00;00;00;23 - 00;00;24;10

My name is Luke Aldridge. I'm interviewing Vietnam veteran Richard Dittmer, who served in the Army and was in Vietnam from January to December 1970. Mr. Dittmer, this interview will have four sections your life before service, basic training, your time in Vietnam and your life after service. So let's get started with your background. Okay. Where did you grow up and what was your area known for?

00;00;25;07 - 00;01;00;27

I grew up in, Salem, Missouri, which is a southeastern part of the state. It's about 100 miles from, 120 miles from Saint Louis, and probably about the same distance down to Memphis. It's a very rural area. Population at the time was 2500 or so, and it's in the Ozarks. And what that means is, you know, it was, the people that tried to farm there, had a very hard time because the soil was so rock.

00;01;00;28 - 00;01;33;19

It wasn't fertile. It was, very difficult. So the main industries there, near Salem, a lot of people that lived in Salem worked in, in, Barker, Missouri, which was a huge lead mining, location. And of course, everybody knows what happens to lead mines. And, but the other big industry was timber, people, cutting cordwood.

00;01;33;21 - 00;02;12;12

You know, and we had a huge, charcoal factory plant that made, what's the most popular charcoal brand? I can't remember, but anyway, they made tons of, of charcoal there from, the hardwood trees. There were no ponds in, in Missouri and in the Ozarks. So it was hardwood logging and hardwood, processing into either fence posts or telephone poles or, into charcoal.

00;02;12;15 - 00;03;05;05

So those were the two main industries in Salem. Okay. Can you tell me about your family growing up? Well, I had a good mom and dad. Had, one older brother had two younger brothers and two younger sisters, and, I was number two. I was second, and both were, and, we were a churchgoing people, and, we, we had a count and, my wife still can't believe that she was raised in Chicago, but, you know, there were a lot of times, I mean, a lot of times when we lived on milk and cornbread or beans, and, so those are three of my favorite foods,

00;03;05;05 - 00;03;31;11

even to this day. But, anyway, and a lot of the kids are going to school with worked at the sawmill, you know, worked at, a cutting

wood. What did your dad do? My dad was mechanic. He was car mechanic. He was very good. He, started out working for a Ford dealer, actually started working for a Ford tractor dealer, and then went to a Ford car dealer.

00;03;31;14 - 00;04;01;25

And then at some point in my adolescence, he bought a garage, that had been there forever. And, he owned the garage and gas pumps and, you know, and so I spent a lot of my teenage years, high school years, working in his garage, working on cars and pumping gas and so forth. Do you have any memories of your father or other men around you telling war stories from World War Two?

00;04;01;28 - 00;04;23;09

My dad, was not in World War two. He was, he was injured in training, so he was never sent overseas and was not, you know, he didn't have any war stories. Now, I have an uncle, his brother, his older brother, my dad's older brother. His name was Arnold, and he had plenty.

00;04;23;11 - 00;04;47;17

He was missing a finger, and, he had he had been shot by a sniper, and it took off one of his fingers and hit him in the chest. So he was, in a hospital for a very long time. But now, he didn't go out, and he didn't tell a lot of war stories. He just, you know, he just was a guy, you know?

00;04;47;20 - 00;05;16;02

Just like my dad was. So, I did hear I guess we did hear some about, I had an uncle that was in the Korean War and I did hear some about the Korean War, but, gosh, that was I was still pretty much an adolescent at that time, too. I don't know when the Korean War ended, but, you know, I was very young when when I was hearing him talk about that.

00;05;16;04 - 00;05;36;22

Do you think either of your uncles that were in the military encouraged you to join the military? No, I don't think they encouraged me, but they didn't discourage me. You know, one of, one of the things that people would tell you, even tell me when I was a kid, was that, you need to go in the army.

00;05;36;23 - 00;06;04;06

It'll make a man out of them. And, and I knew guys that went to high school with which were idiots. I mean, they were just totally numskulls. And, when they got out of the Army, they would seem like

adult men to me, you know, responsible. And, and I noticed that in myself when I was finally, I, when I finally got out of the Army in 1972.

00;06;04;08 - 00;06;29;26

So, I was, I'm a turtle a lot, and I know that a lot of other people did, and that was that was encouragement for people to have their sons, too, you know, in the military was, because, in Salem, Missouri, it's in the Ozarks, in the mountains. It's it's very mountainous. And the roads are just like it is like this.

00;06;29;29 - 00;06;54;19

And so one of the primary causes of death among, young men, young women, too, young men and teenagers was car accidents. There it was a very a lot of the kids drank and a lot of, you know, they get out on these roads and miss a curve and hit a tree and, you know, they would end up in the morgue.

00;06;54;21 - 00;07;25;15

And, and so that was that was some of the reason I didn't drink. So, you know, it didn't apply to me, but it was, it was one of the things that made me, feel like, you know, I needed to do this for another reason, too. And the other reason is I graduated high school when I was 16, and, started college and, you know, kind of, I struggled along until I turned.

00;07;25;18 - 00;07;57;02

18. Didn't really, didn't really make any progress. Got a few credit hours and so forth. But, so it was, I guess part of my, I guess, my journey to manhood, so to speak. Did you have a favorite World War Two movie growing up? I don't think so. I mean, I I don't remember now. When I was older, I, I like Patton.

00;07;57;02 - 00;08;24;22

I thought that was a great movie, but that was I was an adult by then. I really I not really, the town I grew up in there didn't have it. Only had, a drive in theater. So, you know, our community got 1 or 2 movies a week instead of, like, today, you go to the multiplex and see one of the Disney movies and then go to a different multiplex and see others, you know?

00;08;24;24 - 00;08;37;08

But back then, you know, we got we got the, the movies that were shown by our drive in theater. Right. So and I did see a few movies, but,

none of them were war movies.

00;08;37;08 - 00;08;45;25

Now let's move on to the start of your service and basic training. Would you describe yourself as volunteering, being commissioned or drafted?

00;08;46;03 - 00;08;55;14

I volunteered. And what were the main reasons you volunteered? Well.

00;08;55;16 - 00;09;05;21

It was the thing to do. Okay. And I think I told you this yesterday or whenever Saturday.

00;09;05;24 - 00;09;34;01

In Salem, Missouri, when you graduated from high school, there were three, three things open to you as a man, as boy. One was to go to college. If your parents were rich and I, which we considered anybody whose family had an attorney or an accountant or, you know, a doctor or something like that, to be that the more well-off and they would, they would be able to go to college.

00;09;34;03 - 00;09;59;20

Then, a huge number would go in the military, a huge number, probably more than more than a third. And then the other third went to work at the sawmill. So those were basically what we considered our three options, out of high school. Did you expect to go to Vietnam when you enlisted? I did. And you weren't afraid of going over there?

