here in Huntington? (yes) What sort of work did your father do? Or your mom? Or both?

Johnson: Uh, my father was a process worker at Highlawn Sonco Chemical Company, which is now BASF Wyandotte and my mother worked as a psychiatric aide for awhile, and I guess she spent the rest of her life...she was a psychiatric aid, did that for 5 to 6 years. The rest of the time she spent as a waitress. (okay: is she retired now?) Yes: She retired for many years. She is officially retired.

Hennen: When you graduated from Barboursville High School, what was your plans at that time? Did you want to attend college or...?

Johnson: Yes: As the matter of fact, I enrolled at Marshall in September of 1963, but I found out I couldn't get my academic life and party life...straightened...I wasn't...I wasn't mature enough to attend Marshall. I just wasn't ready to do that: academics wise I was fine, but on a maturity level, I wasn't ready to handle it. (uh-huh) So I decided that I had to do something so I, so in November 1963, I went down to join one branch of the armed services and uh, the guy who ran the army recruiting station was out to lunch and so I ended up talking to the marine corp recruiter. I wasn't expected to be drafted then, anyway, I went through all the testings and everything I was sworn into the reserves on January 4, of one day before my 19th

Saturday, I went for Marine Island, South Carolina on the 24th of January and started basic. Unofficially, I guess, but, my date was the 20th of January when I officially started training, according to the government records.

Hennen: Okay. So now you are enlisted in reserves? What kind of plan did you go by?

Johnson: Nothing. Well, just a hundred and twenty day delay in that way you could anything you wanted. You could take care of your business. It wasn't like for a particular education like that, purposeful, anything like that but that was explained to us. I think that the morning I took the test to get in I was tired. I didn't do too well. And so it was being able, being in three years I was two points away from a score being able in three years, so I told them to fill me _____ for four, (run-run) I guess I ate something interesting about that I was under weight; you had to weigh up, 120 lbs, and I weighed 115 and...

Hennen: You're about what, 5 ft. 7 in.?

Johnson: No, I'm about 5 ft. 4 in.

Hennen: 5 ft. 4?

Johnson: Then I was 5 ft. 2 in. or 5 ft. 3 in. and so the recruiter from Huntington took me to Ashland where the selective services has their processing area and because I was under weight he said that you will not pass this physical, son! So he took me over to the bus station and said, put some weight on you real quick and the quick things I had was a banana split. I ate five banana splits in a hour and ten minutes.

Hennen: (laughter)

Johnson: Before I took the physical, and when I went out I weighed a hundred and twenty-one pounds. (laughter)

Hennen: How did you feel after that?

Johnson: (crouble! Trouble! I don't like banana splits because of that, why not the first thing I did after taking the physical I went outside and throw up it was of about six pounds of bananas. I guess it was of to pass the physical to get in the Marine Corps.

Hennen: Did this man? Did the recruiter say anything about Vietnam?

Johnson: No. Not really, he this uh, the gentleman's name was Sgt. Canfield and he was a real straight shooter. He told me you probably want like the Marines but get in there and give it your best shot and keep your eyes and ears open your mouth shut. He said may or may not ever involve in combat. He said I can't tell you that I; I'm not going to lie to you. They are going to give you a job what your supposed to do. Your basic job is to learn to

with people (shouting) why. He said tell me how before will go through this, he was real square guy about that, the really was, you know. For some reason he did tell everybody about this, maybe he felt he could sit down, tell me via or na about what was going on. (un-nun) Well, I am not doing anything now. Maybe I could get a job or a career. You know all this business about learning killing people I was intrigued by this. I must say, (un-nun) what do you want? What do about that? You know? Shooting at people, spending on mines and stuff. I wasn't particularly violent person at all but was average blue collar type family kid, you know.

Hennert: Do you figure then the marines would sort of gateway for a career.

Johnson: Yes! Yes! You know!

Hennert: What was your reaction when you got down to Paris Island for your basic training?

