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"I'd Rather Be Forgotten Than Dishonored": An Oral and Life History Project with a Vietnam Veteran

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“I’D RATHER BE FORGOTTEN THAN DISHONORED”: AN ORAL AND LIFE
HISTORY PROJECT WITH A VIETNAM VETERAN

By

HAYLEY MICHAEL HASIK, B.S.

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ABSTRACT

More than 2.7 million Americans served in the military during the Vietnam era and roughly 40,000 of them as helicopter pilots in Vietnam, yet scholars are still trying to understand the Vietnam experience. There is little doubt that the war played an influential role in the lives of that generation. Yet, many Vietnam veterans refrained from talking about their service, making it difficult to study and understand their experiences within the existing historical narrative. Using the life history of Warrant Officer James Scott, Hayley Hasik argues that Vietnam veterans—particularly helicopter pilots—are an underrepresented group that, through oral history, can provide an alternative narrative to enhance our understanding of the war and its aftereffects. Gathering primary sources and understanding how the individual fits—as an individual—into the larger historical narrative provides Vietnam veterans with a “voice” and helps give validity and meaning to the abstract.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As any graduate student can attest, the completion of a thesis or capstone project involves countless hours of research, writing, and editing, as well as a lot of blood, sweat, and tears. The following pages contain the history of a man who started as a mere acquaintance and overtime became a friend. That is what countless hours of interviews and questions can do. This project started nearly four years ago and, although extensively documented within these pages, it hardly feels complete. But that is the nature of oral history—the never-ending history.

A countless number of people helped make this project possible. First, I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Paul Sandul who pushed me to think outside of my comfort zone and always had just one more question. Thank you to Drs. Phil Catton, Scott Sosebee, and Diane Dentice for serving on my committee and providing input where needed. As Sandul frequently reminded me, a good thesis is a done thesis, and I thank you all for helping me finish.

To my family: thank you for putting up with all of my frantic phone calls and text messages over problems—both big and small (sometimes they felt catastrophic)—that you hardly understood. Thank you for always supporting me even if you do not completely understand the work I do or the subjects I study. And I would be remiss if I

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Figures	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: “Like Father, Like Son”: Shaping the Outlook of a Vietnam Veteran	17
Chapter 2: You’re in the Army Now: The Life of a Huey Pilot, 1968-1971.....	46
Chapter 3: From Hometowns to Hollywood: The Homecoming Experience	89
Chapter 4: Doing Oral History	123
Explaining the Disciplines: Public and Oral History	124
Literature Review	130
Methodology and Best Practices	144
Conclusion	162
Bibliography	168
Appendix	178
Vita	188

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures

1	<i>Map of Hunt County, Texas</i>	19
2	<i>Scott family in December 1950</i>	29
3	<i>Father and Son on the Ranch</i>	31
4	<i>Corporal Cecil Jack Butler</i>	34
5	<i>Wolf City Football Co-Captains, Fall 1963</i>	41
6	<i>Freshman Year, 1965</i>	42
7	<i>Family Day, Ft. Wolters, May 1969</i>	57
8	<i>Map of the Republic of Vietnam</i>	61
9	<i>Scott and His Crew</i>	70
10	<i>WO Scott Receives a DFC</i>	82
11	<i>Helicopter Tour of Hawaii</i>	86
12	<i>R&R in Hawaii</i>	86
13	<i>Towing out General A. E. Milloy's Ship</i>	87
14	<i>Christmas 1970</i>	99
15	<i>Air Force Flight School</i>	110
16	<i>James Scott, August 13, 2014</i>	167

INTRODUCTION

On March 29, 2017, President Donald J. Trump signed into law S. 305, the “Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017,” which declared March 29, National Vietnam War Veterans Day. This act passed nearly fifty-three years after the Gulf of Tonkin “incident,” forty-nine years after the Tet Offensive, forty-four years after United States troops withdrew from Vietnam, and forty-two years after the fall of Saigon. Yet, this particular law does nothing more than “encourage the display of the flag of the United States on National Vietnam War Veterans Day.”¹ No discussions about the war and its aftermath are to take place. No efforts are made to seek out veterans so as to understand better their experiences and thoughts about the war that, for many of them, defined and shaped the rest of their lives. The law simply *encouraged* the flying of the U.S. flag every year on March 29.

Also in March 2017, albeit less publicized, was news of efforts to install a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery for Vietnam helicopter pilots. For years the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) has worked to get a small monument (32 inches wide and 27.5 inches tall) erected to the roughly 4,500 pilots and crew members killed in Vietnam—nearly 8% of all casualties during the war. The VHPA has

¹ Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017, Public Law 115-15, 115th Cong., 1st sess. (March 28, 2017), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/305/text>.

independently raised the funds necessary to erect the small monument and provide a stipend for its upkeep. Bob Hesselbein, a veteran Cobra attack helicopter pilot, noted that the monument will provide a place to commemorate the Helicopter War and that its greatest value is in providing a sacred space for “recognizing our lost comrades.”² These two related, yet very different, efforts illustrate how—despite the passage of time—the effects of the Vietnam War continue. From a national level on down, efforts to document the history of Vietnam continue as well.

On a similar, but completely unrelated note, nearly four years ago, on November 7, 2013, a group of undergraduate students met in the archives at Texas A&M University-Commerce and shared their experiences conducting veterans’ oral history interviews with a group of high school students. Although interested in the subject and the prospect of conducting their own interviews, the high school students failed to understand the deeper meaning of these interviews, in particular, the proverbial human side of the story that went beyond A-Teams, Hueys, and napalm. Nevertheless, the visit coincided with Veterans’ Day and, as a surprise, James and Sharion Scott sneaked in to meet the group of aspiring historians. Without prompting, the Scotts began to share what oral history meant to them as interviewees. For instances, James somberly discussed the importance of these stories to the study of history for future generations. Sharion, perhaps more

² Meg Jones, “Vietnam helicopter pilots memorial closer to realist at Arlington National Cemetery,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 15, 2017, accessed April 3, 2017. <https://www.stripes.com/news/army/vietnam-helicopter-pilots-memorial-closer-to-reality-at-arlington-national-cemetery-1.458837#.WOJihDvyvcu>.

sentimental and subjective, said something like, “Our grandchildren know that grandpa’s a patriot. The flag means something. You stand up when they play the National Anthem. Now, thanks to these oral histories, they will know why.” For over forty years these stories remained locked away in the memory of Warrant Officer James E. Scott, Jr. No one asked. Perhaps no one cared. But James never felt the need to start that particular conversation anyways. It could be argued that attempts to commemorate the Vietnam War (like those mentioned above) left individuals like Scott feeling misrepresented or unrepresented. Forgotten. Discarded. Cast aside like the Korean War veterans before them. An arbitrary day designed for little more than flag waving did little to document history. To honor and pay respect. A group of inquisitive, young historians, however, began asking questions and brought an entire historical narrative to life.

The son of a “grizzly old” World War II veteran, Warrant Officer (WO) James E. Scott, Jr. grew up in rural Wolfe City, Texas. His father, Scott, Sr., served in the United States Army Air Corps and taught both of his sons to appreciate and value service, but revealed few details of his years as a ferry pilot flying planes all over the world during World War II. Scott, Sr.’s stoic silence was later reflected in his son’s own recollections (or lack thereof) regarding his military service in the Army during Vietnam and, later, the Air Force. These different angles (i.e., Scott’s status as the son of a World War II veteran) provide a richness and uniqueness to Scott’s experience that highlights the personalized and often atomistic nature of military service. Too, Scott is a product of his environment. As explained in subsequent chapters, Scott grew up in the rural South. In

the fifties and sixties. Rural Southern culture not only supported military service, but rather robustly (if not religiously) celebrated it all as honorable, patriotic, and the ultimate test of masculinity. He further had direct familial ties to that generation of veterans who, as the story went, killed Nazis and saved the world, greatly influencing Scott both as a young man and as an older veteran, reflecting on the actions and attitudes of his youth.³

It is precisely these different angles and layers within the life of an individual that make the use of life history valid and fascinating. As oral historian John Hennen noted in his study of Appalachian Vietnam veterans, “there is no common denominator for Vietnam veterans.”⁴ Not only were these veterans molded by their participation in the conflict (time, location, capacity, etc.), but they were also molded by their understanding of the war, their attitudes toward it and military service, and all of the influences that shaped them into unique individuals. Although linked by their status as Vietnam veterans, this generation (and, arguably, all generations that went to war) fought a personalized war that, ultimately, signals a heterogeneous group of veterans not easily unified by their experiences. With that said, one answer to this problem is to conduct oral history projects to help bolster the significance for days like March 29, contextualize monuments like the

³ Joseph A. Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War: Belligerence, Protest, and Agony in Dixie* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2015), 12.

⁴ John Hennen, *Caught up in Time: Oral History Narratives of Appalachian Vietnam Veterans* (Huntington, WV: Aegina Press, 1988), 5.

one for Vietnam helicopter pilots, and enhance our understanding of the various facets of the Vietnam War experience.⁵

Several terms warrant definition up front to aid understanding and what helped guide this particular project: an oral history project of WO James Scott, narrowed on his time as an Army pilot in Vietnam. Oral historian Valerie Raleigh Yow has already provided some useful definitions of life history, biography, autobiography, and oral history that proved helpful throughout the entire process. She defined life history, to start with, as “the account by an individual of his or her life” and an oral history as, essentially, a recorded life history, except that the narrator is recounting their life story at the prompting of an interviewer (an outside perspective and influence however objective and nonintrusive).⁶ Therefore, oral history is a little more complicated than just recording someone. It is, in short, a multi-authored creation of both the narrator and interviewer. Autobiography, of course, is an account of one’s life that is written by the narrator without the assistance of an outside party; in essence, it is a written life history. Finally, biography combines life history, autobiographical writings, oral history, and any other documents and artifacts to create a study of an individual life that is placed within a wider historical context. My project, by definition, is both a life history and an oral history, but it really combines the categories of life history, oral history, and biography to create as

⁵ Hennen, *Caught up in Time*, 5.

⁶ Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3rd ed. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 254.

complete a narrative as possible regarding the life and experiences of James Scott concerning a portion of his life. The structure of this project and the creation of the historical narrative allowed Scott to tell as much of his story in his own words, but also allowed for the inclusion of historical context and additional documentation to help clarify and explain how this individual fits into the larger narrative.⁷

When it comes to studying the Vietnam War, specifically the experiences of veterans, sample size can present an issue, no doubt. Consider that WO Scott was one of more than nine million military personnel who served on active duty during the Vietnam War (1964-1975). Roughly, 2.7 million Americans served in Vietnam; between 1-1.6 million Americans fought in combat situations, provided close combat support, or were regularly exposed to enemy attack. Approximately 40,000 men served as helicopter pilots; 2,197 died or were listed as missing in action and another 2,274 crew chiefs and gunners died. Over 58,000 Americans died fighting in Vietnam.⁸ Scott is part of a generation whose history has been too often boiled down to statistics and categories in an effort to simplify an enormously complicated period in history that contains a vast number of perspectives. While perhaps exaggerated, statistics are facts and figures without faces, creating a history often void of humanity. When soldiers are discussed as

⁷ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 250-54; Alessandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different," in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge, 2003), 64-5.

⁸ Tom Johnson, *To the Limit: An Air Cav Huey Pilot in Vietnam* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006), 1-2.

part of some broader historical narrative they are often consolidated into categories such as foot soldier or pilot, Army or Navy, or the history of a particular division or battalion, which reduces and treats each individual experience as the mere manifestation of a categorical narrative.

Too often, experiences outside of the broad narrative are overlooked or ignored. While this type of history does have value and helps us understand big picture ideas and concepts, there is often very little information to help people understand how the individual fits—as an individual—into this larger narrative. Said differently, soldiers are too often treated as a collective rather than individuals, which ignores a vast amount of individual historical knowledge and facilitates the creation and assignment of group identities. Conversely, veteran reporter Ron Steinman argued that an attempt must be made to “bridge the gap between the theorists and those who served,” noting, “each man formed his own truth about Vietnam.”⁹

Emphasis on the individual’s role in the war often comes by way of biography. Yet, such biographies too often disregard or simply do not consider (for whatever reason) much of the more top-down doings of elites and the political, social, and military complexities of the conflict. Conversely, as indicated already, the absence of veterans’ individual experiences and participation in grander historical narratives and histories is no better. Indeed, historian Meredith Lair studied the development of the “Education

⁹ Ron Steinman, *The Soldiers’ Story: Vietnam in Their Own Words* (New York: Fall River Press, 2000), 21.

Center at The Wall” (i.e., at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC). She argued it worked to sanitize the war by presenting “an idealized, militarized version of citizenship . . . that combines the familiar tropes of the ‘Lost Cause’ and the ‘Good War.’” Lair argued that the focus on the veteran was not the problem, but rather the absence of the war’s complexities and controversies were. By looking at one aspect or the other and not some combination in between, the dominant narrative presented to the public is incomplete, at best, and misleading, at worst. Ultimately, individual stories like Scott’s exist within the complicated and broader narrative of the war and should be analyzed as a piece of the whole. Like war memorials, veterans’ experiences can, if placed in context, “have the potential to give [individuals] pause about going to war except as a last resort.”¹⁰ These personal experiences provide a name, face, and voice to war that humanizes the political and tactical decisions, providing a more thorough history.

On a large scale, James Scott is part of the Vietnam generation and the existing scholarship on the Vietnam War provides a framework in which his life history is contextualized and analyzed. Scholarship on the Vietnam War is often broken down into two camps: (1) orthodox and (2) revisionist. Journalists David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, and Stanley Karnow published the first best-selling books about the Vietnam War and laid the foundation for the orthodox literature that painted the war as “bad” and

¹⁰ Meredith Lair, “The Education Center at The Wall and the Rewriting of History,” *Public Historian* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 35-36, 59.

unwinnable.¹¹ Revisionist arguments emerged in the late 1970s with scholars such as Guenter Lewy, William C. Westmoreland, Harry G. Summers, Jr., Mark Moyar, B. G. Burkett, Lewis Sorely, and James S. Robbins, who rallied around the belief that the United States was justified in going to war and focused more on the conduct of the war than they did on the so-called wrongs and rights of the war.¹² Of course, the literature on the Vietnam War itself cannot be boiled down into a simple black or white, right or wrong dichotomy. It, like the war itself and the lives of so many individual soldiers, is multi-dimensional and complex. Analyses and insights drawing from all sides of the Vietnam War literature will be used as necessary to demonstrate how an individual fits into the larger, widely accepted histories of the war.

James Scott's status as a helicopter pilot contributed greatly to his life story. Indeed, herein lays a unique layer that is a large part of the historical narrative portion of this project. Moreover, the scholarship on helicopters and pilots or crews is, unsurprisingly, divided. For the most part, historians Simon Dunstan, Chris Bishop, and

¹¹ David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992); Neil Sheehan, *A Bright and Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989); Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History, The First Complete Account of Vietnam at War* (New York: Viking Press, 1983).

¹² Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976); Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982); Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); B. G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley, *Stolen Valor: How the Vietnam Generation was Robbed of its Heroes and its History* (Dallas: Verity Press, 1998); Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999); James S. Robbins, *This Time We Win: Revisiting the Tet Offensive* (New York: Encounter Books, 2010).

Walter Boyne focused on the history of the aircraft; when it was developed, how it evolved, the different types of helicopters, and the specific use of helicopters in the Vietnam War. Other scholars like W. E. Butterworth and James Williams looked at the development of Army aviation as a whole from the Army Air Corps (now the Air Force) to the present. They provided more detail regarding the different Army flight programs and how groups like Warrant Officers came to play such a large role in Army aviation.¹³

In contrast, the histories of helicopter pilots and crews are found mostly in memoirs and collections of personal narratives. Chuck Gross, Karl Marlantes, and Robert Mason, three veteran pilots (out of many), wrote about their personal perspectives regarding their service in Vietnam, and all of them outlined their time in country in great detail. Arguably the most well-known of the three, Robert Mason, author of *Chickenhawk* (the most famous helicopter pilot memoir), combined the mechanical with the personal to provide a glimpse into the humanity of the experience rather than the proverbial robotic/mechanical. These Vietnam-era helicopter pilots began documenting their experiences in an effort to share a unique lens through which conflict can be viewed. The pilots noted that they were not the only individuals with such experiences, but they had a responsibility—and arguably an obligation—to share. Now note, the Vietnam War is

¹³ Simon Dunstan, *Vietnam Choppers: Helicopters in Battle, 1950-1975*, revised ed. (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003); Chris Bishop, *Bell UH-1 Huey 'Slicks', 1962-75* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003); Walter J. Boyne, *How the Helicopter Changed Modern Warfare* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 2011); W. E. Butterworth, *Flying Army: The Modern Air Arm of the U.S. Army*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1971); James W. Williams, *A History of Army Aviation: From Its Beginnings to the War on Terror*, (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005).

sometimes called the helicopter war, precisely because of the prevalence of these machines and their invaluable contributions, from transport to troop extractions and much more. Despite the value of helicopters, limited scholarship exists on the men responsible for operating these flying workhorses. This project thus helps to preserve the history and memories of one such helicopter pilot to help enhance the existing historical narrative regarding what it meant to serve during the helicopter war.¹⁴

Histories like that of James Scott also help to bridge an ever-widening generation and information gap and stand as a means of evaluating relative truth and myth against the prevailing memory and narrative of the Vietnam War. Coupled with enduring the violence of combat, returning Vietnam veterans faced numerous pejoratives, such as baby killer, rapist, and warmonger, which contributed—or downright led many—to suffer from addiction, unemployment, homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other psychological issues. From these difficult realities, stereotypes developed, which exacerbated the difficulties returning Vietnam veterans already faced when integrating back into society. Ultimately, stereotypes about Vietnam soldiers largely developed as a means for making sense of the war. Over time, such stereotypes overwhelmed the reality of the war. They helped shape what it meant to serve in the military. Although certain

¹⁴ Burkett, *Stolen Valor*, xxiii-xxvii; Chuck Gross, *Rattler One-Seven: A Vietnam Helicopter Pilot's War Story* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2004), 208-209; Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go to War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011), xi-xii, 207; Robert Mason, *Chickenhawk* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005); James Joyce, *Pucker Factor 10: Memoir of a U.S. Army Helicopter Pilot in Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2003); Jay Groen and David Groen, *Huey: The Story of an Assault Helicopter Pilot in Vietnam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984); Johnson, *To the Limit*.

grains of truth inhabit many stereotypes (i.e., some Vietnam veterans certainly were boozers and junkies), elements of myth also underscore stereotypes. As oral historian Ronald Grele noted, “[Th]e absence of knowledge about the past perpetuates myths about it, and contributes to maintaining the status quo.”¹⁵ Each veteran has a different experience and a story that fits into or defies existing stereotypes or, in some cases, myths. The diversity of experience, in fact, encourages the study of individuals, like James Scott, focusing on their memories and thoughts about the war in comparison to the prevailing and popular historical narrative, i.e., “dominant memory” or “dominant narrative.”¹⁶

This project also has a “new military history” aspect that was important to the historical narrative portion, but also important for informing the approach to this entire project. Rather than focusing on politics and military strategy (more traditional military history themes), this project took a more social and cultural approach (more in tune with postmodernism and social history) focusing on the individual and a bottom-up look at how they fit into larger historical narratives. In the end, this project incorporated a variety of themes (social, cultural, political, economic, etc.) to develop a well-rounded narrative with James Scott at the center.

¹⁵ Ronald J. Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1985), 4.

¹⁶ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Maurice Halbwachs, “From *The Collective Memory*,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 139-49.

According to military historians Stephen Morillo and Michael F. Pavkovic, the emergence of new military history and “war and society” studies in the second half of the twentieth century provided an avenue for better studying the impact of warfare. As this project demonstrates, this approach allowed scholars to look beyond the logistics of campaigns and battles and better understand the varied experiences of warfare. Naturally, oral history provided a means for collecting and preserving information vital to this type of research. Military historian Jeremy Black also supported the use of oral history within the field of new military history because it not only made this information accessible to the public, but recollection through oral history also allowed scholars to understand better what war was like for those who experienced it. Beyond just looking at the experience of war, however, oral history allows scholars to study the relationship between war and society and all of the various other layers.¹⁷

In the end, this is an oral history project. It is meant to serve as my public history project as defined by the History Department and, as such, be my culminating experience for a Master’s degree in History at Stephen F. Austin State University (Axe ’em Jacks!). To be clear, like a traditional M.A.-level thesis, one goal of this project was to create a historical narrative based on both primary sources and secondary literature to show my mastery of historical research and writing. The first part (Chapters One through Three) is such an historical narrative, which provides an in-depth look at the life history of James

¹⁷ Stephen Morillo and Michael F. Pavkovic, *What is Military History?* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 105; Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 49.

Scott starting with his upbringing and who he was before he went into the military. In Chapter One I argue that his life influences and environment not only shaped him as a person (as they do all of us), but are hugely influential in how he approached and viewed his military service both while he was serving and decades later. Chapter Two focuses exclusively on Scott's service in the Army, including basic training, flight training, and his year in Vietnam up to his return home. Not only does this chapter chronicle what Scott did in the Army, but because the historical narrative is based on oral history interviews, there is some self-reflection included as well as viewpoints from other people in Scott's life. Finally, Chapter Three looks at Scott's return home, his readjustment, and his views of his service nearly fifty years later. This chapter covers both his experiences upon his immediate homecoming and his reflection upon the entire homecoming experience for Vietnam veterans. Unfortunately, these three chapters still only tell part of the story and do not delve into Scott's experience in the Air Force flying B-52s or his career in public education. Due to time and the fact that this is a Master's project and not a dissertation, those experiences and how they factor into Scott's life history will have to be part of another project.

Because this was a public history project, the historical narrative serves as part, rather than the entirety, of the project. A substantial portion of the project was conducting the oral histories that then informed the historical narrative chapters. In fact, the entire purpose was to go beyond my training as an historian and not only demonstrate my mastery of public history literature and methods, but to do it—to go out and conduct an

actual oral history project. In Chapter Four (part two) I review and discuss relevant public history literature and oral history best practices and theory. I also provided my methodology for carrying out an oral history project from start to finish.

Part two also provided me an opportunity to compare the work I produced (presented in part three) to the recommended best practices, which allowed me to critique myself and rationalize the decisions I made throughout the process. Within the appendix (part three) I included all the relevant documentation and forms used during the interview process. I have also included a digital component that includes the oral history transcripts (they were too long to include in a hard copy) and the oral history interview recordings since those are the original documents. These additional components demonstrate my mastery of the relevant methodologies and my ability to navigate through the entire process of a project. This part also provided me with a tangible product that not only showcased my skills as a public historian, but further demonstrated my understanding of public history theories and practices through practical application.

James Scott is just one Vietnam veteran out of millions of men and women who served during that era. The study of his life is not meant to create a representative example or generalize the experience for all helicopter pilots. Rather, this project demonstrates the complexities of studying military experiences of a Vietnam veteran and adds to the existing historical narrative and our collective understanding of the experience. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the history and commemoration of the Vietnam War is still being defined and developed. A. D. Horne noted that the

Vietnam generation is “a generation of Americans whose lives were—and still are being—profoundly altered by the war.”¹⁸ This project adds another piece to that narrative to both help complicate and clarify the historical understanding of the experience and provide an outlet for Vietnam veterans to constructively share their personal experiences and understanding of the war that, to summarize journalist and oral historian Michael Takiff, marked them for life.¹⁹

¹⁸ A. D. Horne, ed, *The Wounded Generation: America After Vietnam* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981), xii.

¹⁹ Michael Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes: American Fathers and Sons in World War II and Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), 12.

CHAPTER 1

“Like Father, Like Son”: Shaping the Outlook of a Vietnam Veteran

Growing up around World War II veterans, airplanes, and immersed in rural southern culture all helped shape Warrant Officer James Edward Scott, Jr. and his outlook on life. Although World War II veterans lived all across the country, the melding of the three cultures molded Scott and created a culture unique to that particular time and place. Growing up in the rural American South meant more than just a regional designation. Since at least the Civil War, according to historian Joseph Fry, “a heightened sense of honor, manhood, and patriotism” emerged in the South.²⁰ World War II and the post-war years helped intensify this attitude as the South became home to 60 of 110 new military installations during the war and seven of the ten largest defense contractors between 1945 and 1970.²¹ Scott, whether he recognized it or not, grew up in a region deeply committed to what Fry also labeled the “‘ethic of honor’ and the ‘warrior ethic,’” with a great sense of “military tradition and vocal patriotism.”²² Examples of both military and civil service consciously and unconsciously influenced James during his formative years and also defined the rest of his life.

²⁰ Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War*, 12.

²¹ Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War*, 36, 40.

²² Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War*, 14, 4.

Scott's father, a "grizzly old" World War II veteran known to his friends and family as Edward, served in the United States Army Air Corps during World War II and taught both of his sons to appreciate and value service. James recalled how his father's "belief in the system and America and his service instilled in me and my brother . . . a sense of service also"—a trait that shaped the rest of his life.²³ Although Edward expressed pride in his service, he revealed few details to his sons. When asked what his father did in the Air Corps, James responded, "I just know that he did [serve]. I say he was a ferry pilot, but he never said anything. . . . I don't know why he would fly just as a ferry pilot . . . he never told me any stories about that."²⁴

Edward's stoic silence influenced his sons' own recollections (or lack thereof) regarding their respective military careers; James served in the Army during Vietnam and later the Air Force during the Cold War and Rodger (three years James's junior) had a twenty-year Army career as a field artillery officer and AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter pilot. Growing up in the post-World War II South placed James in a culture historically known for its overt patriotism and commitment to military service, which, combined with his father's experiences, influenced the man James became and his outlook on his own experiences in the military. From his father to local veterans, James grew up respecting service and idolizing the men who had worn the uniform. "Like father, like son" is a

²³ James Scott, OH 1001.2, interviewed by Courtney Crumpton, Commerce, TX, June 18, 2013, East Texas War and Memory Project, Texas A&M University-Commerce Archives and Special Collections [hereafter TAMUC Archives], James G. Gee Library, Commerce, Texas.

²⁴ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

phrase that comes to mind when comparing the experiences and recollections of these two generations of servicemen.²⁵

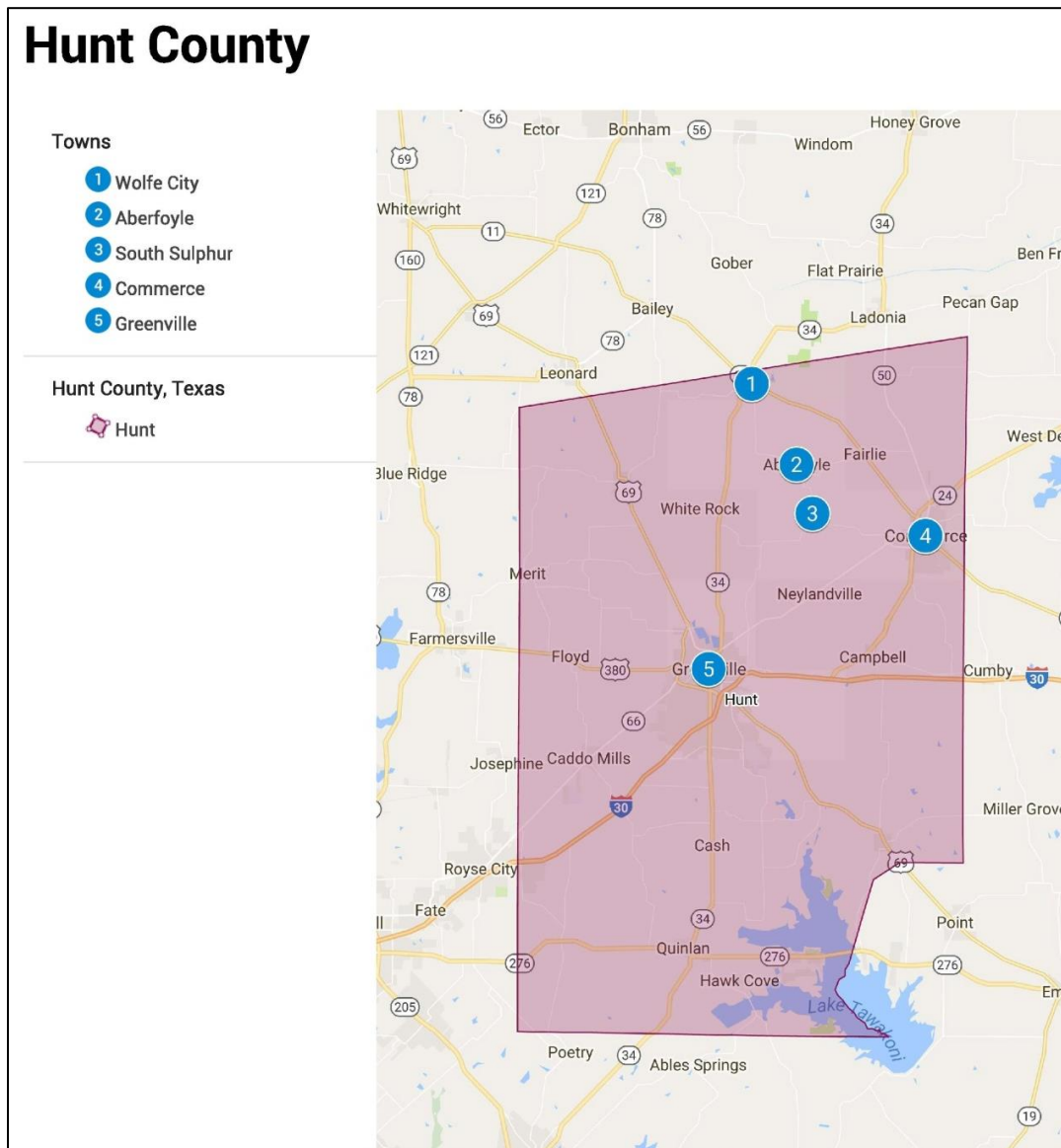


Figure 1. *Map of Hunt County, Texas*. The noted towns and communities provided the setting for James Scott's life and are referenced throughout. Map created by author using Google MyMaps.