00;09;59;23 - 00;10;35;06

No. Actually, if you went in the Army when I did, which was, late. 1969, August 1969, Tet offensive was going on her head. I think it was just getting started. And that was all the talk, at one time. And I may have these numbers completely wrong, but I know at one time, the Army, the U.S built up a force in Vietnam to over 500,000, half a million GIS serving in Vietnam.

00;10;35;08 - 00;11;03;20

And, it was on the news. If you watch TV, you and any knowledge newspapers or whatever of what was going on in the world, it was Vietnam. And, so I, I figured it was pretty likely, but, didn't deter me. So do you remember anything specific about the last days before your service or the trip to base?

00;11;03;23 - 00;11;26;15

Oh, I mean, it was. I'm not a drinker, so I wasn't out partying or, you know, doing what? A lot of a lot of the guys from Salem, Missouri would do. You know, they'd be out partying and, tragically, there were two of them that were killed the summer, that summer of 19, 1969, in a car accident.

00;11;26;17 - 00;11;56;15

Both had more drop. They had two women in the car with them and they were also killed. And it was just the, the state of affairs in Salem, Missouri in a lot of parts of the Ozarks. How would you describe your boot camp experience? It was not as bad as I expected. It was I had there was only one thing that I didn't excel at.

00;11;56;17 - 00;12;18;16

I excelled at shooting because I'd grown up hunting rabbits and deer and, you know, squirrels and everything. You know, growing up. So I was pretty good shot that I was the only one in my unit that, that, were was awarded the marksman badge.

00;12;18;19 - 00;12;45;12

And the only other thing that I was afraid of was I had still had underdeveloped arms. I could do push ups. I could do most of the p.t, but the the parallel bars going down the parallel bars. I just couldn't do more than 3 or 4. Well, when we got to the testing, that would determine whether you graduated from basic or had to go back and do it again.

00;12;45;14 - 00;13;07;22

We got out on the on the area, and when we trained those bars, when that big around, I couldn't reach my fingers around them. And I couldn't do more than 4 or 5. So when we got to the to the testing area, they were about this big round. I went down and back and it didn't, didn't, you know, didn't miss me.

00;13;07;29 - 00;13;39;12

So those were my two real experiences and basic training that I, and I recall. Did anyone around you struggle with boot camp? Yeah, we had one guy that, I think he was depressed. I think, he he wouldn't get out of his back, and he was, now, later on. He was diagnosed with, Oh, my gosh, a neural disease.

00;13;39;12 - 00;14;08;10

He was diagnosed with, What what what went through Fort Leonard Wood back in 1968. They were, an epidemic that went through. And it was, what was it called? Spinal meningitis. And he had that and nobody knew. And if you eat them when it's hard, it's made him go to second. And he just barely struggled to get there and nobody realized he wasn't.

00;14;08;17 - 00;14;33;25

He was not like a slacker. He was he was very sick. He didn't have symptoms like, you know, throwing up or, you know, any of that. But he just was like a couch potato. And then it turned out toward the middle or toward the end of basic training, that he was diagnosed with that and was barely recovered, as far as I know.

00;14;33;27 - 00;14;35;07

Thank you for sharing that.

00;14;35;07 - 00;14;42;00

I'd like to move on to your time in Vietnam. Okay. Did anything stick out to you about your flight to Vietnam?

00;14;42;00 - 00;14;53;22

Well, it was a charter flight. I've never been on a charter flight. You know, and I think it was a DC ten. It was a, a wide body. And it didn't have a first class, and it didn't have.

00;14;53;25 - 00;15;21;15

I mean, it was just guys 8 or 9 across all the way down the from front to back. So it must have been, it must have had. I'm just guessing. It must have had 3 or 400 of us on there. Now, I had flown before. Not much, but it was always on, you know, seven, 20 sevens or, you know, that size aircraft.

00;15;21;18 - 00;15;42;24

And, never seen a plane that big. And then as we were landing, you know, they gave us all these warnings about, you know, there could be, you know, there's always somebody watching these planes land. And if you if, you know, if you get hit by mortar attacks, whatever, you know, where to go and what to do.

00;15;42;27 - 00;16;20;23

But other than that, uneventful. And you mentioned that you'd flown

before. I did was that in the military or. Well, actually, when I was in basic training. One of my cousins and I kind of grew up with that, was killed in a car accident. And, so I got permission. His his funeral was on a Saturday or Sunday, so I got permission to get a three day pass, which I think I was the only one in my unit that never got a pass in the middle of basic training, to fly home from, Kentucky to Missouri and then fly back.

00;16;20;25 - 00;16;47;28

And, both of those flights were not full size. Yeah. Well, that they were for back then, you know, full size jet back then might carry 80 or 90 passengers. But, that was my only two experiences in flying it all my life until I got on the plane to Vietnam. Could you describe your first 24 to 48 hours in country?

00;16;48;00 - 00;17;25;03

It was it was interesting. Now, each unit, they have a really a rear echelon, where they were, they, they process people and, and then they send them out to whatever, and so when, when I first got there, they were, and we had to do guard duty on the perimeter. During that time, but what they were, what they were doing was they were telling us, about the unit we were going to.

00;17;25;06 - 00;17;46;11

In fact, my unit, 11th camp, had their own in processing, and I was part of that. But they were telling what to expect and and all that. And then, on the, at night, you know, we were expected to go out and, and do guard duty along the perimeter and watch for sappers and what a separate.

00;17;46;14 - 00;18;22;14

So, they were very popular in Vietnam. They were, Vietcong or MVA who would, crawl right up to the perimeter. I would American, installation. And they threw a charge across one, you know, across that wasn't wall, but it was like that. Second offense. Okay. And they would lob those over and they didn't shoot. But you know, they while those are over and they would explode behind the guards and maybe even hit a building behind guards.

00;18;22;16 - 00;18;48;00

And so we were to watch out for sappers that we had claymore mines and we knew what they were. We went out and checked them, made sure that they were plugged in correctly. And so if we saw any sign of a sapper, pick the little thing and, scare everybody around the base to death because it would it would sound like the end of the end of the world.

00;18;48;02 - 00;19;15;05

And, so that was a bit fearful. What did you expect when you arrived to Vietnam based on TV or stories you'd heard? Well, I may mention this to you on Friday, but, I just thought that you went out and did battle, you know, was out there on an operation, and then you came back and you slept on a bunk?

00;19;15;08 - 00;19;44;05

Every night or most every night. That's how. That's the life of an interim infantryman. Okay? As tankers, as as armor units. We went out the day we got sent out, and we were there until the day we were out. Yeah, I will I will say that we did get one an hour kind of in the middle of the year there and there was toward the end of the year, we did have one.