Johnson: well, it was to say the least, very, very frightening experience. We took a train from Charleston, West Virginia to Richmond Virginia, and then on down the coast. We kept stopping and picking up guys going on to Paris Island. We stopped at a place called Yomicese, South Carolina, which is approximately 20 miles from Paris Island. From there they get you off the train and truck you're on the bus on into Paris Island. I was getting off the train. We had to run out and stand into attention and this guy was really some drill instructor or someone anyway, some guy in a smokers hat hit me and broke my nose. I had no idea 'til this day why. Then they could call you everything they want. It wasn't like now, they have to treat you with respect and they can't call you all these filthy trouble names. I am standing in line, my trousers seams and blood oozing from my nose and my nose laying to one side. I thought Jesus Christ, I don't know what in the hell I'm doing here. I was terrified. (un-nun) I was literally terrified there was one other guy a couple of them, that got punched. I just happened to catch one of their face. I caught one on the face. I think it was particularly aimed at my face. He just swung, that's where he got me. ...because I was little and at Paris Island their major objective was to _____ you out. They got a 90 hours sort of period where they try everything physical and mentally to break you down. Like when we got to Paris Island they took away everything, made us pack everything and send it home, except the clothes we had on. They wouldn't let us have a little duffle bag, whatever, that went home. They made us stand into attention all night long.

Hennert: First night?

Johnson: First night there then they decided to let us sit down at a desk. That was to keep us from passing out, get our knees bent and blood back in our head. The minute we sat down, they told us to get back up into attention, maggots. They made us take a whole lot of tests to see if we were alert some how I felt,

missed out some water, paper, or something. I mean, I mean I was
carried, somewhat, immediately, because it was the first time I
had been away from home and hungry, tired. I thought my God, what
in the hell have I gotten myself into and the next morning they
took us to eat and some of that good marine Corp food or snow,
they called it and it was that was an interesting experience,
trying to sit down and keep your face in about 3 minutes. And we
got picked up by our drill instructors. I was a member of the
first battalion in Marie Island, 2112. My senior drill instructor
was Staff Sergeant Johnson and he had several other junior drill
instructors and they were Corporal York, Staff Sergeant
Christianson, and a couple of others and anyway, like Johnson was
a pretty rough character. And they immediately singled me out
because I was little and they were a couple of other guys that
were about my size. But a half inch taller and also, when
everybody else we started out you know, they took us in and shaved
our heads. Gave us a shower and they did a number on all of us.
They had a radio on the back of us, the song was from the Beatles,
I want to hold your hand. And I come out of the shower listening
to it and the drill instructor clasped his hand around my throat
and picked me up off the ground. And the drill instructor said,
you like to listen, maggot. I said, No Sir, I couldn't even talk
right, and he said that's civilian shit and boy, you...the only
time you listen is when I tell you out not in the Marine Corp.
And they gave us all our equipment and of course, you know even
guys who thought they were in good shape and I knew I was in fair
shape myself. We had some ex-football players and stuff like this
and boys from Georgia, South Carolina and alot of guys from New
York City. They were real ghetto's kids, tough kids and I found
out later that they were scared as I was. (uh-hun) make no
mistake, I thought I was the only person who felt that way. But
we loaded everything into sea bags when we tried to march over a
thing called a grinder, which is nothing more than a big asphalt
strip. I think it was four miles around, I believe, and got us
into the harricks and immediately we had to start doing pushups
and of course, I think I did about three and then he told
everybody to get up and then the drill instructor came back to me
and said, you keep going...(to you?)...Yes! I said, Jesus, what
did I do? But I didn't ask him now. Now I better not leave it
alone. You know, keep your mouth shut because you can get into
trouble. And then the next morning they came in, threw the
garbage cans all up and down, which they called a squad day.
Screaming at the top of their lungs and beating on stuff. They
made us do all kinds of push-ups. And this went on for four days
and during this time in the marine Corp basic training was sixteen
weeks. Later on in Vietnam when it got real heavy looking for
guys to give to the next grinder. Uh! It was eight weeks but we
had sixteen weeks full of pure hell. And once the training
started up, you know it was simple, it was learning things.
Learned how to march in a group, how to do things by the number
all commands. When you screwed up you did pushups or what they
called bends and thrust or you run around the grinder. I don't
like ...I did twelve hours which directly out in front of me.
because I attempted to stop and gradually I got to be professional
on some of the things. Alot of it was I was scared and I uh,