²⁵ Myra MacPherson, *Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 63; Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War*, 14.

James's own story began with his father. Like many "old soldiers," Edward told his sons bits and pieces of his experiences, focusing on logistics or humorous moments—the human interest stories—while glossing over the less desirable experiences of war. Edward spent the majority of his formative years in Aberfoyle, Texas—a small cotton farming community between Commerce and Wolfe City (see Figure 1). He graduated high school in 1929, which coincided with the start of the Great Depression. In order to afford tuition, Edward spent a year working odd jobs and in 1931 enrolled at East Texas State Teachers College (ETSTC) in Commerce, Texas.²⁶ Within two years he received a teacher's certificate, which allowed him to work during the school year and complete his degree during summer sessions. On July 9, 1933, Edward married Elva Louise Voss in Commerce where she also attended ETSTC. That fall Edward taught at and served as principal in a 3-teacher school in the small community of South Sulphur, Southeast of Wolfe City. Edward made \$95 a month. By 1935 Elva began teaching, too. The couple taught together in the Pleasant Ridge and Yowell communities until Edward resigned in 1941 to go to work for the War Department. The couple then moved to Houston, Texas where they both worked for the civil service. Edward, specifically, worked as a Contracting and Purchasing agent at Ellington Field. Later that same year, the couple

²⁶ The school started as East Texas Normal School in 1889. The name changed to East Texas Normal College in 1917 then East Texas State Teachers College in 1923 then East Texas State College in 1957 and East Texas State University in 1965. The university was finally renamed Texas A&M University-Commerce in 1995 when it joined the Texas A&M system. "History & Traditions," Texas A&M University-Commerce, accessed April 3, 2017, <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutus/historyTraditions/default.aspx>.

moved to Waco, Texas where Edward helped set up the Supply Department at Waco Flying Field.²⁷ James recalled hearing stories from his parents about how they “would go in and set up the airfields, bring in personnel, get housing, and this type of thing.”²⁸ They often mentioned the airfield in Waco they helped establish because it was the only field still operational at the time. For James, these particular stories highlighted his father’s view of service beyond just the military—a republicanesque sense of civic duty, doing good for your fellow man was just as important as wearing a uniform.

In 1942, Edward entered Flight Training and in 1943 became a Flight Instructor at Brayton Flying Service in Cuero, TX.²⁹ According to Elva, “Under this program, [Edward] was a Civilian Army Reserve and taught Army Cadets to fly.”³⁰ Edward’s time at Brayton gave him experience teaching acrobatics to cadets. Although older when the war came along—James noted that his “father was in his late-30s, early-40s when . . . he started out working for the government”—Edward received his commission in the Army Air Corps in 1944 “as a Flight Officer in the Air Transport Command, Ferry Division, and ferried aircraft to many parts of the world.”³¹ Edward was multi-engine qualified and

²⁷ Wolfe City Chamber of Commerce, *The History of Wolfe City, Texas*, centennial edition (Wolfe City: Henington Publishing Company, 1990), 494.

²⁸ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

²⁹ Wolfe City Chamber of Commerce, *The History of Wolfe City*, 494.

³⁰ Wolfe City Chamber of Commerce, *The History of Wolfe City*, 494.

³¹ Wolfe City Chamber of Commerce, *The History of Wolfe City*, 495.

flew “everything from P-38 fighters to B-17 bombers.”³² Edward’s missions included flying planes from a factory in Kansas to the east coast, India, or wherever the military needed them. He even ferried a C-47 military transport aircraft over the Hump.³³ James recalled a story Edward told him about flying a brand new P-38 Lightning and he joked, “It’s like driving a sports car after you’ve been driving a bus.”³⁴ These brief stories were typical of Edward’s military accounts and make up most of what his sons know about his military service. Following V-E Day, May 8, 1945, Edward found himself stateside training student navigators in New York. By October 1945, the Army Air Corps discharged Edward and he returned home to rural northeast Texas.³⁵

Often represented as the “good war,” World War II stood as an example of a national triumph and a war in which American servicemen—and a nation—could be proud. As journalist Myra MacPherson noted, World War II “was history’s anomaly;

³² J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

³³ J. Scott, OH 1001.2. In 1937, the Chinese government asked General Claire Lee Chennault for a consultation on the state of the Chinese Air Force. For the next eight years, Chennault and Madame Chiang (Secretary General of the Chinese Air Force and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek’s wife) developed the 14th Air Force—known as the Flying Tigers—to defend China from growing Japanese aggression. Chennault commanded a one-hundred man American volunteer group (AVG) who flew supplies and aircraft over the Himalayan Mountains from India to China throughout WWII. This route was referred to as “flying the Hump.” Martha Byrd, *Chennault: Giving Wings to the Tiger* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987), 4-15, 45-50, 67, 89-122; Duane Schultz, *The Maverick War: Chennault and the Flying Tigers* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 27-28, 46-48; Michael Schaller, “American Air Strategy in China, 1939-1941: The Origins of Clandestine Air Warfare,” *American Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 3-19; Keith Ayling, *Old Leatherface of the Flying Tigers: The Story of General Chennault* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1945).

³⁴ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

³⁵ J. Scott, OH 1001.2; Wolfe City Chamber of Commerce, *The History of Wolfe City*, 494.

America's one black-and-white, good-versus-evil war of the twentieth century."³⁶ This narrative construction inevitably led to comparisons between World War II and all subsequent conflicts involving the United States, including Vietnam. The nature of warfare in Vietnam differed from previous conflicts. Yet, combat is a unifying experience that often transcends time and contexts. Oral historian Michael Takiff laid out a comparison between veterans of World War II and Vietnam depicting the popular differences, but his comparison also revealed surprising commonalities. Takiff argued, "If we see World War II only as a great national triumph, we forget that it was also a great national ordeal. . . . Likewise, to see Vietnam purely as an American embarrassment is to ignore the sacrifice and courage of those who served."³⁷ By placing World War II veterans on a pedestal, they became "plaster saints" rather than human beings.³⁸ Likewise, Vietnam veterans, too, were human beings just like their fathers. As Takiff pointed out, "the experience of war is no less pivotal in the lives of Vietnam veterans than in those of veterans of World War II."³⁹ Emphasis on the differences between the wars created an "us-versus-them" dichotomy that influenced how the wars were remembered and—in the vocabulary of social and cultural theory—legitimated World War II as the "good war," which was the war these young men grew up hearing about and

³⁶ MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 48.

³⁷ Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 6-7.

³⁸ Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 7.

³⁹ Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 10.

thus idolizing.⁴⁰ The comparison between Vietnam veterans and their veteran fathers seemed inevitable.

The discussion of Vietnam is further complicated by combat comparisons that attempt to describe Vietnam as what it was not rather than what it was. As historian Robert O. Self acknowledged, “Measured appraisals of the war’s brutality have found little to distinguish Vietnam from the grisly combat in Europe and Asia during World War II. Even the rituals of killing—the severed heads and ears—and the close proximity of soldiers and civilians were not unknown to American soldiers in previous wars.”⁴¹ Life histories, like this project with James Scott, reveal commonalities between the wars that help bridge what sociologist Tracy Kerner has said is the “division of sons from their fathers.”⁴² Growing up in post-World War II America (1945-1960) meant that Baby Boomers were often immersed in “cultural heroism” as a result of the U.S. emerging as a victorious world power and World War II veterans returning from a war in which they could, as a result, be explicitly proud. According to Self, “Cold War militarism valorized the dutiful manliness of the warrior and defined the American military as an international

⁴⁰ Narrative, especially historical narrative, as a device of legitimation enjoys a rather larger literature, but two lay texts are Hayden White, *The Content and Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); and James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴¹ Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s*. (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 57.

⁴² Tracy Karner, “Fathers, Sons, and Vietnam: Masculinity and Betrayal in the Life Narratives of Vietnam Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,” *American Studies Journal* 37, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 63.

instrument of liberty.”⁴³ This Cold War narrative, coupled with World War II veterans’ status within the “fabric of communities across the country,” legitimated the idea that “military service was a sure path to manhood” and World War II provided the ultimate examples of militarized masculinity.⁴⁴ In hindsight, as Karner has argued, the treatment World War II veterans received was “the *exception*, not the *rule* in the history of American veterans” from the Civil War to Vietnam.⁴⁵ Karner continued, “World War II had provided a model of how soldiers were treated as well as how warfare was conducted.”⁴⁶ The Vietnam War signified yet another shift in social attitudes toward veterans and crafted a new narrative regarding the treatment of veterans that would not be reevaluated until President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. As Vietnam veterans came home, they were, as Self stated, “unrecognizable to a nation steeped in the romance of victory in World War II and the righteousness of Cold War certainties.”⁴⁷

While servicemen dealt with changing perceptions and attitudes abroad, groups like the New Left signified a shift in attitude on the homefront. The New Left garnered support from students on college campuses across the U.S. looking for a political movement or group to fight for civil rights, university reform, and, eventually, protesting

⁴³ Self, *All in the Family*, 50.

⁴⁴ Self, *All in the Family*, 50.

⁴⁵ Karner, “Fathers, Sons, and Vietnam,” 70.

⁴⁶ Karner, “Fathers, Sons, and Vietnam,” 74.

⁴⁷ Self, *All in the Family*, 73.

the Vietnam War. Although disjointed in their efforts, New Left rhetoric against what they saw as a complicit Orwellian state coincided with a divergence from the World War II ideal described above and brought into question the imperialistic and immoral nature of the war in Vietnam. Young men who went to Vietnam and sought the same recognition as their fathers over twenty years before them, found themselves greatly disappointed both during their service and after their return stateside. Antiwar rhetoric often strayed from dealing with the whys and hows of the war and affected the service personnel carrying out their day-to-day orders. Antiwar protestors also served as what communications scholar J. Justin Gustainis has called a “negative reference group” and often led to increased public support for the war because the targeted audience, citizens of middle America (i.e., Nixon’s mostly white “Silent Majority”), found them “distasteful, even threatening.” Not only did a generation gap exist between what the journalist Tom Brokaw called the Greatest Generation and the Baby Boomers, but an explicit intragenerational gap developed among the Boomers, with the New Left and veterans as just two groups among many who clashed during that time.⁴⁸

Biographer and journalist Myra MacPherson argued that Vietnam veterans identified more closely with veterans “who fought in the senseless slaughter of World

⁴⁸ “Origins of the New Left,” *Michigan in the World*, University of Michigan, accessed April 3, 2017, <http://michiganintheworld.history.lsa.umich.edu/antivietnamwar/exhibits/show/exhibit/origins-of-students-for-a-demo>; David Cochran, “I. F. Stone and the New Left: Protesting U.S. Policy in Vietnam,” *The Historian* 53, no. 3 (Spring 1991): 505-7; J. Justin Gustainis, *American Rhetoric and the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 111; MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 26.

War I more than they ever did with their fathers of World War II.”⁴⁹ Once again, World War II and the Greatest Generation proved to be history’s anomaly. The Baby Boomer generation as a whole, not just Vietnam veterans, struggled to deal with the celebratory narrative imparted upon them by the Greatest Generation. From attitudes about socio-cultural norms to views of war, the two generations began to diverge as the Baby Boomers reached maturity.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, one attitude passed from generation to generation by the “hero-fathers” from World War II was “a sense of obligation and a belief in the glory of war.”⁵¹ Although a natural comparison developed, Scott never explicitly compared his service to that of his father—no battlefield comparisons or discussions of time in the cockpit. Therefore, the connections between World War II and Vietnam dealt mostly with attitudes and beliefs, not combat experiences or the swapping of war stories. It is important to note that although Edward served in the military, he and James had very few conversations about Edward’s military service or James’s military service before, during, or after the fact.

Born July 10, 1946, James Edward Scott, Jr. spent his first years in Aberfoyle and the majority of his childhood in Wolfe City, just like his father before him. Settled just after the Civil War, the community of Aberfoyle reached its peak between 1900 and 1933

⁴⁹ MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 5.

⁵⁰ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 208-209.

⁵¹ Peter Marin, “What the Vietnam Vets Can Teach Us,” in *The American Experience in Vietnam: A Reader*, edited by Grace Sevy, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 78.

with a population of 100 and a maximum of four businesses—one of which was a general store. In 1904, the Post Office closed and mail was rerouted through Wolfe City.

Between 1933 and 1945, the population declined from 100 to 25. According to former U.S. Ambassador Fletcher Warren—also a Wolfe City native—population and trade in Aberfoyle declined as roads and communications improved and because of the proximity to Wolfe City, a larger and more established industrial town. Following his military service Edward and Elva returned to Aberfoyle to transition back into civilian life and start a family. Despite the declining population of the community, Edward purchased a little grocery store in Aberfoyle with living quarters on the second floor. Elva ran the store while Edward farmed Blackland cotton as a tenant farmer. The store provided basic supplies and gasoline to the residents in and around the small cotton community who, because of distance or some other obstacle, found themselves unable to travel regularly to the larger neighboring towns of Commerce, Wolfe City, and Greenville. The store supplied those necessities for the area farmers and their families. A large cotton gin and a few other small businesses made up the rest of the small community.⁵²

In 1947, Edward “had a real good crop . . . one of the best he ever made” and sold the store in December. In January 1948, the family, which now consisted of James and

⁵² Fletcher Warren, “A History of Northern Hunt County,” *The Wolfe City Sun*, November 8, 1963, Wolfe City, Texas, Local History Vertical File Collection, TAMUC Archives; James Scott, OH 1001.1, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, Commerce, TX, May 6, 2013, East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives; J. Scott, OH 1001.2; James Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, Wolfe City, TX, September 22, 2016, TAMUC Archives.

his younger brother Rodger, moved to Wolfe City.⁵³ Cecil Jack Butler, a local World War II veteran and family friend, bought and ran the store for several years. Edward continued to farm throughout James's childhood, but worked on various other projects as well.

Wolfe City provided additional employment opportunities. The town started as a cotton mill located near the banks of Oyster Creek. By the early 1880s, roughly 200 people and



Figure 2. *Scott family in December 1950.* James Edward, Jr. is sitting on his father's lap while Rodger sits on his mother's lap. Photograph in Wolfe City Chamber of Commerce, *The History of Wolfe City, Texas*, centennial edition (Wolfe City: Henington Publishing Company, 1990), 495.

a dozen businesses made up the town. In the 1880s, both the Cotton Belt and the Santa Fe Railroads went through Wolfe City.⁵⁴ According to Warren, "The railroad service made Wolfe City an integral part of the outside world."⁵⁵ By 1892—less than a decade later—Wolfe City had an estimated population of 1,800 and a growing business district, including several cotton gins and

⁵³ J. Scott, OH 1001.2; Wolfe City Chamber of Commerce, *The History of Wolfe City*, 495.

⁵⁴ W. Walworth Harrison, *History of Greenville and Hunt County Texas* (Waco: Texian Press, 1977), 226; David Minor, "Wolfe City, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 3, 2017.

⁵⁵ Mary Lloyd, "Farm Boy to Ambassador: Fletcher Warren Looks Back," *The Wolfe City Sun*, vol. 85, no. 36, April 8, 1976, Wolfe City, Texas, Local History Vertical File Collection, TAMUC Archives.

the only cotton seed oil mill in Hunt County.⁵⁶ The Great Depression and the accompanying fall of cotton prices spurred resident migration within Hunt County. By 1940, 38% of Hunt County residents lived in Commerce or Greenville.⁵⁷ Whatever the case, towns like Wolfe City remained small, rural, and primarily agricultural.

Edward's work ethic and approach to business most likely stemmed from coming of age during the Great Depression and working hard at a variety of jobs to provide for his family.⁵⁸ James saw his dad as "a renaissance man in a lot of ways. He could do anything and he did everything."⁵⁹ Edward's primary jobs included farming and ranching. He bought land throughout Hunt County and ended up with a 2,000 acre cattle ranch where he raised premium Hereford cattle and later Quarter horses. He even provided cutting calves for the Fort Worth Stock Show. To supplement his income, Edward did some crop dusting, taught classes for local veterans, worked for Hennington Publishing Company, owned a small airfield in Wolfe City, bought a bulldozer and did work for local soil conservation efforts, and several other ventures. From May 1962 to June 30, 1975, Edward served as Postmaster of Wolfe City. According to Elva, "Edward also served as Justice of the Peace, Prec. 3, from July 28, 1980 until he resigned

⁵⁶ Harrison, *History of Greenville*, 209, 226.

⁵⁷ Cecil Harper, Jr. "Hunt County," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 3, 2017, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch22>.

⁵⁸ May, *Homeward Bound*, 38-9.

⁵⁹ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, September 22, 2016.

September 30, 1984.”⁶⁰ Mostly self-taught, Edward sought jobs that not only provided for his family, but also provided necessary services for his community—i.e., buying a bulldozer to help with local soil conservation efforts. Edward maintained this work ethic during James’s childhood. Throughout his various business ventures, Edward taught both James and Rodger the value of hard work and the satisfaction of a job well done. Rodger commented that his dad “shaped our attitude about life” and provided just one of the influences on the Scott boys.⁶¹ The community in which they grew up provided another influence.



Figure 3. *Father and Son on the Ranch*. Photograph in East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives.

⁶⁰ Wolfe City Chamber of Commerce, *The History of Wolfe City*, 495.

⁶¹ Rodger Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, phone, January 29, 2017, TAMUC Archives.

Many young men from Scott's generation grew up influenced by their fathers' war. These young men also grew up aware of the sacrifice and service exhibited by earlier generations. They grew up hearing the exciting war stories often far removed from the realities of combat. Many fellow Vietnam veterans have remarked about how their fathers' generation influenced them. Fellow Vietnam veteran Mickey Hutchins, for example, noted that he grew up with the idea that "military service is a responsibility of citizenship," a concept that James was also taught.⁶² Their fathers answered the call to serve and as Hutchins also pointed out, "It would be awful hard to look your dad in the eye and say, 'Dad, I'm sorry, but this one's just not for me.'"⁶³ In many ways, as fellow Vietnam veteran Peter Marin pointed out, World War II veterans "passed on to [their sons] a sense of obligation and belief in the glory of war."⁶⁴ Veteran Vince Way noted that "World War II was huge. It was ingrained in us that it was a grand and heroic thing that our country did and our fathers did."⁶⁵ Even Rodger, who did not cite an overt influence from World War II veterans, recognized the influence of this particular generation many years later after his own military career.⁶⁶ James's wife Sharion also noted that her father-in-law "was very patriotic. He was very loyal. He never once

⁶² Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 81.

⁶³ Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 81.

⁶⁴ Marin, "What the Vietnam Vets Can Teach Us," 78.

⁶⁵ Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 2.

⁶⁶ R. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik.

wavered in his values and his thoughts and feelings about the United States.”⁶⁷ This is how he raised his sons and highlights the values he instilled in them. In many ways, these young men carried this pride in service and country with them to Vietnam. Not until asked to serve themselves did Baby Boomers realize that their war bore little resemblance to their fathers’ war.

The “war” stories James and Rodger remembered hearing while growing up were typically more human interest stories focused on the more humorous and light-hearted moments and not about the horrors of war. James recalled that the stories Edward “liked the most were ones where he rode the camels” or “looked at the pyramids over in Egypt.”⁶⁸ And James remarked that his father’s claim to fame was that “one of his fellow squadron mates [when he was stationed in Dallas] was Gene Autry.”⁶⁹ Rodger recalled even fewer stories about his dad stating, “He never talked about it that much. He did every once in a while mention a few things about it, but never to any great extent.”⁷⁰ In fact, most World War II veterans—as well as veterans from other eras—were, according to historian Joanna Bourke, “keen to return to their former lives and civilian sensibilities.” That left little time for dwelling on “deep-seated personal bitterness and

⁶⁷ Sharion Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, Wolfe City, TX, September 22, 2016, TAMUC Archives.

⁶⁸ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

⁶⁹ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

⁷⁰ R. Scott, interviewed by Hasik.

disillusionment.”⁷¹ As one World War II veteran recalled, “[people] didn’t want to hear what men have to endure. They wanted dime-novel stories of adventure. They didn’t understand what I was trying to say.”⁷² Just as veterans of later wars, like James, felt misunderstood and misrepresented, so, too, did earlier veterans. Although Edward refrained from sharing specific details of his military service, he did share his attitudes about service nonetheless, which were hardly a secret from his two sons. Even his silence influenced the way both sons talk about their own service a lifetime later.



Figure 4. *Corporal Cecil Jack Butler*. This photograph illustrates how young these World War II soldiers were at the time of their service. As the saying goes, “War makes men of boys.” Photograph in “Butler, Cecil Jack, 1925-,” Northeast Texas Digital Collections, TAMUC Archives.

James and Rodger both recalled that many of their dad’s contemporaries in and around Wolfe City were also veterans with whom they spent countless hours. Although the details often left something to be desired, the World War II veterans the Scott boys

⁷¹ Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in 20th Century Warfare* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 353.

⁷² Andrew J. Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture From the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 49.

grew up around provided them with hero figures to emulate. One of James's greatest heroes was, and still is, Cecil Jack Butler who stormed Omaha Beach six days after the invasion of Normandy, France on June 6, 1944, fought through the Hürtgen Forest (also known as the meatgrinder on the border of Belgium and Germany), and received a Purple Heart with an oak leaf cluster and a Bronze Star with four oak leaf clusters.⁷³ Butler had purchased the Aberfoyle store from Edward and remains a close family friend. Scott also noted that his heroes—and the men he looked up to—were the guys in World War II “riding on a Higgens boat 200 yards out from a beach that’s being raked with enemy fire and plumes of water and smoke going up around you and running up on that beach and letting that rack down and charging—I just can’t imagine that. And those men who did that at North Africa, Normandy, Iwo Jima—goodness gracious!”⁷⁴ Staff Sergeant John Howe echoed the same sentiments stating simply, “You know, our great heroes were World War II heroes.”⁷⁵

Just as neighbors and friends influenced Scott’s attitudes about war and normalized the idea of military service, so too did popular culture. And both modeled

⁷³ Each oak leaf cluster signified a subsequent award of the same decoration. For example, a Purple Heart with an oak leaf cluster signified that he received two Purple Hearts. For more information on Cecil Jack Butler consult the Northeast Texas Digital Collections and the Special Collections and Archives at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Cecil Jack Butler, OH 754, interviewed by Glenn Gainer, June 12, 2007, American War Experience--World War II [hereafter AWE--WWII], Northeast Texas Digital Collections, TAMUC Archives, accessed December 4, 2015; Cecil Jack Butler, OH 1004, interviewed by Brianna Crews, May 23, 2013, East Texas War and Memory Project, Northeast Texas Digital Collections, TAMUC Archives.

⁷⁴ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

⁷⁵ Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 85.

normative male behaviors. During the 1950s and 1960s, Hollywood avoided making films directly related to the Korean and Vietnam wars in favor of World War II; although, some films discussed Vietnam anachronistically.⁷⁶ As a veteran in Karner's study pointed out, "The 50s and the 60s were patriotic, Americans was [sic] patriotic . . . so they looked up to the uniform."⁷⁷ Films like those starring John Wayne reinforced the idea of "militarized masculinity."⁷⁸ James noted that John Wayne films were "accepted and glorified." As Self also noted, the confluence of culture during this period legitimated the belief that, "To serve one's country was a duty and an honor but also believed necessary for the survival of the 'free world.'"⁷⁹ Historian Michael C. C. Adams opined that Hollywood had a hand in constructing the dominant narrative of World War II as "the best war ever."⁸⁰ Films about the Second World War depicted "a good war story that ignores the tragedy, lies, and stupidity at the heart of the real historical events," further reinforcing the image of World War II as the "good war."⁸¹ Baby Boomers grew up with these images of war. As Self described, up to the mid-1960s, military service in America

⁷⁶ Susan A. Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 180.

⁷⁷ Karner, "Fathers, Sons, and Vietnam," 70.

⁷⁸ Stacy Takacs, "Jessica Lynch and the Regeneration of American Identity Post 9/11," in *Why We Fought: America's Wars in Film and History*, edited by Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 503.

⁷⁹ Self, *All in the Family*, 47.

⁸⁰ Frank J. Wetta and Martin A. Novelli, "On Telling the Truth about War: World War II and Hollywood's Moral Fiction, 1945-1956," in *Why We Fought*, 265.

⁸¹ Wetta, "On Telling the Truth about War," 265.

“was a sure path to manhood.”⁸² And, as MacPherson and Self noted (and James’s recollections alluded to), the men who came of age during the Vietnam era “were destined to be marked by their fathers’ World War II memories,” and defined by “inherited truths about manhood and patriotism, citizen and state.”⁸³ Not until after the escalation of American involvement in Vietnam and questions regarding the validity of American involvement began to surface did the romance of military service and manhood come into question.

A great number of the veterans Scott grew up around served as pilots during World War II. Scott recalled spending countless hours around these veteran aviators who congregated at the two little airports in Wolfe City. Vietnam veteran James Joyce referred to these rural communities as “pilot country”—rural America full of fields and farms where many private individuals had personal planes and/or small airstrips. Joyce’s description accurately reflected the culture the Scotts grew up in and around. “In pilot country you’d find little airports with a single grass runway and a windsock. The farmers, ranchers and small town folk gathered there to gossip, talk about the weather and the going price of crops, and generally shoot the breeze.”⁸⁴ Unlike youth in more urban areas, young people growing up in pilot country viewed airplanes as another piece of farm equipment. Rodger pointed out that while almost everyone around his dad’s age was a

⁸² Self, *All in the Family*, 50.

⁸³ MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 48; Self, *All in the Family*, 50.

⁸⁴ Joyce, *Pucker Factor 10*, 5-6.

World War II veteran, he viewed their influence as an unconscious act that went largely unnoticed by him at the time. This environment was just the way they grew up, Rodger noted, and they never knew any other way of life. James, however, relished the culture and seized every opportunity to take flight and hang around these older veterans. Looking back, James noted the heavy influence that these men and this culture had on his upbringing, life choices, and outlook on life.⁸⁵

From pilot country to time spent with former World War II aviators, Scott's interest in airplanes and a desire to fly started at an early age. Thanks to men like Edward and his fellow veteran aviators and friends Bernard Clayton and Paul Fulks, both James and Rodger spent quite a bit of time around aviation. Scott started by turning cardboard boxes and Tinker toys into airplane cockpits and spent hours "flying" wherever his imagination took him. As he got older, Scott went with his dad to one of the two airports in town and sometimes caught a ride with men like Clayton or Fulks, who was also his godfather. Clayton served as a Naval aviator during the Second World War and ended up owning several cotton gins across the state of Texas. Fulks—Uncle Paul to James and Rodger—"owned and started Texas Tag, which is now Ennis Tag" in Wolfe City and owned the local newspaper, *The Wolfe City Sun*.⁸⁶ These two men along with Edward

⁸⁵ R. Scott, interviewed by Hasik.; J. Scott, OH 1001.2; J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 1, September 22, 2016.

⁸⁶ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 1, September 22, 2016. Texas Tag is now Ennis Tag and Label. The company was founded around the cotton industry that dominated the area in and around Wolfe City. Originally, the company printed all the identification tags used to mark bales of cotton. Ennis, Inc. acquired Texas Tag in the 1970s, making them the largest producer of cotton tags in the world. The company has expanded to include label manufacturing, advertising specialties, and Post-it Note product

were just a few of the veteran aviators in the area during Scott’s childhood. During his formative years, Scott spent time around different airplanes from tail-draggers to Bonanzas further encouraging his love of all kinds of aircraft as later evidenced by his service in both the Army flying helicopters and the Air Force flying B-52 bombers.⁸⁷

Scott’s experience with planes went far beyond just looking at them. In fact, Scott experienced his first aircraft incident as a young boy, not during combat. One day while flying with Fulks they experienced a complete electrical failure and had to make an emergency landing at the Addison airport. Without any electrical controls, the pair unsure about the status of their landing gear—up, down, or somewhere in the middle—circled the airport for assistance. Scott remembered that after several passes around the airport they received a green light and Fulks proceeded to land the aircraft. “As soon as the nose came down the front gear collapsed” and “the prop tore up everything.”⁸⁸ Scott recalled, “In my mind I’d always seen these things, you know . . . blow up.”⁸⁹ As soon as the plane came to a stop on the runway Scott “had that door open and the next thing I remember I was standin’ on the fence way off from that thing. And I turned around and . . . Uncle Paul was sittin’ their shakin’ his head.”⁹⁰ Scott also spent time flying with his dad when

lines in the Wolfe City plant. “Our History,” Ennis, Inc., accessed April 3, 2017, <http://www.ennis.com/about/our-history/>.

⁸⁷ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 1, September 22, 2016.

⁸⁸ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 1, September 22, 2016.

⁸⁹ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 1, September 22, 2016.

⁹⁰ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 1, September 22, 2016.

Edward ferried planes around the state for friends like Clayton. While some boys grew up around cars, Scott spent time with airplanes. Like Joyce, Scott referred to it as a culture and something that was in his blood.

