

**Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine**

Narrator: Conrad T. Gomez

Interviewer: Selene Cortes, and Stefanos Koutsos

Date: November 09, 2021

Location: Irvine, California

Length of interview: 02:20:10

00:00:00 SK

Start recording right now.

00:00:01 CTG

Ok, first of all, yeah -- I wear hearing aids.

00:00:04 SK

Right, right, ok, yeah.

00:00:06 CTG

Uh, I have to, as a rule of thumb, hearing aids work real good this way [signaling forward], you know what I'm saying like?

00:00:13 SK

Ok would you rather have me sit here [pointing off to the side]?

00:00:13 CTG

I guess there's, no this is ok, being able to look at you and your, you know, being able to talk to me because I guess that these [are] new hearing aids, and they're a little different and I turned off my phone so that it doesn't ring either.

00:00:28 SK

Ok, yeah, same, but hopefully nobody calls me. I told them no calls but yeah. Ok so I am about, at the record button here. I have a scripted opening, sort of.

00:00:52 CTG

Ok.

00:00:53 SK

I'm going to read the little introduction and then I'm going ask you to state and spell your name for us and then, we'll get into it. This is Stefanos Koutsos with Selene Cortes, today is Tuesday, November 9th, 2021. We'll be interviewing for the first time, Mr Conrad T Gomez. This interview is taking place at the Langston Library on UCI campus in Irvine, CA. This interview is part of my Vietnam War oral history project at UC Irvine. Would you state and spell your name?

00:01:30 CTG

Conrad T Gomez, c-o-n-r-a-d middle initial T, Gomez g-o-m-e-z.

00:01:41 SK

When and where were you born?

00:01:43 CTG

Santa Ana, CA. July 21st, 1945.

00:01:49 SK

Could you describe your family for us?

00:01:51 CTG

I have, uh, well my mother and father plus four brothers, no sisters, and we lived in Santa Ana up until I was about 8 years old, then moved to Lakewood, CA.

00:02:09 SK

I see, are you the oldest? Or the youngest?

00:02:10 CTG

I'm the second.

00:02:11 SK

You're the second, ok, I see, so what was your education like growing up?

00:02:16 CTG

I went to 12 years parochial school, depart to Saint Pancrace in grammar school, Pius the tenth high school in Downey, and one year of college at Long Beach City College.

00:02:33 SK

Did you have any plans to pursue higher education at any point?

00:02:37 CTG

I do have an associate science degree in business.

00:02:40 SK

I see, and then you decided to join the military.

00:02:47 CTG

Actually, I dropped out from my first year of college because I was rather bored with it. I said I really wasn't ready for it and I had a job and-- and I was not aware that I was being drafted. I was to find that out about 20 years later from my mother because she got the draft notice and she knew what it was, so what she did was she got me down and took me down to the Air Force recruiter and she didn't want me to go in the army, so she got me down there and about-- after I met the recruiter, I did some testing, about a week later, this was August of 1965, and then from there I was, that same taxi-- We did our physical and everything else down in Los Angeles, we got thrown on a bus, got taken to LAX and from there I'm in San Antonio, Texas and I had volunteered to join the Air Force.

00:03:49 SK

I see, how did you feel about it?

00:03:52 CTG

I felt pretty good about it because I have an uncle who was a World War II paratrooper, fought the Japanese in the South Pacific. I had uncles who had fought in Italy campaigns against Germany and Italy, and I also had an uncle who was a Korean Marine Veteran who fought the Chinese communists.

00:04:16 SK

I see, so what was your role in the air force and your rank?

00:04:18 CTG

I was, by the time I left the Air Force, I was what was classified as E-4 Sergeant, ok, that's the lowest of all the Sergeant grades and my role was-- I was the what was called then security police, now they're called security forces. We did law enforcement duties. We were taught to be a defensive unit, not an offensive unit because when we were stationed in the United States, we took care of nuclear weapons. We were the security for nuclear weapons on B-52's air to ground-- I mean ground and air missiles that had nuclear capability.

00:05:10 SK

I see, so that period where you were first in the military, what was that like? How was that experience before you were deployed to Vietnam? How did you adjust?

00:05:20 CTG

It was for myself, it was, uh, pretty easy because I had been on-- when I was in high school, I had been on the track team, the football team, and the baseball team, and so working being in the military is-- your as a group, you know you eat together on game day, we would eat together, shower together everything else, so that wasn't so different, this-- once you join the military, you really, you really realize that you, have lost almost, like you're a second class citizen, you really have no rights to some degree. It's not like, hey, I want to stop, I'm too tired or anything like that, you just have to gut it out.

00:06:09 SK

And so, then you found out or how, what was the process like for you to be deployed to Vietnam, what was that like?

00:06:20 CTG

Really, I was not-- I volunteered to go to Vietnam.

00:06:27 SK

I see.

00:06:28 CTG

And the way it went was I did Vietnam in '65, was just starting to get to be a hot war, and I was stationed at Niagara Falls International Airport, and we had bullmark missiles there, and so, I wanted to go to Europe, and not to see France or this or that, I wanted to go through the Berlin Wall, because at the time we were dealing with the USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republic and the main enemy really was the Russians.

00:06:57 SK

Right.

00:07:01 CTG

So I wanted to go to Germany, and then if I didn't go to Germany, then I wanted to go to Italy. Why Italy? Because of whom-- I'm a Roman Catholic, so I wanted to see-- I knew that if I got to see Rome, my mother would be very happy. I was single. I didn't have a girlfriend all during this period of time, and so what happened was one, at one of our guard mountains, that's where we all get together, get the information of what our duties are. They're asking for volunteers to go to Vietnam because one of our air bases had been hit and there was a lot of devastation. At first, the Marines and the Army used to defend the air bases because they were using as a defense force only, and then right around that time in '66 they started using them as offensive forces, and it uses South Vietnamese army to guard the air bases, U.S. air bases, and the US command in the

Air Force did not care for that, so they used defensive forces to become offensive forces, and we learned as we went, which wasn't a good way to go into war, and so one night, after the Basin play crew got hit, there was about 10 of us that always hung out together. We had a little too much to drink, and we talked about what had happened and we said, hey let's all go down and volunteer, lets go to Nam, and so we all did. Nine of us would go to Vietnam and one would go to Thailand. We thought we'd all go together, but they did-- but we did not-- they split us-- we all went to all different bases. So you know we lost our friendship because we already lived together for almost 14-15 months, and then now you're just breaking us up. We didn't realize that they would break us apart otherwise we would have asked, hey, we all want to go together. You know, but it didn't work out that way.

00:09:09 SK

Did you ever come back into contact with those friends of yours?

00:09:12 CTG

No, no, I, I would visit them because I was a security police and we had a particular patch. I could probably go where officers couldn't even go. You know, because of our status, we could tell an officer you can walk in the building you can't walk in the building just like you have security here, you know, and we would allow them to come into the nuclear weapons areas and things like that, you know. So we had more power than they did, even though they're officers, but off duty was different, of course.

00:09:48 SK

So when you volunteered, did you feel like you had an accurate picture of what things were like in Vietnam for the American military?

00:09:56 CTG

Absolutely not. Absolutely not. As a matter of fact, a friend of mine, his father was in the Normandy invasion in World War II. He was a medic, and he started off from Normandy all the way to Berlin, and he pulled me aside when I had come home before I went to Vietnam and he had told me "this is a different war Conrad," he said "they don't wear uniforms there, you won't know who the good people are and the bad people are, they use children and women as suicide bombers, snipers and other entities of war."

00:10:42 SK

So when you are deployed, what were your first impressions of the country when you got there?

00:10:49 CTG

We, um-- I left from Travis Air Force Base, we stopped off in Alaska, then we landed in Tokyo. Then we landed in Okinawa, then we landed in Saigon at an air base called Thompson Air Base, and we had been in the airplane a good 22 hours, and we're wearing winter uniforms the whole blue, the blue coats that you know the wool pants and everything else like that, and when I landed there, it was Easter Sunday at 3:00 PM and we had to walk down the aircraft. It was commercial airlines Tiger Airlines, and when I walked out and I looked around and the heat hit you, it was just like walking into a blast furnace. It was by the time I was at the bottom I was already taking off my tie, taking off my coat, walking into the terminal there was no air conditioning, and actually when I was standing at the very top, I looked down and there was two jeeps. One was on the right, and one was on the left and I saw three military police that I thought

were army MPs, and there was a pole mounted M60 machine gun and these three guys were just, you know, chatting and they were in flak jackets. You know the arms, the helmets, all that the whole enchilada, and the-- you could tell they'd been there a while. They're very well tanned, and I started walking down and I said, those guys are bad, you know they're bad, you know, but I didn't know though that they were security police from the Air Force.

00:12:42 SK

Right.

00:12:43 CTG

You see, and then I found out and go, oh no, oh my God, what have I gotten myself into?

00:12:48 SK

Right.

00:12:49 CTG

You know, because that was a complete unknown, so we went in, checked in, and that night we had to stay overnight, before, as before, once we got out of the terminal, we're in a bus like a regular school bus and it had mesh wiring over the windows and of course you always get the guy, what's the mesh for? Well, in case they throw, try to throw a hand grenade in here.

00:13:20 SK

Oh goodness.

00:13:21 CTG

Yeah, and then so-- they even got smart enough to wear, when they started putting-- had the meshes on the windows they started putting fish hooks on the grenades, so maybe they might you know, hook onto the mesh windows, so then we started to realize you know this is not very safe place, and we were just going from the airport to the barracks area which was no more than about four or five miles, and then once we got to the barracks, they put us in the temporary barracks, and there was a sign, and then they told us where the chow hall was, and they said "them on the wall up"-- on the very top it said, in case of a ground attack, go over here, in case or rocket or mortar attack over here, then you really started realizing, no, they don't kid around here. The Air Force at that time, was ill prepared to properly train us to be the troops that we would be in Vietnam. As I had mentioned before, we're a defensive force, but we were to learn and to start using army weapons, we carried carbines, pistols and that was about as far as it went, but later, once we got in there, we went through a two week course of using an M16 machine gun, grenade launcher, throwing hand grenades. We were the light, we become the Light Infantry for the Air Force, and a lot of people are not aware of it, and our nicknames were Skycops, you know, so if I use the word Skycop, that meant security police guy, because you do use that word lot, ok.

00:15:09 SK

So what was the date that you actually first got there? Or the date when you first arrived in Vietnam?

00:15:17 CTG

I believe it was March 22nd, 1967.

00:15:21 SK

I see and-- so earlier you mentioned how you didn't feel like you had an accurate picture at all of how things were over there, so how long do you feel it took you to adjust once you got there and realized, oh, this is something different.