didn't want to fail. You want to be a part of the unit and they threatened to send me to _____, I was _____ because I was little it took two or three times to do things. (un-nun) I said, Jesus, I don't want to go to motivation. But then (unaudible)...came with fifty pound rocks in each can and make you wade through mud up to your neck, and other things to get you motivated. (Motivation!) Fear, I...and they made me a house mouse and I was kind of responsible for the drill instructor whenever he wanted something done. They was for the nicest guy in the platoon. Later on I did real good that I kept that job for quite awhile, until I forgot to put the lock on my rifle, when it was on my rack and he found my rifle unlocked, and so I lost my job as house mouse. And when we got to the rifle range, I done some shooting you know, around the house, when I was a kid I was pretty good, well, when we got to the rifle range, they started backing off on me a little bit. Because I was a good shot and they liked that, you know, I could tear my weapon down, and put it together or unfolded and I kept it clean. Any time when we had a rifle inspection because all my weapons was real clean. They could not find nothing wrong with it. I showed good safety on the firing line and I was a damn good shot! And that got respect and that got them off my back for a little while. And we started going things alot more heavy duty physical training and convenience course type things. (go ahead!) And I use to be afraid of heights and they put me up on things about 60 ft. high. You know, I was going for it but I froze because I looked down and I froze. So they put me down on the ground on the shit pile and they started on me again. (un-nun) So I...about this time we were doing some hand to hand combat. And that's where they get you and you learn _____ holds and all this and how to disarm a person without a rifle or a person with a bayonet on their gun and how to take a knife from

Johnson. ...somebody or how to take out a ^{sergeant} century. It is a basic course; you just went over the basics and you work platoon against platoon. So they team me up against this guy who was about 6'4". And we were using bayonets that were in sleeves and this hold called the masked strangle hold was supposed to take out a century. Anyway, you put it on the guy if it's out on, you start to check out, you grab your hands to be let go. To stop the hold he knows to let go, going out, okay. I got this guy good and he wants me to let go. They team up against another platoon. He is hurting me he had along reach he kept hitting me in the nuts with his bayonet and so he said, you can't make me _____. You can't put me in a hold that I can't break or let go or put me out. So, I said okay. I was hurt, I was mad out in control of it. So, I know what so he turned his back, I jumped up and kicked his legs from under him, put the hold on him, put him down and stood him up and pulled him back and I didn't go out completely, but he was slowing strangling and he wanted crap, you know. I said, if you don't crap, I will end up killing you and one part of my brain after I said that, what am I saying you know, and the other part said yeah, they got you. But they got what they wanted but I knew it then and I couldn't do a damn thing about it. (uh-huh) I couldn't do a thing about it and the drill instructor came over and lifted his hands and his finger nails were blue and the drill instructor said to let him go, I said, no, sir! Because he has not clapped. I said, if he has not clapped, I will kill him. So, they got three other drill instructors to tell me to break this hold, they threw me off the mat and yelled at me and kicked me in the ribs with their toes you know. They said, sit there, maggot, and they went and got this guy some oxygen so he could start breathing; he sat up. The minute they turned their backs I moved and he was revived, I put the hold on him again. I was determined to make him _____ or burn him or kill him right there. So, my senior drill instructor got me at the back of my neck. We were by this building out back the beach and held me to the surf and kind of threw me out. He held me there. I came out spluttering, my clothes all wet. I turned around and looked at him and said, you know, sir, you have messed with me every since I got here, you made me do everything twice, you pick on me and punch me and pushed me and pushed me. You want a killer because you are next. And me and my senior drill instructor got into a fight out there in the surf. He would knock me down, I would get up and kick him in the balls. He would knock me down and this went on for 10 or 15 minutes. I wouldn't stay down or go down and one of my eyes were black so one of the junior drill instructors, his name was Sergeant Christianson for some reason he liked me because he saw all this going on. He knew it was a little unfair you know, for some to kick you in the eye and make me do all this stuff over twice. When I had it down, I was motivated and really let this have it by taking him over some coals about what he was doing to me. Made him go back up to the building and he took me up to the top of the sand dunes. I didn't smoke at that time but he lit up a smoke and told me to smoke it. Sit here, and talk to me anyway, until you calm down and cool down. You are in a hard time the Marine Corps with that attitude track what we want, a killer, but you are not to kill your own

people. He said, "he provoked you," and I said, yes, and he was real nice and said, you sit here and cool off and I promise you this, nobody else will bother you no more while you're here on Paris Island. You will graduate, you will not be a PFC, you will be private like all the rest of them. Just go go on your final inspection. You will graduate with your platoon and you will be a good marine but you pushed too hard, too far. There were a couple who wanted playing attention. This is not what we want in the total sense for the military. But not for somebody to take on everybody, regardless. So, I got out of Paris Island after that I graduated from platoon, my final inspection and all but some of the guys that made PFC had dirty rifles and faults with their uniforms and stuff, and I did fine and more.