As Scott matured into a young adult, his deep sense of service and patriotism became more apparent. While in high school, Scott began to hear about the conflict building in Vietnam, but when he graduated in 1964, the extent of U.S. involvement and commitment was uncertain. Then, the Gulf of Tonkin “incident” happened in August 1964. President Johnson responded to the incident with the claim “we still seek no wider war,” although he authorized preparations for military escalation regardless.⁹¹ In a speech given on April 17, 1965, Johnson argued for the “necessities of war” to protect the innocent South Vietnamese from the evil communist Viet Cong, but he reassured the American people that U.S. involvement was “carefully limited” and directed at strategic targets.⁹² Yet, American troops amounted to almost 200,000 by December 1965.⁹³ Despite Johnson’s claims, America was at war. Following high school, Scott enrolled in

⁹¹ Sean Kay, *America’s Search for Security: The Triumph of Idealism and the Return of Realism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 82.

⁹² “Statement by the President: ‘Tragedy, Disappointment, and Progress’ in Viet-Nam,” April 17, 1965, *Public Papers of the President*, vol. 2, January 1-May 31, 1965, 193. <http://michiganintheworld.history.lsa.umich.edu/antivietnamwar/files/original/d3d28ecd39cc9431ca44091d749447be.pdf>

⁹³ “Peace Research and Education Project,” *Michigan in the World*, University of Michigan, accessed April 3, 2017, http://michiganintheworld.history.lsa.umich.edu/antivietnamwar/exhibits/show/exhibit/origins-of-students-for-a-demo/peace_research_and_education_p.

college and received a student deferment, which kept him temporarily protected from the draft. Nevertheless, the Vietnam War became a growing concern.

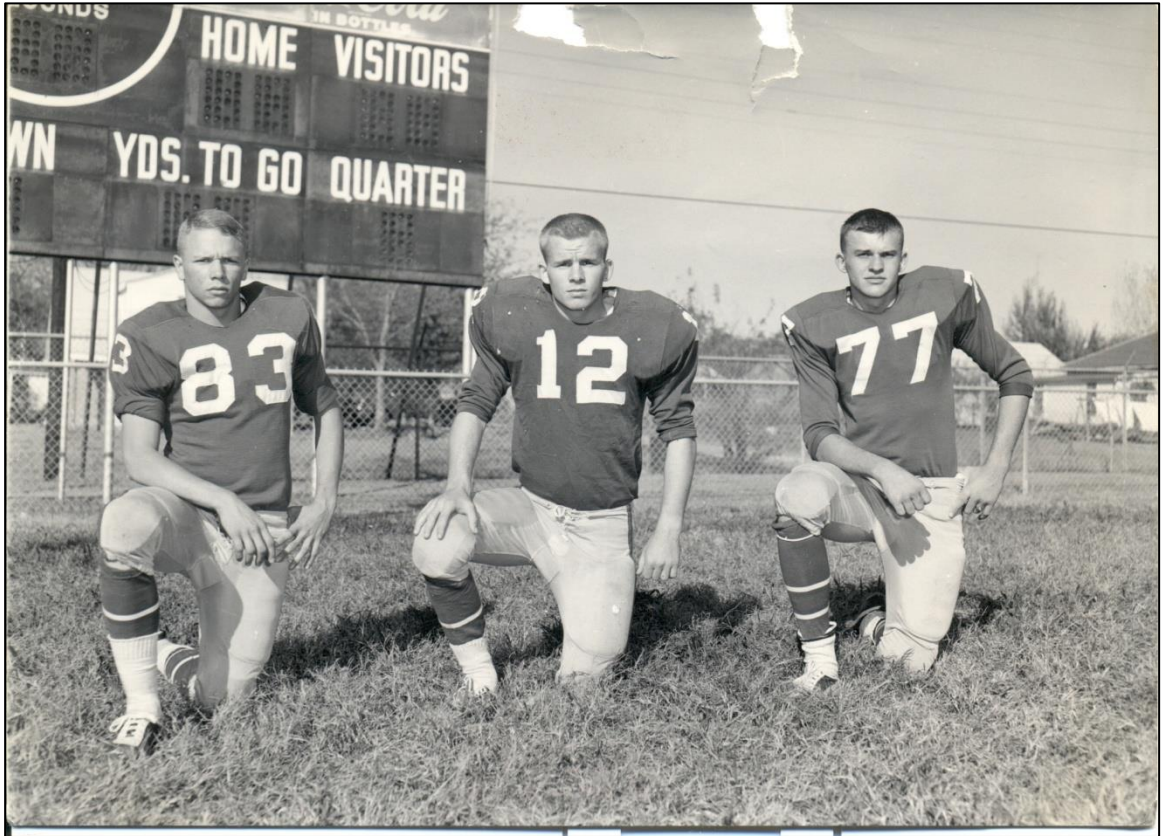


Figure 5. *Wolf City Football Co-Captains, Fall 1963.* Scott, *left*, with co-captains of the football team Bobby Hames, *center*, and Larry Adams, *right*, was more concerned with playing football, finishing high school, and getting into college than the possibility of war in Southeast Asia. Although U.S. advisors arrived in South Vietnam as early as 1950, many young men like Scott did not dwell on the possibility of war. Photograph in East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives.

In 1965, President Johnson began the escalation of troops in Vietnam following the start of Operation Rolling Thunder, an air offensive designed to last eight weeks with the purpose of crippling infrastructure and destroying North Vietnamese morale.⁹⁴ The

⁹⁴ Karnow, *Vietnam*, 415, 454.

offensive ended up lasting from March 1965 through November 1968, and ultimately failed to deter North Vietnamese leaders. Still, Operation Rolling Thunder drew more attention to the growing conflict. Scott first enrolled at Henderson County Junior College in Athens, Texas on a football scholarship before he “got banged up a little bit and . . . transferred back up here to East Texas,” where he decided to combine his love of sports and education to become a secondary educator and coach.⁹⁵ While



Figure 6. *Freshman Year, 1965*. Photograph in East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives.

attending then-East Texas State University (today known as Texas A&M University-Commerce), Scott lived at home and worked full time at Texas Tag to put himself through school. The conflict in Vietnam still grew and Scott took note, but his day-to-day priority was school and work, not a conflict halfway around the world.

The year 1968 marked a pivotal time in the Vietnam War, Scott’s life, and the nation. In January 1968, the war in Vietnam changed drastically following the Tet

⁹⁵ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

Offensive, a coordinated assault on over one hundred South Vietnamese cities and towns that coincided with the lunar New Year. The minimum goal was to inflict enough damage that the U.S. would be forced to withdraw. The maximum goal called for a decisive victory with complete destruction of the South Vietnamese Army and a political uprising in the South. On January 30, 1968, over 80,000 North Vietnamese forces—mostly National Liberation Front (NLF)—took American and South Vietnamese forces by surprise.⁹⁶ Both sides had earlier agreed to a cease-fire because of the sacred nature of the holiday, however, NLF forces used the opportunity to catch their enemies off guard. Because of the Tet Offensive the war shifted from more rural areas to, what journalist Stanley Karnow described as, “South Vietnam’s supposedly impregnable urban areas.”⁹⁷ In the two years leading up to Tet, support for the war declined steadily because of, according to Karnow, “mounting casualties, rising taxes, and, especially, the feeling that there was no end in view.”⁹⁸ Johnson’s popularity had also “been dwindling for years—

⁹⁶ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 206. The National Liberation Front (NLF) emerged in November 1960 as a broad populist coalition that sought to appeal to all groups opposed to Ngo Dinh Diem’s regime in South Vietnam. The People’s Army of Vietnam was composed of NLF forces (approximately 80% prior to Tet) and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). The NLF forces were mostly southern peasants with the basic goal of taking on South Vietnamese forces to carve out large liberated areas of control. Both the NLF and NVA suffered catastrophic casualties during Tet and failed to achieve even their minimum goal of U.S. troop withdrawal and a Southern uprising. Robert J. McMahon, ed., “Chapter 9: The Enemy: North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front,” in *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 273-311; McMahon, “Chapter 10: The Tet Offensive,” in *Major Problems*, 314-354.

⁹⁷ Karnow, *Vietnam*, 523.

⁹⁸ Karnow, *Vietnam*, 545.

partly because of the war, but also because the electorate's faith in his economic and social programs (i.e., the Great Society) had faded."⁹⁹

News of Tet quickly reached the U.S. and contradicted General Westmoreland's previous assurances that the U.S. was winning the war and further denigrated American support for President Johnson and his ability to conduct the war. Overall, the offensive stunned the United States and the world.¹⁰⁰ Combined with the failure of Operation Rolling Thunder and a general inability for the U.S. to swiftly defeat North Vietnamese forces, Tet provided yet another reason for Americans to withdraw their support from the war. President Johnson announced on March 31, 1968, that he would not run for reelection, but he still participated in peace talks in Paris in May 1968 where he agreed to halt "the bombing of North Vietnam but stepped up the air war in the South."¹⁰¹ Following the recent assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy in August 1968 (just as Chicago police pulverized protestors at the Democratic National Convention), Scott graduated from East Texas State University with a Bachelor's degree in education with an all-levels certification and hopes of teaching social studies and coaching football. A change in draft status from II-S to I-A also accompanied his diploma.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Karnow, *Vietnam*, 546.

¹⁰⁰ Karnow, *Vietnam*, 523.

¹⁰¹ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 209-10.

¹⁰² J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

In the final months of 1968, Scott worked to figure out his future—searching for jobs while also contemplating military service—and the American public transitioned into an election cycle. Fed up with the war, the American people elected Republican candidate Richard Nixon in the 1968 election with the hope that he would, as promised, bring an end to the quagmire in Vietnam. Nixon took office in January 1969 and eventually proclaimed a policy of Vietnamization, the process of drawing down American troops and transitioning the responsibilities of the war to the South Vietnamese. Eventually, Nixon’s plans for Vietnamization bore little resemblance to his initial promise especially after he ordered American troops to invade Laos and Cambodia and began saturation bombing. Nevertheless, in late 1968 and early 1969 America still needed replacement troops while Nixon decided how to proceed with the war in Vietnam. In the end, 1968 marked a pivotal year in the Vietnam War, but changes in political regimes and execution of the war did not immediately end the conflict. This marked the beginning of James’s war.

CHAPTER 2

You're in The Army Now: The Life of a Huey Pilot, 1968-1971

The change in James Scott's draft status not only affected him, but it affected his new bride. Although James and Sharion—one year his junior—grew up together in the small town of Wolfe City, they never dated until after high school. The couple dated off-and-on for several years before finally marrying on August 31, 1968, one week after Scott graduated from college. Scott recalled that his draft status changed the week following the wedding, but it did not catch either of them off guard because Scott knew military service was inevitable. In the weeks and months leading up to graduation, Scott looked for jobs. Scott recalled, “Nobody would hire me. I went around and they said, ‘Well, sure, bud, good. What’s your draft status, sir?’ You know, we were at war at that time. I said, ‘Well, I’m I-A.’ ‘Well, I’m sorry.’ Because they knew that if they hired me they couldn’t put anything in me because I’d leave.”¹⁰³ With a reclassified draft status, a new wife to support, and unable to find a teaching position or long-term job, Scott needed to find a way to make a living.

At the start of the Vietnam War, the draft followed the same guidelines as the draft during World War II and Korea—young men registered at the age of eighteen and

¹⁰³ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

were eligible for service until age twenty-six. The federal government instituted student deferments during the Korean War draft that led to the inequities associated with the Vietnam draft. During the Vietnam War, young men in America, like those during World War II and Korea, received a draft classification. A classification of I-A meant fit for military service, II-S meant deferred as a full-time student, and IV-F meant unfit for service. Young men from wealthier families often went to college or found other ways to avoid the draft.¹⁰⁴ Historian Christian Appy referred to the Vietnam War as a “working-class war” because “roughly 80 percent [of those who served] came from working-class and poor backgrounds.”¹⁰⁵ Moreover, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the American working class underwent a vast demographic transformation coinciding with the rise of feminism and racial desegregation. Too, the ideals and tropes of masculinity shifted as the working class diversified; men no longer shouldered the sole responsibility of providing for and determining the family’s social position. According to historian Robert O. Self, manhood and economic class now assumed a central role “in the debates over the war.”¹⁰⁶

Ironically, Scott completed college and still received a draft notice, which arrived after he enlisted and shipped out to basic training. In the late-1960s, draft calls increased

¹⁰⁴ MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 92; Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 529; Christian Appy, “A Working Class War,” in *Major Problems*, 252.

¹⁰⁵ Appy, “A Working Class War,” 251.

¹⁰⁶ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 175-77; Self, *All in the Family*, 48.

and, according to Appy, “the portion of soldiers with at least some college education increased significantly”; Scott’s change in draft status placed him among this group of educated draftees.¹⁰⁷ In late 1969, the draft changed when the U.S. instituted the draft lottery system and each eligible male born between 1944 and 1950 was assigned a number corresponding to the day and month of their birth. Nevertheless, draft classifications, like the one Scott received, reflected the World War II draft criteria and classified an individual based on their physical aptitude and occupational status.¹⁰⁸

Scott could have resisted the draft and run off to Canada, reenrolled in school, or sought conscientious objector status, but none of those options were acceptable in the Scott house. To sum up historian Joseph A. Fry’s explanation, the Southern trend of military service (mostly influenced by the romanticism of World War II) encouraged young men to enlist or succumb to the draft because of a duty to their country; their fathers fought before them and now it was their turn.¹⁰⁹ Sharion Scott recalled that Edward “was absolutely not accepting” of draft dodgers or resisters.¹¹⁰ Growing up around other military families, the Scotts had very little respect for those who blatantly avoided service. After an extensive search—and the possibility of military service still looming—Scott finally found a job working on a construction crew, which was not how

¹⁰⁷ Appy, “A Working Class War,” 259.

¹⁰⁸ Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 529; Appy, “A Working Class War,” 259.

¹⁰⁹ Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War*, 150-53.

¹¹⁰ Sharion Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, Wolfe City, TX, January 6, 2017, TAMUC Archives.

Scott imagined using his hard-earned college degree. He recalled with a chuckle, “Right after I’m graduating, had that big diploma in my hand . . . I’m out here goin’, [makes a shoveling gesture] Oh, look here guys! Get yourself an education!”¹¹¹ It was then that James and Sharion made the decision and he began the necessary steps to join the military.

Historian Christian Appy noted that “draft pressure became the most important cause of enlistment as the war lengthened.”¹¹² These “draft-motivated volunteers” decided to join the military with the hope that they would have at least some choice or control as to which branch they served in and in what capacity.¹¹³ Scott, one of these “draft-motivated volunteers,” understood the inevitability of military service and wanted some control over his future. A small part of him also contemplated a career in the military after his mandatory service in Vietnam. Scott knew that strategic decisions early in his service would influence a future career in the military. He recalled of his decision, “I knew I didn’t want to be a foot soldier. I’d seen enough of that on television; that didn’t sound like fun. And also, my background and wantin’ to fly kicked in.”¹¹⁴ Although Scott based some of his decision off media portrayals and popular cultural depictions of soldiers—images he later described as inaccurate representations—these

¹¹¹ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹¹² Appy, “A Working Class War,” 260-61.

¹¹³ Appy, “A Working Class War,” 260-61.

¹¹⁴ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

images presented one of the few sources of information on which he could base his decision. Only after his own military service did Scott change his view of these representations of American troops.

Scott's first stop was the Navy recruitment center to discuss the possibility of joining the naval flight program. After a circumstantial meeting with a naval pilot friend from East Texas State University, Scott decided that the Navy was not the best choice for him. Scott remembered their conversation, stating, "He'd been in the Navy for six years and he said he was gettin' out. And I asked him why. Said, 'Well, we're gone nine to ten months. We come home and we retrofit and rearm and we, you know, couple months and then we go again.' He says, 'I'm never home.' Said, 'The tours are just too much.'"¹¹⁵ A short time later Scott had a chance encounter with a "military helicopter that made a forced landing not far from [his] home," and a conversation with the Warrant Officer flying the helicopter coupled with the conversation with his buddy in the Navy peaked Scott's interest and sent him to the nearest Army recruiter. The Army recruiter informed Scott that because of his college degree he would be a good candidate for Officer Candidate School (OCS). The first question out of Scott's mouth was whether or not he could fly if he went to OCS. The recruiter told Scott that he would most likely be required to serve a tour as an infantry or artillery officer before he would ever see the

¹¹⁵ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

inside of a cockpit. The recruiter then informed Scott about the Warrant Officer program to which he remarked, “Sign me up!”¹¹⁶

In November 1968, after exploring all of his military options, Scott enlisted in the U.S. Army Warrant Officer program and was inducted in Dallas, Texas. Scott then took Trans-Texas Airways—“we used to call ’em Treetop Airways”—to Fort Polk, Louisiana for basic training.¹¹⁷ Established during the Second World War and named after a Confederate general, Fort Polk served as an infantry training center and later a location for advanced combat training specifically designed for troops headed to Vietnam. Housed in barracks constructed during World War II, Scott remembered basic training as a shift in mindset from a civilian to a military man.¹¹⁸ As historian Joanna Bourke has pointed out, basic training (often called “basic”) throughout the twentieth century served one essential function: to break men down and rebuild them into “efficient fighting men.”¹¹⁹ Scott approached basic as he did the rest of his military service; it was a job. And his job was to just get through the program, “because as a Warrant Officer signing up for the flight program you had a class date. . . . If you didn’t make that class date, you may not be able to go into the program,” which meant the possibility of an infantry assignment—a

¹¹⁶ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹¹⁷ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹¹⁸ “Fort Polk History,” U.S. Army Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, Louisiana, last modified November 7, 2014, accessed November 27, 2014, http://www.jrtc-polk.army.mil/JRTC-Polk_NEW/sites/about/history.asp; Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 60.

¹¹⁹ Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 67.

job Scott wanted to avoid if possible.¹²⁰ Although basic helped Scott transition out of civilian life and taught him the Army way of life, it was not all that useful in Vietnam. As a helicopter pilot, Scott never carried a weapon other than the .38 caliber pistol issued to him.

In early 1969, Scott reported to the Army Primary Helicopter School at Fort Wolters in Mineral Wells, Texas for phase I and II of Warrant Officer Candidate training, a total of twenty weeks. Phase I consisted of combined Ground School, a physical training period, and Officer Candidate School, and lasted four weeks. During phase II, the candidates learned primary flying techniques, including actually flying helicopters as well as navigation techniques, radio procedures, and other basics.¹²¹ These men trained at Fort Wolters because it served as home to the U.S. Army Helicopter School (September 1956-January 1973), actually renamed the U.S. Army Primary Helicopter Center in March 1967. The significance of Fort Wolters dated back to March 1941 when it was activated as an Infantry Replacement Training Center during World War II with as many as 50,000 troops at one time. In 1958, Colonel Daniel H. Heyne commented on the Army's decision to use Fort Wolters for flight training, a decision he attributed to the good weather, consistently clear skies, and open air space without worry of other aircraft.

¹²⁰ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹²¹ Butterworth, *Flying Army*, 171.

The helicopter school trained enlisted men, warrant officers, and commissioned officers with no previous flight training.¹²²

Serving as a Warrant Officer (WO) differed slightly from a commissioned officer in that WO's served as "single-specialty officers" with career tracks focused on a particular field, whereas commissioned officers were characterized by their "increased levels of command and staff responsibilities."¹²³ For Scott, WO training "was an officer training just like they trained the commissioned officers" except he received "a warrant, not a commission."¹²⁴ Warrant Officers made up nearly 80% of all Army pilots during the Vietnam War and their "in-between status" did not cause many problems because they wanted to fly and being a WO meant they flew a lot. Scott noted the increased

¹²² Keith E. Bonn, *Army Officer's Guide*, 48th ed. (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1999), 346-347; Willie H. Casper, Jr., ed., "History of Camp Wolters, Texas," *Primary Helicopter Center Facility*, vol. 3 of *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters*, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph24853/m1/33/>; Willie H. Casper, Jr., ed., "U.S. Army Primary Helicopter School Commandants," *Primary Helicopter Center Personnel*, vol. 2 of *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters*, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph24854/m1/5/>; Willie H. Casper, Jr., ed., "Camp Wolters Resignated Fort Wolters, Texas," *Army Primary Helicopter School, Officer Graduation Class*, vol. 4 of *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters*, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph24852/m1/9/>; Willie H. Casper, Jr., ed., "Camp Wolters Progress (11-29-58)," *Primary Helicopter Training Facility*, vol. 3 of *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters*, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph24853/m1/12/>; Willie H. Casper, Jr., ed., "Wolters: Top Copter School Home," *Primary Helicopter Training Facility*, vol. 3 of *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters*, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph24853/m1/38/>.

¹²³ Serving as a Warrant Officer [WO] differed slightly from a commissioned officer in that WO's served as "single-specialty officers" with career tracks focused on a particular field whereas commissioned officers were characterized by their "increased levels of command and staff responsibilities." Bonn, *Army Officer's Guide*, 345.

¹²⁴ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

inspection standards that accompanied WO training, joking, “Gosh, I didn’t get a pass outta that thing for months it seemed like!”¹²⁵ On top of training, the men attended class and Scott recalled that it was “at least two to three weeks before we ever got a chance to meet our [flight] instructors,” let alone set foot in an aircraft.¹²⁶ Scott expressed how some men had difficulty adjusting to the student leadership positions and the individual responsibilities. In the end, “we had young men who, during that period, just couldn’t fit into that and they left the program.”¹²⁷

Following the Korean War, military aviation underwent a transformation that affected aviators like Scott during the Vietnam War. As noted by Navy veteran and military historian James W. Williams, aviation evolved from its role “strictly as battlefield transportation or fire adjustment to aviation as an integral part of a combined-arms fight.”¹²⁸ This movement signified an Army effort to transition to “an Air Fighting Army” or an “aerial cavalry.”¹²⁹ This transition required more manpower. In the twenty years following World War II, the Army struggled to retain a force of qualified personnel and tried several different methods to try and remedy the situation. These efforts included use of re-rated Navy and Air Force pilots, expanding the program to allow warrant

¹²⁵ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹²⁶ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹²⁷ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹²⁸ Williams, *A History of Army Aviation*, 66; Butterworth, *Flying Army*, 66.

¹²⁹ Williams, *A History of Army Aviation*, 68-9.

officers to attend flight training, and training commissioned Army officers as pilots. Each approach had its pros and cons, but the expansion of the training program in the years following the Korean War laid the foundation for Army aviation during the Vietnam War. Prior to 1962, the threat of total war in Europe distracted from the possibility of war in Southeast Asia. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara ordered a special study known as the Howze Board—officially called the U.S. Army Tactical Mobility Requirements Board but nicknamed after its president Lieutenant General Hamilton H. Howze—that looked at the potential for Army aviation and what could be done to increase effectiveness. Few high ranking officers and government officials took Howze’s suggestions seriously and the Army made little progress toward developing Sky Cav (the nickname for an aviation cavalry) and airmobility / air assault capabilities. In many ways, Howze was the Billy Mitchell of the Vietnam War.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, Army helicopters began serving in Vietnam as early as 1961.

¹³⁰ Williams, *A History of Army Aviation*, 86, 97. Brigadier General William “Billy” Mitchell (1879-1936) became an advocate for the use of military air power between the world wars. In 1917 he published “General Principles Underlying the Use of Air Service in the Zone of Advance, A.E.F.,” and argued that no military branch could achieve victory on their own. He defined two types of aviation: tactical (immediate use near ground troops, i.e., ground support) and “strategical” (had independent missions designed for long-term strategic value rather than immediate support). Mitchell advocated the creation of an independent air force and became increasingly vocal when his proposals were repeatedly ignored by his superiors in both the military and in Washington. At the time, Mitchell’s ideas and efforts were untried, untested, and questioned. In 1946, ten years after Mitchell’s untimely death due to heart problems and influenza, Congress posthumously awarded him a special Congressional Medal of Honor for his “outstanding pioneer service and foresight” in military aviation. Williams, *A History of Army Aviation*, 18; “Brig. Gen. William “Billy” Mitchell,” National Museum of the US Air Force, April 9, 2015, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/MuseumExhibits/FactSheets/Display/tabid/509/Article/196418/brig-gen-william-billy-mitchell.aspx>.

As operations rapidly expanded in Vietnam around 1966, the Army experienced a shortage in aviation manpower. Not only did the Army need more pilots, but the aviation force structure also expanded to include a variety of assignments beyond just transportation units. The Army needed highly qualified pilots prepared for major combat roles.¹³¹ Unlike the infantry, “all air crew were volunteers.”¹³² Not only did men volunteer for these positions, they also trained extensively, which took longer than infantry training. When the Army recognized the shortage in manpower and failed to graduate the necessary number of pilots each month, they placed increased value on warrant officer aviators. Something had to be done and an increased number of draftees failed to help these aviation units meet their quotas. Skeptical senior officers like Brigadier General George P. Seneff, Jr. questioned the abilities of these young WOs with barely more than 200 hours of flying experience by the time they arrived in Vietnam. Within several months, however, the young aviators proved themselves capable and qualified for combat, even though the situation was less than ideal. Although rigorous, the program gained popularity and allowed the Army to maintain their high standards and meet manpower demands. The training of WO aviators was a serious undertaking because these men would lead troops in combat situations; men’s lives depended on them and their leadership abilities as well as their skills.¹³³

¹³¹ Williams, *A History of Army Aviation*, 124.

¹³² Butterworth, *Flying Army*, 171.

¹³³ Butterworth, *Flying Army*, 171

Scott remembered the rigor of class and pilot training as necessary to prepare the men for whatever they might face.¹³⁴

Mineral Wells had the only basic training facility in the country and they had a humongous flight line. They trained in about three or four different types of helicopters there. . . . My section—or my flight, it wasn't called a platoon actually, it was called a flight—and my flight . . . would fly in the morning and then do our class in the afternoon for a week. And then the next week we may fly in the afternoon and do classes in the morning. . . . We not only had academics we had to pass, 'cause we had academics in everything from weather and navigation, military custom and law, safety procedures, and our passing grade was, I think, was 80 or 85.¹³⁵

Before too long, flight training accompanied course work and, while men fought to keep their grades up, they also fought to keep the aircraft in the air. Scott remarked, “Helicopters are not meant to fly. . . . They're an anomaly—they fly, but they're not supposed to. They make too much racket and their things go around and twist and turn. Just learnin' to hover the thing was a thrill.”¹³⁶ Once the men added flying to their training, the standards



Figure 7. *Family Day, Ft. Wolters, May 1969.* Photograph in East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives.

¹³⁴ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; Marshall, *Price of Exit*, 47; Williams, *A History of Army Aviation*, 136-37.

¹³⁵ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹³⁶ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

increased further and the Army expected them to become proficient in both academics and a variety of flying techniques.

Keep in mind that while going through training, Scott also had a wife at home. Sharion had a job at a bank in Greenville, Texas and in November 1968, when Scott reported to Fort Polk, she moved back in with her grandparents who lived outside of Wolfe City. Scott and Sharion recalled not seeing each other again until Christmas when he finally earned a few days off. After that visit, the couple did not see each other again until Scott transferred to Mineral Wells for his first round of flight school. He found himself engrossed in training, which helped pass the time, and the couple kept in contact via letters—a routine that continued throughout his service. The proximity of Mineral Wells to Wolfe City afforded Sharion the luxury of weekend visits and the ability to attend base functions with Scott.

Phases III and IV of Scott’s training took place at Fort Rucker, Alabama and included “the use of a helicopter in the field, under tactical instrument conditions” and the transition into the Huey—known officially as “Bell Huey-series helicopters” or UH-1 Iroquois—that Scott would fly in Vietnam.¹³⁷ Fort Rucker became the location of the Army’s Aviation School in 1953 as the role of Army aviation shifted from battlefield transportation to “an Air Fighting Army,” which required more training space both on the ground and in the air. Since facilities already existed at Camp Rucker and nearby Carns

¹³⁷ Butterworth, *Flying Army*, 174, 159.

and Ozark Army Airfields, locals eager to keep the existing facilities in use, supported the decision. At the time, Carns Army Airfield was one of the top four busiest airports in the U.S. depending on the training schedule.¹³⁸ While at Fort Rucker between June and November 1969, Scott spent many hours in the Huey getting acquainted with the aircraft and completing instrument training. The so-called workhorse of the Vietnam War, developed by Bell Helicopter Company, the Huey was powered by a Lycoming gas turbine jet engine with overhead and synchronized antitorque tail rotor systems. The distinct *whopping* sound of the Huey set it apart from other aircraft and, eventually, the Huey became the defining symbol of the helicopter war in Vietnam.¹³⁹ Some veterans even referred to the *whop, whop, whop* as the “sound of comfort.”

When Scott transferred to Ft. Rucker, Sharion fortunately moved with him. As a Warrant Officer Candidate, Scott held a status somewhere between enlisted man and commissioned officer, which came with a protocol to follow and certain expectations of Sharion as a military wife. While Scott completed helicopter training, Sharion spent time learning about the Red Cross, who to contact while he was overseas in the event of an emergency, hospital care, etc. She also volunteered at the base hospital. Although Scott wore the uniform and underwent military training, they were, in essence, in the military together. Sharion commented about the experience, “I was learning to live the life he had chosen. . . . Military life was very different than anything I’d ever been exposed to. . . .

¹³⁸ Williams, *A History of Army Aviation*, 66; Butterworth, *Flying Army*, 169.