00:15:36 CTG

You started realizing it right away. You know one of the things that one of the sergeants who was a Korean veteran that I was stationed with at Niagara Falls, and we got along pretty well. And he, he told me, pulled me aside goes, "you're going to Vietnam, it's different than Korea, it's different than World War II, this is going to be the most different thing that our country's gotten themselves into"-- and they didn't use the word insurgents because that word wasn't used because you're gonna have to deal with the VC. Which is, uh? Victor, Victor Charlie. That was their military name, but we call them Vietcong. Charlie isn't a nickname that you might have heard in movies and things like that. Most of you know the ghosts are out tonight, and other names are-- I won't mention they were quite derogatory.

00:16:35 SK

So those are all nicknames for the enemy.

00:16:37 CTG

Enemy, yeah, the difference, also is they wore civilian clothes so you did not know who they were. They could be working on the base because we use a lot of Vietnamese, the Air Force, the Army, the Marines and the Navy all use civilian work so they can free up the troops, and that was where I was that, that was-- I was-- there was four corps or four sections in Vietnam, and when I was, I was in two core, and that's where Cam Ranh Air Force Base that's the base that I went to-- and then just pushing real quick, I ended up going up to the DMZ, which was an I core. They don't call it one core, they call it I core and two core, 3rd or 4th. That's just what they called it and there I had to deal with the North Vietnamese army. Yep, I know we nicknamed-- we referred to them as NVA. They wore full uniforms, they were the ones with the AK's and the SKS's, they were a very aggressive unit. They were highly motivated and a lot of them would have a tattoo born in the north to die in the South, so they were dedicated. You know they were dedicated and great fighters.

00:18:06 SK

They were very dedicated to their cause, so, could you explain the difference between the Viet Cong and then the North Vietnamese army?

00:18:14 CTG

The Viet Cong, they had different groups, you could call one a rice Paddy Daddy. Follow that working on the air base they knew where pretty much everything was at, and maybe at night he'd come around and he take sniper shots at you at night, then go back home, go to sleep, and the next day he'd go on base, work again-- they use weapons, whatever weapons they could get, and at that time the Russians, and the Chinese were giving them World War II weapons, and the weapons they captured from the French, so they did not have at the time that I was there, they did in the general area that I was in, they did not have AKs, or SKS's or even the RPG, propelled grenades to work you know they didn't have any of that. They use whatever they can do, they, they improvise so well it was, it was amazing what they could do, and how many ways they tried to kill you.

00:19:26 SK

Right.

00:19:28 SC

So you did mention that on base you would have Vietcongs, correct, working as civilians, so in the entire time that you spent on base, did you guys ever encounter-- well did you guys ever discover, someone working undercover.

00:19:46 CTG

Sometimes we, we, we suspected them, but we couldn't just say, hey, you're VC because he had his ID. They said, hey, they checked my background, this that I'm ok, but in reality he was a Vietcong, and he lied because they didn't have all the all the tactical knowledge. They didn't have computers. They you know, it was word of mouth. How much background checking they did? I really don't know. But it's hard for me to believe that there was a thorough background the way they can, you know push a button today what you could do and what you can do-- because you have to forget everything about what you have right now [pointing to phone] and the way you think right now you have to think of how it was trying to put yourself in their back to that time time period.

00:20:44 SK

So you talked about earlier, talked about how you were on Cam Ranh.

00:20:50 CTG

Cam Ranh Bay.

00:20:51 SK

Yeah, Cam Ranh Bay and so what were things like over there, cause that was where you first went, correct, yeah, so what were things like over there and what was your role?

00:21:04 CTG

Ok, I have to tell you a quick story on when I left-- the following day after I left, I had to report to the airport. We went back to the airport and there was an area where we had to go-- your name was listed ok, you're going to Cam Ranh, and you're going to Phan Rang, you're going to [inaudible 21:40] you're going to whatever race-- line up over here, line up over here, line up over here, line up over there and your flight will be leaving at 10:30 [A.M] and it was a four engine C1 30 aircraft cargo airplane, and so anyway, so I saw my name, and hey, we're leaving about 9:00 o'clock in the morning, so I had my gear and we got in the aircraft, and there-- the cargo bay was empty, so there was about maybe 10 or 15 of us and we sat on the sides you know of the cargo Bay, and then now I thought we were flying directly from Thompson to Cam Ranh and that wasn't so-- we were going to-- when we took off we landed it about four different locations and these places were out in the boonies. I mean they were not airbases, you know they were maybe if you've seen the movie *Air America*, dirt runways, and then the pilots and the crew chief came back before we took off and said "how many you guys are Skycops"-- and there was about four of us, we raised our hand and they said I-- "come on up here with us and then in the cargo way you walk up, and then there's a ladder that goes up, and there's a little section where the loadmaster sits with his instruments, and you can walk right across where the pilot and the copilot are, it's fairly format approved, and so they stationed us with these M60 machine guns, because those, those cargo ships are no -- they don't have guns and so anyway they, so they said

“you use this one, you use that one, and when we get out of the aircraft when we land you'd be on that wing, you'd be on that wing, you be at the head of the aircraft in the back.” So I was on the right wing, so I was beneath the wing and the elephant grass was so tall that I couldn't even see no more than four inches through the grass. It was just, it was just taller than me, and so, and when I told the crew chief, “I can't see anything,” so then, he-- so he called the other three fellas and myself, he took us through and there's a hatch at the top of the aircraft, and so we went up there and you know, we stood on top of the aircraft and all we could see was jungle grass. Drumgole-- and then off to the left we could see a tower and we knew it was a gun tower. You know, it was probably a green beret, uh, base camp and, and they picked up some supplies minimal, then they said, they were going to another place so we went to the second place, we did the same thing again, but here we picked up probably about maybe 80, about 80 people and they're all villagers, and so we shoo them in this and that, and the other Skycop and myself were the ones that were helping shooing them in, and they were bringing in, you know, small animals and things like that and what belongings they had because they're evacuating the village, and so from there we got into-- we're getting in the back, and they're closing up the door and the loadmaster-- and we figure we just sit back there. The loadmaster said, “don't, get up, back up here with us because he said one thing, why don't you get a VC, #2 within five minutes of the airplane taking off, they're all going to be sick down there, and now they're all going to be throwing up,” you know, because they've never been on an airplane, and so thank God he did that, ah, it was terrible because at once we landed at Cam Ranh and we had to just get some uh, water hoses and clean the, help clean out the bay of that aircraft. It was, it's really terrible, you know, so that was kind of like my first indoctrination was to walk to the Nam-- we didn't use the word Vietnam most of the time it was welcome to the Nam you know and, I think that date that I landed on Easter Sunday it was right around, I would say over 115 degrees. The next day as we flew, around Cam Ranh, it would get as hot as old, right around 120 with 80 to 90 humidity, you literally, your clothes were literally wet, and you could go take a shower, put on some dry clothes within 5 minutes or less that uniform was wet, and plus the uniforms we were using at the time were stateside uniforms, not, not the jungle. Where and boots that were to use later that changed in May of that year I got there in March, in May because I can see in the pictures that I have the old uniform plus leather boots and then, and then in, in May I see myself in the lighter jungle socks and uniforms, and wearing jungle boots, so there's-- I know it happened right around that time that they transitioned, and then like I said, we went for about two weeks course of what I would say learning how to use weapons you know they didn't, and they told us you probably wouldn't know most other ones, but they showed us some Communist weapons that we would have to maybe learn to use in case we ever got in trouble and, and had to use them, so that was pretty so from there on through you knew it was pretty intimidating.

00:27:35 SK

So after you had that introduction, I'd imagine you had a lot of different duties at Cam Ranh, so what were those?

00:27:47 CTG

I have to explain this part, I was assigned to, uh, hooch, hooch, is it's about that big [signals height] wall of plywood and then screen and then a, you know a rope on it, you know and no air



conditioner, obviously no air conditioning, no fans, no nothing. You know, and with the heat being is-- and no windows or anything it was just awful to sleep in. I mean, it was really getting adjusted to it, probably the first three to four weeks was such a cultural shock because you learn that you have to start learning to drink warm water because there was no such thing as cold water. You were very lucky-- even though we are on the air base people talk about the Air Force and the Navy having such nice accommodations, but the problem was the flying officers about those things the guys who flew the F4s, the aircraft, or the riverboats and things like that they had access to that, but the guys that were there, you know.

00:28:56 SK

Out of luck.

00:28:59 CTG

Yeah, and I know, ok, let me follow up to that part, I just had to tell you that part. Yeah yeah.

00:29:05 SK

Uh, yeah, so what was-- what were you doing?

00:29:08 CTG

Ok, my duties, since I was a FNG and you can imagine what the first word is, new guy, you know, and so they weren't very-- the guys were very hospitable to you because you know, because you didn't know anything, and which was very true, you know, and we're learning as we were going, so one of the best things to do is, is to hook up with one of the guys who'd been there eight or nine months so he can tell you hey, what to carry what not to carry. How to take care of yourself, and the more you listened to the veteran who had been there-- it was the wiser thing to do. There was, many who didn't and they just thought they were just going to be there for a year and that was the end of that and-- I use it-- I've done statistics on Vietnam and over 1000 U.S. military died on their first day there or in country.

00:30:23 SK

Throughout the course of the war.

00:30:25 CTG

Yeah, yeah, yeah, anything from a truck accident getting run over, be getting off the airplane, plane crashing. You know all kinds of people think, well, he got killed by a sniper or he was gotten himself in the first day in the battle. No, people drowned at the beach, you know, there was an incident where a tiger killed a guy, one of the guys that was out on patrol. You had to understand the culture that we had walked into, and there was everything from tigers to boas, to elephants, to water buffaloes to two step snakes that were very venomous. You know, it was a whole array of different things and we had marked out on the peninsula. Cam Ranh was on peninsula and there was large asian water monitors that were anywhere from 50 pounds to about 120 125 pounds and they were very dangerous, you know. You didn't want to be in a bunker and he joined you because he would get the best of you.

00:31:37 SK

Right.