00;19;44;11 - 00;20;08;16

It was called a stand down, and it was where we brought all of our vehicles in and turned them into the motor pool and had them repair, you know, oil churning. I mean, you know, really get them, refurbished. And then, we were, in sleeping in bunks for like 2 or 3 days, and then we went back out and then, but those were the only two times that.

00;20;08;17 - 00;20;32;14

Well, and when I was started off, I was third time that I was, not sleeping on out in the field. Would you describe yourself as being in combat in the rear or something else in combat? And what kind of work did you do? I was an armor crewman. On a tank. Whether it's an Im 48 M60.

00;20;32;17 - 00;20;56;22

What? The newer ones are called, the, But the Sheridan was what I was on, which is a lighter weight. It's a aluminum hull. And it's very fast. You can drive at 45 miles an hour. And, but it's very light, and, so it's very vulnerable to hitting mines and that sort of thing or on a, on a Sheridan tank.

00;20;56;22 - 00;21;33;13

And so for crew, for man crew. And when you first get in country you're a low man on that are important. So you're the driver okay. And then as time goes by, after you've been there for a while, and as people shift around or people get sent back home or whatever, you would, you would then be promoted to gunner, and try to, loader which

was, position behind the driver standing up on the turret and, you know, inside the turret where your head and shoulders above the top of the, of the turret.

00;21;33;16 - 00;21;53;20

And then next after that was the gunner, which was down beside the driver. And the gunner, had a 50 caliber machine and down there and also controlled the main gun. Now, the tank commander could do the same thing, which was fortunate because a lot of time we didn't have a gunner. We had a three man crew instead of a four man crew.

00;21;53;22 - 00;22;26;01

But then the highest position was a tank commander. So I spent a good deal of time in each of those four positions. You mentioned sleeping in the field. How often a day were you in the tank every day, or how many hours would you say? It depended. Yeah. Now, within, the, third Regiment, the third, okay.

00;22;26;04 - 00;23;03;29

Within our group, there were four platoons. Oh, no. Yeah. For four platoons and two companies. The two companies really big tanks. Okay. They were the M60 in 48, and then, and then we had four, platoons, basically that were, on the Sheridan's, and we had the archives also, which was a, a, plain army, personnel carrier, carrier that had been, transformed into an armored combat assault vehicle.

00;23;04;01 - 00;23;37;14

So it was we were in a tank, a cab, tank, a cab. Okay. And, we were swept inside, which was mostly not a good idea. We had guys who did it. The guys in the archive. A lot of them do it because, you know, it's a long, narrow vehicle. But, on the Sheridan's either slept on the back of it where the engine was, or I slept on a cot beside it.

00;23;37;16 - 00;24;05;15

Didn't ever actually sleep on the ground, but, you know, slept on a cot or an army cot beside it. And did you eat inside the tank during the day? No. We would stop occasionally and, we would have C rations for almost every meal. Now, once in a while. The, the our rear area, our support area would send out a, some, hot meal.

00;24;05;17 - 00;24;38;04

Okay. Became these big, long. Cans that were like a cooler, you know, like an igloo cooler. But they were metal. And, there would be if there's breakfast and there'd be bacon and sausage and eggs and grits

and French fry, you know, fries and all kinds of stuff. And if it was a dinner meal, it would be like roast beef and gravy, mashed potatoes, green beans, tomatoes and so forth.

00;24;38;06 - 00;24;57;08

I found out after I left Vietnam that that roast beef wasn't beef, it was water buffalo. But it was just as good. I mean, you know, it tasted as good as Outback. Yeah. Which we didn't have back then, but you know what I mean? It was, it was good stuff. But we only had a hot meal maybe once a week.

00;24;57;10 - 00;25;30;21

And if that. What cities or borders where you close to? We were near the Cambodian border. Our area of operation for my unit, 11th cab was covering a much larger area, but our unit, third Squadron, was at one time based in convoy. And then, later on, toward the end, we were in Swan Lake, Swan Lake, as a,

00;25;30;24 - 00;25;38;16

It's an outpost. I mean, it's not really a town even. It's just,

00;25;38;18 - 00;26;13;27

An open field, basically. But it's called Swan Lake. We're in a little town nearby, but we never really went into the town. But that's where we were. And that was up next to the Cambodian border. And so. And. April 1st, we staged right there on the border and went into Cambodia. But then we we I mean, that was just, a couple of miles or a couple of clicks, as we call it, you know, a couple of kilometers from, from swarm out.

00;26;13;29 - 00;26;37;06

What kind of missions were you being sent on besides ones in Cambodia? Well, we did, we daily were out there busting general. And what? I mean by that was. And I told this before, but the the jungle is not like, you know, like a Tarzan movie. It's not. It's like, you know, vines here and vines there and, you know, it's not it's a wall.

00;26;37;08 - 00;27;01;05

It's a solid wall, okay? But it's not big foliage. It's not like, you know, two inch diameter, trees and such. But it's, it's a wall. And so you take your tank and if you're going to go north, you start going through it and you're, you're clearing it as you go. And then everybody coming behind you continues that clearing.

00;27;01;08 - 00;27;43;23

And what we would do is reconnaissance. Every day we go out and we'd recon and what we were looking for was trails we were looking for or bunkers, you know, which we came across occasionally. But, we go out and we try to find these trails and then we would investigate the trails and we would set up, mortar attacks at night for the intersections of these borders so that, and we we never really believed that you were gonna hit somebody in that, in that, you know, in that intersection, but you kept on going through it, you know, drop a few rounds in there, right.

00;27;43;25 - 00;28;11;21

Figure out a different way to get where they were going. So, but that was our daily job every day was going out and, mowing down the, you know, mowing down the jungle and, looking for, the enemy. And they were, you know, a lot of times we just see empty trails, you know, now, we could tell if they'd been used last night or, last week.

00;28;11;23 - 00;28;32;28

But then again, sometimes we'd try. We'd be driving along solid jungle and run over something, and it was a bunker. And there would be, there would be, you know, Vietnamese down in this bunker. And of course, the guy that drove over it, he's trying to back up, you know, because he doesn't want he doesn't want the bottom of the tank shot with an RPG.

00;28;33;01 - 00;28;50;12

But anyway, you rarely ran over a marker, but you run into a bunch of bunkers, you'd run into an area where there were a lot of them. And then, boy, that was good intelligence. That was what we were there for. We were there to find the stuff. So was it strictly recon or were you engaging in against combatants as well?

00;28;50;14 - 00;29;13;27

Well, if we were, if they engaged us now, rules of engagement are the same as I guess they are today. Don't fire unless you're fired up. Okay? And we hated that. I mean, we we did because we'd see a guy reach up to shoot an RPG at us, and we were not allowed to shoot him before he shot the RPG.