¹³⁹ Williams, *A History of Army Aviation*, 66; Marshall, *Price of Exit*, 46, 41; J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

James and I had lived a rural life . . . and I don't want to say we were naïve and sheltered, but I guess we really were. . . . There was a whole different culture. It was an awakening, you know, for both of us.”¹⁴⁰ In describing her feelings regarding the overall military experience Sharion stated, “I think those spaces in time can never be replicated. Because they're a special time and you do things not because they're planned but because they happen and so it was a good thing.”¹⁴¹

At the end of November 1969, after a short leave and visit home to Wolfe City, WO Scott shipped out to Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam via Fort Lewis, Washington, Alaska, and Japan. Scott recalled, “I missed Thanksgiving that year all together.”¹⁴² Use of Cam Ranh Bay as a strategic port dated back to the French in the late nineteenth century because of its seventeen miles of sheltered deep water, which easily accommodated larger ships. In 1962 and 1963, Admiral Harry D. Felt, the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), pushed for the construction of a deep-water pier because he argued that Cam Ranh Bay would prove to be an “invaluable resource.” His foresight was an asset and, as U.S. involvement escalated in 1965 and 1966, the U.S. used Cam Ranh as a supply port while the military scrambled to complete piers elsewhere in Vietnam. Cam

¹⁴⁰ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

¹⁴¹ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

¹⁴² J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

Ranh quickly became the second-largest port in Vietnam (next to Saigon) and the third-busiest airbase (behind Saigon and Danang).¹⁴³



¹⁴³ Richard Tregaskis, *Southeast Asia: Building the Bases: The History of Construction in Southeast Asia* (Port Hueneme, CA: U.S. Navy Seabee Museum, 1975), 45, 141, 143.

Previous Page: Figure 8. Map of the Republic of Vietnam. The four Corps Tactical Zones, also called military regions, of South Vietnam are labeled north to south. The country was divided geographically to divide up military and administrative duties, almost like zone defense. Scott spent most of his time stationed in I Corps in the far north of South Vietnam. Annette R. Hall, "Map of South Vietnam," *I Served*, accessed April 6, 2017, <http://www.i-served.com/southvietnammap.htm>.

While Scott traveled to Vietnam, Sharion returned home to Wolfe City. She recalled how Scott's dad "was so supportive"—probably a result of his own military service over twenty years prior.¹⁴⁴ Sharion remembered,

His dad stayed up with me all night waiting for James to call from one station to another when he could get to a phone to tell us where he was. And he played cards with me; we sat in the TV room and played cards all night long. And Dad never stayed up. . . . And, then, when I went to bed that night after we talked to James the final time I can remember him comin' in and kinda pullin' the covers up—I don't know how people do it by themselves.¹⁴⁵

Although their separation during training provided a glimpse into the reality of deployment, neither James nor Sharion Scott were completely prepared for the next twelve months.

As soon as the plane touched down, the "excitement" began for Scott and his buddies. He recalled,

I got there and they had us hold because they were having problems, my understanding was they were mortaring the base so we had to hold outside and circle. I'm sittin' there in that thing going, "Wait a minute, now. I hadn't even gotten there and they're already mortarin' the base." We landed and I remember them landin' pretty hot and taxiing off there and keepin' the thing runnin', openin' the doors, puttin' the ramps up, and everybody came off and they drove up in these big school buses painted blue or green and we had wire mesh over the windows. They hustled in those things and off we went to the induction center.

¹⁴⁴ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

¹⁴⁵ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

I'm thinking, "Well, this doesn't sound like a fun place to be." And it was hot! . . . And it was scary, truthfully.¹⁴⁶

As Scott and the other fresh faces filed off the bus and headed toward the placement center in Cam Ranh, the war weary troops headed back to the States filed past. The contrast between the battle-hardened veterans and the innocent boys from home caught Scott's attention. With this image in mind, Scott spent several days going through re-qualification and waiting to receive his orders. "I had to qualify with a weapon again . . . with the gas, I had to do that again. Boy, I'd already done that twice. Three times was way too many! . . . I had to make sure I had all my medical records and all my shots were correct and all the paperwork was in." As Scott pointed out, "The Army's all about paperwork."¹⁴⁷

The Army sent Scott from Cam Ranh Bay up to Chu Lai and assigned him to A Company, 123rd Aviation Battalion, 23rd (Americal) Infantry Division—call sign "Pelican"—stationed in I Corps.¹⁴⁸ Created in 1942 from miscellaneous American troops stationed in the South Pacific, the Americal Division received the official designation as the 23d Infantry Division after World War II. Deactivated in late 1945, but then reactivated in Panama in 1954 for eighteen months and again in Vietnam from September 1967 through November 1971, the Americal Division never served in the United States.

¹⁴⁶ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁴⁷ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁴⁸ South Vietnam was divided into four regions, numbered I to IV north to south. I Corps was the northernmost region in South Vietnam. Lair, *Armed with Abundance*, 16.

Activated overseas, the Americal suffered organizational issues and poor leadership, further exacerbated by the effects of the twelve-month rotation cycle that plagued all units in Vietnam.¹⁴⁹ A platoon from the Americal Division under the leadership of Lieutenant William Calley was also responsible for the My Lai Massacre, which tends to overshadow any of the other divisions.¹⁵⁰ The Army activated the 123d Aviation Battalion of the 23d Infantry Division in December 1968 following the deactivation of the 161st Aviation Company. At that time, the Army also created A Company—the Pelicans—and B Company—the Scorpions, later renamed Warlords.¹⁵¹ The three platoons in A Company—the company to which Scott belonged—flew a variety of missions including VIP escorts, “ash and trash which is haulin’ supplies,” and supporting “Special Forces units, both the Vietnamese and the American special forces.”¹⁵² As part

¹⁴⁹ Most tours during Vietnam were twelve-months because, as General William Westmoreland noted, “The one-year tour gave a man a goal. That was good for morale.” Talk of extending tours, which would have reduced the replacements needed, never amounted to much and was usually denied on the grounds that soldiers could only deal with the harsh conditions in Vietnam for a year before they became decreasingly effective. Mark DePue, “Vietnam War: The Individual Rotation Policy,” originally published in *Vietnam*, December 2006, HistoryNet, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://www.historynet.com/vietnam-war-the-individual-rotation-policy.htm>; Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 387.

¹⁵⁰ The troops from the Americal division served in New Caledonia and the division’s name came from combining “American Forces in New Caledonia.” Report and Letter from Major Pauli, Office of Information - Americal Division History - Record of MACV Part 1, 28 April 1970, Folder 0145, Box 0009, Vietnam Archive Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=F015800090145>; James F. Dunnigan and Albert A. Nofi, *Dirty Little Secrets of the Vietnam War: Military Information You’re Not Supposed to Know* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 1999), 305; William Thomas Allison, *My Lai: An American Atrocity in the Vietnam War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 18.

¹⁵¹ “History of B company 123rd Avn Bn: Resume of the 123d Aviation Battalion,” B Co. 123rd Avn. Bn., accessed April 4, 2017, <http://bco123rdavnbn.org/id15.html>.

¹⁵² “Ash” refers to Aircraft Support Helicopter and “trash” refers to the type of missions, which ranged anywhere from flying a fan to brigade headquarters or flying a few men from one base to another. J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

of the “bastard company,” an affectionate nickname given to A Company by Scott and his comrades, Scott spent most of the next year flying UH-1 Huey “Slicks” for Special Forces or escorting VIPs and, eventually, Major General A. E. Milloy around Vietnam.¹⁵³

Living conditions in Chu Lai were great compared to those of the men Scott saw “living on top of a fire base on top of a mountain somewhere, you know, livin’ in a cave dug somewhere inside of a hill. Or out in the middle of a bright, dusty rice paddy and stayin’ in a Sheridan tank or one of those APCs [Armored Personnel Carrier].”¹⁵⁴

Assigned to a corner bunk in a hooch—slang for a thatched hut or general living space—overlooking the South China Sea, Scott remarked on the beauty. As a large military base, Chu Lai offered many amenities to the troops, including, “an officer’s club which we built. We had pretty good food. . . . We had hooch maids—women, indigenous personnel—who came in. I got a clean uniform every day. Polished boots. Clean underwear. Clean sheets.”¹⁵⁵ The men of Alpha Company also had a place to store their aircraft, which they affectionately named the Pelican’s Roost after their call-sign.

¹⁵³ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; J. Scott, OH 1001.2. The UH-1 helicopter commonly referred to as the Huey was, according to Ron Steinman, “an unforgettable symbol of the war” and one of the “workhorse[s] of Vietnam.” There were three modified configurations of Huey helicopters—“an air ambulance (Medevac) carrying six litters; as a gunship (Guns) carrying pilot-directed machine guns, rockets, or grenade launchers; and as a troop carrier (Slick) with room for ten soldiers and two crew-operated door guns.” James Scott flew Slicks. Steinman, *The Soldiers’ Story*, 229-230; Mason, *Chickenhawk*, 44.

¹⁵⁴ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁵⁵ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

Although Chu Lai provided several luxuries and comforts, none of them compared to home.¹⁵⁶ Scott noted,

Now, we didn't have running water. They only made water two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. They had a big distillation plant up there and so you had water. It wasn't hot water, it was just water. So, we had a faucet was about this high off the ground [holds had about four feet off the ground] that if you got it right that's where I took a shower. Or during the monsoons you'd just stand in the rain to take a shower.¹⁵⁷

Scott and his buddies attempted to solve their water problem by building a shower out of a big aircraft tank, but "it didn't work too well."¹⁵⁸ Even without five-star accommodations, Scott did not complain about the living conditions because he knew they could be much worse.

Although Scott trained to fly helicopters, no amount of training prepared him for his first official duty. As everyone adjusted to their new surroundings, the men became acquainted and friendly with their hooch mates and the guys they saw every day. Inevitably the men formed close relationships due to close quarters and a limited number of bunks. When Scott first arrived he "didn't even have a place to sleep. I slept in a guy's bunk who was on R&R [rest and relaxation, or recuperation]."¹⁵⁹ At the same time, and not yet accustomed to combat and the uncertainty of life, Scott made a friend.

¹⁵⁶ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁵⁷ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁵⁸ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁵⁹ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

His name was Ward Hooper. And Ward had been there about six months. And he was young—I imagine, Ward was 20. Most of the pilots around me were 19, 20, 21. We had one pilot, we called him the old man; he was 26. . . . And Ward liked to smoke cigars and play darts. . . . One Sunday, ‘bout the second week I was there or third week I was there—around the seventh of December—Ward got up one mornin’ early in the mornin’. I saw his light come on which woke me up, naturally. And he got up and was gonna go fly that day. He was going to fly a chaplain. Sunday. Chaplain. Chaplain’s assistant. And he came by . . . where I was sleepin’ . . . He was one of my first friends that I made. So he goes out the door and I said somethin’ to him and he said, “Well, I’ll see you tonight when I get back.” Uh, Ward was killed that afternoon in an aircraft accident. . . . One of my first official duties was to inventory all of his stuff. . . . It’s not combat, but that was my first official duty.¹⁶⁰

The death of a fellow soldier combined with news from home of his grandfather’s death provided a startling and grief-filled welcome to Vietnam. As Joanna Bourke noted, “‘Obeying orders’ was an efficient way of minimizing emotional conflict,” and Scott still had a job to do.¹⁶¹

Although Scott had not known Ward long, he still remembers Ward’s death and he declared that losing someone so early into his tour “brought home some reality to me.”¹⁶² Scott acknowledged that “aircraft accidents happen. When I was in flight school, we’d had an aircraft accident. Buddy of mine crashed one. I was in a forced landing in high school. I’d been in an aircraft accident as a civilian, so those things I understand.”¹⁶³ Combat, however, provided a different story. Ward’s death was just the first death of a

¹⁶⁰ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁶¹ Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 214.

¹⁶² J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁶³ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

compatriot that Scott experienced during his twelve months in Vietnam. Experiencing a friend's death early on in his deployment reinforced the realities of combat, which, as Bourke noted, "was not sporting, no matter how hard men tried to make it fit into civilian or chivalrous codes."¹⁶⁴ Scott's position as a pilot also offered him a different perspective than infantry troops or the Special Forces troops he regularly assisted because he never faced the enemy on the ground and returned to a well-established and fortified military base after each mission.

One of Scott's first helicopter missions occurred on Christmas Day 1969. Scott recalled planning a trip to see Bob Hope perform in a USO show on Christmas Day in Chu Lai. The men checked the flight schedule daily hoping they would not see their names listed on a crew for one of the few flights scheduled on December 25. Christmas Eve dawned and the men headed out to check the schedule and, sure enough, Scott found his name listed as co-pilot—or Peter Pilot as he called it—for a flight early the next morning. At 6 AM on December 25, Scott and the crew took off from the flight line and headed down to meet the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. Scott remembered,

[We] landed on their ops pad . . . at brigade headquarters. And, uh, this captain came out and behind him was the group of people with mail bags and bundled up things, which turned out to be uniforms. . . . And the cooks came out with those big cans with stuff in 'em. . . . We spent the whole day delivering hot food, mail, clean uniforms to all these units.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 223.

¹⁶⁵ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

Each time the helicopter landed in the field, Scott recalled guys coming out of the jungle “and they’d shake your hand and a couple places the crew got out and opened our doors and slid the plates back so we could get a little breath in there.”¹⁶⁶ Scott noted that out of all the packages he carried—uniforms, food, and mail—the mail meant the most to those troops on the ground “because in that mail, I know, had to be Christmas cards and things from home for those guys who were overseas and missing Christmas.”¹⁶⁷ Despite all the smiles and handshakes, Christmas Day quickly turned serious when Scott and his crew encountered enemy fire. Although nothing serious, the presence of gunfire reminded Scott of the war going on around him. Despite the long hours, enemy fire, and missing Bob Hope, Scott still referred to that Christmas decades later as “one of the greatest.”¹⁶⁸

Many helicopter pilots shared the desire (sometimes overwhelming) to fly. Scott, too, belonged to this group. Whether this passion stemmed from growing up in pilot country with a lifelong love of the air or a simple curiosity, these individuals kept their love of flight at the forefront of their recollections. It also deeply resonated with their pride over a job well done rather than disdain for a war lost; the Army hired them to fly helicopters and fly they did. Scott repeatedly emphasized the day-to-day nature of flying as a job, not a valiant deed. “My job was an everyday job. . . . I didn’t think about yesterday, I don’t think about tomorrow, I do the best job that I could do that day. . . . If I

¹⁶⁶ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

¹⁶⁷ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

¹⁶⁸ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

wasn't flying and working and doing something, I got homesick and all those things."¹⁶⁹

As with any categorization, not everyone fits into the mold of these passionate pilots.

Historian Meredith Lair acknowledged that the nature of the Vietnam War varied drastically from previous wars and many participants, including pilots, "returned to comfortable, well-stocked base camps when an operation was over."¹⁷⁰



Figure 9. *Scott and His Crew*. The men are standing in front of their aircraft. Note WO Scott's name painted on the side indicating his position as the aircraft commander of that Huey. Scott is standing on the far right. Photograph in East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives.

¹⁶⁹ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁷⁰ Lair, *Armed with Abundance*, 6.

Consequently, a startling contrast developed regarding military experiences in Vietnam between those on the ground and those in the air. Because helicopter crews regularly returned to base camps in between missions, men like Scott inevitably viewed their responsibility and service as a job. In reality, they got up, went to work, performed their mission, and returned “home,” just like any other job. In her discussion of soldiers and servicemen dealing with “the burden of guilt,” historian Joanna Bourke also acknowledged that many of them “experienced a kind of separation from the self—including the moral self—during battle.”¹⁷¹ Scott never went into “battle” in the traditional sense—most of his service revolved around transporting troops and supplies—his view of military service as a job allowed him to compartmentalize his duties. His focus shifted to the work rather than the death and destruction around him, homesickness, and the constant threat of injury, or worse, death. Scott and his fellow pilots shared experiences to which other servicemen could not relate and focused on their love of flying to get them through their tours.¹⁷²

Like most pilots, Scott did not start out as an aircraft commander. His early missions consisted of “several just general missions . . . some combat assaults . . . carryin’ the mail missions”—a lot of “ash and trash” as he called it.¹⁷³ After proving himself a competent pilot and leader, Scott “was given the opportunity to become an

¹⁷¹ Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 208.

¹⁷² J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

¹⁷³ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

aircraft commander,” which meant the Army assigned him a \$400,000 aircraft with “*at least* three other bodies . . . because we flew with a co-pilot, crew chief, and a door gunner.”¹⁷⁴ On his first day as an aircraft commander, his commanding officer said, “‘We’ll make it light on you. We just want you to take this old aircraft’—we had an older airplane, it was a D-model. . . . She was an old girl, but—she was, you know, battle worn—but she was still flyable. They gave it to a guy like me.”¹⁷⁵ Anticipating a routine mission—routine rarely described wartime flying—“[flying] up and down the coast of South Vietnam . . . and [carrying] some mail and some people,” Scott did not expect to receive a division alert call.¹⁷⁶ “My first day we flew one of the largest combat assaults that I’d ever been in with this old airplane . . . and she really struggled to keep up with everybody else. But that was exciting because, first of all, I had never flown in a combat assault that size and I’d never done it certainly as an aircraft commander.”¹⁷⁷ After several weeks of milk runs—or routine missions—Scott’s commanding officer reassigned him to fly support for the 5th Special Forces (Airborne) stationed out of Danang, Vietnam.

Located roughly 125 miles south of the 17th parallel—the boundary between North and South Vietnam—Danang held strategic value for U.S. forces and made it

¹⁷⁴ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁷⁵ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁷⁶ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁷⁷ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

possible for bombing sorties to successfully reach the Ho Chi Minh Trail or communist-occupied territory. Scholars estimate that the population of Danang peaked at roughly one million during the American years and the availability of modern comforts skewed Americans' first impressions of Vietnam. Many soldiers retreated to Danang to spend their R&R on China Beach. While Scott had few complaints about the living conditions in Chu Lai, Danang proved nicer than he ever imagined in the middle of a war zone. Because the Special Forces teams arrived in Vietnam before other American troops, Danang had permanent buildings and some of the comforts from home. "They had excellent living conditions. Up there they had flush toilets, hot water and showers. Yeah! And some of 'em had air conditioning. . . . And they lived right on the water, too. . . . They had an excellent mess hall that they paid into—it was like a café or restaurant, and . . . you could order things. Oh, it was good! Had a nice bar. . . . That was the best part of that."¹⁷⁸

Flying for Special Forces groups meant supporting their missions and their A-team camps that housed the operational Special Forces units comprised of a handful of highly skilled men who were cross-trained. Although Special Forces soldiers exhibited exemplary performance in combat, their unconventional skills and methods of waging war made them unpopular among many and devalued the importance of their achievements because they did not play by all of the "rules" of a conventional war. As

¹⁷⁸ Jan Dodd and Mark Lewis, *Vietnam* (New York: Rough Guides Ltd., 2003), 291; J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

historian Susan Brewer pointed out, the idea of a conventional war created problems because U.S. leaders sought to apply conventional tactics to an unconventional war to better sell it to the American public. In his support missions, Scott “did everything from insert Special Forces teams, extract Special Forces teams . . . extracted wounded. We provided the opportunity for troops to be transported from one place to another in those camps.”¹⁷⁹ Korean veteran and author W. E. Butterworth noted that flying evacuation and withdrawal missions for Special Forces “was a precision operation, first by finding the surrounding Special Forces team by means of infrequent radio transmissions and then by picking them up.”¹⁸⁰ Scott recalled these assignments were an “experience” because it “wadn’t just flyin’ from one big airfield to another. I landed in some very hairy places.”¹⁸¹

Fighting a war takes all kinds of people with a variety of skills and although Scott never considered himself a combat pilot in the traditional sense, he used his training and risked his life several times for his fellow soldiers.¹⁸²

The biggest thing for me was to support those guys when they needed help. We pulled some medivacs, pulled out some wounded in some very tough situations. . . . If you consider that combat, that’s where I got my most combat experience ’cause I never fired a weapon in anger over there . . . ’cause my hands were

¹⁷⁹ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁸⁰ Butterworth, *Flying Army*, 165.

¹⁸¹ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁸² Dunnigan, *Dirty Little Secrets*, 168-170; Fred J. Pushies, *U.S. Army Special Forces* (St. Paul, MN: MBI Publishing, 2001), 28-29, 35-36; Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 179-183; J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

always full of aircraft. . . . My part of the combat was bein' in the middle of it lookin' around going, "My goodness! It's scary over here."¹⁸³

Although it was scary, Scott remarked, "As a pilot, the flying was awesome! Boy! Because to master that aircraft and to fly the aircraft, it took some skill and some effort and some time." Scott also likened his experience flying a helicopter to the excitement of Barnstorming, the stunts and air shows put on by unemployed World War I pilots during the 1920s as a form of entertainment. The term originally referred to people traveling from town to town putting on shows in local barns and later referred to the fields used during air shows. Increased regulations put an end to the "daredevil" stunts that made barnstorming so entertaining, albeit very dangerous.¹⁸⁴

In November 1970, after twelve months in Vietnam—seven of which he spent working with Special Forces—Scott headed home to rural Wolfe City, TX. At least, that is what he discussed in his first oral history interview. Never once did Scott mention his Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), Bronze Star, Air Medal, or Army Commendation Medal. In fact, he emphasized his military service as a job with safely returning home as his end goal. Bourke explained that as early as World War I, medals and commendations became associated with savagery or reprehensible acts. By World War II, she argued, "this lack of interest in medals was a reflection of the application of civilian values to a combat situation: most servicemen recognized that the hero was the most effective

¹⁸³ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

¹⁸⁴ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; J. Scott, OH 1001.2; Christopher Lawton, "Barnstorming," *Wall Street Journal*, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://online.wsj.com/ww1/barnstorming>.

killer—and this was not something they thought should be lauded.”¹⁸⁵ No hint of these “heroic” actions appeared in any of Scott’s stories as he recounted his duties and time spent in the pilot seat of a helicopter as nothing more than the job the Army assigned him to do. During a second interview with Scott, his wife Sharion quickly admitted that he had not been completely truthful and he needed to clarify a few things before the second interview. Only then, at the prompting of his wife, did Scott recount more specific stories and provide copies of the citations detailing the actions that earned him those commendations.¹⁸⁶ Determining exactly why Scott reacted this way is difficult, but his father set an example by not bragging about his service and it is clear that Scott’s father was an influential role model. Scott’s unwillingness to share all of the details about his service also reflects his post-war attitude, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Scott earned his first commendation—an Air Medal—between December 13 and December 27, 1969 after he “distinguished himself by meritorious achievement, while participating in sustained aerial flight, in support of combat ground forces in the Republic of Vietnam.”¹⁸⁷ In the span of fourteen days, Scott flew “twenty-five aerial missions over hostile territory in support of operations against communist aggression.”¹⁸⁸ The citation also noted his “air discipline,” “determination to accomplish the mission, in spite of the

¹⁸⁵ Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 120-1.

¹⁸⁶ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

¹⁸⁷ James Scott, “Citation: The Air Medal,” November 20, 1970, TAMUC Archives. See Appendix for full copies of the certificates and citations for Scott’s medals and commendations.

¹⁸⁸ Scott, “Citation: The Air Medal.”

hazards inherent in repeated aerial flights over hostile territory, and . . . his outstanding degree of professionalism and devotion to duty.”¹⁸⁹ Scott revealed almost no details regarding the specific actions that earned him the Air Medal. As for the Bronze star, everyone in A Company of the 123d Aviation Battalion received the Bronze Star “for meritorious achievement in connection with military operations against a hostile force” between January 1 and April 30, 1970.¹⁹⁰ No further explanation accompanied the citation, which listed the men who received the award along with Scott. The actions that earned A Company this particular citation involved assisting a Special Forces camp located in the mountains of I Corps just south of the DMZ. According to Scott, the VC and North Vietnamese tried repeatedly for nearly a month to overrun the camp. Scott and the rest of A Company were responsible for resupplying the camp. Scott carried everything “from food and water to caskets” because the camp was cut off from all outside contact except for Scott and his crew.¹⁹¹ Resupply missions to the camp surrounded by mountains and ridges proved harrowing. Enemy forces always shot at the helicopters as they came in to land causing Scott and his fellow pilots to seek out alternative landing routes to try and subvert the enemy. These missions went on every day, sometimes twice a day, for several weeks. Scott also received the Army Commendation Medal for “meritorious service” throughout his twelve-month tour in

¹⁸⁹ James Scott, “Citation: The Air Medal.”

¹⁹⁰ James Scott, “Award of the Bronze Star Medal,” June 27, 1970, TAMUC Archives.

¹⁹¹ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

Vietnam. As illustrated by his reaction toward these commendations, Scott did not gauge the value of his service by the awards he received.¹⁹²

The only medal listed for actions on a specific date was the Distinguished Flying Cross. On May 11, 1970, Scott set out on a routine combat operation into Elephant Valley—“Vietnam’s beautiful country”—northwest of Thuong Duc, Vietnam. While on their mission, a call came in requesting a volunteer for “an emergency evacuation of friendly casualties.”¹⁹³ As the only Huey available, Scott “called up the Black Cats out of Danang—which was a C-model gun unit,” as cover while he and his crew proceeded to perform “a hot evacuation of [the] wounded.”¹⁹⁴

When I got out there and looked around, I could see there was a tree-line kinda at the bottom of a slope. And the bad guys were in the tree-line and you could see the tracers coming out of that and you could identify those .30 cal rounds. . . . Well, all the good guys were in the ditch on this side [indicates to his right] and the tracers were going back and forth. There weren’t very many tracers coming from over here [points to his right again] because they were carrying M-16s and that type of weapon. . . . I coordinated my two guns and one of my guns started making gun runs down the tree-line to distract them because when I started in the first time, I could see those tracer rounds (you know, of course I’m making all kinds of noise with that Huey). . . . Well, then I could see them turn and he starts shooting at me. Well, that’s not good!¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² James Scott, “Citation: The Army Commendation Medal,” October 14, 1970, TAMUC Archives; J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

¹⁹³ James Scott, “Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross,” November 9, 1970, TAMUC Archives.

¹⁹⁴ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

¹⁹⁵ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

The distraction from the gunship allowed Scott to find a place to set the Huey down and evacuate the wounded, and—as the award puts it—“with complete disregard for his personal safety, [Scott] remained exposed to the heavy enemy fire while the wounded soldiers were placed aboard.”¹⁹⁶ Scott remarked,

I tried to put it as close as I could to our guys, turn our tail as much as I could to the bad guys, and all this time there’s all this banging and shooting because I cleared my gunners hot on this tree-line over there. . . . As we were on the ground, they started pulling and dragging wounded to the ship. We took fire on the way in and you can tell when you’re taking fire. We had a round hit the blade and those things kinda whistle a little bit. There’s a feeling; if you fly one of those things for a long time, you know exactly how it feels and how it sounds. If something happens to make that sound different then you know it. It feels. Or it shutters a little bit differently. Well, they got the wounded on board and I remember looking out the front of the helicopter and they laced the ground in front of me with a magazine of some type of weapon—probably an AK—and I remember thinking, and this is kinda silly, “This looks just like the cowboy movies when they shoot the ground—when the cowboys are running across the ground, you know, and they shoot the ground and the dirt kicks up.”¹⁹⁷

With the wounded safely onboard, Scott and his crew prepared to evacuate the area. Scott thought the worst of the excitement had passed until “one of the soldiers stuck his weapon out the window and fired off the whole magazine of an M-16.”¹⁹⁸ He also recalled of the incident, “Well, the rounds—the spent cartridges—ejected into the cockpit and that just scared me to death because all of a sudden all this plinking was going on

¹⁹⁶ Scott, “Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.”

¹⁹⁷ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

¹⁹⁸ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

inside the cockpit. I thought we were taking rounds inside the cockpit!”¹⁹⁹ The adrenaline rush fueled Scott through the rescue operation, but once the extraction ended and they were out of the line of fire, Scott recalled. “That’s when the shakes start a little bit. I had a young pilot with me and he was just, he was shell-shocked and I sat there for a minute and my knees started shaking a little bit. And I said, ‘Let me tell you what. Why don’t you fly this thing and I’ll just sit here for a minute.’ And I sat there for a minute, my knees shaking, and I came down off that adrenaline high.”²⁰⁰ According to the DFC citation, although shaken by the situation, “Scott elected to return with his crew to extract additional friendly soldiers from the enemy-infested area.”²⁰¹ Once the wounded had been taken to the base hospital, the crew surveyed the damage and Scott recalled, “We had holes . . . going under my seat and going out the skid cap. We had holes in the battery compartment, the tail boom, and in our blades.”²⁰²

Korean veteran and military scholar W. E. Butterworth described the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) as a commendation “awarded to airmen—both Air Force and Army—who distinguish themselves in aerial flight. It is not necessary that the outstanding flying be performed in time of war—explorers and test pilots are sometimes given the award when this country is not at war—but wartime, when safety regulations

¹⁹⁹ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

²⁰⁰ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

²⁰¹ Scott, “Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.”

²⁰² J. Scott, OH 1001.1; J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

sometimes must be ignored, sees far more aviators qualifying for the decoration.”²⁰³

Throughout the Vietnam War so many Army airmen, pilots, and crew members earned DFC’s that the Army failed to maintain a comprehensive list. Be that as it may, that does not necessarily diminish the value of a DFC, but rather can be said to illustrate the large number of aviators who distinguished themselves through outstanding flying.²⁰⁴ Scott chose to skip over all of his commendations and medals because, according to him, “that’s your job.” As noted earlier, Joanna Bourke pointed out a shift in attitudes toward commendations as early as World War I because reprehensible acts resulted in medals.²⁰⁵ Many veterans also associated an element of reckless abandon to those who “needlessly risked men’s lives” for reward. Also, medals were often distributed unevenly, which left the recipients questioning why they received recognition while their fellow compatriots had not.²⁰⁶ Scott did not view his “calm analysis of the situation, . . . professional competence, and devotion to duty” as heroic or valorous—terms he reserved for personal heroes like Cecil Jack Butler mentioned in Chapter 1. But they earned him a DFC, an award he did not realize he had been recommended for at the time but found meaningful nonetheless.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Butterworth, *Flying Army*, 164.