Hennen: What was your state of mind by the time you got out?

Johnson: I was surprised. I was a marine boy. I was proud of that because this was ... times that I thought I was going to make it. Because I would mess up and get myself hurt. But I was really proud walking across that grunder and the day I graduated and staying in the marine corps. So, I had my chest stuck out, I was a marine, they chain-washed me ha! ha! ha! They done a good job, I mean(coughs)

Hennen: Did you know by the time basic training was over, were you ...where were you going?

Johnson: Yes, I was going to us, according to my test, I was going to a place called 29 Palms, California. I went out there to get some advanced training in infantry, which was about you do mess duties and then do your training and leaving. So the people I was with we had to do all our infantry training, which was conscience training which you learned more tactical training making booby traps and bombs, playing around with explosives, firing different kinds of weapons and I did real well on the weapons, overall. I got into honors school, that influenced me out or not, I stripped different kinds of weapons but nobody showed me how to use them. The field instruction I had just taken the weapon apart right there on the field. I seem to know what I was doing, but I fired my way from the field station from 29 Palms California. It was the largest marine war post in the world. It covers about 3 square miles long out in the desert that includes some civilians houses on the property that belong to the military. There is no fence surrounding the property. I was stationed at Hawk Mission Unit. It was called light in the air craft missiles, which the _____ was A.A.M. battalion. Most of our time was spent in the field. I check in some time as usual picking up my gear like my rifle, and all my seven-eighty two gear, what they called it. Your helmet, your pack and get all squared away in the barracks and after that, we spent most of our time in the field. We spent most of our time on the fire infantry side. But the funny thing about ...I never got to see one of those missiles fired until I came back to the United States

Hennen: Uh-huh.

Johnson: It was just one of those things we go out there in the field, we never got to fire one of those things, we did a lot of ...I just _____ things we went out in the desert. I got picked to go to desert survival school. You was supposed to stay out four days, I was out a week, they threatened me to come with a court marshal, if I don't return to the unit, I did real good at that.

Hennen: You were on your own?

Johnson: Yes, well, after they showed us this movie given these courses. They hunted us and we had to escape and invade these people. I was the only one who didn't get captured. I got about eight pounds but I was near healthy at the end of it. I had to give a debriefing, they asked me what did you eat, I told them I eat rattlesnakes, rabbits, ants, uh, for water I got in pools in your headquarters. I used to sneak every other night in your headquarters and fill mycanteens up and I knew every position in which you were in each night because the way you move things. The guys who got caught tried to move during the day and I moved at night. (right?) I dug a hole in the ground and buried myself up to my waist, especially by trees to camouflage myself. So the rest of my body stayed cool because it was underground. They had to fly a helicopter over and say turn yourself in, we assumed that you are dead. So I got excellent marks at that and then I went and pulled some mess duties there, which was kind of fun at that, no major problems with that which everybody did it one time or another. You either worked on a serving line or washed dishes or scrubbed pots or take out garbage. I did a little bit of everything for forty days. Came back out of mess duty, Picklesheimer, California for co-window training and I did excellent at that and I had no problems at all. They gave initial schooling and classes and sent you out and nobody was hunting us this time. You just had dropped you some place in a helicopter and you had so many days to get back through snow and ice.

Hennen: Did everybody in A11 go through this in the summer?

Johnson: No! They just went through and picked people. I have no idea why they picked me out of random. They figured this guy did real good here so let's send him back out there. So I was a private at this time. Now I got to be PFC at Twenty-nine Palms, California, whether in classic fashion face. I was on guard duty this was one on, your top secret posts. You had to have top secret clearance before you could walk around these missiles and so and even before you could work there. You go out and do your job in back of the barracks out in the missile park. I was scrubbing them down and learn how to track them down on radar and scout. Things like that so there was a chain link fence there was one road through it. It was a fire lane and the only people to come through it was fire trucks. I was walking guard duty one night and it had a cat walk up there that you walked across the road. You check out the other side then you open up the other gate and go back the way you were and then you called in your post. If anybody checked on you they to call you first and said