00;29;13;27 - 00;29;34;10

And the RPG could take out a tank. So we we we toed the line on that as closely as we could, but if a guy was aiming straight at us or the tank next to us, we weren't gonna let him fire, you know? But, yeah, we did engage when we got ambushed. Like we'd go through some

villages.

00;29;34;10 - 00;30;03;08

Sometimes we'd end up having to go through a village to to, And when I say a village, you know, these are straw hats and dirt roads. But we would go through a village and, all of a sudden gunfire from both sides, RPGs and, you know, machine gun fire from both sides. And here's little kids and women and old people walking down the road, and here we are, and they're in the crossfire, you know, wasn't right.

00;30;03;11 - 00;30;32;06

Yeah, it wasn't right. But yeah, we get we got ambushed and we got ambushed in a, when I was in Cambodia, we were went through a michelin plantation. Michelin, gets most of the rubber from Southeast Asia and, the rubber rubber plantations out there. And so we went through a lot of this when we were in Cambodia, and, we got ambushed in a rubber plantation and, hum.

00;30;32;09 - 00;30;59;03

Now we ended up by firing here, by firing back, cutting down a lot of these rubber trees. And my understanding was that that would upset the, the plantation manager and that, the U.S. would have paid them compensation for us mowing down some of their, you know, rubber trees. But I let these people poke around a tree and shoot us, you know?

00;30;59;06 - 00;31;29;15

But yes, we did get engaged. Usually we were ambushed. That we we rarely ran into a situation where they would they weren't expecting us to think about it this way. Sheridan Tank has the same diesel engine that a 18 Wheeler has. So you got four acres. I mean, a for Sheridan's coming down, a trailer coming down. John, it sounds like 418 Wheeler trucks.

00;31;29;18 - 00;31;50;13

You're not sneaking up on anybody, you know? They know you're coming. Yeah. I mean, if you surprise them, it's because you stop and you sit there for a little bit and they don't know where you are, and they walk in, walk into you. But other than that, we didn't we didn't really surprise anybody. I'm curious about the compensations.

00;31;50;13 - 00;32;21;29

Did you hear about anybody else getting compensated or just Michelin? I never heard about anybody else because I don't know that we were now. We were. And we were even in near a michelin pilot plantation, in

Vietnam. It may have been. Well, we know it was Michelin plantation cars. There's a huge sign with Michelin, you know, roly poly got, you know.

00;32;22;01 - 00;32;54;14

So we knew it wasn't theirs. But that wasn't going to stop us from doing what we needed to do. How would you describe the people you served with in terms of economic background, race or religion, as you'll see when you see my pictures? We were okay, racial background, I'd say we were about, 50% white and about 40% black and about ten, 10%, other, Hispanic, Asian, whatever.

00;32;54;16 - 00;33;21;09

So that was the racial makeup. There were some, some of the people now, I know that there were there were no radicals in the field, no radicals. We had guys that like to, you know, dress up like, I don't know, Malcolm X or whatever and smoke their weeds and, you know, do all that. But they were not.

00;33;21;11 - 00;33;46;27

They would they'd jump on a machine gun and do as much damage as they could, just like I would or just like anybody else would. And same with our Hispanic, crew. You know, the ones that were Hispanic. So just to be clear, you're referring to the entire 11th Cav or just your unit. Well, I can't talk for the rest of camp, but I, I would say it's probably pretty well distributed.

00;33;47;00 - 00;34;11;17

It was kind of distributed that way in basic training. I t and even when I went to Germany after Vietnam, it was, it was kind of same distribution, I think maybe about maybe about 40% black and 50% white, about 10% everywhere, everything else. Okay. We didn't have a lot of Asians. So most of the most of the something elsewhere were Hispanic.

00;34;11;19 - 00;34;45;22

Did you work alongside any women, either Vietnamese or American? No, no. At one point, we were providing, safety for a group of American women who were, entering, entering an area where we had a hospital, a field hospital. And so we kind of escorted them. They were in a Jeep, and we kind of escorted them past through a village and, you know, down this road and got them there without a single shot being fired.

00;34;45;25 - 00;35;17;11

And, we were able to talk to them. But, it was pretty interesting. I

for not having seen, you know, an American woman for a white woman for a long time. But now Asian women were everywhere. You know, the Vietnamese women were were everywhere. We didn't, you know, have much to do with them, but, you know, they were there and we saw they go, they persist, you know, in their little Lambretta, isn't it?

00;35;17;14 - 00;35;34;24

It was, just they were they were workforce. I think the Vietnamese men were all in uniform and all the Vietnamese women were doing all that farming and that child raising and all of that.

00;35;34;24 - 00;35;38;12

Did you learn any Vietnamese words or phrases during your time there?

00;35;38;12 - 00;35;44;10

I've got a little pin I where wants to, It says dig it out.

00;35;44;11 - 00;36;11;16

Do you know what that means? No. Do you know French at all? No. Okay. When they would jeer, you know, when they would, try to, insult us, you know, they'd say, you you dinky down, you buku dinky da gi. Well, look who means a lot. You're very. And thank you. Down means touched in the head.

00;36;11;16 - 00;36;44;12

You know, that was one phrase. There was another one that, we were taught, and it was called Choo Haw and Choo Hwee meant that, they drop all these leaflets where they had, you know, big concentrations of the Viet Cong in the NBA. And, what the leaflet said was, if you come out of that, if you come out of the jungle and just yell at you what you thought you and we were forbidden to shoot at you and we never did, and we never had that many of them.

00;36;44;15 - 00;37;27;00

You know, they might have dropped a thousand leaflets and we might have gotten 2 or 3 that walked out and took advantage of that. But they were allowed to the fact actually, I mean, they were we always had no enemies Army with us. Always. We always had them throughout our unit. But they were mostly officers and they were, a lot of their job was to, you know, to take in deserters and take in, you know, those that were surrendering rather than being killed because a B-52 strike, I don't care how many thousands of people you got within a square mile area.

00;37;27;03 - 00;37;54;07

B-52 strike, we're all dead. And so, you know, they would be warned before a big strike like that, and some of them would come out, you know, want to, want to desert or whatever. So do you remember what true means? Don't shoot. I think that's what I was told. I think it means don't shoot.

00;37;54;10 - 00;38;20;13

There was another one. It'll come to me later. There was a third one that, was fairly common, but, that's not coming. My memory right now. How did living in Vietnam and meeting Vietnamese people affect you? Well.

00;38;20;15 - 00;38;53;25

The ones that I met, the the South Vietnamese military guys, the the the ones that served with us within our unit, were very, There wasn't a slouch among them, you know what I mean? These were all very, serious and very, you know, they weren't there were only slackers. There, were they? We had plenty of slackers, but know they didn't have any.