²⁰⁴ Butterworth, *Flying Army*, 168.

²⁰⁵ Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 121.

²⁰⁶ Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 122-3.

²⁰⁷ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; J. Scott, OH 1001.2; “Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross,” November 9, 1970. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Jack Butler stormed Omaha Beach on D-day +6, fought



Figure 10. *WO Scott Receives a DFC*. Milloy awarded Scott with a DFC in November 1970, just weeks before Scott returned to the U.S. Photograph in East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives.

Although the flying proved dangerous and Scott noted several harrowing missions throughout his year in country, there were light-hearted moments, too. Such stories hold a prominent place in Scott's recollections of the war. Many servicemen and women went on R&R during their stint in Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, service personnel found

through the Hürtgen Forest (also known as the meatgrinder on the border of Belgium and Germany), and received a Purple Heart with an oak leaf cluster and a Bronze Star with four oak leaf clusters. Scott also noted that heroes were the men "riding on a Higgens boat 200 yards out from a beach that's being raked with enemy fire and plumes of water and smoke going up around you and running up on that beach and letting that rack down and charging—I just can't imagine that. And those men who did that at North Africa, Normandy, Iwo Jima, goodness gracious! Those men are heroes, not me." For additional information consult, Butler, OH 754, American War Experience--World War II, Northeast Texas Digital Collections; Butler, OH 1004, East Texas War and Memory Project, Northeast Texas Digital Collections.

themselves with an unparalleled amount of free time. Just as Scott referred to his military service as “just a job,” so too did many other service personnel. In an effort to combat boredom and break up the monotony of the year, the U.S. military instituted R&R—excursions to somewhere outside of the combat zone for three to ten (mostly five to seven) days. The Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) directive stated that the purpose of the program was to “remove the individual from his normal duty environment in order to provide a respite from the rigors of a combat tour in Vietnam.”²⁰⁸ The program peaked in 1969 and at that time “soldiers could choose from Hawaii, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Penang, Singapore, Sydney, Taipei, or Tokyo,” although a number of variables factored into their choice.²⁰⁹ Only two stations allowed for spouses to accompany their partners on R&R. For this reason, James and Sharion Scott chose Hawaii as their destination. Sharion noted that the couple began planning for their trip as soon as they found out that James was eligible for leave. Although technically eligible for R&R after ninety days in country, the Scotts decided to plan the trip as close to the nine month mark as possible because, as Sharion stated, “we’d put more behind us than we had in front of us.”²¹⁰ The couple spent a week in Hawaii during August 1970 and

²⁰⁸ MACV Directive No, 28-3, “Welfare, Recreation, and Morale: R&R Activities Out-of-Country,” 20 July 1969, Investigation Division Reports, MACV IG, cited in Lair, *Armed with Abundance*, 110.

²⁰⁹ Lair, *Armed with Abundance*, 110.

²¹⁰ S. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, September 22, 2016.

celebrated both James's good fortune over the last nine months and their second wedding anniversary.

A trip to Hawaii during the middle of the war sounds like a frivolous luxury, but the time afforded service personnel a break from the constant stress of combat. Nine months in a war zone changes a person. Sharion recalled buying civilian clothes for her husband and arrived in Hawaii a day before him only to hear the personnel in charge of organizing the R&R trips warning her that she may not recognize Scott when he stepped off the bus. They told Sharion to be "patient" and "just wait in the center and we'll get him back to you."²¹¹ Flabbergasted, Sharion recalled, "That is the stupidest thing I've ever heard. Who would not recognize their husbands?"²¹² As the buses arrived and the servicemen filed off, Sharion worried that maybe they were right; maybe she would not recognize James Edward, as she affectionately called him. Bus number one came and went, so did buses two and three. As bus four emptied, James was one of the last two guys to step off. Sharion exclaimed, "Oh, my Lord! I might not have recognized you."²¹³ "Skinny like a twig," tan, and sporting a head full of blonde hair and a mustache. James barely resembled the young man Sharion sent off to war nine months earlier. Sharion

²¹¹ S. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²¹² S. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²¹³ S. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, September 22, 2016.

noted in reflection, “You don’t realize how much somebody can change in a nine month period.”²¹⁴

The Scotts embarked for their hotel where James changed into ill-fitting civilian clothes before the pair headed off to dinner. Sharion remembered the beautiful scenery and the sound of waves crashing on the beach. Many servicemen and their wives also chose this particular restaurant. Sharion recalled, “You could tell the military guys that were there because . . . none of their clothes fit and all of ’em looked a little rugged and sunburned.”²¹⁵ As everyone enjoyed a relaxing evening, the crash of a tray on the concrete floor and shattering glass brought home the reality of the situation. Sharion looked around the room and noted that “throughout the whole place there wasn’t a male left sitting at a table.”²¹⁶ This was not a true vacation, but a reprieve from war; the men were still stuck in combat mode. Sharion remembered, “Now, it’s funny. Then, I cried.”²¹⁷

Although the trip started with a bang followed by a conditioned duck-and-cover exercise, the Scotts relished in their short time together. They ate, frolicked on the beach, visited the USS Arizona, and even took a helicopter tour of the island, giving Sharion the opportunity to experience a part of James’s new world. Despite all of the fun in the sun,

²¹⁴ S. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²¹⁵ S. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²¹⁶ S. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²¹⁷ S. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, September 22, 2016.

Sharion remarked that “knowing he had to go back kinda overshadowed everything, but, then again, I had to keep in perspective that it was a shorter time that we’d done and we were gonna be able to make it.”²¹⁸ Sharion also noted how her mental preparation was different because she “was sendin’ him back to something that I understood a little better and that I knew a little better.”²¹⁹ After a week in Hawaii, WO Scott headed back to Vietnam and a new job flying for Major General A. E. Milloy while Sharion headed back to Dallas and her job at the bank.



Figure 11 and 12. *Helicopter Tour of Hawaii*. As one of their excursion during R&R, James and Sharion Scott took a helicopter ride around the island of Oahu. James did not offer to fly the helicopter, though he was more than qualified, but he did share a part of his day-to-day life with his wife. Photograph in East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives.

In the days leading up to his R&R, WO Scott received notice that upon his return he would be transferred to 3rd Platoon and fly for the new commanding general—A. E.

²¹⁸ S. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²¹⁹ S. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, September 22, 2016.

Milloy. To say Scott lacked enthusiasm would be an understatement. Scott recalled telling his platoon leader Lieutenant Buckley, “No, I’m not doing that,” to which Buckley responded, “Well, I don’t care whether you want to do that or not.”²²⁰ Scott thought flying for Special Forces was more important to the war effort than flying a VIP from base to base. He viewed his new position as a cushier job because he did not know of



Figure 13. *Towing out General A. E. Milloy's ship, #017 with a new L-13B engine in 1970. Photograph in East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives.*

very many VIP units that took heavy fire on a regular basis. The biggest accident within the VIP unit during his time in Vietnam was an accident when a helicopter carrying Milloy's predecessor and several of Scott's friends crashed into the side of a mountain.²²¹ After a conversation with the company commander and threats to jerk his wings, Scott begrudgingly conceded. When he returned from Hawaii, Scott transferred to the 3rd Platoon. Despite all his protests, flying for the General proved to be some of Scott's fondest memories of Vietnam.²²²

²²⁰ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

²²¹ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

²²² J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

The two men had a relationship built on respect. Although Milloy far outranked WO Scott, Scott had enough respect for the man to stand up to him when necessary. Scott recalled an instance when Milloy wanted to visit Hill 4-11 while it was under siege. Scott followed orders and took off in bad weather toward Hill 4-11. “Setting was low. So, we headed inland. And the further inland I got, the lower the clouds were.”²²³ Scott ended up a mere four or five hundred feet off the ground with his blades in the clouds. Scott told Milloy, “I’m not goin’ out there. . . . I can’t risk the General. . . . The cloud cover’s low, it’s bad weather, and they’re still takin’ fire. I’m not gonna go.”²²⁴ Milloy finally conceded on the promise that the crew would head out as soon as the weather cleared and the firefight ceased. Although he defied direct orders, Scott acted in the best interest of his crew and, most importantly, his commanding officer. In the end, Scott described Milloy, saying, “He was a good commander. . . . Concerned about his men. I had a lot of respect for him.” After three months flying for Milloy, it was finally time for Scott to head home.²²⁵

²²³ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

²²⁴ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

²²⁵ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

CHAPTER 3

From Hometowns to Hollywood: The Homecoming Experience

Homecomings evoke images of crying spouses, excited children, and relieved parents. Parades down Broadway in New York City pervade the popular imagery of returning World War II veterans, while images of veterans being spat upon or mistreated overwhelm the representations of returning Vietnam veterans. Although these images hold some truth (some World War II veterans returned to parades and some Vietnam veterans faced harsh homecomings and even vice versa), the reality of military homecomings, especially for Vietnam veterans, was proverbially far more complex. Several factors, including location and environment, date of homecoming, and support system once they returned, shaped the homecoming experience for Vietnam veterans. Scott, fortunately, returned home to a supportive wife and family, as well as a generally welcoming community steeped in military tradition thanks to the more conservative rural environment and the many local World War II veterans. These factors helped ease Scott's transition. Nevertheless, his experience was hardly ideal.

In November 1970, after twelve months in Vietnam, Scott finally headed for home. Just before Thanksgiving, Scott boarded a Continental flight from Vietnam to the Seattle Tacoma Airport. When Scott and his fellow troops prepared to disembark the aircraft, the flight attendants, veterans themselves regarding the experience of returning

soldiers, informed the men that it would be best if they changed into civilian clothes. Given that most, if not all, of the men had been away from home for over a year, civilian clothing was not in abundance for these combat veterans; Scott candidly admitted, “I didn’t have any civilian clothes.” The flight attendants then told the servicemen, “It’s probably best if you go to the USO [United Service Organizations] and stay in the USO.” Unsure about the treatment they would receive but aware that the welcome home would not include a parade full of cheering admirers, Scott and approximately 150 fellow servicemen headed down to the USO in a group because, as Scott admitted, “there’s always safety in numbers.”²²⁶

We all went down in mass to the USO. . . . They had showers, we had food, you could call home, make your flight arrangements home, and so on. And then about three or four of us got together to fly from Washington to Love Field in Dallas. . . . I know it stopped in Denver and, uh, we all sat together and stayed pretty much outta the way. People didn’t have much to do with us.²²⁷

The USO, created in 1941 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, combined the efforts of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), Jewish Welfare Board, Salvation Army, Traveler’s Aid, and National Catholic Community Services to provide a “home away from home” for U.S. troops. Not limited to overseas bases, the USO organized shows with big-name

²²⁶ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

²²⁷ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

entertainers like Bob Hope and created USO clubs to give the troops a taste of home.

Even decades later, Scott noted, “I’ve always been grateful for them ever since.”²²⁸

After hours spent on airplanes and waiting in airports, Scott finally arrived in Dallas where his family eagerly awaited his arrival. When asked about Scott’s homecoming, Sharion recalled the excitement and anticipation the entire family felt. The family knew Scott would return around Thanksgiving because they knew his tour “would be around a year,” and as soon as Scott received his orders, he forwarded a copy to the family. As the family prepared for Scott’s return a few disagreements broke out regarding who could go pick him up from the airport. Sharion recalled, “They all wanted to come to the airport to meet James when he came home.”²²⁹ Cousins, aunts, uncles, parents.

Everyone wanted to greet Scott upon his arrival. But, Edward Scott had a different idea.

According to Sharion,

His dad was so selfish; he didn’t want anybody else there. He wanted me, mom [Elva], and him. And I finally had to say, “Dad, you can’t do that. You know, these are people who love him. Who have, you know, kept up and communicated. And they’ve waited for him to come home too. So, you know, they’re gonna come see him and then we’re gonna come back to Wolfe City so don’t worry about time that you won’t get with him.”²³⁰

Elva agreed with Sharion and the entire family set off for the airport, including grandma, a few cousins, aunts, and uncles.

²²⁸ James Westheider, *Fighting in Vietnam: The Experiences of the U.S. Soldier* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2011), 92-94; J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

²²⁹ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²³⁰ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

Scott felt a sense of relief when he finally saw familiar faces in the crowd. For days, Scott and his fellow veterans traveled to get home to their families. Throughout that time the men interacted with a variety of people, including individuals who were less than supportive of the war effort and the returning servicemen. Vietnam veteran turned sociologist Jerry Lembcke argued that these images of Vietnam veterans being mistreated and “spat upon” were mostly myths perpetuated by political institutions for political gain that only surfaced in the years after the war with presidents like Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. Just as Reagan sought to turn Vietnam into a “noble cause,” Bush used “the idea that Vietnam veterans had met with malevolence . . . to rally support for the Persian Gulf War.”²³¹ These two presidents reshaped the treatment Vietnam veterans received upon their return home to create a narrative that provided support for their foreign relations efforts. Lembcke argued specifically against the “spitting image” going so far as to say that veterans perpetuated the myth and did not face any hostile treatment from the public. Although Scott never discussed being spit on, he recalled a specific incident in the airport when, according to Scott, a Vietnam objector stood between him and his family. Scott remembered, “walkin’ down the concourse and I remember meetin’ this little old lady and she looked at me, kinda squinted her eyes. She took this big wide step around me, and I’m going, ‘What is that!’”²³²

²³¹ Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 2.

²³² J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

Lembcke discussed the “spitting image” so as to emphasize the act of protestors actually spitting on returning servicemen. But he also attempted to argue that these returning veterans never faced any criticism or unfavorable treatment from the public. A 1980 study conducted by Louis Harris and Associates—a well-known polling organization—for the Veterans’ Administration and submitted to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs looked at attitudes toward Vietnam era veterans. Repeatedly, the Harris firm noted that, “Although the public feels the war in Vietnam was a mistake, it does not hold the warrior responsible for the war.”²³³ The study concluded that Vietnam era veterans were not mistreated and neither were the veterans who actually served in Vietnam. Yet, Vietnam *era* veterans were not all Vietnam *combat* veterans. The study noted the distinction, but frequently used the term Vietnam era veterans when discussing their findings. It is difficult to apply the conclusions from the study when a distinction is not made and the experience of era veterans proved far different from those who served in Vietnam. This distinction, although present during previous conflicts, became more divisive during the Vietnam War given U.S. involvement in the Cold War and U.S. troops stationed all over the globe, many far removed from the war in Vietnam but still serving their country in some capacity. In contrast to the Harris study, studies and scholarship from countless scholars including MacPherson, Hagopian, and Takiff

²³³ Louis Harris and Associates, *Myths and Realities: A Study of Attitudes Toward Vietnam Era Veterans*, submitted by the Veterans' Administration to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States Senate, Washington : U.S. Govt. Print. Off.: for sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O., [Congressional Sales Office], 1980, xl.

discussed how veterans were mistreated and, if nothing else, faced a homecoming that left them feeling unappreciated and unable to share their experiences freely. Scott's personal experiences further complicate the existing scholarship regarding veterans' homecomings because he faced (what he perceived as) negative situations (like in the airport), which neither resembled the fair treatment outlined in the Harris study nor the overt protests and "spitting image" of stereotype.²³⁴

As Lembcke pointed out, the images of Vietnam veterans spat-upon by passersby became part of a dominant narrative and stereotype for the treatment returning soldiers faced, implying that every veteran experienced these interactions. One problem with stereotypes is that they exaggerate the problem by implying that it is universal (which most often it is not) and, as a result, work to delegitimize the validity of those veterans who experienced strangers making a blatant effort to avoid them in public (like Scott in the airport) or being spit on—literally or figuratively. Here, this woman's reaction is only understood from the Scotts' perspectives and her reaction could be caused by any number of factors related or not to Scott's status as a veteran. Although Lembcke argued that this form of veteran rejection was little more than myth, veterans like Scott recalled poor treatment and less than favorable interactions with the public. Whether the public's actions were actually the reflection of antiwar attitudes is up for debate, but there is

²³⁴ MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*; Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009); Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*.

something to be said for how veterans reacted to the public. That interaction is two-sided and deserves further study.

Moreover, as noted by oral historian Paul Thompson, using oral history to add these individual experiences and nuanced accounts of the same larger event “offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history.”²³⁵ Samuel Hynes further discussed these myths regarding the military experience, not just homecomings, by saying, “it is a term to identify the simplified, dramatized story that has evolved in our society to contain the meanings of the war that we can tolerate, and so make sense of its incoherences and contradictions.”²³⁶ Again, Scott was never spat-upon, but he did face challenges interacting with strangers in the aftermath of his homecoming. To label Scott’s recollections of his own experiences as inaccurate, discredits what he went through in Vietnam and places the outside observer (in this case the scholar) in a position where they claim to know more than Scott about his own life story. Notably, Scott’s view of his life has meaning. Clearly, discussions regarding the treatment returning veterans received are still contentious, and Scott’s account adds another layer further complicating authority, as much as history.

Although confused and put off, Scott refused to dwell on his interaction with the unknown woman in the airport. Instead, he quickly set off to find his family. Sharion

²³⁵ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 24.

²³⁶ Samuel Hynes, “Personal Narratives and Commemoration,” in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 207.

remarked that, unlike the experience in Hawaii during R&R, this time she had no trouble spotting her soldier as he got off the airplane in his uniform. She also admitted it was not the homecoming either of them expected as Sharion witnessed the older lady's reaction to her husband, as well as the reactions of several people around them. Sharion recalled, "I will tell you, we walked out of that airport not one person said anything to us at the airport. There were no high-fives or excitement." When asked what reaction she expected, Sharion lamented, "I guess I expected smiles and—any family who's had a child who's spent any time away is always excited to see another family. If I see families today and they've been separated from their children, I'm always excited for 'em and glad to see 'em and just a smile, you know, just a look even. But, I don't think anybody even met our eyes." Not only was Scott evidently ignored because of the uniform he wore, but his family members were also ignored because of their association with him. Nonetheless, the public avoidance did not diminish the pride Sharion felt for her husband, the pride Edward felt for his eldest son, and the relief Elva felt because her son returned home safe.²³⁷

As public support wavered over the course of the Vietnam War, the homecomings of servicemen changed as well. The events of 1968 caused a drastic shift in public reception of the war. First, General Westmoreland went before the American people and assured them that the U.S. was winning the war in Vietnam. Then shortly after that the

²³⁷ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

Tet Offensive happened. The American public began to question the state of the war and all the information the government and press presented to them. Another event of 1968, the My Lai Massacre, influenced public opinion of the war, too, but did not have an immediate affect because the events of that day did not become public knowledge until 1969. Of course, images of both Tet and My Lai depicted a different side of war. These two events further pushed the boundaries and allowed the public to see images of combat situations rarely, if ever, shown during World War II or even the Korean War. My Lai, especially, showed images of dead women and children that furthered the stereotype—but confirmed in this instance—of Vietnam combatants as “baby killers.” Needless to say, these images shaped how returning veterans were seen by many in the general public.

Historian Susan Brewer noted that the first—and only—parade for returning Vietnam veterans occurred in 1969, perhaps unsurprisingly, as a publicity stunt orchestrated by President Richard Nixon. A unit recently withdrawn from Vietnam as part of Vietnamization returned to Seattle—chosen, according to Brewer, “for its moderation both in size and antiwar activism.”²³⁸ *Newsweek* reported the parade a success, as crowds thanked returning veterans and “pretty girls handed red roses to the troops.”²³⁹ Veterans’ reactions, however, were divided. Several veterans accepted the praise because they “felt they had gone to Vietnam to do a job and had done it,” a

²³⁸ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 215.

²³⁹ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 215.

sentiment Scott shared.²⁴⁰ Other veterans recognized the event as “just a gimmick” or “expressed consternation that they were honored as victors before the war had been won.”²⁴¹ In the end, the Defense Department considered the parade a “public relations failure” and “decided to hold no more parades for returning troops.”²⁴²

Once he returned home, the Army granted Scott a thirty-day leave, which he spent in Wolfe City surrounded by people who not only knew and loved him, but some of them also understood what it meant to be a war veteran. Scott recalled, “There was a large contingent of veterans like my dad and their sons—a lotta their sons had been or are in the military—and it was easier for me there. I didn’t go too many places other than there until I went back to Mineral Wells. And we were pretty well advised to, you know, not to wear our uniforms. And I didn’t, I didn’t. I pretty well stayed outta everybody’s way and that type of thing.” Scott used his leave time to transition back into civilian life and out of combat mode.²⁴³

Returning to his childhood home proved beneficial for Scott and his readjustment back into civilian life. Immersed in small town, Texas culture where military service was honored and World War II veterans provided a level of support (oftentimes unspoken) sheltered Scott from the more tumultuous reactions that some Vietnam veterans faced

²⁴⁰ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 215.

²⁴¹ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 215.

²⁴² Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 215.

²⁴³ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

during their transition back into civilian life. Although Edward served as a ferry pilot during World War II, father and son never talked very much about James's experiences in Vietnam. As Sharion remembered, Edward held a silent pride for his son's military service and there was "no doubt that he was happy and relieved" when his son came home, but conversations regarding the specifics were few and far between.²⁴⁴ Even Rodger, a cadet at Texas A&M University, never talked in depth with his brother about his military service. Although specific conversations about what James experienced in Vietnam did not happen regularly, being in a familiar environment proved beneficial because Scott faced little outward criticism for his service and was not forced to talk about it. And, of course, Sharion helped tremendously.²⁴⁵



Figure 14. *Christmas 1970*, less than a month after James Scott's return from Vietnam. Note the serious expression on his face. A year in Vietnam, greatly affected James. Photograph in East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives.

²⁴⁴ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²⁴⁵ R. Scott, interviewed by Hasik; J. Scott, OH 1001.1; J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

In the end, Sharion provided the most support for her husband in the days, weeks, and months following his return home from Vietnam. Although Scott maintained a calm and collected exterior, Sharion revealed that the events from Vietnam took more of a toll than Scott led people to believe. As the couple settled back into life together, Sharion made a conscious effort to allow Scott to approach her on his own time because she thought, “If he’s not ready, he’s not ready.”²⁴⁶ Since the two communicated via letters almost every day while Scott was overseas and the family received correspondence regarding his medals and commendations, Sharion knew about some of the experiences her husband dealt with in Vietnam. Nevertheless, being aware of events could never prepare Sharion for Scott’s mental state or emotions; those just did not show up on the pages of letters. Sharion recalled that the first few nights, “he had terrible dreams and he would wake up just in a cold sweat. And I’d hear him, I mean he’d say a few words or somethin’ and then when he’d wake up I’d say, ‘Are you okay?’ And he’d say, ‘I was just, I was just havin’ a bad dream.’”²⁴⁷ One night before Scott reported back to Mineral Wells he had a particularly bad dream and told Sharion, “‘They’re comin’ under the wire.’ And I said, ‘James, you need to wake up. You gotta wake . . .’ He said, ‘No, you’re not listenin’! They’re comin’ under the wire!’”²⁴⁸ After a few weeks the dreams began to improve, but Scott told Sharion, “I think it’s so weird that when I was there I dreamed

²⁴⁶ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²⁴⁷ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²⁴⁸ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

about being home and now I'm home and I dream about being there.”²⁴⁹ Scott took a little while to transition back into life stateside, but as time went on the dreams became farther apart unless triggered by something (e.g., a movie, a book, news article, or even a conversation).

While some people might classify Scott's behavior as symptomatic of Post-Traumatic Stress, James, Sharion, and their son Brian all referred to it as survivor's guilt. Joanna Bourke defined survivor's guilt as “guilt for having lived when one's comrades had been killed.”²⁵⁰ As a Huey Slick pilot, Scott never bombed the enemy and never found himself face-to-face with the enemy on the ground. Overall, Scott made it through a tour in Vietnam relatively unscathed, but many of his friends did not. Scott returned home and resumed his life while men he served alongside had their names etched onto the Wall at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Sharion noted that survivor's guilt still plagues Scott to this day—nearly five decades after his service—and it greatly molded his personality, but his experiences did not prevent him from living a full life. Vietnam veteran and author Tim O'Brien pointed out that most Vietnam veterans faced criticism because “we've adjusted too well.”²⁵¹ Scott readjusted well. Contrary to stereotypical images of drug addicts or homelessness, as O'Brien also noted,

²⁴⁹ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²⁵⁰ Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 208.

²⁵¹ Tim O'Brien, “We've Adjusted Too Well,” in *The Wounded Generation: America After Vietnam*, edited by A.D. Horne (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall), 205.

“most Vietnam veterans have made the adjustment to peace. Granted, many of us continue to suffer, but the vast majority are *not* hooked on drugs, *not* unemployed, are *not* suicidal, are *not* beating up wives and children, are *not* robbing banks, are *not* knee-deep in grief or self-pity or despair.”²⁵²

Scott’s service changed him in ways imperceptible to the lay person unacquainted with him or his Army service. Because of Scott’s experiences in Vietnam, Sharion noted, he appreciates “every day, every moment, and [feels] responsible to help out, do things, enjoy each and every day. Because I think the thought of all those friends that he lost and people he didn’t know that never got a chance to have a family, never got a chance to come home, made a big difference in the way he reacted to everything.”²⁵³ Sharion pointed out that a year in Vietnam also made her husband “a much more serious person” and “much less tolerant.”²⁵⁴ In the matter of twelve months, Scott went from “young and carefree” to much more aware of the world, the politics that created the conflict he was sent to fight, and the diverse attitudes of his fellow Americans. Scott credited Sharion and her support for helping him deal with the aftermath of his service. He noted, “Sharion has always been supportive of that. And tried to take my mind away from those types of things.”²⁵⁵

²⁵² O’Brien, “We’ve Adjusted Too Well,” 205.

²⁵³ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, January 6, 2017.

²⁵⁴ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²⁵⁵ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

A bitter tone crept into Scott's voice when he talked about his experiences and the treatment he received in the years since his return. Sharion specifically acknowledged this characteristic, "I've told him this—there's a part of him that's very bitter toward the way they were treated and the way—and it's not something he can get past—lay it aside and get past it—and he resents that people don't understand the sacrifices made."²⁵⁶ While many young men of his generation avoided service (for whatever reason), Scott went to war for his country—and as he saw it—as a matter of pride, honor, sacrifice, and duty. Scott specifically addressed the men who avoided service with an underlying bitterness, "I've had men, guys come up and try to explain to me why they didn't serve. . . . No. Those things hurt me in the fact that it hurt me as a person. . . . I was asked to serve and I did, as did many, many others. I'm not any different, braver, or anything than anybody else. . . . We went to do the job we were asked to do and those who didn't, that's on their conscience."²⁵⁷ As noted in Chapter 1, Edward raised both of his sons with very strong convictions when it came to military service and how veterans should be treated. Military service also represented a greater moral obligation; Scott could not contemplate an alternative. Although Scott technically volunteered for military service—a strategic action on his part—he also received a draft notice while in basic training and, therefore, military service for him was inevitable. Chapter 2 highlighted Scott's view of his service as a job and an obligation for living in the United States. As historian Robert O. Self

²⁵⁶ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²⁵⁷ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

stated, “To serve one’s country was a duty and an honor but also believed necessary for the survival of the ‘free world,’” a statement with which Scott whole-heartedly agreed.²⁵⁸ As addressed in earlier chapters, much of Scott’s belief in service as one’s duty or an honor stemmed from his upbringing in the rural South, a region steeped in military tradition and pride, and his own father’s view of service passed down from generation to generation. Scott’s own military service further enhanced his pride in country and service.²⁵⁹

While bitterness like that felt by Scott fueled the actions of some veterans, Scott internalized his bitter feelings. A number of Vietnam veterans returned from the war and joined the anti-war efforts and eventually formed organizations like Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). These veterans viewed the war as unjust and unnecessary and, rather than sit idly by, they organized and used their personal experiences to fuel their efforts and lend credibility to their cause. Scott never joined the ranks of these veterans. He never protested or spoke out against the war or the people responsible for the conflict. In fact, he had a rather low opinion of protestors, not because they protested (a right he supported), but because of the effects these protests had on returning veterans.²⁶⁰ Scott noted, “Nobody comes home says, ‘Oh, man,’ you know, ‘war’s great,’ and this type of

²⁵⁸ Self, *All in the Family*, 47.

²⁵⁹ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016; J. Scott, OH 1001.1; Self, *All in the Family*, 47.

²⁶⁰ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

thing. . . . But, when that protest also spills over to devalue the people who are doing it, which that happened to us, then . . . that's not right."²⁶¹ Self also affirmed that many Vietnam veterans reacted this way and "were uncomfortable seeing their comrades siding with the antiwar movement."²⁶² In the end, Scott stood by the values he learned growing up and quietly observed the actions of others. Sharion summed up her perception of her husband's attitude toward these protests saying, "He's always been a loyal person. He's always been patriotic. But, I think today that's the reason he resents the not standing up for the anthem; not puttin' your hand over your heart, you know, with the flag; not respecting what people have died to preserve."²⁶³ To Scott, protestors targeted veterans when, as discussed before, he simply did the job he was asked to do. Politics were above his pay grade.