Well, we are coming _____ you have five minutes left to get there. If they showed up five minutes and ten seconds then you told them to screw themselves, but they pulled up and an officer of the day they wouldn't get out and the sergeant and officer of the day would get out and check your post there, you know, you would wait for him. But you watched your watch and you were very serious about it. (un-huh) Hey, if we show up ten seconds after you don't have to tell us anything. You know we screwed up and _____ are during your job. You can sit there and look at us then turn around and walk off. They were very strict about it in that sense. I felt you know, we carried a magazine, a M-14 rifle and we had two magazines with five rounds. This one time I pulled guard I had worked the four to eight shift of one evening. Right before I was about to be posted on my...on this post my battalion officer Davis was asking our general orders. What are your special orders Private Johnson. Well, my special orders _____ if anybody goes up that line road other than the fire truck I was to stop them. I am supposed to shoot them and killed them if I have to if they don't stop. He said, will do that. I said, yes, sir. And well, I found out later I was the first person on guard duty since 1944 to fire a weapon guard duty. Anyway I got out of my four to eight shift, come back and the next morning I was out about five-thirty and I walked through the fence up over the cat walk as I was getting ready, start to lock the fence this car comes up with this family car at this particular time, different incidents occurred with drivers...

END OF SIDE 1

Johnson: ...drivers come up that, made a wrong turn. And getting out and beat fences. Not our post but all over the base, just something to do you know. This was a civilian car and I thought it's not supposed to be here. So I stepped out from directly behind the vehicle. I screamed "halt!" Then I screamed "halt!" Again and screamed "halt!" again and nothing happened and let the car run and I picked up the line, but over the top of the vehicle and the car did not stop. And I thought you are dead, whoever you are and I threw down in the back of the rearview mirror of this vehicle. Finally, I saw this individual's shadow and the car went through these high intensity _____ mercury weapons and lights and it shifted the man shadows. I attracted on that and I thought he moved over in his seat and I crawled on the ground, blew out his rearview mirror and the car stopped and I didn't know if I hit him or not, or killed him or whatever. Well, he's not dead because he stopped the vehicle and so I walked on up to the passenger side of the vehicle. I said, all right, whoever's in that car I want you to get out and I want to see two pairs of hands come up first, that's what I want to see. I said, you have exactly three seconds now! one, two, the door flies open and his hands come out and this gentleman comes out, stands in civilian clothes and turns around says, another, don't shoot, it's the base officer of the day. The blood was just pouring all over. I thought, my God, but actually where I did hit you at? He said, I think you shot my ear off and later I (un')...found out I'd taken off the lower lobe about middle ways up on his right ear. well, ;

told him to get over and lay down in front of the headlights and push yourself up on your toes and elbows. If you have any identification card, you lay it on your vehicle and he climbed on the hood of his vehicle and placed his identification card on it and I climbed and got his car and I looked. He didn't look like the person because he had blood all over him, you know. I wasn't looking that didn't cross my mind, but the fact that this person did not belong here. I was no fool or whatever and I asked all the questions I could think of and he was starting to beg and I know you are weak from bleeding. But if your stomach drops, I will drill you again. I don't know who the hell you are! Tell you what, there's a computer on this base that has information on everybody on this base. There is one of two things that each individual and computer knows. I will walk up here to the phone and I will call and then you tell me what that computer knows about you. (uh-hun) So, he did that I made him place his hands behind his head and made him bring them all the way up. I made the phone call and it was confirmed that he was the base officer of the day. Well, I made another well uh, secret thing about who he was lieutenant so and so. I made another call, who was the base officer of the day, and either he had to make...go through the same secret procedure. As I had to _____ before. He had to call my battalion officer of the day and the chain of command to my corporal guard. And the corporal guard to call me to tell me that the base officer is coming at such and such time. He will be coming up to the gate. Be there _____ to say the man is not in uniform. I asked how up, why I recognized him, I could see why he did how! After I recognized him, so I told him to put his hands down. I took a handkerchief out of my back pocket, here, put this on your ear and apply pressure. I said, do you want me to call an ambulance. He said, no, if I can get back in my vehicle I can drive up to the base hospital. And I said, that is fine. He said, where did your first round go? I said, it went about 300 meters out in front of your vehicle and hit a _____ out there. You can go out tomorrow and check it out, there it's there with a hole in it. I said, you are very much aware that nobody probably comes up this road except the fire trucks. Well, I forgot now the question I want to know, why in the Hell are you doing. He said I been on duty for three days and I was going home and get a piece of ass. Do you think it's worth it? He said, "no!" and he said, "what is your rank?" I said, "a private!" Gave him my name and service number and what outfit I was in, Charley compound first land battalion. He said, "you will be a PFD tomorrow." He said, "you did your job." He said, "I know business here."