00;38;53;27 - 00;39;44;13

We didn't work with any of the women. There were times when, we would encounter the women. One time that comes to memory as when, our, our unit, K troop unit, had set up and then the platoons had gone out for nighttime, reconnaissance. And, when we were coming back in and we went out on this nice gravel road, where I when my bike read play and, when we were going back in, we were sweeping it, you know, for for mines because they had been known to come out mine those roads and, just up ahead of us, maybe walk away.

00;39;44;15 - 00;40;12;03

Oh, this Lambretta with these eight women went by us, you know, and we were going slow because we were. And they went out just around the bend and there was this big explosion and, they were everywhere. I mean, they were just pieces, bits and pieces and everywhere. Other than that, we did not have any. The other were girls that followed us around.

00;40;12;03 - 00;40;28;27

And so Coca Cola, we call them the Coke girls. And, we didn't get coke out in the field and these were bottled. I think they came from, from, I don't know, maybe,

00;40;29;00 - 00;40;53;08

What's the Thailand? I think they might have come from Thailand. But they were in the the small eight ounce, glass Coca-Cola. And there were a lot of Vietnamese girls out there selling them. You know that when, whenever we stopped, they'd come running up and try to sell us these Cokes and, you know, we interacted with them that way a little bit.

00;40;53;11 - 00;41;17;03

You mentioned, North Vietnamese or Vietcong troops defecting to the South Vietnamese. Did you see how they were treated? Once I did, I switched. I did, I did, they were they were taken and they were tied. They didn't. I don't think they had handcuffs, but they would they they didn't have zip ties as many as 55, 54 years ago.

00;41;17;06 - 00;41;40;18

But, they took them and retained them and took them and interrogated. And, I only saw one time where a, South Vietnamese had taken his rifle, baton, hit one on that upside the head. And I think that in that case, he was one that wasn't willing to talk. And, when you chew Hoi, you better be willing to talk.

00;41;40;20 - 00;42;03;01

You know, you're not you're not going to get in there and try to infiltrate or just protect yourself. You know, that's not that's not going to happen. So, other than that they were they were treated like prisoners, but they weren't ill treated. Most of the South Vietnamese. So the Americans who were tying them up, the South Vietnamese.

00;42;03;01 - 00;42;27;29

Okay. Yeah. We didn't we never really detained them. We always had plenty of South Vietnamese traveling with us. And we also had South Vietnamese scouts that traveled with us and and like, the whole time I was there, there was one his name was Juan. He was a he was got a little guy. But he was sweetest guy in the world.

00;42;28;01 - 00;42;51;19

But he was, South Vietnamese, who had trying to be an American scout. He spoke enough English that, he could be our scout. A lot of the others were kind of held back. Kind of hang back. You'll see in the pictures. We'll have a couple of scouts actually inside one of our vehicles around the back of one of our vehicles.

00;42;51;22 - 00;43;22;10

But then we'll we'll have, some of them hanging back the like, the South Vietnamese infantry. Do you remember any distinct animals during your time in Vietnam? What about those? I remember deer there were do there just like in South in, you know, in Missouri, there were, cobras. There were scorpions as big as your foot.

00;43;22;12 - 00;44;04;19

That's an exaggeration, but we were plenty of scorpions. It's wasn't funny then that we had, a stack of artillery shells, where we had set up for a day or two. And so we're getting ready to load this back up on a trailer and take them to wherever we were going next. And, one of the guys, it was picking them up and loading them on, on the, on the trailer, a big old scorpion brown scorpion ran up his arm and he dropped that and that, and it landed on top of the other rounds.

00;44;04;21 - 00;44;37;21

Now, the tip of it didn't, which is fortunate because we'd all been blown to smithereens if it had that time. Yeah. And there were big, big black, scorpions or cobras. They're all kinds of snakes, but those the cobras were the ones who were most memorable. They're huge and they were fearless. They come right in between you and your tank, raise up and look at you, you know, and the last thing you wanted to do was swarm away or make any movement at all.

00;44;37;24 - 00;45;06;17

One of my first sergeant had a little dog that his his little dog. And, this cobra came up next to his back or next to his cot, and, the little dog ran out. At Cobra. Bang. Right on the nose. Big mine on the first. And, it was all over. But those were the scary ones.

00;45;06;19 - 00;45;27;20

Other animals. We did see some deer. We did see some, a lot of water buffalo. Seem like there were others that were fairly familiar, but those are the two main ones that I can recall. Did you ever have any animals inside of your tank? I had my monkey in there, one that, but he wasn't really my monkey.

00;45;27;20 - 00;46;06;18

He belonged to the first sergeant. And I just want your picture ready or her or whatever it was that it was, Now somebody has had dogs in her, you know, they'd adopt a little dog and have a little dog in their in a vehicle to keep them in the tank. Yeah. It was not good because when, when we would get ambush or when we would, you know, opening fire, they would usually jump out and never be seen again

because it was so thunderous, you know, so the first time I heard an explosion, wasn't like a firebomb.

00;46;06;18 - 00;46;34;29

It 4th of July. It was. It was shocking. It was so loud. And it was a long ways away. And, and when you hear that right there on your vehicle, when, like when the, when the, when the main gun on the Sheridan fires, it's a hundred and some odd decibels, so, you know, that's loud. Now it's louder in front of the tank than it is inside.

00;46;35;02 - 00;46;52;22

But it's it's very loud on top, very loud in front. And you're very loud on the sides, but, very noisy. And, dogs don't like to stick around a lot of noise. They don't. They just they go find a and new Vietnamese master. I guess.

00;46;52;22 - 00;46;56;19

Do you remember seeing Agent Orange being sprayed? I did

00;46;56;19 - 00;46;59;15

well, no, I take it back.

00;46;59;18 - 00;47;39;22

I remember Mustang Jungle right after it had been sprayed. It was dripping. Okay. And that's harmless. You know, it's, you know, it's. And they would take some and do it like this with their fingers and it's nothing. It's a it's a herbicide. It's not a, you know, it's not it won't kill bugs won't kill you. But yes, I do remember Busting Jungle, which of course, was, you know, eight feet high in it splashing back on us, but, no, I was, and I remember seeing them spraying it in the distance, but not, like, right over us, right near where we were.

00;47;39;24 - 00;47;46;24

But you would get wet from the Agent Orange dropping down onto you. Yes.

00;47;46;27 - 00;48;20;03

And how often was it George cleaned out of the tank. Did you make any effort to wipe it down after that? Well, the tank was pretty tight. Okay. From the top, you had a cupola over the, where the tank commander sat. And, he had a big seat there, and his legs actually stuck up under the, under the edge of the of the turret and, the

loader, which I was it all times, stood up in the loaders hatch beside the tank commander.