The Vietnam War, however, was steeped in politics. Veterans like Scott considered politicians responsible for American involvement in Vietnam and the conduct of the war. The study conducted by the Harris firm on the myths and realities of attitudes toward returning veterans explicitly stated, "The responsibility for the unsuccessful war is placed squarely on the shoulders of our political leaders in Washington. Although a majority of the public agreed that the Vietnam war was one that our troops could never win, a more substantial majority feel that our political leaders would not let our troops

²⁶¹ J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

²⁶² Self, *All in the Family*, 65.

²⁶³ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

win.”²⁶⁴ The changing political climate coincided with events in Vietnam during 1968 and 1969 that reshaped the war abroad and at home.²⁶⁵ From the Tet Offensive to news of My Lai, public perception of the war declined drastically. Unable to reassure the American public, Lyndon Johnson refused to run for reelection in 1968. The assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. deepened the wounds of America and, according to historian Bruce Schulman, “[extinguished] the extravagant hopes of the era.”²⁶⁶ During his campaign, Nixon pledged to end the war (although he did not present a specific plan for troop withdrawals). He managed to win the presidency in a close election, but the war still raged in Vietnam. Plenty of domestic issues—race, the economy, social unrest—influenced the American vote, but the American people also recognized that politicians exercised a heavy hand in the execution of the war, and the election of Republican candidate Nixon showed a desire for change. Politics also gave disgruntled veterans a means of protesting the war that created a backlash against the veterans themselves, rather than the politicians responsible for propagating the war. Scott’s view of military service as a job contributed to his desire to remain apolitical; Scott wanted to stay out of the “limelight.” After all, Scott was home from war, but still in the Army.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Louis Harris and Associates, *Myths and Realities*, xl.

²⁶⁵ Self, *All in the Family*, 59.

²⁶⁶ Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 4.

²⁶⁷ Self, *All in the Family*, 59; Schulman, *The Seventies*, 4-5.

After his thirty-day leave, Scott reported back to Fort Wolters in Mineral Wells, Texas for a new assignment. Scott ended up stationed at Fort Wolters as a Training, Advising, and Counseling (TAC) Officer, which meant Scott worked with Warrant Officer Candidates and “[provided] insight on their leadership qualities.”²⁶⁸ Fortunately, Sharion moved with Scott, which allowed the couple to finally spend some time together; Scott joked that he and Sharion “were only together six months out of the first two years we were married. I think she calls those the ‘Wonderful Years!’”²⁶⁹ After several months in his new position, Scott recalled,

I went down to the personnel office and said, “What’s next? I don’t want to stay here all the time. I either wanna go to instructor school or wanna go to Chinook training.” . . . Another type of helicopter is Chinook—CH-47. And they looked at me, said, “Well,” said, “probably within the next six months you’re gonna go back for a second tour in Vietnam.” I said, “Well, wait a minute, I just got home. I don’t really wanna go back that soon.” And they said, “Well, that’s our rotation now. We’re not sending very many newer, but we’re sending a lot of people for second tours who are staying in. But, if you want, we will start your processing to get out of the service. So, you have one of two choices. You know, you’re gonna get out or you’re gonna go back.”²⁷⁰

Scott enjoyed flying and felt proud of his service, but too many of his friends went to Vietnam for a second tour and ended up wounded or worse, killed. Not willing to take the risk, Scott decided, “I made it through pretty much unscathed the first time—only thing

²⁶⁸ United States Army Warrant Officer Career College (USAWOCC), “Training, Advising and Counseling (TAC) Officer Certification Course (TCC),” accessed February 28, 2017, http://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/documents/cace/wocc/WOCS_TAC_Officers_ver4.pdf; “Warrant Officer Assignments,” United States Army Combined Arms Center, accessed February 28, 2017, <http://usacac.army.mil/organizations/cace/wocc/assignments>.

²⁶⁹ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

²⁷⁰ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

that ever bothered me was my nerves—and so I took the option to leave the service.”²⁷¹

Sharion shared the same sentiments stating, “You know, I figure that God gives you so many chances to take care of yourself and then he says this guy is not smart enough and he’s back over here again; I don’t know about that.”²⁷² Although this marked the end of his Army career, Scott forever carried a sense of duty, patriotism, and love of flying.

After all, few things compared to the excitement of flying a helicopter.²⁷³

Transitioning back into civilian life ended up more complicated than Scott hoped. The initial readjustment to life at home occurred relatively smoothly, but once discharged from the Army, Scott faced decisions regarding what to do with his life. His draft status no longer held him back. But finding a job still proved difficult in 1971. The economic boom following World War II slowed by the latter years of the 1960s. In fact, Schulman describes the “long 1970s” starting in 1968 as the decade of stagflation with crippling “high rates of inflation and economic stagnation, the seemingly impossible combination of rising prices with high unemployment, slow growth, and declining increases in productivity.”²⁷⁴ Locked into an expensive war with no end in sight did not help the economic situation. During this transition, James and Sharion relocated to Wolfe City and lived with Edward and Elva immediately following Scott’s discharge from the Army.

²⁷¹ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

²⁷² S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²⁷³ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²⁷⁴ Schulman, *The Seventies*, 8.

According to Sharion, in the subsequent weeks, the couple spent many hours mulling over their professional futures. Sharion stated simply, “At that time, not many people hired Vietnam veterans.”²⁷⁵ A struggling economy and limited pre-war work experience could have also factored into Scott’s job prospects. Sharion, a banker by trade, took a job at a local bank and continued on the career path she started while her husband served in the Army. Scott, a social studies teacher and coach by training, found a job coaching and teaching in Bonham, Texas—a small town north of Wolfe City.²⁷⁶

Prior to the military, Scott prepared for a career in education, but a year flying Army helicopters showed him the thrill and excitement of flying. Scott recalled, “Coaching and teaching, it wasn’t really—it wasn’t really what I wanted to do. I can’t explain to the flying experience itself: flying the aircraft and doin’ the things with it and becoming proficient.”²⁷⁷ Scott knew the Army was not the place for him to continue flying, but the Air Force provided completely different opportunities. Although Scott never explicitly stated why he went into the Air Force except for a love of flying—possibly because the real reason is hard to articulate—his regard for his service and how he viewed his treatment provided a hint that the military provided a sense of safety and security, even familiarity. Another Vietnam veteran, Dr. Homer “House” Butch, said he reenlisted because “I was more comfortable, felt fulfilled in the Army. I didn’t feel

²⁷⁵ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²⁷⁶ J. Scott, OH 1001.1; S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, September 22, 2016.

²⁷⁷ MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 548.

comfortable being a civilian.”²⁷⁸ After a year in Bonham waiting on a complete discharge from the Army, Scott joined the Air Force to go to their pilot training and by June 1972, he reported to Reese Air Force Base outside Lubbock, Texas for the start of a four-year enlistment.²⁷⁹

Although Scott’s Army career officially ended in 1971, the years he spent flying helicopters affected the rest of his life. As noted above, Scott made the conscious decision to keep stories of his time in the service quiet. His father’s teachings on the importance of military service and pride in country greatly informed this decision. Edward also taught by example; his silence about his service—or emphasis on a few humorous stories—modeled to his son (for better or worse) how to deal with and share those experiences. As noted in Chapter 1, Scott grew up in an era steeped in post-World



Figure 15. *Air Force Flight School*. Just a few weeks before graduation, Scott is pictured with T-38 Super Sonic Jet Trainer. Photograph in East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives.

²⁷⁸ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

²⁷⁹ J. Scott, OH 1001.1.

War II sentiment that fostered a natural comparison between “his war” and his “father’s war.” As Myra MacPherson argued, the timing of Vietnam in the 1960s and early 1970s coincided perfectly with the generation whose parents had grown up during the Great Depression and served in the military during World War II. Caught between the “Greatest Generation” who raised him and his contemporaries who either fought alongside him or refused to understand his service outside of the boundaries of a failed war, Scott struggled with his immediate homecoming and chose a life of silence rather than potential ridicule. In many ways, his silence mirrored that of his father decades before. As an adult who had been to war, the construct of the “good war” became even more prevalent in comparison with the results of the Vietnam War. A true understanding and recognition of how Scott’s war differed from his father’s did not happen until after he came home. He went to war because his country asked him to serve and, as noted in earlier chapters, a pride in service, country, and a job well done defined the values Scott learned growing up.²⁸⁰

The evolving relationship between the military and the media also factored in to Scott’s decision to keep his military experiences buried. His experiences in the Dallas airport coupled with a negative view of the media that had developed during his time in Vietnam had a lifelong effect on Scott’s ability to share his experiences with people

²⁸⁰ MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 48.

outside of his inner circle. When asked to describe the media's portrayal of the Vietnam War, Scott remarked,

One of the sayings that I've heard that we had at one time that's been passed around some was, "Fear not the enemy; they can only take your life. Fear the media; they can take your honor." And that's pretty much what happened. There were media consultants that I believe made erroneous reports and when confronted and told they were erroneous, refused to stand back up and say, "Oh, you know, I made a mistake." There were those that were very honest, I'm sure, and those who had very strong opinions and I have no problem with that. But I have a problem with the idea of continuing to cast the men who are doing the job they've been asked to do in a disdainful light.²⁸¹

The relationship between the military and the media began as an effective relationship. Correspondents such as Neil Sheehan and David Halberstam provided commentary in response to, and often disagreeing with, various policies but they "never questioned the ends of the war."²⁸²

Correspondents during the early years of the Vietnam War, according to American military historian William M. Hammond, "[placed] great confidence in the American soldier," and the military refrained from enacting censorship of the press, instead working on a type of honor system where reporters avoided releasing valuable information to the enemy because they understood the need to protect American troops.²⁸³ Hammond argued that this relationship turned sour during the Vietnam War

²⁸¹ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

²⁸² William M. Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 291.

²⁸³ Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam*, 292.

because “the conflict was born in contradiction and grounded in ambiguity,” and the lack of clarity regarding the real reasons behind the war greatly affected all aspects of the war effort.²⁸⁴ Through inconsistencies and blatant lies, both Johnson and Nixon failed to manage news coverage of the war, unlike in previous wars, and ended up fostering distrust within and of the media.²⁸⁵ As Hammond noted, news reporters and editors in the United States “tended to hew to the sources that gave their work the most weight—the president, the vice president, and other high officials of the executive and legislative branches of government.”²⁸⁶ This method proved problematic as the reliability of the executive declined. Reporters then asked questions that drew attention to the war’s lack of direction and, as the war waged on, they became more critical of how it was being conducted. As the news media began questioning the war, the military services still had a war to fight and too much questioning could undermine their efforts and the lives of more troops. This inevitably caused tension between the two as troops felt attacked by the media trying to report the facts and rally public support to end the war.²⁸⁷

While the news media kept up with the day-to-day depictions of the events halfway around the world, Hollywood, too, helped shape public perception of the war

²⁸⁴ Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam*, 293.

²⁸⁵ Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam*, 292-93.

²⁸⁶ Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam*, 294.

²⁸⁷ Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam*, 291-96; William M. Hammond, *United States Army in Vietnam: Public Affairs: The Military and the Media, 1962-1968* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1990), 321.

long after the fighting ended. Between 1965 and 1973 (the war years), Hollywood released only one film dealing with combat in Vietnam, *The Green Berets* (1968) starring John Wayne. The film, also co-directed by Wayne, portrayed him “as a frontier and war hero” to combat rising antiwar sentiment. Rooted in nostalgic ideology and patriotism, the film, according to film and history scholar Leslie H. Abramson, “staunchly [defended] U.S. military policy via the conventions of the World War II combat film and the western.”²⁸⁸ The timing of the film’s release in late 1968 could not have been worse given the political climate at home and problems with the war abroad. Nearly a decade passed after the failure of *The Green Berets* before any of the major studios released another film about the Vietnam War.

Film and literature scholar Stewart O’Nan discussed Hollywood’s silence regarding the Vietnam War as the result of major film studios recognizing that “America could no longer be sold war as adventure or war as a moral duty in the same way World War II and even Korea were sold.”²⁸⁹ After *The Green Berets*, Hollywood released a few films dealing tangentially with Vietnam and most of them were “schlock films about crazed returned vets.”²⁹⁰ The first round of films about the Vietnam War started in the late 1970s and continued through the 1980s and included films such as *The Deer Hunter*

²⁸⁸ Leslie H. Abramson, “1968: Movies and the Failure of Nostalgia,” in *American Cinema of the 1960s: Themes and Variations*, edited by Barry Keith Grant (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 206.

²⁸⁹ Stewart O’Nan, ed. *The Vietnam Reader: The Definitive Collection of American Fiction and Nonfiction on the War* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998), 260.

²⁹⁰ O’Nan, *The Vietnam Reader*, 259.

(1978), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *First Blood* (1982), *Platoon* (1986), *Hamburger Hill* (1987), and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). Often over-the-top, violent, and bloody, these films presented an image to the public who, according to Scott, then believed “that’s what really happened.”²⁹¹ Hollywood went from “pointedly ignoring Vietnam” to creating images for entertainment or shock and awe that reflected a particular type of veteran who then became the image for all veterans.²⁹² Scott admitted that “atrocities happened” in Vietnam, and most of the popular films latched onto these atrocities. But in the same breath he exclaimed that the “crazy sergeant that burns down the ville and the rest of them [soldiers] are all smokin’ pot” was not an accurate depiction of the universal Vietnam experience.²⁹³

Hollywood certainly generated many negative images about the Vietnam War, but these films also proved positive in some regards. O’Nan argued that while the first wave of films dealing with Vietnam (*The Deer Hunter*, *Coming Home*, and *Apocalypse Now*) failed to present a realistic depiction of the Vietnam experience, these films did break barriers and inspired a number of veterans to begin “[speaking] out and try, once again, to set the record straight.”²⁹⁴ The second wave of films (*Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket*, and *Hamburger Hill*), according to O’Nan, presented a less complex image of the Vietnam

²⁹¹ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

²⁹² O’Nan, *The Vietnam Reader*, 259.

²⁹³ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

²⁹⁴ O’Nan, *The Vietnam Reader*, 442.

veteran and reflected familiar tropes such as the drug-addicted and/or psychologically unstable veteran or merely used Vietnam as a setting to comment on a different social issue, such as women's rights or race. *First Blood*, released between the first and second wave, provided a more complicated view of Vietnam veterans with its depiction of "Rambo the psycho vet [who] is supposed to convince the audience of the average vet's humanity and courage." According to O'Nan, the level of violence in Rambo contradicts this idea, but, in the end, Rambo is cheered as a hero with a noble cause.²⁹⁵

Film played a valuable role in communicating with the general public, but answers regarding why America went to war were non-existent. As Lembcke noted, and as Scott attested to, "Film, more than any other medium, promulgated the image of Vietnam veteran rejection."²⁹⁶ Out of all the films dealing with the Vietnam War, Scott referred to the Mel Gibson film *We Were Soldiers* (2002)—based on the book *We Were Soldiers Once . . . And Young* by retired Lieutenant General Harold G. Moore—as a "portrayal of true heroism and men who were doing the job they were asked to do."²⁹⁷ As a lifelong student of history, Scott has spent countless hours learning about the Vietnam War and has watched a number of the films, but *We Were Soldiers* was the only film he described as "[portraying] it as it was."²⁹⁸ The image of a helicopter coming into the

²⁹⁵ O'Nan, *The Vietnam Reader*, 442.

²⁹⁶ Lembcke, *The Spitting Image*, 9.

²⁹⁷ J. Scott, OH 1001.2.

²⁹⁸ J. Scott, OH 1001.2; J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

landing zone (LZ) to resupply the troops with the tracers flying by the aircraft caught Scott's attention and he noted, "I look at that and it gives me cold chills because that's exactly what it was."²⁹⁹

Designed as entertainment first, and occasionally a source of historical information second, films provided an interesting medium for disseminating information to the public. While veterans like Scott viewed these films for everything they failed to show regarding the experience of serving in Vietnam, these films often legitimated stereotypes by highlighting the more exciting and exaggerated accounts from Vietnam. That contrast inevitably led to differences in opinion and a further divide between the men and women who experienced life in Vietnam during the war and everyone on the homefront. These films were just one means of presenting the Vietnam War to the public. Educators, scholars, political figures, and the various forms of media all functioned as a means for disseminating information; no single person or entity held sole responsibility for the release of information. Scott alone does not bear the burden of correcting the popular representations of the war. Nevertheless, he does play a role in helping shape and re-shape popular memory because, as MacPherson stated, "the only war you know is the one you were in" and the only people who truly understand the realities of war are those who experienced it.³⁰⁰ If these individuals with firsthand knowledge share their

²⁹⁹ O'Nan, *The Vietnam Reader*, 259-61, 277, 441-56; J. Scott, OH 1001.2; J. Scott, interviewed by Hasik, part 2, September 22, 2016.

³⁰⁰ MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 5.

experiences then they can help other people to understand the realities of their situations and experiences.

Veterans have always played a vital role in the remembrance of war. War is never a pleasant experience. In fact, Union General William T. Sherman summed it up best, “War is hell” and not something lightly remembered and dwelled upon. Scott and other Vietnam veterans attempted to compartmentalize their military service in an effort to adjust back into civilian life. This preservationist mentality isolated these veterans and, as Peter Marin wrote, allowed for “few avenues for what is within them to make its way into the larger world, or be sustained and refined by the larger world.”³⁰¹ Scott frequently noted how popular movies and other forms of popular culture got the whole experience “wrong,” but that did not inspire Scott to share his own experiences until over forty years after his discharge. As MacPherson discussed, Vietnam veterans as a group refrained from explaining their war. Like Scott, “an overwhelming number told the public *nothing* on their return. Not even their parents and close friends.”³⁰² Two groups of Vietnam veterans did talk about their experiences: POWs and the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Therefore, these groups shaped the prevailing image of the Vietnam veteran. Scott acknowledged that not all servicemen had the same experiences in Vietnam and therefore his story was not the same story as his fellow veteran. Certainly, truth exists in the

³⁰¹ Peter Marin, “What the Vietnam Vets Can Teach Us,” in *The American Experience in Vietnam: A Reader*, edited by Grace Sevy (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1989), 81.

³⁰² Myra MacPherson, “A Different War,” in *The American Experience in Vietnam: A Reader*, edited by Grace Sevy (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1989), 64.

experiences of POWS and veterans against the war. But since Scott—and countless other veterans—refused to publicize and share his military experiences, those willing to talk shaped the dominant narrative.

Sharion credited her husband’s silence to his naturally private disposition. Therefore, no one expected him to act any differently when it came to revealing the details of his military service. Sharion noted that her husband lived by the adage, “If you do a lot of talkin’ about it and braggin’ about it, maybe you weren’t who you said you were.”³⁰³ Their son Brian reflected this same sentiment in his recollections of his father’s stories as well as his personal experiences as a police officer.³⁰⁴ Dustoff pilot Mike Novosel, Jr. also echoed this same sentiment; “The guy that’s seen combat, he’ll just have a different way of explaining things. He won’t tell you things unless he’s asked. A guy who has never seen combat will basically volunteer all this shit.”³⁰⁵ Although Sharion understood where her husband’s need for privacy came from, she also noted,

Because the people [veterans] haven’t talked over the years, you’ve gotten only what was written by the media and I think that that has colored what everybody knows, remembers, feels. . . . If you get a bunch of them together and they start talkin’ about it, they’ll relate all kinds of human interest stories. Not just the war part of it, but, you know, doing Christmas, deliverin’ mail, deliverin’ the packages, workin’ with the people that were indigenous to that area that . . . didn’t have any luxuries, and you get a different perspective from them and I think you’ve been denied that because they won’t talk about it.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, January 6, 2017.

³⁰⁴ Brian Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, Wolfe City, TX, December 30, 2016, TAMUC Archives.

³⁰⁵ Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 66.

³⁰⁶ S. Scott, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, January 6, 2017.

Through Scott's own recollections and those of family members it became obvious that his choice to protect his Vietnam experiences stemmed from a variety of factors as outlined above.

Although Scott appreciated and enjoyed the brotherhood and camaraderie of military service, he also acknowledged a lack of understanding and shared experiences among fellow veterans. As Wilbur Scott, a Vietnam veteran turned sociologist, stated, Veterans are a potential group, which means they share a common interest or experience. In this case, their service during wartime provides unique experiences that set them apart from those who did not serve. However, as W. Scott also noted, "they are by no means a homogenous potential group, for their experiences also divide them."³⁰⁷ The differences in experiences and perspective between veterans became more apparent after interviewing Scott's friend Vernon Shive, a retired Technical Sergeant in the Air Force. The men shared a common bond because of their service in the Air Force. Scott flew B-52s and Shive worked in administrative positions. As a result, Shive could not relate to Scott's service in both the Army and the Air Force. Catching a ride on an Air Force airplane on the way to his next temporary duty station was as close as Shive ever got to combat flying. Nonetheless, Shive thought he and Scott shared a brotherhood and a bond that many other people never understood, and they do. They both wore Air Force

³⁰⁷ Wilbur J. Scott, *The Politics of Readjustment: Vietnam Veterans Since the War* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993), xvii.

uniforms—but Scott flew B-52s and Shive worked in an office. None of Shive’s experiences compared to Scott’s Army career.³⁰⁸

The “brotherhood” Scott shared with Shive compared with Scott’s relationship with World War II veteran aviator Leonard Gerner from Bonham. According to Scott, he and Gerner “didn’t talk about the war very much; we talked about flying.”³⁰⁹ The two shared a common experience of serving as a pilot, but the circumstances were slightly different and that showed through in how they communicated. The pair focused on the technicalities of flying rather than the specifics of war.³¹⁰ Sociologist W. Scott noted, the fact “that veterans often seek commonality with other veterans is hardly surprising.”³¹¹ Nevertheless, as a “loner’s war of isolated, private little battles, companies, squads, platoons, and five-man teams” finding people with shared experiences proved difficult.³¹² As noted earlier in this chapter, war is hell—something veterans can agree on—but it does not lend itself to easy or lighthearted conversations. Recognizing that wearing a uniform did not equate to shared experiences reinforced the value of understanding the role of each individual. Nonetheless, it must be noted that this lack of understanding also

³⁰⁸ Vernon Shive, Jr., interviewed by Hayley Hasik, Wolfe City, TX, December 22, 2016, TAMUC Archives.

³⁰⁹ James Scott, OH 1001.3, interviewed by Hayley Hasik, Wolfe City, TX, August 13, 2014, East Texas War and Memory Project, TAMUC Archives.

³¹⁰ J. Scott, OH 1001.3.

³¹¹ Scott, *The Politics of Readjustment*, 258.

³¹² MacPherson, “A Different War,” 57.

contributed to the silence many veterans adopted upon their return home. It was difficult to talk about something that few people truly understood.

When asked to provide any final comments regarding his military service, Scott remarked,

Well, I have a positive feeling about my participation and what I did . . . because I feel like I did my job. . . . It wasn't political. . . . Your life depended on you doing your job and your part. The Kent States and . . . some of the things we heard from our "celebrities" . . . didn't hurt me as a pilot or a military person; it hurt me as a person. I was asked to serve and I did, as did many, many others. I'm not any different, braver, or anything else than anybody else.³¹³

These final remarks not only summed up Scott's attitude toward his own service, but also reflected the attitudes of other veterans from his generation. Photographer Jeffrey Wolin created a photograph story to show and tell the stories of Vietnam veterans then and now. After working with a number of veterans and hearing their recollections about their own experiences, Wolin stated, "All [Vietnam veterans] were deeply and permanently affected by the war, but the majority are proud of their service."³¹⁴ Just like Scott, these men exhibited a pride in service that transcended politics and popular culture. In the end, they survived what many fled and few understood.

³¹³ J. Scott, OH 1001.2

³¹⁴ Jeffrey A. Wolin, *Inconvenient Stories: Vietnam War Veterans* (New York: Umbrage Editions, 2006), 5.

CHAPTER 4: DOING ORAL HISTORY

This project unofficially began in March 2013 when I visited the Vietnam War exhibition at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. At the time, a junior working on a B.A. in history, I had just co-founded the East Texas War and Memory Project at Texas A&M University-Commerce (TAMUC) with five of my peers. As such, oral history and veterans flooded my thoughts. But on that cold day in March, I met James Scott. We started up a conversation thanks to a TAMUC sweatshirt and a UH-1 Huey “Slick” helicopter. After exchanging pleasantries and learning that Scott lived in Wolfe City—a mere fifteen miles from the TAMUC campus—he pointed out that he flew the helicopter parked behind us. Not that exact one, of course. But he flew that model when he served in Vietnam. He also served in the Air Force and spent his career in public education.

So many layers and dimensions surfaced during that brief initial encounter. In the back of my mind, I thought, “He doesn’t look like a Vietnam veteran.” I had just begun to really learn about the Vietnam War. Up to that point, all of the veterans I interviewed and interacted with had served in World War II. I found myself guilty of evaluating Scott based on stereotype and frequent tropes I had seen in films. But, those stereotypes or tropes of Vietnam veterans pushed me to ask questions and try to understand how Scott fit into this larger narrative. Thus, my master’s public history topic emerged.

This chapter outlines the journey of developing, executing, and completing an oral history project of a Vietnam veteran. I explain public history as a discipline and provide a brief history of oral history as well. I then review relevant literature regarding the practice and methodology of oral history and its specific application for studying both life history and military history. Finally, I provide a detailed explanation of my methodology and practice throughout the project—my process, the decisions I made, any problems I encountered, and how it all fit into best practices. This final section provides a glimpse into the triumphs and struggles of oral history and chronicles the steps I took in completing the required, cumulative public history project for my master’s degree.

Explaining the Disciplines: Public and Oral History

The professionalization of history began during the late nineteenth century as, according to public historian Patricia Mooney-Melvin, “part of a larger redefinition and institutionalization of knowledge that took place throughout America.”³¹⁵ A definition for history emerged during the early years of this movement, which “stressed objectivity, research, the increase of knowledge, and employment within an academic setting.”³¹⁶ Between 1884 and the 1970s, the separation between professional historians in academia and “other” historians (everyone outside of academe) widened. Academic historians

³¹⁵ Patricia Mooney-Melvin, “Professional Historians and the Challenge of Redefinition,” in *Public History: Essays from the Field*, revised ed., edited by James B. Gardner and Peter S. LaPaglia (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2006), 8; Denise D. Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History* (Amherst: University of Boston Press, 2012), xviii.

³¹⁶ Mooney-Melvin, “Professional Historians and the Challenge of Redefinition,” 8.

became evermore specialized, technical, and catered increasingly to audiences made up of academic colleagues, drawing less attention and perceived relevance from the general public. Yet, the post-World War II economic boom led millions of (white) Americans to get into their cars and use their newly acquired disposable income and vacation time to travel the country.³¹⁷ Historic sites and National Parks became popular attractions precisely because they provided a sense of culture, exposure to American history, and an increasingly middle class product they were sold to “experience.” Increasingly, public historians—professionally trained with PhDs or not—worked at and ran these sites.³¹⁸

The 1930s marked a pivotal period in the development of public history. Indeed, it was during the 1930s that these two strands of history (public and academic) began to noticeably diverge. Mooney-Melvin noted that the biggest difference between those in academia and those in the public sector was “their audience, their presentation format, a more regulated work environment, and their limited reliance on peer review.”³¹⁹ Yet, New Deal initiatives also provided opportunities for professional historians to find work outside of academia, but fostered a sense of separation between more traditional, academic historians and the yet-to-be-named public historians (usually identified as simply Federal Historians, if at all, because most found employment at government run

³¹⁷ Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 15-17; Mooney-Melvin, “Professional Historians and the Challenge of Redefinition,” 12.

³¹⁸ Tyrrell, *Historians in Public*, 14-16.

³¹⁹ Mooney-Melvin, “Professional Historians and the Challenge of Redefinition,” 10.

sites and institutions). Historic events including both World Wars and the Great Depression provided opportunities for the federal government to use history as a promotional tool for documenting these particular periods and, as public historian Cathy Stanton noted, “for stimulating community and national identity.”³²⁰

Although history for consumption dated back centuries, according to historian Denise Meringolo, it was not until the 1970s that public history finally became part of the professional vocabulary and a legitimized academic discipline. A rapidly shrinking academic job market and the economic crisis of the 1970s helped further the development of university programs (i.e., public history programs) that encouraged the practical application of historical skills. In many ways, the legitimization of public history was a market-based solution (employment) to a market-based problem (unemployment). Starting in the late 1970s, graduate programs developed (the first at the University of California, Santa Barbara), professional associations for public historians emerged (e.g., National Council on Public History), and new journals created (e.g., *The Public Historian*). Public history now had an official, albeit evolving, definition with a growing job market and place within the discipline of history.³²¹

³²⁰ Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 10.

³²¹ Mooney-Melvin, “Professional Historians and the Challenge of Redefinition,” 14-15; Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks*, xiv-xv; Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment*, xvi-xvii; Tyrrell, *Historians in Public*, xix-xxi.

As noted by public historian Constance B. Schulz, “The goals and practices of public history are often interdisciplinary in their scope.”³²² Public historians are trained for a broad range of private and public sector jobs due to their exposure to a variety of subfields including museum studies, archives, historic preservation, and oral history. Public historians also work with a variety of primary source documents, not just written documents. In line with this tradition, work with oral histories provides both professional training in historical methodology, as well as the opportunity to use these records as a primary source to inform scholarship.