Hennen: You didn't expect him not to?

Johnson: They didn't expect to be that realistic you know. With everybody goofing off on guard duty that's where I was different. I took this business serious. It was serious business today, so, any way, I walk him back to his car. I made a call at the hospital. Lieutenant so and so, base officer of the base company and he's driving in, please have somebody meet him, meet him half way down the road because he is bleeding. He's bleeding pretty

dad because he lost part of his ear. There was a lot of pandemonium going on, they said. What happened? I said, I shot him so all night he leaves and I'm going back down to check and see if there is any evidence. I saw two rounds cases, so I picked them up and I knew that was evidence. They had my fingers prints on them, so I picked them up with a pen and stuck them down in my pocket. Well, the bases marshal came up, which they have no business being there, they had two old sales in there that had been in the marine corp for seven years and two corporals. I said, wait, who goes there? And they said the probase marshal office and I said, would the probase marshal dismount from the vehicle and be recognized and this old looking guy, Lance Corporal, the probase marshal have to do anything. We ...we have to go through it again and I said, I got three rounds in this M-14 and says the god damn probase marshal better haul his ass out of that vehicle or he will be one dead son-of-a-bitch. And mean now! The buddy over there that is riding shotgun you stick two fingers down on that twelve gauge barrel and that will be the first person I see come out of the top. You _____ you keep your hands on the wheel where I can see them. I said I don't even flinch and the guy with the shotgun, now he gets to hold the shotgun up, the gun he had two fingers on the barrel. I said, barrel or not, you drop it there. I said, now strip everything, shoes and the only thing you get to keep is your dog tags and your life. As soon as you get stripped down you lay at the head of that vehicle. Don't you move and the other guy you get out of here and I want to know who in the hell you are. What are you doing on my post. I said, you don't belong here and my orders are precisely only a fire truck can come up this fire lane. Nobody else...they have to check with me and out here I am God, just me and the cowboys. I said, nobody comes up this road. So, he had his hand hanging down on his belt trying to reach for that forty-five. (huh) So, he really thought he could do it. I said, as long as you be there standing, you are not wvatt Earl, and your buddy has kicked back at all. I said, he is in that same position too, his dick his getting wet in it from the sand. I said, I tell you what, you go ahead and I can lay three rounds in the middle of your heart, that you can put a dime on it. Before you can reach that, your forty-five, you strip too, now you got me pissed, all of you. I was _____ if I put up with this and I know what my job is; nobody is going to tell me what to do. Not me because I am the marine at this post and I made him strip and put his forty-five in the barrel and strip all his clothes, put it in the barrel. I made them both back off and lay down on their elbows and I searched the vehicle to see if they had no hidden firearms in there. I wasn't about to get shot and the whole time I was shaken. I was scared to death. I thought this is what my job is, this is what I was supposed to do, and win, lose or draw, I am going to do this and so I put them back in their vehicle. Let them drive off fifteen minutes later, I was relieved up to my nose and I had to tell everybody the same story over and over all day long, about what happened. Finally, had to see the commander general of the base, which was a two star general and had to make a non-sworn statement according to article 31 of uniform code ...of uniform justice of military justice.

Article D) is you write out what happened in your own words. I was giving this statement to the secretary, try to talk to this young lady, I was going to jail. I see myself at Camp New Hampshire, on the rock pile and was scared and I was in _____ I thought gee, I'm getting out in jail because I did my job. They are going to put me in jail because I was going my job. I guess the general must of picked up what I was thinking, he said, you are not going to jail, you're not going to the brig, he said, just back off, be cool. Take it easy and write he was finishing up this statement, and stuff, this lieutenant was walked in with a big old bandage around his ear and it _____ his head was bandaged, it looked like his head was blown off or something. He said, I am getting out of the marine corp, he came here to confirm with you that I was on that road last night. When I wasn't supposed to I said, yes, sir, you was, he said, okay.

Hennen: He said this in front of the general?

Johnson: Yes! Uh-huh. He said the general is going to talk to me in a little bit. I know I will get a new official recommendation you did the right thing. You were absolutely incorrect in dealing with me and the propose marshall people.