00;48;20;06 - 00;48;41;29

And pretty much I mean, it would land on the loader and and land on the tank matter, but it wouldn't it wouldn't infiltrate down in the inside of the tank. Now, the driver, he was way up under, you know, he was he was, he rarely got wet. And then, the gunner had no exposure or whatever.

00;48;42;01 - 00;49;08;07

So the answer is, it wasn't like something that ended up. And by the way, it's not orange. It's just called that. But it's, it's, you know, I don't think we ever had to decontaminate. In fact, back then, it wasn't until after Vietnam War that they discovered the link between Agent Orange and a lot of the ailments that the Marines had.

00;49;08;10 - 00;49;34;02

So back then, it wasn't even it wasn't even considered a danger. They could spray it directly on you. But now it's for it's for foliage. It's not for trying to kill people, you know, for trying to harm people. Right. Did you coordinate with the people spraying Agent Orange? No, we had nothing to do with it. That was that was an error.

00;49;34;05 - 00;50;01;04

That wasn't an air mission. There was something that the helicopters and the planes did, usually helicopters were spraying, because they get down at tree tops and, you know, make sure that it got off to the, into the, you know, down further into the trees. Right now, we had nothing to do with that. We could see it and we hear about it and we'd see it, you know, the day that they did it, and then we'd see it a month after they did it.

00;50;01;07 - 00;50;20;12

It's devastating. It would have the jungle that it was. You would in these instances where you got wet from the Agent Orange. Was it just coincidence that you were going into the same area? We were going, yeah, we were going into an area that had been sprayed maybe an hour or two before, and it was still in the leaves and all that.

00;50;20;14 - 00;50;36;21

And of course, we've got that antenna that goes up 20ft or so, and it's whipping against all that brush and everything. And it's, you know, it's if it's been raining, it's great because you get a little

bit of water on you. But, if it's, if it's Agent Orange.

00;50;36;23 - 00;51;03;07

It didn't say we didn't, now, I do remember them spraying, DDT on us directly. We were in an area, and I. My mosquitoes were just. They were just horrific. I mean, they were beyond, And we were all taking a malaria pill, so we had not a big risk of malaria, but, man, they would just cover them.

00;51;03;09 - 00;51;27;02

And, you know, a lot of us a lot of times didn't wear a shirt. And so they would get under our flak jacket and under our helmet, and they would just eat you up. And, and so I do remember them spraying DDT on us. But back then again, this is a this is a herbicide. It's not a it's not for, you know, it's not for killing people.

00;51;27;05 - 00;51;52;27

And back to Agent Orange. It was not just an herbicide. It was a broadleaf herbicide. Okay. So you can you couldn't go and kill grass with it. Agent orange wouldn't kill grass, to the best of my knowledge. There's a different herbicide for that. There's for grass that kills grass. And then there's the one that kills, you know, trees or plants with foliage.

00;51;53;00 - 00;52;11;27

So you mentioned that you could tell pretty easily the areas that have been sprayed both during because it was wet. And then a month later, what was it like a month later, it was sagging like the the the jungle was coming down. A month later, the jungle was coming down. Two months later, it was all laying on the ground.

00;52;11;29 - 00;52;16;08

So it was it was effective, very effective.

00;52;16;20 - 00;52;19;08

What were some of the ways you coped with the war?

00;52;22;11 - 00;52;57;21

I stayed in touch with friends back home and my family. And, I took a lot of pictures, most of which I've lost in 1 or 2 divorces. Never, ever will see them again. I'm sure they've all been thrown out. And then. So my loss, as I told you Friday or whatever, when they confiscated and when we were leaving country, but,

00;52;57;23 - 00;53;24;05

And back then, I had a 35 millimeter camera, and, I took Rosenberg's pictures and, What you see in those two albums, there's a lot of what I've got left of that. Could you talk about the pictures that were confiscated? Right. Let's say a body got to go in this way. An arm. Arm going that way and leg blown off.

00;53;24;05 - 00;53;45;17

And, yeah, they were pretty horrific. The graphic pictures got confiscated. Oh, yeah. And I plenty of everybody did, but they got confiscated before we could get on the freedom plane. How did people around you cope with the war?

00;53;45;19 - 00;54;25;13

We dealt with it, you know, I think I think, we all, I think we all just dealt with it. It was. So you had been going on for a while instead of 68. Was the the climax of it okay. I mean, that's when in fact, in my unit in, in first platoon. Carter. First platoon of K troop during the Tet Offensive was wiped out that, some of the older people that had been there before, this was 70 and that was in 1968, told about how they went to rescue first platoon.

00;54;25;15 - 00;54;54;13

And when they got there, the, the Vietcong were on top of the tanks taking the ammo and, you know. Yeah. And throwing the bodies off of the, you know, off the vehicle and, and, you know, they came in and they tried to light them up, but, you know, it was, it was all over, you know, they didn't didn't rescue a single a single member from first platoon carry troop,

00;54;54;15 - 00;55;14;20

Everybody that was there. Okay. There were a lot of people in Vietnam, either on a second tour or maybe even some on a foreign tour. I only did one tour, and almost everybody else just did one tour. The.

00;55;14;23 - 00;55;48;00

The coping was. Let's get through this. You know, I got your back. You got my. So. Nobody bitched about it. Can I show you something? I guess I'd have to interrupt to show you. Yeah. Okay. Never mind. You mentioned drugs earlier. Was that widespread? Yeah, well, but not hard drugs, I don't remember. I don't recall any hard drugs.

00;55;48;02 - 00;56;10;03

And the way that they did it, instead of rolling joints, which then you get rolling back, rolling paper over there. So you buy a Pachamama, you tamp all the tobacco out of it, you fill it with marijuana, and then you smoke it with a filter. They smoked them with filters because that's how they made their way. Joke.

00;56;10;05 - 00;56;35;16

Now, some of them did. Yeah. People would send him rolling paper from home or whatever. But, you know, it was more or less, now, I don't know if anybody in my group, in my platoon that did it when we were out blasting. No, I don't think anybody ever did that. But at night when, you know, we were back kind of in a safe area, you you could smell it.

00;56;35;22 - 00;57;04;04

You could see it. It was. It was being used, but I don't. And I did remember some speed. I did remember some guys using speed, which I'm not sure why. I mean, anything will make you hyper. It's somebody shooting at you, and, you don't need speed for that, but. And then a lot of guys track, in, in Vietnam, you were either a juicer, which you were a beer drinker, or you were ahead what you meant as your dose either.

00;57;04;06 - 00;57;38;19

So, those were the, escapes of choice for, a large majority. What was the most memorable friendship you had during your time in Vietnam? Well, there were a couple of them. Let me tell you about Terry, about, Larry Bushman. He was this big bear of a guy, you know? He couldn't wear a beard, but his.