Oral history is arguably the oldest method of history dating back to preliterate societies. As British oral historian Paul Thompson stated, “[O]ral history is as old as history itself. It was the *first* kind of history. And it is only quite recently that skill in handling oral evidence has ceased to be one of the marks of a great historian.”³²³ In the United States, the Federal Writers Project (FWP) conducted one of the first unofficial oral history projects collecting over 2,300 first-person accounts from former slaves as part of the New Deal during the 1930s. These narratives were transcribed and assembled into a 17-volume collection in the Library of Congress. W. T. Couch, another early proponent of oral history, expanded upon the work done by the FWP and started conducting life histories with “ordinary Southerners,” which he published as *These Are*

³²² Constance B. Schulz, “Becoming a Public Historian,” in *Public History: Essays from the Field*, revised ed., edited by James B. Gardner and Peter S. LaPaglia (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2006), 24.

³²³ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 25.

Our Lives (1939). Yet, oral history was still not a formally established field of study. Then, in 1948, historian Allan Nevins—who long supported public outreach and relevance for historians—established “oral history” as an official and legitimate method of research at Columbia University. He argued that oral histories—more than just an interview—allowed scholars to discover and explore various perspectives, bypassing what he called “for the record only” statements that left historians looking for the “why.” Despite Nevins’s campaign and advocacy, the field of oral history developed slowly, with other professional historians questioning the reliability and validity of human memories. Not until the 1960s, with the rise of social history and postmodernism, did the field of oral history experience a dramatic expansion and wider acceptance.³²⁴

Although gaining support in recent years, debate lingers regarding the reliability and validity of oral histories. Oral historian Nicholas Mariner explored the four distinct stages, or “generations,” of oral history since its formal inception in the U.S. in 1948. “From a ‘fact-finding’ to a ‘history-shaping’ process,” oral history faced great criticism that resulted in efforts to redefine the practice as a “credible” study of history.³²⁵ Despite the debate, more historians began using oral history in the United States following World War II as an accepted way of preserving and studying the past. Advances in

³²⁴ Rebecca Sharpless, “The History of Oral History” in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, edied by Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless (New York: AltaMira Press, 2007), 13.

³²⁵ Nicholas Mariner, “Oral History: From Fact Finding to History Shaping,” *Historia* 14 (2005): 59.

technology—namely portable recording devices—also encouraged growing use of oral history. From Forrest Pogue and S. L. A. Marshall—official U.S. Army historians during and after World War II—capturing stories hot off the battlefield to Studs Terkel’s “*The Good War*”: *An Oral History of World War Two* four decades after the war, oral history has played an extensive role in the documentation and remembrance of war starting with World War II to the present.³²⁶

Oral historian Michael Frisch referred to oral history as “the flashlight of history” because it allows scholars to delve into undiscovered historical perspectives, but it also provides a means for giving history back to the people who participated in and created it—no doubt a very populist, democratic vision of oral history. Although the tendency is to group individuals or study people in an effort to make broader generalizations about a region or a group, social psychologist Dan P. McAdams warned, “[Pe]ople’s life stories are less integrative and unifying than we might expect.”³²⁷ Because such diversity exists, each individual interviewed (such as James Scott) has something to contribute to the historical narrative. Even experiences that corroborate a particular event provide nuanced perspectives that enhance and diversify that particular moment in history. Oral histories are not merely collections of repeated stories from different people. Perhaps the chief value of studying Scott’s experience, as well as those of other veterans, is best summed

³²⁶ Mariner, “Oral History,” 59; Studs Terkel, “*The Good War*”: *An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984).

³²⁷ Dan P. McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich, *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 5.

up in the words of journalist and oral historian Michael Takiff, “The gulf between those who have seen combat and the rest of us can be narrowed . . . but it can never be bridged.”³²⁸ Personal accounts—no matter the medium—are an invaluable window into the reality of veterans’ service.

Literature Review

Oral history literature includes scholarship on topics from the value and validity of studying recorded memories to selecting the proper recording equipment. The nature of oral history as a methodology also makes it accessible to a variety of disciplines, which adds to the vast amount of oral history literature and suggested best practices. First up is the literature dealing with the theory and practice of oral history as it is most relevant to both a “new military history” and “life history” project. Ultimately, the literature generally fits into three broad categories: interpretation; theory; and practice.

Starting in the mid-1800s, long before the professionalization of oral history in the United States, individuals like French historian Jules Michelet and American historian and ethnologist H. H. Bancroft (his personal collection/library is the foundation for the University of California at Berkeley library) set precedents for the use of oral history as evidence in their own research. Michelet used oral evidence in his study of the French Revolution when he realized existing documents (official, written) only preserved one side of the political story.³²⁹ As oral historian Ronald Grele acknowledged, and Michelet

³²⁸ Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 10.

³²⁹ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 49.

practiced, “oral history holds great promise for the increase of our knowledge of the past and of how that past lives on in the present.”³³⁰ Bancroft, more ambitious in his collection of materials, collected on a very large scale for his own personal studies, using methods that “clearly had many weaknesses,” but, in doing so, amassed a large quantity of research materials. These two historians, and many others, laid a foundation for oral history still appreciated nearly a century later when Nevins helped resurrect and professionalize the practice.

Countless oral historians, including James Bennett, Edward M. Coffman, William W. Cutler III, and Rhonda Y. Williams, have agreed that oral history provides something more to the current knowledge on any given subject, topic, etc. From preserving a certain human element and a richness beyond the audible word—that is, the pauses, periods of silence, inflection, and cracks in a speaker’s voice that cannot be captured or understood on paper—oral histories provide an immeasurable source for understanding points of view beyond the written word. Debates regarding memory, validity, and reliability are not to be ignored and are further explained later. As with any primary source document, oral histories, too, must be analyzed regarding the interviewee’s motivations, intended audience, proximity to events, omissions, etc.³³¹ That is not to discredit the validity or value of oral history, but rather legitimizes it as a valid means of preserving history, just like written documents and other primary source materials. In the case of this project, oral

³³⁰ Grele, *Envelopes of Sound*, viii.

³³¹ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 22.

history helps elucidate deeper meanings of war, society, and memory that is not always read on paper or seen on film.³³²

Using oral history as a means of interpreting war came into its own with studies of World War II and shaped the practice of oral history as related to military studies—in this case war and society—for later conflicts. Historian Rodger Horowitz acknowledged the possibility of problems associated with oral history and distortion of memory as well, but he asserted that the preservation of the war experiences not formerly documented in reports or other written records outweighed these problems. Horowitz explored the varied uses of oral history in the preservation and exploration of World War II experiences, analyzing Cornelius Ryan and his narrative *The Longest Day* juxtaposed with Forrest Pogue and his “mole’s point of view” defense of oral history to illustrate the two dominant uses of the questioned practice. Ryan described the Normandy invasion using oral history narratives to humanize history, and reinforce and support the existing narrative. Ryan, however, admitted that he “rejected at least ninety percent of the testimony I received in interviews. I did this simply because I was unable to substantiate or confirm what the person said.”³³³ Pogue, on the other hand, contested that “historians

³³² Edward M. Coffman, “Talking about War: Reflections on Doing Oral History and Military History,” *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (September 2000): 582-92; William W. Cutler III, “Oral History. Its Nature and Uses for Educational History,” *History of Education Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1971): 184-94; James Bennett, “Human Values in Oral History,” *The Oral History Review* 11 (1983): 1-15; Rhonda Y. Williams, “‘I’m a Keeper of Information’: History-Telling and Voice,” *The Oral History Review* 28, no. 1 (Winter – Spring 2001): 41-63.

³³³ Alice M. Hoffman and Howard S. Hoffman, *Archives of Memory: A Soldier Recalls World War II* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990), 4.

could then use the fragments of the story obtained from many interviews [oral histories] to ‘resurrect’ what actually happened.”³³⁴ In essence, Pogue argued that oral histories represented memories of historical events that could be synthesized into a narrative. By exploring these two historians and the evolution of oral history Horowitz wrote, “There remains a great deal to learn about the impact of World War II on Americans, and oral history can be an essential resource in this effort.”³³⁵ Horowitz helped set a precedent for the use of oral history in the study of war and memory that applies to the study of all wars, including Vietnam, and their participants.

Both Ryan and Pogue acknowledged the central debate of reliability versus validity—explained in broader detail later—and this debate intensified with work done by oral historian Alice Hoffman and her husband, Howard Hoffman, a psychologist and World War II veteran. Using her analysis of Howard’s military service—and his memories thereof—Alice defined reliability “as the consistency with which an individual will tell the same story about the same event on a number of different occasions” while validity “refers to the degree of conformity between the reports of the event and the event itself as reported by other primary source material, such as documents, diaries, letters, or other oral reports.”³³⁶ The Hoffmans, though, expanded their exploration into an

³³⁴ Rodger Horowitz, “Oral History and the Story of America and World War II,” *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (Sep., 1995): 619.

³³⁵ Horowitz, “Oral History and the Story of America,” 624.

³³⁶ Hoffman and Hoffman, “Reliability and Validity in Oral History: The Case for Memory,” in *Memory and History: Essays on Recalling and Interpreting Experience*, eds. Jaelyn Jeffrey and Glenace Ecklund Edwall (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 109.

examination of long-term memory; they noted that beyond merely humanizing historical narratives and recounting events of the past, oral histories allowed scholars to investigate how people remember events and how those memories change (if at all) over time.

Questions regarding memory inundate oral history scholarship. The debate often harkens back to the dispute between reliability and validity of reminiscence and memories long after the original event occurred. As oral historian Alessandro Portelli defended, “there are no ‘false’ oral sources.”³³⁷ The way a narrator remembers or recalls past experiences can be just as valuable and valid as the information they recall. Oral historian Trevor Lummis looked at the structure and validity of oral evidence and concluded, “The validation of oral evidence can be divided into two main areas: the degree to which any individual interview yields reliable information on the historical experience, and the degree to which that individual experience is typical of its time and place.”³³⁸ Again, this speaks to the interdisciplinary nature of oral history and the different ways oral sources can be studied and interpreted.

While some scholars view the inaccuracies within oral history as a hindrance, oral historians Lummis and Valerie Raleigh Yow, among others, both pointed out the hypocrisy in this assumption given the inaccuracies and discrepancies that also appear in other documentary evidence. Lummis posited that “as critics of oral history so frequently

³³⁷ Alessandro Portelli, “What makes oral history different,” in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge, 2003), 68.

³³⁸ Trevor Lummis, “Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence” in *The Oral History Reader* edited by Perks, 273.

contrast it to the assumed greater reliability of contemporary documentary evidence it is worth reminding ourselves that such sources also have their biases and distortions which, while acknowledged in books on methodology, are rarely allowed for in practice.”³³⁹ Yow summarized existing scholarship on memory itself and opined that although a journal entry from the day of a particular event is considered more reliable than a recollection several years or decades later, “research indicates that people forget more about a specific event in the first hour after it happens than during any other time.” Over the course of nine hours after an event, forgetting continues and “more is forgotten the first day than in the succeeding weeks, months, and years.”³⁴⁰ Although memory and reliability need to be taken into consideration, the argument that the passage of time voids the validity of oral sources is not always accurate. Other factors such as the mental state and overall health of the narrator must be considered as well.

The use of oral history to document and interpret the Vietnam War obviously has a shorter history than its use with the history of World War II. Given the contested nature of the Vietnam War and the continuing struggle to come to terms with what the war meant at the time and the aftereffects, oral history projects do not always provide a critical look at the history of veterans or the war itself. Mark Baker, Ron Steinman, Al Santoli, and Bob Greene—all part of the Vietnam generation, but not all veterans—wrote

³³⁹ Lummis, *Listening to History: The Authenticity of Oral Evidence* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1988), 11.

³⁴⁰ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 22-23.

several of the more well-known and popular oral histories of the Vietnam War.³⁴¹ Most of these publications use snippets of oral history interviews with a number of veterans from different backgrounds and present these “stories” as the story of the Vietnam War. This scholarship manages to provide a variety of perspectives and allows readers to learn about the war through the words of veterans, yet very little analysis exists. The “oral histories,” as they are described (generally only a few pages, sometimes as little as a paragraph, from each veteran narrator), are meant to stand alone as well as summarize the entirety of the experience. The reader is forced to make all of the connections and, if desired, look elsewhere for context and a deeper understanding. In essence, the “So what?” is missing.

One of the most well-known oral histories of the Vietnam War is *Nam* and written by Mark Baker, who directly stated in the introduction that his book “is not the Truth about Vietnam.” He continued, “Everyone holds a piece of that puzzle. But these war stories, filled with emotion and stripped of ambition and romance, may bring us closer to the truth than we have come so far.”³⁴² Baker’s work reflected possible constraints resulting from Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations designed to protect human subjects of research, but, as noted by oral historian Linda Shopes, are generally

³⁴¹ Baker, *Nam*; Steinman, *The Soldiers’ Story*; Al Santoli, *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War* (Ballantine, 1986); Bob Greene, *Homecoming*.

³⁴² Baker, *Nam*, 16.

inappropriately applied to oral history.³⁴³ Baker stripped the oral histories of almost all identifying information (biographical, gender, race, etc.) and relied on specific stories most often about specific instances to present the “Nam” experience. In short, the manuscript resembled a collection of individual short stories; personal experiences without a strong understanding of the “so what.” Ron Steinman, a veteran reporter, provided more details about the soldiers whose stories he included in his collection along with brief clarifying statements to help the reader understand the events in each story. Nonetheless, Steinman also left the oral histories to largely “speak” for themselves because, as he argued, these personal accounts provided personal meaning and “an attempt to bridge the gap between the theorists and those who served.”³⁴⁴ Unlike Baker who used a thematic approach to sort his oral histories, Steinman focused on six key battles (or specific facets of combat like the air war) and provided a summary of events to help place the personal accounts into a larger historical narrative. While these are just two specific accounts of oral history used to document the Vietnam War, many existing

³⁴³ Linda Shopes, “Legal and Ethical Issues in Oral History” in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, edited by Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless (New York: AltaMira Press, 2007), 138-9. IRB guidelines require researchers affiliated with colleges and universities who interact with human subjects to submit an outline of their research modes for review under Title 45 Public Welfare, Part 46 Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46 or the Common Rule). The intent is to prevent unethical practices like those used in the Tuskegee syphilis study. However, as Shopes noted, “constraints appropriate to these forms of research [the Tuskegee study] have been inappropriately applied to oral history: interviewers have been asked to submit detailed questionnaires in advance of any interview; to maintain narrator anonymity, despite an interviewer’s willingness to be identified; and to destroy tapes and transcripts after the research project is completed.” As Shopes went on to explain, these guidelines “violate fundamental principles of oral history.” Shopes, “Legal and Ethical Issues,” 138-39.

³⁴⁴ Steinman, *The Soldiers’ Story*, 21.

works follow the same models as outlined above. As more veterans reveal their “truths” and complicate the narrative, hopefully more in-depth studies can be done over how these individual experiences (or group experiences) fit into the larger narrative of the Vietnam War both at home and abroad.

While these works of interpretation provided some examples on how to approach my project, oral historians Donald Ritchie, Valerie Raleigh Yow, and Paul Thompson wrote some of the seminal works on the practice of oral history and provided the foundation of best practices for this project.³⁴⁵ These manuals have each undergone multiple revisions, further demonstrating the evolution of the practice and the immense importance of the work produced by these three scholars. Ritchie, Yow, and Thompson all discussed (in their own ways) how oral history enhances the historical record and allows scholars to take biographies of relatively unknown individuals—like James Scott—and use them to develop sound, well-researched contributions to current historical understanding. Ritchie argued that, “By adding an ever-wider range of voices to the story, oral history does not simplify the historical narrative but makes it more complex—and more interesting.”³⁴⁶ Yow posited that despite the “dominance of macroanalysis of social movements on conditions” within the field of history, oral history provides information and documentation that allows historians to “present a narrative that positions the

³⁴⁵ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History*; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*.

³⁴⁶ Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, xiv.

individual life in a wide social and historical context.”³⁴⁷ Building on that same idea, according to Thompson, oral history as a methodology “offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history, to the authoritarian judgement inherent in its tradition.”³⁴⁸ These three prominent oral historians not only provided the methods applied to this project, but also a solid justification for my chosen approach. More details on how my project fits into these best practices is provided for in the methodology section below.

I consulted oral historians Ronald Grele and Michael Frisch regarding both more theoretical concerns when it comes to oral history and best practices. Their scholarship, too, shaped my approach and my justification for oral history as the method chosen for this particular project.³⁴⁹ Of note, Grele and Frisch both discussed the relationship between history and memory and the role that oral history plays in not only uncovering previously overlooked historical narratives, but also expanding the perception of who makes history beyond just presidents and politicians. As Grele noted, oral historians of the New Left in the 1960s “hoped that, by giving voice to the voiceless, they could foster social change.”³⁵⁰ Historian Gary Okihiro summed up the value of studying non-elites by saying, “Oral history is not only a tool or method for recovering history; it is also a theory

³⁴⁷ Yow, “Biography and Oral History,” in *Handbook of Oral History*, edited by Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008), 426, 435.

³⁴⁸ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 24.

³⁴⁹ Grele, *Envelopes of Sound*; Michael H. Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays On the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

³⁵⁰ Rebecca Sharpless, “The History of Oral History,” in *History of Oral History*, 14.

of history which maintains that the common folk and the dispossessed have a history and that this history must be written.”³⁵¹ As a practice, oral history provided a way for non-elites to, according to Yow, “[inscribe] their experiences on the historical record, and [offer] their own interpretations of history.”³⁵²

Since this is a life history as well as an oral history project, literature on specific methods and practice dealing with life history greatly informed my approach. Many of the seminal oral historians discussed the use of in-depth interviews, a narrative strategy, or study of life histories as related to oral history. Yow, in her extensive guide to oral history, explored both the values and limitations of this approach, which allows for the study of people often obscured in history because of their non-elite status and it helps illuminate “the dimensions of life within a community.”³⁵³ As a biographer, Yow used her own experiences to further illustrate the value of this approach and noted, “a study of one life is not only about one life,” and “biographies require a wider historical context than the individual life.”³⁵⁴ Thompson also explained the individual life as “the actual vehicle of historical experience” and not only does oral history “[offer] a challenge to the

³⁵¹ Mary A. Larson, “Research Design and Strategies,” in *History of Oral History*, 104.

³⁵² Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*, ix.

³⁵³ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 11-13.

³⁵⁴ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 253-54.

accepted myths of history,” but the life-history approach specifically “is more likely to bring new insights.”³⁵⁵

As a “life history,” this project placed the experiences and memories of James Scott into a larger historical context of the Vietnam War and the subsequent stereotypes that have informed the dominant narrative of the war itself and the Vietnam generation. According to life historians Michal M. McCall and Judith Wittner, this approach to history can “deepen the critique of existing knowledge,” provide “important tools for reconstructing knowledge,” and give underrepresented historical actors an opportunity to “speak for themselves and ‘participate in setting the historical record straight.’”³⁵⁶

Ultimately, stereotypes about Vietnam soldiers largely developed as a means for making sense of the war. Over time, such stereotypes overwhelmed the reality of the war. Too, they helped shape what it meant to serve in the military. Although certain grains of truth inhabit many stereotypes (i.e., some Vietnam veterans certainly were raging drug addicts), elements of myth also underscore stereotypes. As Grele noted, “[Th]e absence of knowledge about the past perpetuates myths about it, and contributes to maintaining the status quo.”³⁵⁷ In this case, each veteran has a different experience and a story that fits into or defies existing stereotypes or, in some cases, myths. The diversity of experience,

³⁵⁵ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 24, 231, 269.

³⁵⁶ Michal M. McCall and Judith Wittner, “The Good News About Life History,” in *Symbolic Interaction and Cultural Studies*, edited by Howard S Becker and Michal M. McCall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 46-47, 75.

³⁵⁷ Grele, *Envelopes of Sound*, 4.

in fact, encourages the study of individuals and the issue of agency, like James Scott, focusing on their memories and thoughts about the war in comparison to the prevailing and popular historical narrative, i.e., “dominant memory” or “dominant narrative.”³⁵⁸

Although a number of oral historians acknowledge the value of life history as an historical approach, the practice, much like oral history, has been highly criticized and the validity questioned. Yow used psychologist William Runyan as an example. In 1975, when Runyan began studying life histories, he noted, “A number of people reacted to these efforts at understanding life histories with responses ranging from indifference to contempt.”³⁵⁹ Over the past forty years, attitudes toward life history have begun to change. The emergence of postmodernism (which threw all sources into question, not to mention “truth” itself) as well as a wider practice of social history helped life history gain respect as a valid historical approach with its focus on non-elites rather than the “great men” of history.³⁶⁰ Postmodernism thus only reinforced the belief that history belonged to the people as much as to the historian and life history provided an appropriate methodology for allowing people to take back their history.³⁶¹ These in-depth interviews

³⁵⁸ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Maurice Halbwachs, “From *The Collective Memory*,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 139-49.

³⁵⁹ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 18.

³⁶⁰ Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment*, 11.

³⁶¹ Tyrrell, *Historians in Public*, 16.

provided another valuable method for studying the life and experiences of the non-elites who, as Yow noted, “do not leave memoirs or have biographers.”³⁶²

This project also has a “new military history” aspect that is important to the historical narrative portion, but also important for informing the approach to this entire project. As a life history of a military veteran, this project incorporates approaches and questions more in tune with social and cultural history than traditional military history, which typically focuses on politics and strategy. During the second half of the twentieth century, military studies began to incorporate aspects of social and cultural history however, which, further, gave more credibility to oral history as a means of collecting and preserving military history. According to military historians Stephen Morillo and Michael F. Pavkovic, war and society studies represented a departure from the focus on the so called art of war—“just studying campaigns and battles as exemplars of universal military principles”—to an approach that focused on the “impact of warfare.” Morillo and Pavkovic acknowledged that oral history plays a necessary role in the study of new military history as it provides “windows into the experience of warfare” and helps capture the “full range of military experience.”³⁶³ Military historian Jeremy Black also provided insights into the shifting military history and the role of oral history within the field. Black argued that not only does oral history help create military history that is more accessible to the public, but it is also “seen as an aspect of recollection that provides a

³⁶² Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 11.

³⁶³ Morillo, *What is Military History?*, 105.

key guide to what war is like.”³⁶⁴ Oral history provides a means for looking at the relationship between war and society.

In the pages above I outlined just a fraction of the existing literature on oral history methodology. Ultimately, I narrowed on the literature most relevant for informing my project and my approach. Although oral history has a relatively short history as an “officially” recognized historical approach, the literature is extensive and constantly evolving and changing as new projects are developed and executed, and technology advances. These works, as well as others not specifically discussed, provided the foundation for the project described in detail below. In the next section I will explain my process and how it fits into best practices.

Methodology and Best Practices

The research and collection of materials for this project actually began in May 2013 when I conducted the first oral history interview with Scott on the campus of Texas A&M University-Commerce (TAMUC) as part of the East Texas War and Memory Project (ETWMP). Due to scheduling conflicts (and the fact that these interviews were part of a project conducted by several people), a different intern conducted the second interview using follow-up questions created from viewing my first interview. I did a third interview during the summer of 2014, which focused heavily on Scott’s career in public education, post-military service, and the ways his service informed how he taught

³⁶⁴ Black, *Rethinking Military History*, 49.

history and how he approached the rest of his life. At the time of the third interview, I considered doing a project about Scott for my master's thesis (I started my master's degree at TAMUC in fall 2014) and I began looking into his role in the broader formation of memory regarding the Vietnam experience. Obviously, he had first-hand knowledge and I wanted to know how (if at all) he used that knowledge and experience to educate the students and people around him. Veterans, it could be argued, have an interesting obligation to share their experiences to help inform the public. After learning about Scott's service, I wanted to better understand his role in the shaping and reshaping of historical narrative. I was especially curious given Scott's view of existing stereotypes and tropes as "incorrect" or "not how it was." One way to help shape and reshape that narrative is by providing an alternative narrative.

After consulting with Dr. Paul J. P. Sandul (this project's committee chair), I utilized a total of nine interviews for this project. The first three interviews were, as noted above, conducted as part of the ETWMP, of which I conducted two. For this project specifically I scheduled and conducted six additional interviews: one more with James Scott; two with his wife Sharion Scott; and one each with their son Brian, James's brother Rodger, and family friend Vernon Shive. As explained by oral historians Hugo Slim, Paul Thompson, Olivia Bennett, and Nigel Cross, "An average life story interview may need two or three sessions and can take anything from one to eight hours. Breaking up the interview into separate sessions gives people time to remember and explore the past and

makes recollection more of a process than an occasion.”³⁶⁵ These breaks between interviews, especially the interviews with James and Sharion, allowed me to prepare adequately for each interview and allowed the interviewee ample time to reflect on their memories and the purpose of the project as suggested by Slim, et al.³⁶⁶ On a more basic level, breaking up interviews into shorter sessions helped avoid exhausting both the interviewer (me) and interviewees. The interviews were usually no more than two hours. If a longer session was necessary, I made sure to schedule a lengthy break. I also found that each subsequent visit resulted in additional stories never mentioned during earlier interview sessions and helped strengthen rapport. This allowed me to ask more probing questions over time without fear of offending the Scotts. By the time I concluded the interview process, Scott was sharing his experiences without as much prompting on my part.³⁶⁷

Although the interviews occurred over a period of several years, they serendipitously took a life history approach from the very beginning. Ever since I started working with oral history, I saw the value in using a life history approach because people’s lives and experiences do not exist in organized chapters. Summarizing oral historian Mary Chamberlain, the events of our lives blend into one another and different

³⁶⁵ Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson with Olivia Bennett and Nigel Cross, “Ways of listening,” in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge, 2003), 116.

³⁶⁶ Slim et al., “Ways of listening,” 116.

³⁶⁷ Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 25; Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 108.

periods inform our attitudes and actions at later times.³⁶⁸ A life history approach during the oral history process laid the foundation for a larger biographical project that combined the life histories with other documents (both primary and secondary) to create, as Yow described, a narrative that places the individual in a wider historical context.³⁶⁹ Especially when documenting military experiences, I always tried to understand motivating factors. Oral historian Paul Thompson stressed the strength of oral history in allowing scholars to form connections between different stages in life and illuminate the ordinary experiences generally overlooked in the larger historical narrative.³⁷⁰ By trying to understand where individuals like Scott came from and how they were raised and what affect that had on their decisions later in life, I embraced Thompson's approach. Even men who were drafted during war had varied feelings and attitudes toward the draft and their service and their early years often informed their attitudes.

The same type of argument applies when looking at post-military years in the lives of veterans. Asking about post-military experiences and life events provides a valuable look at the effect of their military service and, really, how they have made sense of it since then. For many veterans, including Scott, they spent only a chapter of their lives in the military. In the grand scheme of things, military service was only a fraction of their life. Yet, for many of them, this brief period greatly shaped the rest (and often

³⁶⁸ Mary Chamberlain, "Narrative Theory" in *Handbook of Oral History*, 393.

³⁶⁹ Yow, "Biography and Oral History," 426.

³⁷⁰ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 231; Yow, "Biography and Oral History," 440.

majority) of their adult lives and sometimes the lives of those around them (i.e., spouses, children, other family members). As Takiff stated, “War marks individuals for life, war marks families for generations.”³⁷¹ Looking at the entirety of a veteran’s life provides a larger window to understanding how exactly military service affected their life.

It should be noted that no set technique or master blueprint exists for oral history precisely because each interview presents its own set of challenges and demands that must be addressed. That being said, I relied heavily on Thompson’s life-history interview guide (an appendix in *Voices of the Past*) when developing interview questions for each interview. Thompson’s outline helped me understand better the types of questions I needed to ask so that I could gather as much information from each interview as possible and create a more well-rounded narrative. I generally approached each interview chronologically and tried to focus on crafting broad, open-ended questions to start the conversation and direct the interviewee with specific follow-up questions as needed.³⁷² That being said, very rarely did I use a set “script.” As Thompson pointed out, different interview styles exist “ranging from the friendly, informal, conversational approach to the more formal, controlled style of questioning.”³⁷³

My initial interviews with both James and Sharion were best described as “general gathering” interviews where I prompted the interviewee with broad, open-ended

³⁷¹ Takiff, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, 12.

³⁷² Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 226; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 66-67.