Hennen: Was this person career oriented?

Johnson: Yeah! Yeah!

Hennen: Career oriented?

Johnson: A first lieutenant _____ up for captain. You know! I can an, blow his career all to pieces. You know!

Hennen: You mean he did?

Johnson: Yeah! That means _____ did it, you know, anyway, un, well, I was sitting finishing up this statement. The general looked at me and said, we have to do something now. Because very time somebody gets out on guard duty now, he said, everybody will be chanking out rounds everywhere and anywhere that moves out here. Coyotes, jack rabbits, and imaginary shadows, damaging equipment, you know. We have to make an example out of you. When I said before you are the first person to fire a weapon on guard duty since 1944. He said that's twenty years and he said I was curious why did you do it. Because that was my orders and that was what I was told I was supposed to do and those were written out. That was written out and I had to study those number, he said, okay. So he said, come with me so I went out and got in a staff car. Where am I going now got down to my battalion, everybody, almost 600 people in full dress in their uniforms. I got major promotion to PFC. I never walked guard duty in the U.S. again till after I came back from Vietnam. So that's now I made PFC.

Hennen: Hmm. See...so, from there when did you get your orders to go to Vietnam? Did you know that you were going to Vietnam?

Johnson: no! They came through in August of 1964. Around August 18th, something like that, 1964. we had ...because we were with the 1st Marine Force, we had to keep all our gear packed our own personal equipment. Our field marshal packed everything, they come up and picked up six of us, get your gear and go out to the truck. Drove us to some airstrip; I have no idea where this airstrip was. we were in the truck for two or three hours and it was still dark when we got on a plane, all the windows were painted over black. Strap yourself in, guys. we made two stops one night, Clark's Air Force base in the Philippines. they would let us out of the plane. we keep asking where we are going, where are we going? they said, just shut up!

Hennen: There were only six of you that's left?

Johnson: Uh-huh. Yeah. Our final destination was Donrank, we didn't know that where it was. we landed at this strip and got off, it was hot and humid and in the evening they took us over and introduced us to I guess, an advisor that was working with the company. You are going on the hill with us till 3:27 official we were in Vietnam. with the _____ and the bowling alleys, and the doughnut dollys and all that stuff. The next morning we took that hill, our job was to put in metal stakes and bury them, which were a place where the missile launcher would go and these hawk missile launcher, we didn't know what we were doing. They said here! They gave me three stakes apiece, have a sledge hammer, drive the damn things in the ground. it took us three days to take that hill before we could go up and do our job. they strained it and blew half of it up and that was my first experience of seeing actual people getting killed and stuff. We were gone a total nine days. we went after the ...got this place finally secured. we walked around and placed these stakes in ...took down a hill and put us on a plane and brought us back. um!

Hennen: You mean, back to California?

Johnson: Yeah! Uh, the rest of the time we spent in the field, out in the desert; we were told not to talk about it. (uh-huh) I now my mom and sister and my dad at that time, were kind of frantic...no letter. I used to write every other day. They didn't get anything from me for about two weeks. I got back and made a phone call. I'd been away, she said, oh, okay. I understand. Let me talk to my mom, I got you, no sweat. So the rest of the time from the end of August till to the end of October, we practiced what they call man out, which getting all your gear out and trucks and everything. Clean out your warehouses and like we are going out to the desert and setting up missile launchers and tearing them down. I mean, howing out cables and hooking everything up, putting the birds on the launchers. They said, hey! Down. We were very professional at it. we could do it in forty-five minutes. We had to clean out the warehouse and stuff and it took us about two hours. I am talking about tons of shit, but it was organizing...we were that organized. We got it just some where along the line in there.

Hennen: Is this the same six guys or some bunch guys? The whole battalion?

Johnson: No! It was the whole battalion I mean, the rest of the company in the battalion. We pretended because we didn't talk and they were real serious about it so...

Hennen: Some battalion? Was this before the (inaudible)...resolution? You said August of 1964.

Johnson: 1964. It may have been around that time. I'm not for sure. While we were there that was going on. While we were at _____ this was going on at the _____

Hennen: Was that...Was it a secret mission?