00:31:38 CTG

You know, so all these things you're learning, you know and you're going, wow. My duties were to protect the air base, 80% of the men, airmen, that were on the base were unarmed. There was

Skycops, forward air controllers, PJS pararescue, special operations, they were the ones who held weapons. Because they had tried giving everybody a handgun, and apparently about a year before at another base, somebody saw something-- spooked him, he shot another, another guy shot, before they knew it they had about maybe 80 guys shooting at each other. You know so-- and then now you're around 250 pound, 1000 pound bombs, to napalm, to JP four fuel oxygen, so you could imagine why they had to be so strict with the airmen. You know carrying weapons, and I-- I had post, we had the first inner perimeter and that was like the main gates, but what you would see at a regular base you know we had through basic but we didn't even have a fence or anything like that because the base was so huge and then we have no observation posts and then in between them would be a canine patrol, and then, if you're lucky, if you're unlucky enough, there was an LP which referred to as listening post and you'd be out there sometimes by yourself from let's say 11:00 PM to about 5:00 AM. That was considered as a short shift because you had been out there by yourself and being on the observation post there might be-- depending on the time of the day there might be only two or three airmen, but once it got dark, there might be six or seven, because generally speaking, the time of attack was usually from 1:00 AM to 4:00 AM before sunlight. That's because the Vietcong were very-- we didn't have night vision or anything like that, so that was what I did when I worked just basic security. I was later on-- right around October of 1967 I changed-- a friend of mine, his name was Lavarde he mentioned to me "hey let's get out of security, go into to law enforcement", they, you know they live a lot better you don't have to go out in the boonies or any of that crap so I said, hey, that sounds like a deal. I didn't realize when we hooked up with the law enforcement it was really called Allied Police, Allied Policemen-- that we worked with Korean MPs, Vietnamese MPs, the National police, CIA and U.S. Army. The Air Force overlooked the entire unit of Allied police because some of the-- we worked customs and things like that at the airport so guys weren't taking home all kind of contraband, and so when you work security, you were just stuck on that base, you didn't leave it, but when you worked-- allied police and suits, since Cam Ranh was on a peninsula, there was a pontoon bridge that hooked up to the main land and that would take you up about-- once you got to the other side, take about a mile or so and you got to highway one. The lap there was a village called [inaudible 33:41], and we knew that there was VC sympathizers and we knew that there was wives and family of Viet Cong and so periodically-- I was involved in three raids that we went in at one, two o'clock in the morning, and we're looking for VC and it wasn't a very pretty sight to do because we work in cooperation with the South Vietnamese army. They were the ones who were in charge, we were-- there was about 20 of us and the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] had probably about maybe 150 to 200 soldiers that surrounded the village and then there's some that were inside and they would attach a person like myself with three South Vietnamese soldiers, and they didn't know English, and I didn't know Vietnamese so that was pretty awkward. Same thing with the Korean, we couldn't speak Korean and when we patrolled highway one there was always two Skycops and then we'd have either a Vietnamese or a national police which we really didn't want because we didn't trust them, because some of them had turned their-- they were really viet, they were communists and they would assassinate Americans and, and, we had found that out, and the Koreans-- we loved Koreans and-- because so to speak, they didn't really follow rules of engagement as much as it was implanted on us. I guess I would

say that Asians know how to fight Asians, you know there-- it was completely different so you always love to have-- their nicknames were rocks, you know and so it was always good to have them with you. When I first started patrolling highway one, we did convoy duty if we saw villagers walk along the highway, we checked their ID things like that, you know, and if we saw that they were-- didn't have ID we picked them up and took them over and we turned them over to the South Vietnamese and they were-- that's where the CIA came in for intelligence gathering and things like that yeah, they talked to them anything, and that, and so that was quite unique, working that because I said I started right around on October, after the Bob Hope Show and that's it. Who was the President Johnson and Westmoreland the general who was in charge of the war, after they came, they basically told us the war was almost over in 1967 so we thought, hey-- and there was even rumors were going to be coming home so I've got-- instead of the year hey I was only gonna have to do eight or nine months you know which, you know we all were up for, but in January things started to change, and we could tell the villagers weren't as friendly, they would stay away from us, and we couldn't figure out, but we also knew that there was something wrong. You could tell there was something in the air and we couldn't figure it out, but, and, and they just told us to be more cautious. They started giving us more ammunition to carry, and that wasn't a very good sign, you know, because you have to imagine driving down this dirt asphalt highway and there's only three of you in an unarmed jeep. Right, and there-- was hey I need some help it was, you know, you knew there was-- if you got yourself into a firefight, it was over quickly and chances are it was going to be favorable, favorable to yourself so just like on those observation posts. The Vietcong like the small unit so there'd be a bigger unit coming in to rescue them, the main target wasn't the observation post, the main target was a rather a rescued mission. You see they, like I said, they were very ingenious, they had fought the French, they had fought the Japanese, so they had a lot of experience compared to us. You know we're just new kids off the block, I was, see, 20 years old when I went there.

00:40:18 SK

Wow, so you had mentioned ARVN-- that the term ARVN or could you explain what that is?

00:40:27 CTG

ARVN are South Vietnamese troops, army, you know Republic of Vietnam, you know, but the nickname, ARVN, was their nickname. We had, you know? In all theaters war each one has their own different uniforms, weaponry, and whatever, but there's always the language and this one-- debate that everybody uses yeah, hey you need out there, you know and things like that you know there was different verbiage-- is for everything you know and--

00:41:01 SK

Right

00:41:05 CTG

One of the things that were-- when you got stuck on those old [inaudible 41:08] they didn't really go to the chow hall, yeah, there was no bathroom there was no facilities like that on the observation post. You were surrounded with concertina wire with mines all around you, you know, so you could see how you have to be a Spartan. You know you really had to learn to tough-- we used, we used to just even warmer, we used to get World War II rations, you know we used to see the sub that they canned 1946, 1944 and eating some that's up to you if you ever want

to open up a can, a hash and just look at it and think that you're going to eat that cold. You know but then there was always ways and we improvised because guys always do, the army gave them they used to use C4 and it would burn if it's very small parts, not explode, and they would use C4-- sometimes guys would take some of the bullet heads off, put the gunpowder down with some papers, stuff like that, and start up the small fire and things like that, but at night you could not have any form of light, you know it's not like you know overhead lights and the bunkers and things like that. It had to be completely dark, even if you smoked a cigarette let's say the the gun window was right here [signaling height] and up to here, you'd squat down, light your cigarette and smoke your cigarettes down there you never got or-- in the line of fire, of inclining fire, because you can see that cigarette a long ways away, and we started learning different things then as the war progressed-- the longer you're there, you started wearing less and less clothing you know because of rashes we first were wearing T shirts, then T shirts went, you know, first of all they were white imagine wearing a camouflage uniform then you have white T shirt, you know then they changed it to green, and then those went and then we wore boxers, shorts and those went. It was just that's just the way it was. That, you know, you know, and having any form of privacy was nonexistent taking showers going to the bathroom, anything. It was just like there was always 15 other guys. You know doing that, especially when you're on highway, highway one and we're patrolling, there was no 7-11. You know, and the water was hot and you just learned to accept it. That was just the way it was, and all you did is-- well, we would have graffiti on our helmets, you know 164 you know left to go. You know? Getting short, you counted the days-- we even have calendars that start off at 364 and would go to the last day-- in the last 10 you would say short timer. Once you got under 30 days you were considered a short timer and they protected you more. You know, because. If you don't get home, maybe they won't get home. There was, there was kind of like a superstition, and it didn't matter if it was an officer trying to bully these you know, it was kind of-- we had a very close knit group, all of us. No matter what unit you were in. You know, "hey, he's only got 10 days. Why do you give him this, this-- why is he going out on this patrol? He should stay in let the new guys go out, well the new guys don't know nothing, well get their asses out there I didn't know anything." You know that's how you had to learn. You know?

00:45:02 SK

So when you're working security on Cam Ranh, you're-- you said your role was to defend the base and did you ever have to do that? And if you if you did, could you take us through that?

00:45:17 CTG

Yes, when the Tet Offensive started on January 31st, I had mentioned to you that we were feeling uncomfortable in January 68. We only patrol hwy one during the day. Once it got dark we got off the highway and went back into the peninsula and nobody was allowed to go from the peninsula to the mainland. On this pontoon bridge, because it was hairy enough just to go across during the day-- to drive those large army vehicles across-- upon two dredging [and] the water going like this and that. You know it, it was a-- I went across many times on the Jeep and I never liked it. I was nervous now, you know. You don't like that. You know it was-- on January 31st, we are already told-- that was the night of Tet. They told us that at [when] the build is done with, then they are going to have fireworks and things like that, don't be alarmed. Ok, so usually at this

checkpoint called Mika, checkpoint-- which was the last checkpoint before you all in the pontoon bridge. They brought in extra ammunition for the M60, and then they brought in extra rounds of M79 for the grenade launcher, and then they made sure that to the right there was a small little village called Mik, and then there was a French monastery, Catholic monastery to the right, and they said "make sure that somebody--" there was now four of us. Usually there was only two of us, and there was four of us, two augmentees and wanting guys-- and not augmentees had to go patrol around the entire area and we never did that before-- and so we had to go into the monastery area, go all the way around it and then check on the village line where they had concertina wire, where they couldn't sneak out. You could see oil lanterns and things like that, but you know just to make sure nobody was doing anything, but the biggest problem was that you're always scared that-- is there a booby trap out here tonight? Just because you walked around the first time and everything was ok, that didn't mean the second time you came around and you took basically the same trail, there might be a trip grenade or or anything else. So it would get spooky. I guess that's the word. Would you get nervous? Yeah, because in January, I was going home in March. You know, and we knew things were getting worse, and so, right around-- we went on post about 10, and right around two or three o'clock in the morning, they were having their fireworks just like they had said. Then we notice, more loud banging, going on. then we realize that-- we called in there's tracers being fired. We've read communiste screen, and so you could see the traces going back and fourth, the bullets. You know, and so we were radioing it in and then-- army base. Those helicopter base, the 10th assault helicopter group they started getting rocketed, but 122 millimeter rockets that are about maybe five feet tall, or 20 22 millimeters wide, very deadly and, and then they would hit you with-- first, they would start for the rockets, then they would start for the mortars, then they would start-- the next step, would be the RPG's. The shoulder at once, because they had now gotten-- there was a sequence, and you had to try to understand to learn what each one wasn't a mortar or the rock, and they would usually shoot anywhere from five, to as many as 50 rockets at you at one time, though lots weren't accurate. But if you, if you point all all rockets to a particular area, they're going to be hitting something-- they didn't have the smart bombs or anything like that. They're very primitive, all they do is just get the bamboo sticks, put them together like this [signals an x] they put the rocket there, aim it towards the base, and just-- they use silk rope, and just with you know with match they'd light them one after another, then one off, one off, you know it's one two three four five as many as they want to. So we were reporting, the army base wasn't really getting heavily hit, and then this was going on for about four-- and then we-- and all this time we're in constant contact because there-- we knew that they had Vietcong frog men so there was concern about that. So we didn't have any boats or anything out there, and so we got a call from our Central Security Center Command and they said, "one of you got to get a bag of grenades and go out to the other side from the other side, start throwing grenades into the, into the bay," you know, and because they're-- we've heard that there are frog men out there and we want to keep them away. So anyway-- so sergeant Thomas, we're both about Sergeant, but he had rank on me because he'd been promoted before, so that-- I was the second guy and we weren't going to send the augments to do it, they told us so. We knew it was either Thomas or myself and then I, then I, I knew right away it was going to make me because he outranked me, you know, and he was a