³⁷³ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 222.

questions and allowed them to do most of the talking. I knew that I could fill in any information gaps later in the interview or even schedule an additional interview, which helped me worry less about directing the conversation too much and allowed me to maintain a certain level of flexibility. From when and where the subject was born to current occupation, I sought to collect as much information as possible. I then used these interviews to develop the questions for follow-up interviews to fill in any gaps or holes in the narrative as the literature recommends. The biggest pitfall I tried to avoid was the rigid, interrogation style interview where the interviewer (in this case, me) comes off as brutal and abrasive. Allowing the interviewee to direct the conversation, but not control the situation, also helped reveal details and specific stories that may not have come up during a more structured interview.³⁷⁴

Conducting interviews with James Scott and his wife Sharion provided the foundational information vital to the project—not surprising since the project centers around James Scott’s life. A life history would have been impossible without those two perspectives. Over the course of four interviews with James and two with Sharion I realized that this project could quickly become never ending. Each time I met with the couple I learned new stories and information that helped guide my research and left me with more information, but also more questions. Even throughout the writing process I found myself asking additional questions as I looked at the larger historical narrative and

³⁷⁴ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 222, 226, 309; Charles T. Morrissey, “On Oral History Interviewing,” in *The Oral History Reader*, 108, 113; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 77-78.

where exactly James Scott fit. These questions often dealt with specific events in history or Scott's thoughts on particular groups, like the New Left. While writing and revising the historical narrative chapters I constantly reminded myself that I had to draw a line somewhere. Just because the research could continue did not mean that it needed to or that it should. As Portelli, Lummis, and Ritchie all noted, there would always be someone else to interview and another question to ask. In fact, additional interviews and questions might be asked at a later date for a different (or larger) project.³⁷⁵

After conducting initial interviews with James and Sharion, I sought out additional interviews with as many family members as possible as suggested by Yow and Ritchie. The initial interviews with Brian, Rodger, and Vernon differed from the initial interviews I conducted with the Scotts because I sought information directly related to James. Oral historian Charles T. Morrissey also noted that no single technique exists for interviewing and a good oral historian adjusts to the present situation and to fit the person who they are interviewing. As Morrissey pointed out and I acknowledged earlier, each interview I conducted required slightly different techniques. These interviews had more structure and I relied on a more specific set of questions, but still maintained flexibility and asked follow-up questions based on the answers provided in the interview. I also maintained an element of life history because I wanted to have some background on these people as individuals, even though the interviews were geared toward learning more

³⁷⁵ Portelli, "What makes oral history different," 71; Lummis, "Structure and validity in oral evidence," 282; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 60.

about James Scott specifically. In many ways, these interviews, or at least the interviews with Brian and Rodger, resembled what Slim and others referred to as “family-tree interviewing,” because they focused on uncovering more in-depth family history rather than just focusing on the interviewee.³⁷⁶

My interviews with Brian Scott and Rodger Scott added a dimension to the research that allowed me to look at an outside perspective of James, which better informed my understanding of him and his attitude toward his military service. Although these men are close family and, as such, part of James’s inner circle, they also had varied knowledge of James’s life and military service. James and Rodger grew up together in the same house with the same parents in the same environment. Rodger, while corroborating information gathered from James about their upbringing, also highlighted how different two siblings could be. While James is a storyteller, Rodger is quiet. James responds to questions and prompting with stories and allows the questions to prompt him whereas Rodger provides more succinct and direct answers. Also, I found myself surprised at how little Rodger knew about his brother’s military service. Brian, on the other hand, knew quite a bit about his father’s military service and relayed stories with great enthusiasm. Much like James, Brian is a storyteller and provided more expansive answers to questions than Rodger. Again, as Ritchie and other oral historians noted, I

³⁷⁶ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 89-92, 265-66; Morrissey, “On oral history interviewing,” 107-8; Slim et al., “Ways of listening,” 117; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 77.

found myself adjusting my approach to each interview depending on who I was interviewing.³⁷⁷

Unfortunately, I was unable to conduct all of the interviews I would have liked. Despite repeated attempts, I never had the chance to interview James' and Sharion's daughter Amy or their son-in-law Steve. Eventually, timing became an issue. As much as I wanted to add these different perspectives to the project, I also recognized that much of the information pertinent to my project came from James, Sharion, and Rodger. In retrospect, interviews with Scott's children provided a lot more information to use in future projects. The interview with Brian provided additional information regarding how James dealt with his service in the subsequent decades. As noted earlier, this project focused specifically on James and his Army career and stopped when he enlisted in the Air Force. Plenty of information exists on his Air Force career and subsequent career in public education, but due to time and the fact that this is a master's project, not a dissertation, I chose to save that information for another day. As Portelli noted and I touched on earlier, "interviews with the same person may be continued indefinitely" and there comes a point in any given project where you must assess the completeness of the information gathered. Oral history projects almost always end as a work in progress because there are always more people who could be interviewed or one last question to ask a participant. Yet, that does not discredit the information gathered, but instead leaves

³⁷⁷ Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 66-67.

room for further research. And as Donald Ritchie noted, this “excess” information can provide valuable information to other researchers as well—a cornerstone of public history in general.³⁷⁸

I also looked for interview subjects outside of the family, as Yow and Ritchie suggested. Unfortunately, the friend I hoped to interview, World War II veteran and James’s “personal hero” Jack Butler, declined an interview. He did two interviews with the ETWMP about his military service and told me that he would rather not talk about it anymore. I explained how I wanted to talk about Butler’s experiences in Aberfoyle and Wolfe City to get some more context on the area and his relationship / friendship with Edward and James. Since two interviews about his military service exist in the archives at TAMUC, I wanted to focus more on how he knew James and what, if anything, James shared with him regarding Vietnam. As Army veterans, even though they served in different wars and in different capacities, I wanted to understand better the connection the two shared. Indeed, historian Myra MacPherson provided many comparisons between the two generations and I wanted to explore the contrasts between the two on a more individualized level. In other words, I wanted to see how the relationship between Butler and Scott compared to the literature. I was also curious about Butler’s thoughts on Vietnam veterans and how their war and treatment differed from World War II. In short, I thought Butler could help complicate the narrative and add (or at least enhance) to the

³⁷⁸ Portelli, “What makes oral history different,” 71; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 89.

existing information on Scott. Nevertheless, after several attempts and various explanations of my project, Butler declined to sit for another interview and I respected that decision.³⁷⁹

Vernon Shive, on the other hand, happily accepted my invitation. I first met Shive at a Kiwanis luncheon I attended with the Scotts. I talked to him about my own education and background studying veterans' experiences and he immediately started sharing his own Air Force stories. He seemed interested and enthusiastic. Shive, however, overstated how well he knew James. Yow, however, discussed different ways of interpreting oral histories beyond surface-level text. I looked to both her and Thompson to find ways to look beyond what Shive said to understand more about his motivations and attitudes toward not only his military service but Scott's as well. The best information that came out of this particular interview dealt with attitudes toward service from one veteran to another. The way Shive discussed his service in comparison to the way Scott talked about his highlighted the discrepancy between veterans' experiences and their willingness to talk about them. As explained throughout the narrative chapters, military experiences vary and when, where, and in what capacity someone served can influence how they talk about that service. My interview with Shive also reinforced my understanding of Scott's

³⁷⁹ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 265-67; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 62-3; MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 608-14.

desire to preserve his military experiences and not share too much information with people outside the family.³⁸⁰

As I approached people for interviews and developed questions, I tried to find perspectives and angles to help complete the narrative. Oral historian Mary Chamberlain pointed out that “individuals [do] not choose one narrative through which to recount and construct their lives, but several.”³⁸¹ As I discovered after interviewing Scott several times, the history of people does not exist in neat chapters with a clearly defined introduction and conclusion. Rather, it all blurs and blends from one event to another, with much overlap. As a result, each interview I conducted added a dimension to the narrative. As Chamberlain further stated, “who we have become continues to select and structure our memories and experiences and the narratives through which we record them.”³⁸² Meaning, there is nothing inconsequential about the narratives one chooses to create and tell in life. Moreover, because individual life histories and narratives are multilayered, they present a multi-dimensional addition to the existing historical narrative and archival record. Each interview provided an additional layer to Scott’s story. Other layers within the narrative for James Scott included his rural, northeast Texas upbringing, his father’s experience as a World War II ferry pilot, his own military experience in Vietnam, and his specialty as a helicopter pilot. Each one of these layers lends itself to a

³⁸⁰ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 339-45; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 272-74.

³⁸¹ Mary Chamberlain, “Narrative Theory,” 393.

³⁸² Mary Chamberlain, “Narrative Theory,” 395.

different chapter of history, but, as Yow and Stanton acknowledged, looking at all of these pieces together provides a lens to understand more about how individual lives intersect with larger cultural and historical moments. Therefore, this project took a multidimensional approach that I tried to accomplish through my choice of interviewees and the information gathered in their interviews.³⁸³

I recorded all but one interview as a digital video. Although Ritchie and other oral historians warn that video cameras can make interviewees nervous initially, there are ways to setup the camera to capture the interviewee's expressions and body language without being invasive. I often put my camera just off to the side and I sat slightly off to the opposite side to direct the interviewees attention toward me and not the camera. This allowed for a clear recording without distracting the interviewee. Video interviews allowed me to capture, and better understand, silences, pauses, and facial expressions, which according to oral historians like James Bennett, Edward M. Coffman, William W. Cutler III, and Rhonda Y. Williams are unique to oral sources. In fact, I prefer video oral histories because of this added richness.³⁸⁴ Although a camera can be intimidating to some people, capturing body language and facial expressions adds a dimension that can never be completely replicated in the written word. As Yow noted, video provides the

³⁸³ Yow, "Biography and Oral History," 436; Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment*, 12; Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 265-67.

³⁸⁴ Bennett, "Human Values in Oral History"; Coffman, "Talking about War: Reflections on Doing Oral History and Military History"; Cutler, "Oral History. Its Nature and Uses for Educational History"; Williams, "'I'm a Keeper of Information'"; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 109-12, 118-20.

“capacity to illustrate the meanings of oral history testimony.”³⁸⁵ How someone speaks, the gestures they make, and their overall body language and facial expressions reveal things that do not always come through in the spoken word. For example, watching an interview as opposed to just listening to it can help the viewer better understand why someone pauses in the middle of their story.

Although I preferred video interviews, or at least interviews in person, I conducted one interview for this project over the phone. While not ideal, timing and distance prevented a face-to-face interview. But thanks to modern technology, I still managed to do the interview. Yow articulated my chief concern, my inability to read body language and facial expressions during the interview and thus gauge Rodger’s attitude and feelings toward my questions. I did try to concentrate more on Rodger’s voice (tone, inflection, etc.) to gauge his reactions, but I found myself struggling to determine if a pause meant he was gathering his thoughts or done answering the question and ready to move on to the next one. The situation was not ideal and, in this instance, reality (recording interviews in whatever way possible) trumped a perfect project (having all of the interviews in the same format).³⁸⁶

Although the actual primary source document is the recording (whatever the medium), as both Portelli and Ritchie acknowledged, most scholars work from transcripts, which increase accessibility, not to mention potentially motivates better

³⁸⁵ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 95.

³⁸⁶ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 130-32.

preservation of the oral history itself because, in step, increased accessibility turned to increased use and popularity. In keeping with this practice and after consulting my project committee chair (Sandul) about what would be expected of me for completing an oral history project from beginning to end, I transcribed a total of nine interviews for this project. Too, after I consulted with Andrea Weddle, head of special collections at TAMUC, I decided to use the oral history transcript format provided by the East Texas Research Center at Stephen F. Austin State University since TAMUC does not have a set transcript format. This format included a title page (including interviewees name, date and location of interview, and name of the interviewer), editorial notice, restriction, abstract (including persons and places mentioned), and the actual transcription. I used this format for all nine interviews.³⁸⁷

Since I relied heavily on the transcripts to prepare for future interviews, I started with the three interviews from TAMUC. As I completed each subsequent interview I began transcribing straightaway. Not only was the interview fresh in my mind, which helped me clarify any confusing stories, but this also helped me develop questions for future interviews and begin outlining and constructing the historical narrative simultaneously. I referenced both Portelli and Yow when figuring out how best to approach the transcribing process. Part of the value of oral history, as repeatedly referred to above, is the spoken word. As Portelli noted, “the actual document is the recorded

³⁸⁷ Portelli, “What makes oral history different,” 64; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 41-44.

tape; but almost all go on to work on the transcripts, and it is only transcripts that are published.”³⁸⁸ No matter how hard a transcriber tries (in this case, me) the confines of written language—grammar—make it difficult to create a written document that reproduces the original source with complete accuracy.³⁸⁹ Yow advocated for a verbatim transcript, which I attempted to follow as closely as possible in an effort to capture as much language, tone, and personality as possible. Although the process was, as Yow attested, “painstaking and time consuming,” this choice allowed me to produce a transcript as close to the original as possible.³⁹⁰ Ultimately, the process of transcribing is highly subjective and as oral historian Willa K. Baum explained, “There are no cut and dried rules for how to do oral history at any step. Oral history is an art, not an exact science.”³⁹¹ Therefore, it should be noted that any mistakes in the transcripts are mine and for complete accuracy consult the original oral history interviews.

As stated above, several interviews with Scott were already archived at TAMUC prior to the start of this project. After consultation with Paul Sandul, Linda Reynolds (the head of the East Texas Research Center), and Andrea Weddle, I chose to deposit the originals with TAMUC because it would reflect poor practice to separate the collection. Also, using the repository at TAMUC made more sense because Scott and his family

³⁸⁸ Portelli, “What makes oral history different,” 64.

³⁸⁹ Portelli, “What makes oral history different,” 65.

³⁹⁰ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 356.

³⁹¹ Willa K. Baum, *Transcribing and Editing Oral History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 6.

have closer ties to the region. Placing these materials at the East Texas Research Center in Nacogdoches, Texas, although possible, could inhibit future use. And, as Yow indicated, one goal in oral history is finding a way to “[make] sure your work will continue to be helpful.”³⁹² Because I always planned to donate all of the materials collected during this project to TAMUC, I contacted Weddle to ensure that all release forms and formatting met her specifications. All of my release forms came from TAMUC, which simplified the process for me because I did not have to create my own release forms or biographical documents (See Appendix).

For this project specifically—not including the materials already available at TAMUC—I produced and donated (or will donate) six oral history interviews, the corresponding release forms, transcripts for those six interviews as well as the three existing interviews in the TAMUC archives, and a copy of my completed project. These materials add to the existing collection on Scott that includes three interviews and various other documents (mostly digital scans), including photographs and Scott’s military commendations located in the archives at TAMUC. These materials also helped inform and enrich the historical narrative for this project. Also, each individual I interviewed received a copy of their interview as well as a copy of the final transcript. This transparency and continued communication allowed me to remain in contact with my interview subjects and helped maintain a rapport that allowed me to reach out for

³⁹² James E. Fogerty, “Oral History and Archives: Documenting Context,” in *Handbook of Oral History*, 207-236; Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 371.

additional information or clarification, which proved especially helpful throughout the writing process. This fulfilled my work as an oral historian, but not my role as public historian. Now that I had the tools, it was time to use them.

CONCLUSION

Already shared, a quote from A. D. Horne deserves repeating. The Vietnam generation is “a generation of Americans whose lives were—and still are being—profoundly altered by the war.”³⁹³ Much like the so-called Greatest Generation and World War II, no Baby Boomers alive during the Vietnam War era survived unscathed. News of the war provided countless pages for newspapers and flashed across televisions in living rooms throughout America. In some way or another, it seemed everyone knew someone serving in Vietnam. Yet, for such a large generation affected by such a long-lasting conflict, there is much left to learn about the individuals who fought in the war. As Wilbur Scott noted, veterans of any war—in this case Vietnam—are bonded through shared goals and interests (e.g., staying alive, returning home, completing the mission, protecting their fellow soldiers), but their experiences also divide them. Life histories like Scott’s allow us to look at both the shared and disparate experiences of soldiers and further complicate the historical narrative.

As both Jeffrey Wolin and John Wood explained, the individuals with first-hand knowledge hold a special kind of authority in the study of war and its effects. After all, they were there. They experienced things that few people could ever relate to or describe.

³⁹³ A. D. Horne, ed, *The Wounded Generation: America After Vietnam* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981), xii.

Veterans like Scott have and continue to play a role in shaping our understanding of what it meant to serve in the Vietnam War. Yet, until recently, most of the veterans sharing their experiences were either POWs or Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Therefore, two dominant narratives of Vietnam veterans developed: (1) they had been captured, the war was hell, and they were heroes for surviving; or (2) they spoke up against the war and were labeled as imposters, not real veterans or, really, patriots.³⁹⁴ Journalist Peter Marin referred to the veterans who chose to remain silent (not to be confused with—nor separated from—“the silent majority”) about their service as “isolated” with few avenues for constructively sharing all of their stories, experiences, and feelings with the larger world. He wrote, “If someone somewhere would take the trouble to draw forth from the veterans what it is they feel, think and know, or to convince them to speak, all of us would be better off.”³⁹⁵ And that is precisely what I aimed to do with this public history project.

My project involved conducting oral histories with James Scott and his family in an effort to not only understand his life within a larger historical narrative better, but also to allow him a venue to finally share his military experiences with someone outside of the family. War changes people. A good way to see or understand that change is to study the lives of veterans over time. In this case, I chose to look at Scott and focused on his Army service, including the various influences that shaped his views and understanding of

³⁹⁴ MacPherson, “A Different War,” 64-65.

³⁹⁵ Marin, “What the Vietnam Vets Can Teach Us,” 81.

service as well as his reflection upon that chapter of his life. This review of different periods in Scott's life demonstrated how a veterans' military experiences could permeate the rest of their life. Of course, one has to ask: Does the study of Scott completely transform the narrative of Vietnam helicopter pilots? No. And no shame should come from saying so. But what it does do is enhance our understanding of what it meant to be an Army pilot (the training, the missions, the camaraderie with crewmembers, etc.) and how Scott felt about his service—a perspective that is both historical and informative however authoritative or not. Since the Vietnam War has largely been dominated by narratives and images of draft dodgers and resisters, not to mention hippy war protestors, projects like this help us understand better how and why individuals like Scott have such a stoic pride and appreciation for their service and the service of millions of others.

As thoroughly demonstrated, Scott's story is multi-layered and leveled. So, too, are the stories and experiences of all veterans. Recognizing this helps enrich the historical narrative on a larger scale because it reveals points of comparison and contention. These multiple (and diverse) layers and levels also reveal more areas of potential future research. Concerning just Scott, for example, further research could be done on the community of Wolfe City and how and to what extent the pro-veteran community developed. Too, looking beyond Scott this time, although the helicopter played a substantial role in the execution of the Vietnam War, existing scholarship tends to focus on either the mechanics of helicopters or memoirs from pilots and crew members, sometimes with little to no historical context. As demonstrated with the recent efforts to

erect a national monument for Vietnam helicopter pilots, a lot remains to be learned about this particular group. Returning to Scott and his story, I found that very little scholarship exists about the Pelicans—A Company, 123d Aviation Battalion, 23d Division. More information is readily available on their sister company, the Warlords. A more comprehensive look at the Pelicans is needed and would also allow for a comprehensive study of the 123d Aviation Battalion as a whole and how these aviators worked with and supported infantry troops. Huey Slick crews and an in-depth look at their role in the war, how helicopter crewmembers (not just pilots) used their skills, if at all, after their service, and a more comprehensive look at veterans who served in multiple branches of the military are all possible directions for future research projects. Scott's history provides a jumping off point.

Despite my best efforts, this project is not perfect, but few are. It always felt like I should have asked just one more question, interviewed one more person, or consulted one more book. I suspect such are the trials and tribulations of oral history based projects. Certainly, as each project unfolds it evolves and sometimes takes a different direction than initially intended, which can leave unintended gaps in the history. Moreover, despite any oral historian's best efforts, it is impossible to capture 70 years of a person's life in a reasonable amount of time. If I had the chance to do the project over or had more time, I would sit down with Scott to create a detailed (written) timeline to provide a framework. This would have required more preparation on his part to recall those specifics. Given more time, I would have also requested a copy of his service records and even a copy of

his brother's records as a reference, means of comparison, and additional documentation on his military service. Although I interviewed several family members, finding some of his crew members or even just men he served with would have provided an insightful addition to his military experience. Scott maintained minimal contact with these veterans, which would make contact more difficult. But it could be done if I knew who to look for.

Overall, this project took nine oral histories and placed them in a larger historical context as both a comparison and a critique of our existing knowledge of the Vietnam War experience, specifically for an Army helicopter pilot. As oral historians race to capture the stories of the remaining World War II veterans, we must recognize that Korean, Vietnam, and even Cold War veterans writ large are not too far behind them. Long after everyone who experienced these conflicts—both veterans and civilians alike—is deceased, scholars will still use their oral histories to study their lives and experiences. Although an oral historian's first role is to collect the information and preserve the original documents for future use, doing such is just the beginning. Using these documents to advance scholarship is also the role of a good oral historian and continues long after the cameras and recorders are turned off. For years Americans tried to forget about the Vietnam War. As A. D. Horne noted, a "generation [several by now] of Americans came to maturity knowing little and caring less" about what the Vietnam generation had gone through.³⁹⁶ Now, decades later, it is time to remember.

³⁹⁶ Horne, *The Wounded Generation*, xii.



Figure 16. James Scott, *center*, with ETWMP intern Emily R. Gruver, *left*, and ETWMP Coordinator Hayley Michael Hasik, *right*, August 13, 2014. Photo in author's possession.

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APPENDIX

Certificate: Air Medal	180
Citation: Air Medal	181
Certificate: Army Commendation Medal	182
Citation: Army Commendation Medal	183
Award of the Bronze Star Medal	184
Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross	186
Oral History Release	187
Interviewee Data Sheet	188



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AUTHORIZED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER, MAY 11, 1942
HAS AWARDED

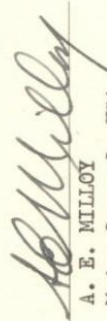
THE AIR MEDAL

TO

WARRANT OFFICER JAMES E. SCOTT JR., 457-74-8783, UNITED STATES ARMY

FOR MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT
WHILE PARTICIPATING IN AERIAL FLIGHT

IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM FROM 13 DECEMBER 1969 TO 27 DECEMBER 1969
GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
THIS TWENTIETH DAY OF NOVEMBER 19 70


A. E. MILLOY
Major General, USA
Commanding




SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

Citation

BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT

THE AIR MEDAL

IS PRESENTED TO

WARRANT OFFICER JAMES E. SCOTT JR., 457-74-8783
UNITED STATES ARMY

who distinguished himself by meritorious achievement, while participating in sustained aerial flight, in support of combat ground forces in the Republic of Vietnam. During the period

13 DECEMBER 1969 TO 27 DECEMBER 1969

he actively participated in more than twenty-five aerial missions over hostile territory in support of operations against communist aggression. During all of these flights, he displayed the highest order of air discipline and acted in accordance with the best traditions of the service. By his determination to accomplish his mission, in spite of the hazards inherent in repeated aerial flights over hostile territory, and by his outstanding degree of professionalism and devotion to duty, he has brought credit upon himself, his organization, and the United States Army.

PPC-Japan



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY HAS AWARDED
THE ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL

TO

WARRANT OFFICER JAMES E. SCOTT, 457-74-8783, UNITED STATES ARMY

FOR

MERITORIOUS SERVICE IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM DURING THE PERIOD

NOVEMBER 1969 TO NOVEMBER 1970

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
THIS TWENTIETH DAY OF NOVEMBER 19 70



A. E. Milloy

A. E. MILLOY
Major General, USA
Commanding

Stanley R. Reorr

SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

Citation



UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

THE ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL

IS PRESENTED TO

WARRANT OFFICER JAMES E. SCOTT, 457-74-9783, UNITED STATES ARMY

who distinguished himself by meritorious service in support of military operations against communist aggression in the Republic of Vietnam. During the period NOVEMBER 1969 to NOVEMBER 1970 he astutely performed under extremely adverse conditions to obtain consistently superior results. Through diligence and determination, he invariably accomplished every task with dispatch and efficiency. His unrelenting loyalty, initiative and perseverance brought him wide acclaim and inspired others to strive for maximum achievement. Displaying total dedication to mission accomplishment and uncompromising tenacity of purpose, he has contributed significantly to the success of the allied effort. His commendable performance was in keeping with the finest traditions of the military service and reflects distinct credit upon himself and the United States Army.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, Americal Division
APO San Francisco 96374

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 7413

27 June 1970

AWARD OF THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL

TC 439. The following AWARDS are announced.

Awarded: Bronze Star Medal
Unit: Company A, 123d Aviation Battalion APO 96374
Date of service: 1 January 1970 - 30 April 1970
Theater: Republic of Vietnam
Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of
Executive Order 11046, 24 August 1962
Reason: For meritorious achievement in connection with military operations
against a hostile force.

BOLTON, JOHN E, 171-26-0072, MAJOR, FIELD ARTILLERY
ANDERSON, DAVID, 055-40-1825, CAPTAIN, TRANSPORTATION CORPS
BEATTY, EUGENE E. JR, 434-64-4757, CAPTAIN, TRANSPORTATION CORPS
CARGILE, CLAUDE H, 421-58-7932, FIRST LIEUTENANT, FIELD ARTILLERY
DICKSON, DAVID C, 451-70-3886, FIRST LIEUTENANT, FIELD ARTILLERY
WILLIAMS, RICHARD D, 402-54-6438, CAPTAIN, AIR DEFENSE ARTILLERY
BULLARD, JAMES, 237-80-1833, CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER CW2, AVIATION
BUTZ, RICHARD H, 537-48-4460, CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER CW2, AVIATION
COBB, MARK D, 264-13-0028, CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER CW2, AVIATION
FARRIS, DONALD F, 219-46-5844, CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER CW2, AVIATION
HUDSON, JON W, 573-50-6400, CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER CW2, AVIATION
STUHMER, RICHARD T, 116-40-5445, CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER CW2, AVIATION
DIAMOND, RICHARD, 231-68-7421, WARRANT OFFICER W01, AVIATION
ATKINSON, ROBERT E. JR, 037-30-6552, WARRANT OFFICER W01, AVIATION
HARRELL, DONNY L, 253-78-8805, WARRANT OFFICER W01, AVIATION
SCOTT, JAMES E, 457-74-8783, WARRANT OFFICER W01, AVIATION
VOSS, WILFRED E, 496-02-7532, WARRANT OFFICER W01, AVIATION
YAREROUGH, CLYDE D. JR, 587-01-3470, WARRANT OFFICER W01, AVIATION
DORN, ARTHUR J, 130-34-9779, SPECIALIST SIX
WALDBURG, ISAAC, 254-60-5073, STAFF SERGEANT

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:

JOHN L. INSANI
Colonel, GS
Chief of Staff

J. P. Romano
J. P. ROMANO
CW3, USA
Asst AG

GENERAL ORDERS NUMBER 7413, dated 27 June 1970, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY,
Headquarters, Americal Division APO San Francisco 96374 (Cont)

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, Americal Division
APO San Francisco 96374

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 14622

9 November 1970

AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

TC 439. The following AWARD is announced.

SCOTT, JAMES E., 457-74-8783, WARRANT OFFICER WO1, USA
Company A, 123d Aviation Battalion, Americal Division, APO 96374

Awarded: Distinguished Flying Cross

Date of service: 11 May 1970

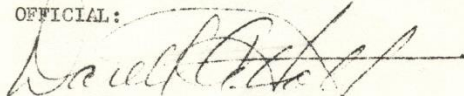
Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Authority: By direction of the Secretary of the Army under the provisions
of AR 672-5-1.

Reason: For heroism while participating in aerial flight as evidenced by voluntary actions above and beyond the call of duty in the Republic of Vietnam. Warrant Officer Scott distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 11 May 1970 while serving as a Helicopter Pilot with Company A, 123d Aviation Battalion. On that date, Warrant Officer Scott was flying the command and control aircraft during routine combat operations northwest of Thuong Duc. After monitoring a call for the emergency evacuation of friendly casualties, he unhesitatingly volunteered to undertake the mission. With complete disregard for his personal safety, he remained exposed to the heavy enemy fire while the wounded soldiers were placed aboard. Although the helicopter had been badly damaged by the hostile barrage during the mission, Warrant Officer Scott elected to return with his crew to extract additional friendly soldiers from the enemy-infested area. Through his timely and courageous actions, he was instrumental in saving the lives of several men by his skillful flying ability and calm analysis of the situation. Warrant Officer Scott's personal heroism, professional competence, and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the Americal Division, and the United States Army.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:



DARELL A. HOTT
CPT, AGC
Asst AG

ALPHUS R. CLARK
Colonel, GS
Chief of Staff

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F

1-TAGO, ATTN: AGPF-F, Wash, DC 20315



Oral History Release

According to the Oral History Association, “oral history is a method of gathering and preserving historical information through recorded interviews with participants in past events and ways of life.” Your participation in this interview is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the interview without penalty, or request confidentiality, at any point during the interview. You may also choose not to answer specific questions or discuss certain subjects during the interview or to ask that portions of our discussion or your responses not be recorded on tape.

Statement of Consent:

I give permission for Texas A&M University-Commerce to keep a copy of my interview for research purposes at the James G. Gee Library. I agree to allow A&M-Commerce to place my interview in its entirety in the Northeast Texas Digital Collections for online research.

Unless you check below to request anonymity, your name will be referenced in the transcript, recording, and in any material generated as a result of this research. If you request anonymity, the interview will be closed to public use, and your name will not appear in the transcript or referenced in any material obtained from the interview.

I agree to participate in this oral history interview, and to the use of this interview as described above. My preference regarding the use of my name is as follows:

___ I agree to be identified by name in any transcript or reference to the information contained in this interview.

___ I wish to remain anonymous in any transcript or reference to the information contained in this interview.

Interviewee Signature Date

Interviewer Signature Date

Interviewee Data Sheet:

Full Name:

Date of Birth:

Place of Birth:

Subject of Interview (i.e. local history, veteran's history, etc.):

If military history, list war/s served, branch, dates served, and final rank:

Date of Interview:

Current Address:

Phone Number:

Notes:

VITA

After completing her work at Melissa High School, Melissa, Texas, in 2010, Hayley Michael Hasik entered the Honors College at Texas A&M University-Commerce. In the fall of 2013, she helped start the East Texas War and Memory Project. Hasik completed an honors thesis titled, “Faded Memories: War and Memory and the Preservation of Soldiers' Stories,” presented at nearly a dozen academic conferences, and co-authored three academic articles and a book chapter. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in May 2014. Hasik spent a year in the History graduate program at Texas A&M University-Commerce before transferring to Stephen F. Austin State University in August 2015. Hasik worked as a Graduate Assistant in the History Department during the fall of 2015 before transferring to the East Texas Research Center where she was employed for the remainder of her degree. Hasik completed her Master of Arts degree in May 2017 and has been accepted into the history doctoral program at the University of Southern Mississippi.

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This thesis was typed by Hayley Michael Hasik.