00;57;38;21 - 00;58;07;19

He got his, you know, after night out, you know, afternoon. What do you call it? 5:00. Shadow? Yeah. Your 5:00 shadow. He got his about 9:00 in the morning, and Larry was a just a sweetheart. He was a really, really top rate guy. He was one of my best buddies.

00;58;07;21 - 00;58;31;29

I've got an interesting story about him, if you want to hear it. Sure. We were. I had another buddy whose name was, We called him chaplain. His name was Larry Chapel. But, they were on a lead track. They want a camp. That was the lead vehicle. I was on a Sheridan. That was right.

00;58;31;29 - 00;58;55;22

We were the second vehicle that. And so we were following them, and they were maybe, I don't know, 10 or 20ft ahead of us. And of course, you had to stay in the tracks of the vehicle in front of you because you were very, very, you know, you could hit a mine that they missed, you know, so we're going up and all of a sudden we hear the RPGs coming in, you know.

00;58;55;24 - 00;59;31;25

You know, they were they were the very distinctive sound. And, when we heard RPGs coming in and his track got hit, his, a cab got hit, and, we were engaged in a firefight for a long time. I mean, it was it seemed like a long time might. I mean, not more than an hour, but when it finally when it was finally over, the, the medics had come up and they were further back in the, in the column.

00;59;31;28 - 01;00;00;21

And so the medics had come up and they had gone to that the track and the desktop helicopter came in and picked up and there's some I heard back toward the back to back. Anyway, my, my friend Chappell and my friend was, Bush Bushman were on that ley track and Bushman was driving and when I, I kept wanting to go up and check on them.

01;00;00;23 - 01;00;29;05

Now, are you not leaving your track until we say until you get clearance to do so? So we waited. Probably 45 minutes after the man evac had had taken them off. And, they told me I could I could go up and check on my buddies. So I went up there and, Bushman had been driving and the RPG here right beside the driver's hatch.

01;00;29;12 - 01;00;59;22

Okay. And there was blood and hair and brain matter everywhere. I mean, in his ears. His helmet was lying there. And these were fiberglass helmets, by the way. These weren't metal helmets. These were like radio helmets. And, his helmet was lying there and, and Chappell was not injured. Okay. So he was there and I said, man, he said, I didn't know if we were American doctors because they were saying that, you know, and and then, of course, they started their small arms.

01;00;59;22 - 01;01;24;12

Right. But, anyway, we all assumed the chaplain was that, that, Bushman was that 20 years later, we go, I've gone to these, 11 cavalry, reunions since 1984. They start having them, I think, in 82. And I didn't get to the first 1 or 2, but I've been going to them since 1984.

01;01;24;14 - 01;01;46;05

So about 5 or 6 years ago, I'm getting ready to go to one that was up in up in Washington DC, I think. And my buddy Chappell contacted me and he said, are you coming? And I said, yeah, I'll be there. He said, guess who else is going to be there? I said, hey, he said, Bushman. And I said, Here's dad.

01;01;46;08 - 01;02;11;06

We we both thought that. And he was in this. I mean, they would never tell you. I mean, if we had people dusted off with what looked like a minor injury or a disastrous injury, they would never tell us whether they lived or died where they were in a hospital, what we would never be given that information. So we had to find it out when we got back.

01;02;11;09 - 01;02;37;10

And, sure enough, he was married. 15 years later. He found out, oh, more than that, this was this is probably this was probably 30 or 40 years later. This had been like ten years ago. So and this is my 54th anniversary. So, I mean, it's just stunning. It's just an amazing revelation. Now, you could tell he had been hit in the head.

01;02;37;13 - 01;02;55;10

And he had some difficulties, but, oh my gosh, he was alive. And he had children and wife and children. Thank you for sharing that.

01;02;55;13 - 01;03;01;15

What was the most beautiful thing you saw in Vietnam?

01;03;11;15 - 01;03;18;24

What much beauty there?

01;03;18;26 - 01;03;54;14

We had a staff sergeant who was from Arkansas. Which was also in the Ozarks. Now we ever get together and talk about, you know, not growing up, but, he, had, we got ambushed inside a village. Okay. I mean, like I said, there were people, you know, the the Vietnamese people walking on the street, children, you know, women, you know, like normal people walking down the road.

01;03;54;16 - 01;04;23;09

And, we got ambushed and, so your first, instinct is to get lower,

whether you get inside or you get down or get behind something, that's your first instinct. And, I'm trying to remember his last name. Anyway, if it escapes me, I can. He's in some of these pictures.

01;04;23;11 - 01;04;53;25

And he was. He was a white guy. And, this, he was he was one of the tank cameras who was my take that may as take matters. We had this little gun that was, it fired of a rocket. Okay. I can't remember what I called it, but it was, m 85 or. I don't know what it was, but, he fired it, and it sent a projectile that was explosive, and, it would.

01;04;53;27 - 01;05;21;28

Whatever it hit, he would explode, and, he was he had gotten kind of down inside. I mean, he still sticking up by this much, in the in the tank manor's cupola and, but he had gotten down because he went down there to get one of these little things. Was like a shotgun. That shotgun explosive round.

01;05;22;00 - 01;05;53;08

And, so when he got it, he came back up and there was this, Vietcong soldier that had fired at his his vehicle and was running to, to hot, hot, hot and ran inside and closed the door. And when he shot, he hit that door. I mean, just it closed. So to me, that was.

01;05;53;11 - 01;06;09;23

That was Carter. So I don't know if you're talking about karma or you're talking about, you know, something else. I mean, I didn't see it, but whoever brought.

01;06;09;25 - 01;06;30;20

Bushman back to life, whether it was. On the track or it was on the field hospital, whether it was in Japan, if I went to Japan, after they were, if they were gravely wounded and I'm sure he went to Japan. Or there.

01;06;30;23 - 01;06;34;20

There was an earthquake.

01;06;34;22 - 01;07;07;26

Do you remember any American songs from your time in Vietnam? Oh, yeah. I want to get out of this place if it's, well, American pop songs. Yeah. A lot of them were war songs, and they were played on, you know, our mom AFB in, they were a lot of them were protest songs,

even for Dead in Ohio.

01;07;07;29 - 01;07;38;13

I listened to one just before, just yesterday, I think, Deep Purple, who won? They sing. Fortunate Son. You know, but, the one that struck me the most, it was huge hit just came out during 1970 when I was there, and it was a bridge over Troubled Water.

01;07;38;15 - 01;07;45;29

One of my favorite songs in this day.

01;07;46;02 - 01;07;53;15

So I bring back a lot of memories for you. Yes. And that's all. Oh, yeah.