good guy, and I knew that he could handle the things good, and he would, and it would help me out-- and so I, I didn't take my AR, I mean my M16 with me because grenades were heavy enough because people don't understand how heavy a box of ammunition is, or you know, packed full of grenades. I carried about 14 grenades, I did take my sidearm and I always carried a knife bing, because I had promised myself that I was not going to go POW. You know worst comes to worst, pull up that bing-- that you know that they're going to shoot you. Better dead, than being a POW, that was my philosophy at the time. So anyway, I went off. I went out to the other side and everything was quiet, and it was quiet in the sense of --these battles are going on, I'm right in the center. It's very dark, and so I start throwing grenades. One you know, one side, go back, the other side. You know one here one there, one to the opposite sides and then all of a sudden, I heard an aircraft coming over, and it was a gunship from the train and it was like one of those World War II type of paratrooper aircraft, a C47. And it had Gatling, it's a gunship, and it has five gatling guns on the side, and it just flies around in a circle and it can keep on the same target. They have a target-- this right next to the pilots window and all he does is fly around and they shoot. Maybe sometime five guns at a time, three guns at a time depending on the necessity of how much they needed to suppress the enemy-- and the enemy had learned to like they-- you said they like to get us close to you and tighten the belt. Like if I could tighten, grab your belt, you couldn't shoot machine in artillery. You couldn't bring in aircraft to help support you. They wanted to be nose to nose with you. That way they could not do that, so anyway, as I was doing that-- I started just before I even got halfway done-- that's C 47-- as he was doing his shooting, he was also starting to drop flowers so he could tell who was who in the base. So that was just like putting this light on, in the middle of the night, and people started realizing what I was doing. From the village, and before I realized it, at first I didn't realize it, and then I realized that there was ricocheting, hitting off, because it was, it was still-- the bridge is steel, and so all of a sudden I started seeing sparks and I knew what they were, you know-- and then I was, oh my God, you know there's some clown out there. He's trying to get me, you know, and so I obviously I picked up the pace and throwing the grenades. You know back and forth and Thomas, I've got [inaudible 55:13] on the other side. He was yelling at me to just to throw them all in there at one time, and, and I knew I couldn't do that, and so I kept on back to get to the other side and then once I got back to the side, then we opened up with the 60 going across and hitting the fisherman boats. They were next to the village of [inaudible 55:12], and some we received fire back and we were fighting, firing then and so. We went through probably about maybe five to six boxes of ammo, and there's probably 200 rounds in each box. You know, and then you have to be careful because you can't just go full automatic all the way, because you burn out the barrel. You know, so that was so, you also had to take care of that. Then we sent the two augmentees keys to get up here the the bridge, and they really didn't even want to get near there because we were firing this way and at times we would just fire off to the right just to see and we did have, right fire coming to us, you know, because every time the checkpoint-- we have lights like this [pointing up to the light], you know big four large floodlights. We had to turn them off, you know, we called him to CSC, told him we're under fire and they were, you know, give them fire. That went on for about maybe two 1/2 hours, three hours. You know it wasn't one of those things, it was 15 or 20 minutes, and so then that was really my first indoctrination on being in combat. Was I scared? I

would say I was pretty intimidated. You know, but at the same time too, I knew that I-- we had to respond and it was our responsibility that we could not allow anybody to get across that bridge, because that meant they could get on that airfield and the damage they could do on that airfield, you know. Knowing that 80% were unarmed airmen, you know it was, but we were at higher alert too. We had extra men on all the posts except that one that should have had more, like 10 because it was a main crossing point, you know. So yeah, that was the first time I got into combat.

00:57:11 SK

This incident that you described just now was this, like around the start of the Tet offensive.

00:57:18 CTG

That was start of the, that was the start of the Tet Offensive. I was there at the height of the war. I have a friend that was on the USS Mattick, and he was there at the beginning of the war, and I have a friend that he was on the last plane, Telidon ANG Air Force Base in 1972, when the peace talks and the pows were freed and he was there at the end or so. The three of us always joked together. You started it, you in the middle, and you Max, just closed the door. You know on this whole place you really messed up. You know, you didn't finish it right, you know. So, the three of us are still in contact as a matter of fact. Max is the President of the chapter that I'm now president, you know he was a founder of the chapter that I'm president of now. Vietnam Veterans of America, chapter 75, sixteen beach. You know, and he's the 2nd Vice president. You know, permanent, you know, because he was president for quite some time. Then I eventually took over, so-- and I meet with PTSD groups and things like that too.

00:58:39 SK

I see, so going through the Tet Offensive, is that the time where you had the most combat experience?

00:58:49 CTG

No, the worst was to come. Ok, you see the first part of my tour I wouldn't say it was easy, but it's getting to adjustments getting to learn how to use weaponry, but there had been no combat. There have been sniper shots and things like that, but nothing that happened. When I first joined Allied police, within the first two days, one of the,-- there was two MPs, no three MPs. They were driving on highway one, and they hit a 250 pound bomb that had been dug into the ground. All three of them killed. That was first, the first reality of death. We saw the body block bags come in because the air base was one of the largest logistic bases. It was supposed to be the Guantanamo Bay of the far east once, or once we had won the war, that's what was the perception. That's why they were building up the peninsula very much, and right now they still have that air base there, but it's now called Cam Rahn international airport. See, so we did a good job in building and you know, concrete runways, everything else and all the facilities, yeah. The worst was to come, was two days later on February 2nd. I got-- Thomas came in, and I just I had been in bed, and he woke me up and he said "hey you know you're on special assignment," and I said, what are you talking about? "Special assignment," he goes. "You're you're, you gotta go and check out the bulletin," so I went to the bulletin board with our headquarter, headquarter staff was, and it says the following airman will report to the flight line, but with stuff, you know. What kind of gear we're supposed to take, and you'll be departing February 2nd at 6:00 AM. Be there

and you,-- and these were not written, or typed out orders. Everything was all written there-- from there on, through-- during February all we were getting was written manifests, things like that. So, so we took off in the C130, I was later to meet the pilot who pulled me in there about 10 years ago at an air show. When we got near the DMZ, that separated the North from the South the loadmaster came back to us, and this time there was a bunch of pallets inside the aircraft, and he,-- over the noise of being inside a military aircraft. You know, they're literally screaming because of the engine so he says, "look, we've been flying like this level. He's going to bring the aircraft up and he's going to go in on a 45 degree angle, and so make sure you really hold on." Because there was no seatbelts or anything like that, so it was kind of like Nettie.

01:02:06 SK

Ok.

01:02:08 CTG

As he went up, and we felt him go up, and then he started coming down, as he was coming down on the C130, his left wing went to the left, and then his right wing went to the right. He was doing,-- and he was doing it on purpose because we were, we were receiving aircraft fire where we were landing. Then as we're coming down, and starting to level off, the loadmaster again got us all together in line, and we counted off. He says "number one, as the C130 lands you will, the aircraft is not going to stop, we're just dropping the pallets. The plane is not, it's just gonna you know, taxi down and you'll be jumping out of the rear so don't fall on your face when you jump out, the plane will be going about 5 to 10 miles an hour." The primary goals, and it might be going faster, because as soon as, as soon as we started coming in. The North Vietnamese were already shelling the runway. We could see, from the back of the aircraft, cargo Bay as it went down, we could see the explosions as we were coming in, and so, he got up to where we had to jump out of the aircraft, and so imagine you're holding the bag, holding your rifle, you're trying to jump out of this aircraft and so, we did then, and I was like #5. I got there, and I just a quick blow off to my left, I could see at least two to three rounds of mortars just hitting the air base as,-- Oh my God, you know, and you could see machine gun fire going back and forth from the marine to the North Vietnamese, you know. So they're,-- they were going along pretty good, and they said when you get down there, there's going to be somebody down there for the flag, go to him, and follow him, because they've done this so many times already, apparently. So they're dropping pallets. We're jumping onto the airplane. The motors are going off and I was just so scared. Don't trip don't trip, you know, don't fall down your knees, don't do something stupid because within a month I am going home. You know, and so I was able to, I jumped out of the aircraft and I saw I was following the other four and they let us into a large trench, and the trench was like almost a World War I type print or you couldn't see. See you were below ground, even if you're six foot four, you couldn't. You know they were that deep, and there everybody was-- you kept hearing these, but come on this way, hurry up, you know just, you know just keep moving, keep moving, keep moving you know follow that man, and it was just you know then you kept, kept hearing you know the mortars going off. You know, and then finally, you got to this large underground bunker, submarine officer came out, he says welcome how you guys doing? Yeah, just like it's nothing to him. He was just so cool, it was just unbelievable, you know, and so this was the first time that we had really been into something like that, and so he says, you Air Force



guys you will be the security for the radar site here. That is why you're here, you will be security for the control tower, and the radar site. The radar site ran all the aircraft into North Vietnam, the B52's, the bombing runs into Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam and sometimes into the South. You know so, and he says-- so they took us out. At first they had hooches up on ground, but then they got rid of those because most of them had just been already. They weren't worth living, plus there was rats. It was just pure filth plus gunsmoke, plus everything you know and you're dying for glass of water, cold water, most of the water we drank was lukewarm or warm or hot you know. That was just something that, and even to this day I still do it. Sometimes I still drink warm water, my daughter will say you're drinking warm water Dad, and I go, yeah, yeah, and she says what's wrong with you dad? Nothing you know. My boy-- a lot because-- sometimes I chat with him about it, and so we bunkered down. Then they told us where we're going to be and that base had a trench. They went all around the base and they were biting holes. They're different than trenches, a trench is where you move through, this and that, fighting holes look like a trench, but it's where you can kneel down or stand up to fire-- we had a small section and the Marines had probably 90% of the perimeter, and we had like only 10% and that was in the area where the radar site was and the control tower. So we would man it there at night, and it was just like a which is just you know a typical World War I movie you know where the guys are in the trenches and ready to go. The North Vietnamese were over there and they used to taunt you all night long. You know they wouldn't show you during the day, but they love to shout at you at night because they knew that-- they shout at you at night, you weren't going to get any sleep because the base was on alert, and the one time we went through how many ways-- it was close to 55 rockets that they shot in at one time. So the salvos were just going all over place and one of them hit the ammunition dump, and that blew the ammunition dump built for about 2 days. It was just like an earthquake causes backgrounds constantly move you know. Yeah, and that was, that was quite something to see, you know, and actually where the ammo dump was, it was pretty far away and it was a pretty good lucky shot, but they got it, and then they would taunt you by-- you'd be in the trenches and they'd be over here and what they would get a candle and they put it there, you know, and then one of the guys of course wanted to shoot it and he said no, leave it alone, but then every once in a while you get commanded or get a grenade launcher, take that candle out. One of the guys would do it and then about maybe 15 minutes later they put out another candle and now we could tell you-- we're watching you. You know we're going to get-- and they use megaphones, you know-- "GI we're going to kill you tonight." That's what you'd hear. That you know, is like, you know, and I thought to myself, I'm in the Air Force I'm not a marine, I'm not in the army, but here I am, you know. By then I probably had about maybe-- I would probably say about maybe less than 40 days to go. You know and we went through a lot of shouting. We got into a couple of firefights where they sent in sappers. Sappers is either a Vietcong or North Vietnamese, and even or-- we use it too. They would get down to where they would almost be naked, but they could crawl where you couldn't see him, and they were so good at it, so quiet. We had Claymore mines and it's ball bearings about maybe I don't know how many there are in there, but well over 200 ball bearings and the sign on the front says face towards enemy. Ok, and you had a lot of wire that came off and you clicked it three times, after you took off the safety and it would shoot out. You know anybody in front-- obviously you know