Johnson: Yeah! We were forbidden to talk about it and we practiced this mount of stuff so all of a sudden something happened. The fighting _____ or something. Something happened in Vietnam, they took a bunch of us guys from the first land battalion and sent us up to the second land battalion and this was major serious type mount out one each, we were each...had all kinds of generals come by inspecting our equipment and before they...you know, were the battalion or the base general. This was stuff coming from General Zueback's command of the fleet marine force pacific. This was serious shit. We figured that okay, we are going! And we know it. (uh-huh) There was a stand down and they sent us back to the first land battalion. We were there two days and they said, hit it. This was the end of October, I guess. No, uh, let me get this right. I guess it was about the 14th of November. We had everything packed up and sitting on the ground the whole battalion in a big convoy, ready to go. They confined us to the barracks for talking and then called us out of the barracks for talking and for going bowling and talking on the phone. They kept the peace and made us go back to our barracks and confined to barracks and I asked for our phone call or I was leaving that...all I could say and the guy picked me up and asked me who I thought I was talking to. And I said, I'm talking to my mom. He said, you say sometime. I said nothing. He said I asked her that when he got on the phone, asked her did your son tell you anything. She said, no, we were just talking to his sister about her getting married, all this stuff, you know. He identified who he was, you know, well, we got an escape on that one. We were gone, we were to _____ at the post, twenty-nine Palms, California, (inaudible)...we spent two and a half days getting everything loaded up, ready on the snip and left on the night of the 17th. We took the big round circle route up there around Alaska. (uh-huh) I was a house mouse again on the snip and I learned to read upside down when I was about ten. While I was up there, looking over, just happened to be standing there was a order on the desk and it read the first land battalion would meet General such and such in Siagon, an oriental deal or something, and you set up and offer total resistance. Signed Lyndon B. Johnson. Then they started taking up M-14 everybody had an M-14, everybody started well, uh, that was not one _____ here.

G-100 and my out of Okinawa there would be guys around the airfield at whatever airport they moved to all over the place from what I understand you know for a while. They got us at Marston and did combat and some stuff on the base and their command decided they didn't want no extras missing around there, air waves. Somebody got a call and so down to the airport and somebody goes to the G-100, there's no radar equipment, I mean, what I say, I spent 4-October or December of 1964 in the barracks with the guys having a party and opening up my goody packages from home. The ass I went to Camp Hester in Okinawa for technical school. I was there, let's see, February the 1st and maybe when something happened at . I'm not sure. Anyway, the shit had really hit the fan, because the school was not over yet and I think that there was 20 of us and I was like 17 or 18, I was on the base and we were doing what you know, killing targets, launching missiles, they had part of 120 millimeter rockets, part of 107 millimeter rockets, and we could assume what ever was the others was . They didn't have complete details on it and anyway. I was the top grades in this particular area. We did everything like small arms repair, just weapons themselves and but I did real well with these foreign weapons and they had an example there that we got to fire a AK47 rifle, sniper rifle they got off everybody, some of those VC's or North Vietnamese troops out anyway, as far being able to identify all these weapons. I could tell you where they came from. After while because of certain ways they were made (un-um). Of course, I studied hard but we had half a day book and the rest was memorization. And finding and field stripping them and being able to take them apart blindfolded, like we did for our M-14 weapons like and that, and anyway, somewhere around February the 3rd or the 4th, the shit hit the fan and they sent all of us back, it was from my battalion but guys all over and they sent me back to my unit. They said we are going, they need all of us there and we are going to release some of those from other battalions and there were guys due to rotate home, so maybe they were lucky because a lot of Vietnam vets got sent home by themselves. You know, just occasionally. I think there was fifteen of these guys got to leave when we got back to Da Nang, and like I said, up 'til then there haven't been any combat, you know, up 'til that little in August. As we got out the plane in Da Nang, and we were coming up this road on to of 027 mile, we passed a prisoner of war camp and out in the ditch there were four of these guys working this guy over and they had his hands behind his back. He was laying down in the ditch and they were beating him with rods and stomping him. I just, I seen a couple of dead bodies before but I never seen nothing like this before. That kind of cruelty and I was sitting on the tailgate you know, I reared over and puked my guts out and I had my camera out after puking and took a picture and someone said, you're not supposed to take a picture of that, I said, why? Hell, why didn't somebody tell me that before I made an ass out of myself. Before I get into trouble, and I still have slide of it somewhere.

 Huh, so you got the school?

Johnson: Oh, yeah! Just not a picture of the event that happened.

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