

My Viet Nam Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: DENNIS PHELPS

Interviewer: Bridget Devlin, Chris Le

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Length of Interview: 01:30:08

ABSTRACT

An Oral History with Dennis Phelps, born on the 21st or 22nd of May 1949 in Ogden, Utah. He was the first in his family to achieve a high school diploma. He was drafted into the army in June 1969 and was a Military Occupation Specialist welder in the 103rd Army Engineers and the 169th Engineer Battalion. He was deployed in Viet Nam from August 1970 to June 1971 in Nuy Li in the Dong Nai province. Mr. Phelps worked on various engineering projects in the camp throughout his stay in Viet Nam, where he experienced joyful moments with his close friend Bob Bassat and fellow soldiers who he shared comradery with. While in Viet Nam, his friend Ray Desmond was killed in April of 1971, leading Mr. Phelps to contemplate suicide. However, he was able to find healing by meeting with Desmond's family at the mobile Vietnam Memorial Wall about fifteen years after Mr. Phelps left Viet Nam, as well through various support systems. He is currently president of his local chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America and helps veterans transition to normal life with a veteran's helicopter ride program. At the time of interview, he resides with his wife in Orange, California.

Keywords: 103rd Army Engineers, 169th Engineering Battalion, Dong Nai, Military Occupation Specialist (MOS), mobile Vietnam Memorial Wall, Nuy Li, papa-san, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), returning home, Veterans Affairs, welding