what would happen to him, but sometimes they would-- and you-- we would check that before it got dark. Then in the morning if nothing had happened, you sometimes would find them turned around pointing at you. They were that good and didn't--they got that close to us that they could literally turn, you know, the claymores on us. You know they were just ingenious. They could slip through barbed wire, they had little hooks that were kind of like kinda like u hook comes down and they would get the concertina wire, put them close together and then use that hook so they could funnel a tunnel through the ball wire. We would find them in the morning and stuff like-- they were, I mean they were good so when we would see things like that, that would tell us ok, they're probing, they want to see our strong spots our weak spots, so now we really have to be vigilant, you know. Because you know it's not like you have an eight hour shift. You were used-- if you want a night, you even push two nights, without sleep. Oh, you get some sleep, you know 20 minutes here, 15 minutes there, you know and you learn to stand up, and this and that, and then-- if you're on the trench line in those fighting holes, and if it rained we had rats galore. They were as big as cats, you know. Sometimes when we got shelved, we'd be in, we get in the bunkers and there'd be rats in there with us. There's times that guys had to go to the bathroom, they couldn't go out and leave, and things like that. So you, you just have to learn to just suck it up. There was no pit, and then I left down that base on March 2nd, and because I was to go home March 18th, and so I got back, I had day off, and then the next night I had-- I was, I was at an entry control point at a convalescent area hospital area on the beach where they had-- they wanted from all the services, they were placed there because it was a safe place, and the control tower was not too far away from us. So it was about 9:45, and I was getting off post at 10:00 o'clock, and I was waiting for my relief. I was picking up my, you know, just getting my stuff together and getting ready to leave, I just got 15 more minutes, they'll be here and I'm going to get off the space. Then right around-- and I'm looking at my watch, and then that's when I heard the first explosion go off. I looked up from there, and you can see the rockets coming in, and that that would be the first time that Cam Ranh got hit with rockets, and we got hit with 27 in a matter of probably 10 minutes. At home, and the reason they hit that particular area, was because the mainland and the peninsula were its closest point. If they had done it from the village to the air base, the range wasn't there, so that's why they hit that figure. One of the rockets hit a-- they have like these large large tires, huge tires, but there are fuel bladders and have JP, it hit about-- well, there's about maybe 20 JP pour pods, and it hit one section of them, so of course they all went up. They hit all around the control tower and the friend of mine who wrote me a stressor letter about my PTSD, he was just walking out the control tower with some coffee to give to some of the guys and he looked up. That's when he heard the explosions and he-- he lives in Massachusetts, and he's a retired US state police officer, and we still converse. You know, because I post some pictures on Facebook, and some of the guys that I know-- hey Conrad, I remember that party. You know this and that kind of thing, yeah. So we keep in contact, and the Christmas pictures and my last night, that I was there, I pulled how we pushed him, you know and you know there's other things such as Christmas-- is one of the saddest part. Is that a lot? You don't hear the good things that the United States did, I know. There was a lot of things that went wrong. You know children, women were killed, sometimes it would because the command was just lousy. You have to remember that these officers weren't there for the duration of the war,

they were there for six months or a year, they're in and out, so if you had good experienced troops, they would be there a year, and they were gone and then you had any experience trooper coming in, and the next one you know, coming out. We built bridges, hospitals, taught young women like yourself, [points to SC] to be nurses, aides, and to let us know when we take the doctors from, from the air base to dump it in and to help the villagers medically. Then when I used to patrol hwy one, we used to, we found how many-- it was a total of five. Five young girls at different times. Three one time, two the other time. They were students, and they wore the Vietnamese white, all white clothing and they had their throats cut. There were signs, signs, die GI. You know they always fall hard. We would do the start, to do the same and really begin getting back to [inaudible 01:18:11]. That was the most barbaric place I've ever been in my life. It was unbelievable. Some of the men, some of the Marines who had to go outside the wire or outside the base into the hills and chase in the cities-- oh my God, I can see why they came back the way they did. Very barbaric. You know to kill a person is one thing, but the mutilation of bodies on both sides, you know it was just like you were in a planet all by yourself. It was just, just an unreal situation to put a person into a war. I don't care what war is, you know, but especially-- I read statistics where World War II veterans who fought in the European campaign had less PTSD, than the US troops who fought-- especially the Marines who fought the Japanese in Asia and also the same thing happened to Korea in the Korean War. The same thing happened in Vietnam, because the way the Asians spiked, and they get in, they're very brutal. You know it's-- give no quarters, and that's why sometimes it was kind of like a saying, save the last bullet for yourself, and if it got that bad-- being in a Jeep with two other guys, one driving, you know, one in the back-- once you shot your first magazines, try to reload-- people think it's you know, what they see. Oh, it's just so quick, it's not that quick. Might take you maybe three or four seconds, but those three or four seconds, you're dead. You didn't want to run out of ammo or be captured. You know that was just like, oh no way Jose. Use that sixshooter on yourself, if you have to. So, that's pretty much it, I think we got other questions. You know I'm trying to.

01:20:00 SC

I do, I have a few so bear with me, so you've mentioned a lot, the fighting style with the Koreans, the Vietnamese, especially on both sides, so as the US, did they adopt any fighting style? Do they copy any certain technique?

01:20:20 CTG

That's where the seals, navy seals now are probably one of the best units, fighting units that we have. The seals were used in World War II, and in Korea. Just to blow up the obstacles that would stop the landing craft from coming in. Later on those Navy frogmen were not taught to be, what they are today. We've learned things like night vision, they started using, actually they started to use smart bombs at the end of World War I, I mean at the end of Vietnam. A lot of people don't know that they were using the call. That we use,-- down what they started doing with the Air Force and the Navy, but their carrier aircraft. They were sending pilots over there, take them on three month tours, usually they are a year, just to get the experience of fighting. That's, that's all they were sending them up there for, and they were sending them up north to fight migs and the migs-- which we all at first thought-- there were nothing more than just North Vietnamese pilots. There was Russian pilots, there's North Korean pilots, there's Chinese pilots

fighting for, North Vietnam. Over 12,000 Chinese technicians were killed in the Vietnam war, because they were helping with those Sam missiles that took down our aircraft. The radar guided anti aircraft guns were there. The Vietnamese were taught by Chinese, you know, so we've learned a lot, but we did not learn enough. The one sad part about Vietnam was not about the US military. The South Vietnamese government could not pull the country together and have a strong legitimate government to get the people to unite to fight the North Vietnamese communists. In one year they had three presidents, what does that tell you? Three coups. That means it was unstable. You know some of the Vietnamese, there were officers that knew things were going wrong, they were already sending their family members to the US, get them out of there. What happened in Afghanistan was the lesson that we were supposed to learn from Vietnam. You know, because you know whenever anybody says something about losing cause you know they always-- they don't talk about World War II. They don't talk about Korea, they talk about Vietnam. That was the lesson learned. How do you fight? Somebody who's in civilian clothes right now, hey, you know we were chatting, two days later you put a gun to my head and kill me because I'm military and you're just a civilian. How does that work? How do you know? I don't like saying this, but, you know the guys, you know they could go into some of the cities [inaudible 01:24:06] all these other places. Of course there's bar girls, a lot of more VC sympathizers. The guys all get drunk and open up their mouths. They were information gatherers-- give to the Vietcong. So how do you fight people who are not in uniform? You know, and that's where it really starts getting ugly there, because you know an innocent person can be dubbed by somebody who dislikes him, say oh, he's VC-- the real reality is not VC, the guy just doesn't like him. You know, and then you get the South Vietnamese taking you away, you ain't coming back. You know there was no such, you know the rights that you think, or that you have here. All the freedoms that you have, there's no such thing like that in countries like that, Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam, China, you know the Philippines, you have no rights. You know, and that's hard for people to perceive because you know, if you want to-- hey, you can get in and out and get some hamburgers. Right now, North Korea, do you think they can get that--lucky if they get four bowls of rice in a day? You know so it's when you fight an insurgency war is probably the hardest war to fight, and especially if you have to fight them from building to building jungles. You know the density of the rainforest, and Vietnam does have some beautiful rainforest. It's a big tourist attraction now, and especially because the Communist Vietnamese have been sort of opening the door to veterans that want to go back to see the places that they were stationed at, or whatever. A tourist industry really is flourishing, not right now. Before, because guys want to go back there and see, and they get everything from fake, you know the Vietnamese do everything-- dog tags. Things like that, you know old memorabilia, you know that's all fake, but you know. To show the people some of the stuff you know of our experience, you know, and it was a life changing experience. A lot of us were 19 20, I think the youngest was a 16 years old that died. He was a Marine African American, and there was no color line either there. Even though I didn't mention this, the first hooch that I moved into, there was nine Soul Brothers and myself. When I opened the door and saw nine African American airman I said oh \*\*\*\*. You know, and the person says, what the hell you doing here, I go "is this da da da da," and they said yeah, and I said "I volunteer." I get the f u- get the hell out of here, you don't

belong here in Motown. They had about maybe five, or six hooches areas that were called Motown. Then there was a section where they had the rebel flag and it was up there. Man didn't say anything about it and it is where the rebels were, you know. For Caucasians they're called crackers, you know, and obviously. You know nicknames were quite prevalent they would be quite offensive today. You know, because you know times have changed, but in the military, it's, it's completely different. My son was in Iraq and if you two [signals us] maybe remember, or you were young enough, there was an Iraqi who was killed by, well, firefight, by five Marines. They were in this building and they were caught on camera urinating on his dead body.

01:28:09 SK

I remember, that.

01:28:10 CTG

Yeah, when my son Matt, he had three tours there-- I brought it up and I say, hey, what about that, they caught those guys, those guys, dumb to get caught doing that. He goes, yeah, and we Veterans humor, we both laughed about it, everybody else is appalled by it. You know, because my son and I can talk about stuff, and with my uncles we would talk about things that other people just cannot imagine, and then they find it very offensive. But to us, you gotta remember we were there, we're not on a piece of paper. We had to live that minute by minute, day by day. You know and, a lot of us-- there is many Alcoholics from all the wars, and there's also many of us-- a lot of Vietnam Veterans that became very, very successful, you know and we became workaholics. We did not even acknowledge the fact that we were Vietnam Veterans until almost nine years after the Gulf War. And the reason we-- I correlated to the Gulf War was because they allowed a group of Vietnam Veterans to March in the parade, not at the back of the parade, but in the middle. It was kind of like wow, because we didn't wear hats like this [picks up his Saigon hat] in the 80s, or anything like that. You know we didn't tell people, you know I still get phone calls from a wife, "oh my husband was in the military, and this and that and he was in Vietnam, and are there any better benefits that and-- we've already buried him. Is there any way to get any money back? This and that, and I said well, didn't he view this particular paper, DD214 discharge pape, and she says, well, first of all, we didn't even know he was in the military, and we didn't even know he was in Vietnam. I've gotten at least probably about 10 calls over the years that families never even knew that their loved one was in the military and was in Vietnam. That's how secretive it was. There was no chapter, organizations-- not after the Gulf War, Max Sewart, who was the founder of our chapter, he started in I think 1995-- 1995. Opening up the chapter, we got our Charter in 97. Then I hooked up with him, became the secretary and had been with him ever since you know. We do and we work with the community, the biggest problem we had, we used to go to a-- we used to have our meetings at the VFW, and that was the worst place for us to be. Why? Because they have a bar, and when you're younger, you think we could hang out there two, three, four, o'clock in the morning, just get frigging blasted, you know. I was here, or this now, we did this crazy, crazy. You know all these crazy things you know, and then we realized that we got some good things accomplished, and then the chapter was starting to go to hell and then Max and I, we decided to move the chapter out of there, and we moved to the Gold Star Manor in Long Beach. And no alcohol is allowed, period. When we have events, no alcohol is allowed. You know if you want to drink, stay home. You know, don't join your chap. You're not going to

come here to drink. We're here to help other vets. From Afghanistan to Iraq, we do community service, we give out scholarships that-- we do a lot of things like that and we network a lot with Westminster Vietnamese community, we work with them quite a bit on scholarships and I'm on a committee right now with the Quang Tree, a battle that they had, and I'm kind of telling them that they almost lost the war in 1972, instead of 75 because of American airpower. American airpower was the one that kept everybody alive. The French weren't strong enough, but there was the use of airpower, and that's why they lost. They just couldn't move around. They didn't have those Hueys, they had helicopters, but not in the way we had that Huey. You know that Huey was just our chap. Our sister chapter has a Huey that they purchased, and it's called Life Saver and it was not in Vietnam, it was in New York. They bought for about \$15,000 and I-- we had to roller paint it, and save on costs and things like that. We take it around, he puts it on a trailer, we go to certain events. I'll be in Seal Beach on Wednesday, tomorrow, I believe, yeah, tomorrow, and people are amazed about it. It has no rotors on it, doesn't fly anything like that, we got it out. Does it fly? Does it fly? Here look, does not have rotors on it or anything like that. Yeah so, yeah it's a, you know another thing, I think that I guess we would forget was the fact that how it affected our parents, you know? I when, I know when I left I didn't think it was a big deal I really didn't. Even coming home, I really didn't. Then, that's when the antiwar movement had started, and it didn't start including yet on veterans, you know, and so on. So we couldn't understand-- you have to understand that we were secluded. We only knew what we heard and we were told, so for a whole year we were isolated and everything. One of the biggest impacts to me was when I went to church with my mom on Sunday and they had-- first of all I'm Roman Catholic-- Latin Mass-- I used to be an altar boy and come back to this, where there's singing and almost dancing in the church, what the hell is this? You know what happened to the world that one year? Had-- I mean not only being there.

01:34:56 SK

Right.

01:34:56 CTG

But coming back here, and the most nicest thing that I enjoyed when I came back, was to be able to go to the bathroom and close the door by myself, but that is crazy, isn't it?

01:35:11 SK

Yeah.

01:35:12 CTG

Or being able to take a shower by yourself instead of with 30 other guys, and then two, and I'll bring them-- last thing up, is about Agent Orange .Ok, it was a defoliant used-- some of the fellows that worked on these air crews, one he had about five bouts of cancer, and he's been able to beat them all. And they used to-- supposed to throw these 55 gallon drums and they would put him in the back of a cargo, and then it had spares on the wing and they flew solo. The spray would come in, and the crew guys that were in the back doing all the handling of this stuff, they would just be drenched. They weren't given uniforms or anything like that. There's cigarettes, they would smoke them, they'd be wet, you know. So come to find out when you come down to-- how did so many guys get ill from it, and many more have died now than died in the war from Agent Orange. From cancers or and other things, that's-- and then two we're fighting for right

now is our children, because it's being handed down, you know, and we know that. You know, because lawsuits like having lead in your milk and you drink, you know the milk-- you know you're gonna get sick. It's going to lead to birth issues, you know, you know learning disabilities. My son had open heart surgery when he was 13. My grandson he had, under his testicle, it was next to his stomach. You know so we know and we're talking-- I later gave classes on Agent Orange, and they're saying it takes about five generations before it starts cleansing out. Dow Chemical and Monsanto say no, no no, no no, ya'll wrong, but the problem happens to stem there and if you see any of that stuff in what you see in North Vietnam you don't. You'll turn it off. You won't watch the whole thing. The deformities of these Agent Orange where they sprayed it all fell into the rivers, streams, everything else. We weren't getting bottled water. The Agent Orange was in the water and we took showers in it. Every use in town that you could use water for, you know when we were. Just about a year ago, there was two kind of navies in Vietnam; brown water Navy, blue water Navy. Brown water Navy, they went up the rivers and canals and things like that, and like gunboats. Blue water Navy aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers out in the ocean. Well, you know the river goes into the ocean. And guess what? 50 years later they finally get the okay to be treated for Agent Orange cancer, cancers and illnesses. Took 50 years, now we're fighting that they give benefits or health care to our children. You know, and because we know it's gonna continue, there's-- I've read too many things, and there's been documentaries on it, and you know, that's our last fight. Is the legacy of Vietnam Veterans you know and that we'll never leave another veteran behind. That includes Afghanistan, you know, Iraq because of their issues that they've had of war syndrome. They've had the burn pit issues and my son, when he was in Iraq, I've probably got around 400 pictures, and I went to a meeting with the 13th Marines one time, the support makes the families, and one of the mothers said, you know, my son never writes me, I write him letters, he never writes me, and and I said and he never will. And she was why? I go, they got computers, they got phones, they've got all this stuff over there. I had pictures of these Marines in their, in their living quarters and they had their gas mask on and they're playing for the PlayStation 3 or PlayStation 4 or playing war games, you know, and you go, how do they-- you know everything is digital. You go out on patrol, you get into a firefight and then you go, hey mom, how you doing? You know, and that was the same thing of coming home one day were this atrocious country that's culturally backwards, compared to everything we knew, and then we come back and then you throw us into this civilization, we called it the world. You know we called the aircraft the freedom bird you know, and you come back, and you're supposed to just blend into society just like that. At that time there was no such thing as PTSD. None of that was-- it was not to get into the medical journals until the 1980s sometime. You know and then we have guys who are not-- I filed my PTSD claim in 2008 and I was, I got a high rating and I-- one, was it was okayed 2012. Yeah, so there's-- people don't really understand how much money that we're still spending more on Vietnam Veterans than we are on Iraq and Afghanistan veterans because there was 2.2 million men that went boots on the ground. Now we have to add the Blue Water Navy guys. You know, and most of us average from the age of about 74. The average age of Vietnam Veterans is 74. So, uh, there's a lot of hospitalization care.

01:41:39 SK

Right.

01:41:40 CTG

You know. Anything else?

01:41:43 SC

Have you been back to Vietnam?

01:41:47 CTG

I was thinking about going back there in January. I have some friends there. There is a colony of Americans that live in Saigon, but they have-- because of the virus they've shut everything down. Saigon, or they call it Ho Chi Minh City, the people in the South are still kind of rebellious, just like the North and South Civil War we had. You know the, the Vietnamese, the South Vietnamese do not-- that are here in Westminster don't call it Ho Chi Minh City they call it Saigon, and the people there that live in Ho Chi Minh City, they call it Saigon, and they're, and they've gotten in trouble for it. They go to reeducation camps, you know, and any member that lives in South Vietnam that had a relative that fought against the communists are not allowed government jobs, teachers jobs, and there's one other job that they can't get placement or something like that.

They're just put on site and they get no help. You know, just like right now, probably maybe 10%, 15% of the people in Vietnam have been inoculated. You know, and Saigon is the capital of tourism, and it's the money bank for all of Vietnam. You know that's where all the guys go. They, they don't go to Hanoi, you know they go down to Saigon because most of us came in through Saigon, left through Cam Ranh. You know, and then we had how many-- most of our bases were on the ocean, South China Sea. That was about 10 of them, and right now the government, our government-- about seven years ago spent six years cleaning up the defoliant mess that was left at De Nang Air Force Base, to the tune of \$98 million. It was supposed to be a four year program for 46 million and it wasn't. It took a couple of more years, and all they're doing is worn out about maybe four to five feet of dirt and putting it in cement vaults. They can't burn it or anything like that. Now they've moved it to from De Nang, they've gone to a place called Bien Hoa that's in Saigon. They're doing that base, and it's same thing for years, and it's been now two and a half, and there's still not even half completed, and they still have to do eight more air bases. But you know, to clean up, and we indirectly, the United States government is paying a high price for that war. You know, not only through the veterans, but the clean up messes and the clean up messes now. Now they're finding the Agent Orange got its way through into Thailand, Hawaii, the Philippines. You know, so yeah, you know and Dow Chemical, just wash their hands and say sorry we have nothing to do with you know, so that's that's, you know that's a story of Asian or just quite a bit to if you really want to get involved in something. The Agent Orange issue is a huge issue. You know, because it's a lot of undocumented things that happened from 65 until there was a lawsuit in 1979, that some veterans went against Dow Chemical and in 1993, they settled a lot in court. But for only about 100,000 veterans, it wasn't publicized, and there wasn't, you know, phones like this. It wasn't advertised on TV, and obviously there was limited internet and computers at that time. So yeah, that would be something to look into because I've read quite a bit about that, you know. So anything else?

01:45:51 SK

Just a couple more.



01:45:52 CTG

Sure.

01:45:53 SK

You've been talking about this sort of last period of time, but-- so Vietnam was obviously like a really hot button issue to the American public. Like you said, with the antiwar movement and everything and yeah, it was a hot button issue and it was big in the anti war movement and all that, but how were you received?

01:46:21 CTG

Lousy lousy.

01:46:21 SK

I understand that a lot of Vietnam Veterans got poor treatment when they came back.

01:46:29 CTG

Yeah, I have a friend. When he came in late in the war like '69 '70 got home, they put him on a bus. They had all those you know, like fence chain links across some windows, and stuff like that, and as they were leaving the depot people were throwing from rocks to bottles to everything at the bus that was within the 1st. You know, after they got the airplane customs to do that I had a couple instances where I still had about maybe 13 or 14 months left to go. The Air Force was four years okay, and so I still had a time left, so obviously I still had to wear a hairband and the one we couldn't hide being the veteran, especially because we wore short hair.

01:47:24 SK

Right.

01:47:35 CTG

At that time where they were longhairs, oh, there's a bunch longhairs and as soon as they see white sidewalls, you know they knew you were military, and I was going to LAX and I was going up. There's a couple long hairs coming down and they kind of gave me some verbal hey welcome home, kind of stuff, quite sure it wasn't very true, you know, and it was another time I was in the bar and some guy found out through one of my friends and yeah he was in Vietnam and the guy came up with this real \*\*\*\*\* you know what you join the military for? Things like that, and you know you always had to bite your lip in the swamp water. You know, but I, but I do know some Vietnam Veterans that went a little farther than that, and that's why they're in jail. You know, and I had one friend who joined the chapter, he got into a bar fight and killed three men in one night.

01:48:29 SK

Wow.

01:48:30 CTG

Yeah. Yeah, because there's only so much your body can take. You know when you're under a rocket attack, motor attack, and just wondering if you're just gonna get out, out of that life that one day or that one minute, you know that rocket could be hitting your hooch or your bunker.

01:48:51 SK

Yep.

01:48:52 CTG

And you knew you were not the hunter, you're being hunted. You know, and itd-- so that's fine. All this stuff we put away, I mean, at that time there was no such things in these things. Then like I said, after the [inaudible 01:49:02], it started changing people now, It's like they can't seem to get enough of us, you know it's, it's really odd. It's gone from one extreme to another.

01:49:21 CTG

You know, I was with my family one night at dinner and the guy came by and he says I have a-- I was wearing a Vietnam hat and I had on my side and he said were you in Vietnam? I, oh yeah, and he says when? I go dadada and he's oh thank you very much, and then when we went to get the bill for the dinner it was like 80 some bucks or something like that, the bill was paid for. You don't know how many times that has happened.

01:49:53 SK

Ah.

01:49:54 CTG

You know, or you know what would-- and there were good restaurants too, the Outback. There was five of us, five Vietnam Veterans, and we were all from different time zones and you have to understand the war kept evolving. The uniform cell equipment, everything it kept evolving all through the war. You know, and so, anyway, we're at the bar all having drinks. It's about 4:00 o'clock or so, and we're having a pretty good time, and we had one friend, he's Chinese American. He had the worst time because dressed as an American soldier, we were not accustomed to seeing Asians, none of us were at that time, and so he got shot at on many occasions by Americans in the US. Army, because he would come back to base because they thought he was a Viet cong disguised as an American soldier, and then when he got-- when he was at Chow Hall and had come back, and he was 4F, 4F means they don't take you, but they took him anyway and he got into one of the worst battles there was in 1968 in the city away, and he was only there two weeks. Willie was in the chow line, he had an aluminum pan and some white Sergeant came by him and he said, get that goop out of my chow hall.

01:51:30 SK

Yeah.

01:51:31 CTG

And Willie just snapped. He went up to the guy and slammed him right across the head, start beating the \*\*\*\* out of him. I laugh only because what did they expect? You know, he actually had to really save the last bullet for himself, because he was in a group that got surrounded by let's say 150 to 200 NVA, and there was only 15 Americans. You know those aren't very good odds.

01:52:06 SK

Right.

01:52:06 CTG

And your perimeter keeps going smaller and smaller and smaller, because guys are getting wounded. Guys getting killed and there was already twenty Americans that already gotten killed. You know and, he just said they were getting low on ammo and they were just lucky that an Army helicopter gunship happened to come by, and he was able to push the enemy back, and

they were able to get out of there. Yeah so, and so anyway, but everybody always tells us that story.

01:55:35 SK

Yeah

01:55:36 CTG

And we look to them, God, you're nuts man. You're nuts, and so anyway, so and then we go and have dinner, and like I said, this is the Outback. Some guy comes over, he goes, you guys have a reunion? You guys all seem to be military, and by then we were starting to wear hats like this. [points to his Saigon hat] Yeah, so yeah we're all in Vietnam, he was there at '67 '68, he was there '69 '70, all yabba dabba doo. No kidding, you know, and so when we get the check, that guy had left \$200 and he had paid for our stuff.

01:53:17 SK

Wow

01:53:18 CTG

Yeah, that's what we said, wow. Hey, who's the guy you know-- my family members get surprised sometimes when we're at the supermarket or something like that, and somebody will come by and say thank you for your service. You know and, you see, the reason I particularly wear this quite often is since I'm the President of the chapter, it's a form of advertising to get more veterans. I even get Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, and we've helped about 3 or 4. That go hey, you were in the Nam huh? Oh yeah, were you? I was in Iraq. My son was there man, where was he? Oh he was marine in the polution this and that you know, and then, hey, are you getting help? No. Why not? Oh I was infantry. Oh, you're infantry in Iraq, you're going building and building, and you've got no help, are you dumb or what's wrong with you? You know, and then we crawl in and we get them in to see a Veteran service officer instead of going in the front door of the hospital, we get him into the back door. Because we have what's known of that lead in service officer that helps. Our chapter has one for itself. You know, and we get them, or we can see that a person, a veteran is in really bad shape. They sometimes will walk right down to where, they almost get locked up. They put on a 72 hour hold-- we had a veteran that was that bad that he had trouble moving from his apartment to find another apartment, get 2 cats and a dog. They were small and so he missed a meeting and then he came to a meeting and he said, oh, I moved. Everything is cool, this and that. We saw him great, and we said how'd you find a place that took cats and dogs? He goes, I took my [inaudible 01:55:16] and killed them. We said what?

01:55:19 SK

Yeah.

01:55:20 CTG

You killed them. Couldn't you take them to the animal shelter, no, if I can't have them, nobody's gonna have them. You could just see the guy was gone, you know so, I called Karen up and I said, hey, we've got one that really needs help, and so they came down, and the VA police escorted him down to the-- actually the 8th floor at the VA, and they put him on a 72 hour hold. We later on heard that he was sent to another hospital, because he was gone. You know, there's a lot of guys that keep surviving, but they're gone. You know, because they've just seen way too much cause that's what PTSD is. It's, it's a function that in World War I they would think you're a

coward, World War II the same thing, Korea same thing, you know, but it's just that your body, a human body, can only take so much, and you know, it's another-- people deal with more differently, you know, but there are those that we lose just because, and they'll be that way for 40 or 50 years. You know, and then they snap. Or else they've been snapping along and nobody realized it, but people, but the people in our country now, have realized the issue of PTSD finally. You know, they finally you know, get it that you know you can't put people into these places. I know when my son came back from Iraq, they put him on a two week camp and they were all evaluated as-- and that made them angry because they wanted to go see their families. You know they didn't want to wait there and everybody,-- and the newer abettors they just wanna sign their papers and get out. You know they want to go home, they want to be free, but they're not ready for it, and when they're told they need counseling-- and my son, because he put down some incidences-- he was trying, he lives in Salt Lake City, he was trying to become a police officer for the airport and or a state trooper. They turned him down and said, because you have symptoms of PTSD, go get some help and come back in two years, so basically by being truthful, you're not getting the job.

01:57:44 SK

Right.

01:57:46 CTG

So you're shafted if you do, and you're shafted if you don't.

01:57:48 SK

Yeah.

01:57:49 CTG

You know? What other questions, anything?

01:57:55 SC

Have you noticed any habit or pattern aside from PTSD in veterans that you've met or helped?

01:58:03 CTG

The biggest one are usually-- the biggest one that I have, is I don't like somebody to come up behind me and tap me on the shoulder from the back. Sad to say, I had to one day tell everybody inside, I have-- I wear hearing aids. I had to tell my entire family about maybe four five years ago, do not come from behind me. I love to cook. You know, I'm sitting there and cutting, cutting boards. So hey dad-- you, you know I could hurt somebody. I'm not doing it intentionally, but there is a fear that I have. You know? A question that sometimes is asked by many people, well, when were you there? Oh, last night. I see, you know, and it was always the same. That said, you could always leave the Nam, but the Nam will never leave you. You know, I'll tell you what it's a pretty truthful statement. You know no, no matter how minor, though I think our veteran service officer said, well, you airmen had it easy. You know, you guys had a bunk, you didn't have to sleep in the jungle. Oh no, yeah, you could go to sleep and you could get hit in the Wauconda tag being better state, and the rock it'll take out your hooch and your dentist. At least he didn't feel anything because you were asleep, now you're dead, and that happened to many, many people. When they would do those rock, rock factors there was, there was no time for there's an alarm where you could get into the bunkers or this or that, and you always know when there's a tragedy going on, is that everybody's not reacting because they don't know what's going on, but if you

blow that siren, you know going on, there's still guys that can't hear because they're asleep. They've been working, those guys. The veterans who worked on the aircraft. They worked 14, 18 hour days out in 120 degree weather and when it used to get 85 and 80, we'd be wearing jackets because we were cold, that's how much. That's how much our bodies change.

01:59:02 SK

Yeah.

01:59:03 CTG

You know? Yeah, that one, and we hate 4th of July, and you can figure that one out. You know, we just don't like noises.

02:00:25 SK

Right.

02:00:25 CTG

We like to be solitude, you know? We don't like large crowds, you know, we're taught to be careful if you went into one of the Vietnamese restaurants. You could have a guy riding his bike by and throw a hand grenade inside the restaurant because they're open. You know, not like the restaurants we have, you know, with the doors.

02:00:47 SK

Yeah.

02:00:48 CTG

They had open ones, and the last one that I eat every time I look to go ride my bike-- they used to take the seat out you know where the shaft goes in, they used to put explosives down in there, plastic explosives, so you put down there and it's hooked up to a generator. you know they had light there and you'd be riding along and boom. You're taken out by riding a bicycle. You know, like I said, they're so ingenious enjoying things, you know. Yeah, or, or even probably you might have seen in movies somebody dropping the large load pans or something like that you know or I don't know. My grandson who's gotten better, he's 14 came up, it was about a year and a half ago and I was doing something and he came up and I didn't hear him and said hey Grandpa and he hit me and I almost did that wrong. I almost took him out, and he was so scared, and then, then we had to sit down and say, look, you can't do this around your Grandpa. You know, and this is-- and those are some of the things you know. You don't want to dream about it, but you know when you fall into a deep dream, you get what you get. You know it's not like you can control your mind, when you go to sleep.

02:02:13 SK

Yeah.

02:02:14 CTG

But then two, you don't want to get overmedicated either. You know, because overmedication is just as bad, as alcohol, you know?-- and so, and then the quantities of medicine that the VA hands out to vets. When I hear something-- some veteran is on 18 medications, how does that all function with the body? You know, I'm on just two and I'm fortunate that physically, I'm pretty okay, but I have some dead spots in my brain from-- one of the doctors says-- he asked me certain things and he knew I was a veteran, and he and I said well between the rocket attacks and this map and grenade explosions. He goes well, you know that, that piece of your brain's all right

there, it could have been damaged but we can't say that, it's a head trauma just like getting a concussion.

02:03:19 SK

Right.

02:03:20 CTG

And I go, is it getting any bigger? Is it cancerous? No no no, it's just a dead zone, and okay, well, at least nothing, nothings happening, but people don't understand the intensity of when those one rockets. Even being next to a guy and he's firing machine gun that's shooting 100 rounds in a minute. You know, and you're the feeder, and of course, we don't have hearing aids you know, and what it's doing to you. This here to me is so bad that they were thinking about, a surgery procedures to putting a chip in here [points to back of ear] and they-- and so they asked me, well, besides the exposure, whatever do you do you remember any experience? I go, yeah, there's a particular time when I was on a Jeep patrol, and we're going around a bend, we had a Korean soldier in the back, and I mentioned to you that they didn't follow the rules of engagement, and and I'm the radioman and I'm looking out and we're driving along, and, and then all of a sudden, without even tapping me on the shoulder-- doing anything, he put his rifle over my shoulder, and he let off at the bottom maybe 25 rounds?

02:04:47 SK

Oh.

02:04:48 CTG

And for almost a day I just like, I went to the doc, you'll be ok, don't worry, you're here and come back. But that's you know, now we just laugh about it. I mean, what else can you do really? You know.

02:05:03 SK

Yeah.

02:05:04 CTG

You know, because if not, it really eats you up, but that's why our goal is to continue helping other veterans and show everyone that we were a good group. We were not, what they depict. With the rambos, with the-- but the some of like deer hunter and things like that, you know. If you want to see some movies, it shows the culture of the infantry. *Platoon* is very good. There's another movie, that shows the beginning of like in 1963, 1969, we had visors there, and we're just starting, it's *Go Tell the Spartans*, and it has Burt Lancaster in, and the only place you can find that movie on is YouTube, and then that one with *Good Morning Vietnam*. It's not so much the military side in the music side, it's seeing the culture of the people where some Vietnamese are trying to learn English and a lot of the interplay that's going on. I think that's, I think those three, three movies depict it-- and if you want to see what those guys went through when they were in boot camp, *Full Metal Jacket*. You don't have to watch watch the whole movie, just watch the first hour, how that Sergeant treats those guys, and actually, and there's a part where, the drill Sergeant slaps the-- I'll get his name right now, right now. It was a heavyset guy, and they interviewed him. He was a drill Sergeant in the Marine core before, and he was in Vietnam for 14 months. He was, he was a helicopter chief. He's a pretty good guy, he even had a program called the, what was it, well, it was on The History Channel now called-- and he passed away

about four years ago. And he was kind of like one of our icons, it didn't matter what military you were in, because he would go around in the Air Force, Army, Marines, he go all over the place, Afghanistan, and the military would take him there and stuff like that-- and he talked about all this and that, and the cohesion on all these things, and in the movie, he, he ad libbed a lot of different things that Oliver Stone didn't have in there. He just did it because he was a drill instructor, and in this one particular section when hes inspectecting him, he slaps and he literally slaps an actor, and he says this is your left, which is your left POW, which is your right, and he shows his right POW, and he really hits some heart. Later on I saw him in an interview on that, he goes, didn't you feel bad that wasn't in the script, you're supposed to pretend, and he goes well, he learned a lesson. He knows his left hand from his right hand now, and he'll never forget. That's-- and what you see in that, you see if one person long in the petun, everybody, they will,-- drill instructors will literally make everybody else pay for that one guy, because we can't get him in line. They were called everything from blanket parties where they would throw, let's say Greg walks into the barracks and somebody throws a couple planks over, and they beat the shit out of him, because he's getting everybody in trouble.

02:08:55 SK

I see.

02:08:56 CTG

You see what I'm saying?

02:08:57 SK

Yeah.

02:19:58 CTG

That means, you know your leaves are cancelled. That means that you get every \*\*\*\* duty there is, you know, and you get to march more, and march more, and march more, and run more and run more because of one guy.

02:09:13 SK

Yeah.

02:09:13 CTG

And you know, and that happened in Vietnam what was called bragging. We would get 2nd lieutenants, they have a yellow, just a bar. A second lieutenant is the lowest of all the officers, and they always came in like John Wayne's, they would want to go in there and get the body counts and all this other junk, you know, and they would sometimes get veterans killed, who had been there nine months, 10 months, and sometimes when they were taking a shower or on in the head. They were throwing a dummy grenade into the head, you know that was a warning. Keep-- don't keep screwing with us, you know, leave us alone. We know what to do. You know, and there was instances where some officers didn't make it, because they were too rambunctious.-- I would mention to you about animals, you know. There was four incidences where tigers killed a marine because they were-- they'd layout in bushes. There's plenty of bodys being left out there. Not all American bodies were, you know, retrieved right away. The Vietcong in North Viet-- the NBA, and there were instances where that, that happened so, and I bought it.

02:10:43 SK

So the final question I have for you, before we wrap up is-- so you've had so much time to reflect on Vietnam and everything involved with it, and so how do you feel about US involvement now looking back?

02:11:03 CTG

Looking back is that we haven't learned any lessons. What happened in Afghanistan, you could see it from the beginning. We set up a puppet government, and you saw it going on for a long, long time. If you can't get a government that's correct, and you unify the people, why are we dying? Why are we giving foreign aid to Egypt, to buy weapons from Russia? Look up foreign aid, see how much money, look at the countries, and majority of that money goes like in the Philippines. 70% of it goes to the Philippine military, 30% goes to the people. The money is supposed to be there to build bridges, infrastructures and make a better life for the Filipinos, or the Afghan people or things like that. It's going to the military. We-- I don't really think in these type of insurgency wars and these countries that are all packed out, and obviously including Vietnam still, is that the fact that we have not learned, our politicians have not learned, you know, anything yet. You know, sure, they say they're sorry and all this other yabba dabba doo, like those 13 who we knew-- I don't know about you, but when we're evacuating, you knew something was really gonna go wrong. We, you know that you're fighting a foe that's willing to die. Just like the Japanese in World War II, they were willing to die. You know, the Vietcong and the NVA were willing to die. You know when you're fighting a foe like that, you know it's pretty tough because you know we're taught to stay alive. You know, and I don't think we've learned how to deal with war, really, and I think there's going to be more coming, because we just can't get it together. When it comes to that, it was just a-- The Marines out at 29 palms, about three months ago, fought a group of British and other Allied forces, on our own home turf. They were able to-- British were able to defeat the Marines. That's not saying much, you know for us. You know getting beat on your own own turf. You know, and the military, there are, I believe, weakening more and more, and I don't believe that we're supposed to go out and conquer, and do all that you know. Helping the nation is one thing, like the Gulf War. We went in there, we had, we help quite, we got in and we got out. Now that was a good war. Not that I, like I said, I don't like war, but at the same time, they got in there and they got out. They did their job, they let the military do what they did, and they-- and that was it. Minimal casualties, minimal time, but if you're gonna get into these insurgency wars, and you can see that there's a lack of government, and everything else, you gotta get out of there. You know, right now we have nine US bases in the Philippines, and they're not flagged US, they're flagged Filipinos, but there's marines at Army, Navy, and Air Force all there. The front door says Filipino air base, but it's really a US air base because that's how concerned they are with China right now, and that'll be a mess. You know, because they've got nuclear weapons. How is it, I just, there's no way that you're gonna solve some of these wars, but when they get in, you gotta get in and out. You know, take your losses, I'll just say it, let it be. We cannot, the United States cannot be the placement and use us. Just just like people like you and me, or you [pointing to SC] now because they have females in the military. They can't just say oh, oh, then, then, oh by the way we're going to give you this, Hello how are you this and that, and you signed up and that's what you get. No. I mean how are you gonna make up for losing your legs? How are you gonna make up losing your arms, or



you come back and your wife is divorced you, or you lost your kids or this or that. There's more than just death, that when you come back, you know what I'm saying?

02:15:32 SK

Right

02:15:32 CTG

Maybe your mom died, and you were gone and couldn't come to the funeral. You know, or there's a lot of different things like that. I particularly, you know-- this what I hear now about the military. I just shake my head, they're weakening our military right now, and what it means is less freedom and you two are young[pointing to us]. That just like I was at one time, you know and believe in freedom. I don't want communism in here. I don't want the Mujahideen in here, you know, hey, you know there's a point where the borders gotta be done, right. There, there are-- I'm not saying we can't help people, but there's only so much we can do, we can't save the world. You know, but they're what I kind of think that certain people that the globalists are doing are -- they want a Star Trek world. You know what's Star Trek series? It's about the world being under one government under the federation. They have one monetary system and all this sort of stuff you know so. To me, war is if you can stagger it, stay out of it, but at the same time, you gotta be strong enough not to allow it to beat you, because in too many instances there's-- we have been unprepared, and then that causes more catastrophies. You know, and that's not it.

02:17:01 SK

So is there anything we haven't asked you that you feel is important to add at this time?

02:17:08 CTG

No it's just that people have to understand the nature of a veteran, and especially-- it affects the family and without the veterans sometimes really understanding his issues. I joined the military in 1969. I didn't file a claim until 2008, and I thought I was ok. I worked in the grocery business for 46 years for two companies. One company you wouldn't know, second company is a Ralphs grocery company for 28 years, I worked myself up as a junior manager to director. I worked as far as Newport Beach to Hollywood At 2:00, and then I spent seven years in the hood, Martin Luther King Western, and that was wild. I think sometimes that was wild, doesn't get it now, but people just have to have more understanding of veterans and their-- Congress is too quick to say they're going to do this or that, but they got to talk about it and they got to talk about it. They have the issue of the homeless up in Westwood. I was involved with that movement for a period of time. They can put up an air base, an encampment, a whole entire air base in one day. That's how quickly they can do it today. Okay, they have a mess hall that it literally looks like a huge trailer. That opens like a square box. It opens up in all four sides and they can feed 300 people in that one day. That's how fast they can do it, but why do we have veterans still sleeping in Westwood?

02:19:06 SK

Right.

02:19:07 CTG

Because Brentwood doesn't want us there. That's why. You know who wants a cemetery right in front of your— in your neighborhood like the one they're trying to put here. I think it was near Irvine area and now it's gone up to look up Ray area and it's been shooting around. Everybody

wants yeah, yeah, yeah but, nobody wants it around their house. You know, there's too much stuff that goes on that we're going to make a study. The study is five years, 10 years, 15 years. In the meantime, how many? How many beds have we lost? Now they they just, you know they they just don't get it. They don't move fast enough. So my last comment on that one.

02:19:55 SK

So thank you very much for allowing us to interview you.

02:19:58 CTG

Oh no it was my pleasure, really, you know I hope I didn't bore you too much.

02:20:02 SC

Not at all.

02:20:04 CTG

No, yeah.

**--End of Interview--**