01;07;53;17 - 01;08;05;12

Did you ever hear broadcast from Radio Hanoi? No, no.

01;08;05;14 - 01;08;30;12

Never did I think we were. I think we might have been. We might. We must have been near one of their towers. Because we could pick up a lot of Vietnamese stations, but their music, to me, and this sounds bigoted, but it all sounds the same. I, I can't distinct song from song B, but there just isn't. And most of it is instrumental anyway.

01;08;30;14 - 01;08;37;09

But I, I can't, I can't I never really got the hang of Vietnamese music.

01;08;37;11 - 01;09;18;03

But I tuned in at the end every day. Could you tell me about how you got your Purple Heart? Okay. May 20th, I May 1st, 1970. We. There was an incursion into Cambodia. I know you heard it in the history books. It was considered an escalation of the war as a consider an invasion of, of Cambodia by the left and by the anti-war cult in the U.S..

01;09;18;05 - 01;09;51;14

11th camp led that invasion. Now, 101st airborne dropped troops in the deep end. And then we were sent to connect with them and all three of our, squadrons were were accumulated near K troop, at the Cambodian border. And, you know, all of us were talking about the night before. We're going in there. We're going in there because they wouldn't have

that many people just mass right there, you know.

01;09;51;17 - 01;10;19;21

So sure enough, before dawn, it was wouldn't even they land? And they sent the big tanks in first they sent, two of the big tanks through, and then they sent all of, which were the two big tanks. Well, there were eight in each in each squadron, but they sent Squadron three and and then Squadron one, we were Squadron one,

01;10;19;23 - 01;10;51;11

We went in second and this big long column of tanks where what they were beating into our heads on the radio was don't don't break the line. Don't you know, don't, don't leave a gap. Don't ever leave a gap. Well, I was, I was, loader on my, on my Sheridan and, the a cab in front of us.

01;10;51;13 - 01;11;12;03

The track for the left track came off, and of course, the gap was widening because the the cars ahead of it kept going. And so the seal was going, go go go go. Well, my take Matterson left or right? We go right, we go right. We're going to River. We go left. And are there a big tree there?

01;11;12;05 - 01;11;46;20

He said go, just go. So he chose to go to the left. Okay. Got it. Beside that tree. And the world came apart. My tank was blown up by a 500 pound. We call him. It is now since I ran in Iraq and all that. But back then we call him man. They would. They would take a dud American 500 pound bomb, and they would take it, put a charge to it, and they would, put it under a trail.

01;11;46;22 - 01;12;10;08

And they had that perfect place because I believe they knew, or at least they guessed that this is where we're going, because that's where we were masked. And, so I was, as far as I know, the first casualty of Cambodian war. And we hadn't been there for ten minutes. I hadn't been there for ten minutes. And so but it blew us down the hill.

01;12;10;11 - 01;12;42;15

We were tank down the hill upside down. And so the and so the car behind us went right over the hole that the, that the mine had made. And then the rest of column just they caught up with the ones up ahead of them. And I found myself in a field hospital with, TBI and some

stitches and,

01;12;42;17 - 01;13;04;16

I don't remember what else, but I had some repair here and some repair here, and, I had a concussion, and, so that was my Purple Heart experience. And that was in May. That was my first. So you got injured from this and then went back out in the field for another six months. I, I okay, let me tell you a funny story.

01;13;04;24 - 01;13;22;03

This is the funny part. There's always the funny part, right. So they sent me to this field hospital was a mash house where what they call mash is same thing as the mash TV show. They sent me to this Mash hospital, and when they brought me in, they had some head injuries. They saw my car. You know that.

01;13;22;05 - 01;13;53;01

My head had been hit pretty hard, and I had stitches here and so forth, but I had a temperature of 102, which was not explained by the any of the injuries. So they had a quick test for for, Malaria. And they ran that. I didn't have malaria, so they didn't know what it was. They didn't know why I was running 103 temperature.

01;13;53;04 - 01;14;15;13

So they shot me full of penicillin. Okay. So I stayed in the field hospital I was there for, I don't know, 3 or 4 days. And, so they sent me out to an area where I could, you know, at least not be in a hospital bed, but, you know, be kind of sitting in a, a lawn chair and conversing with other people.

01;14;15;15 - 01;14;36;28

And then, they told me that the next morning they were send me back out to the field. And I said, okay. So anyway, the morning after the morning that next morning, I woke up and I was broken out from the crown of my head to the soles, my feet. I had this horrendous rash like you have never seen shingles.

01;14;36;28 - 01;15;05;00

Okay. And so anyway, so they sent me to see the psychiatrist. They thought it was okay, but I didn't believe it for a minute. I mean, I was ready to go back, I really was. And, so I spent another week, under the care of, you know, Doctor Sydney, the psychiatrist. Fast forward 30 years. I'm a,

01;15;05;02 - 01;15;25;10

Civilian life in, in South Carolina and Lexington. I get swollen lymph nodes. And, so I go to see my doctor, and he said, we can fix this. He said, are you allergic to anything? I said, not that I know of. So he shoots me full of penicillin. Guess what? I'm ten days later, I'm on the phone.

01;15;25;13 - 01;15;45;12

Doc. Oh my gosh, you. Yeah, I'm broken out and hot roll over from the palms of my hands to, you know, soles. My feet, he said, when did I give you that shot? I told him, he said, you didn't tell me you were allergic to penicillin. Well, he said, does this happened before? And I told him. Yeah, I told him it happened to me in Vietnam.

01;15;45;14 - 01;15;54;27

Anyway, that's just a side story. So did you go back into the field after that? I did, I sure did. I was there until December. So

01;15;54;27 - 01;16;04;09

that's the end of my service questions okay. Let's talk about your post service life okay. What relationship in your life was most changed by your service?

01;16;07;21 - 01;16;38;07

Well, I sort of had a girlfriend when I went over there, but that was long gone. That was just a maybe a half dozen letters back and forth. And then nothing. And, so, I only had seven days leave before I had to go to Germany, so nothing. I just got around, saw my family and aunts and uncles, cousins, grandparents, all that.

01;16;38;09 - 01;17;10;06

And then, was on the, mothership. Back to back. Well, back to Germany. Not back, but off to Germany. So, then I had a year. I supposed to have two years in Germany. But, in January of 19 or February of 1972, the army had a riff. I f reduction in force. They were cutting the army back from 12 million.

01;17;10;09 - 01;17;46;29

Now 1 million 701,250,000 to 750,000. They were cutting 500,000 troops. Out of because of war. Vietnam was basically gone and and so I became eligible for five month early out. So I got out in February 14th instead of in August of 14. So that was my, you know, my post Vietnam era was, was Germany.

01;17;47;01 - 01;18;12;10

Did you know any antiwar veterans? Oh, yeah. I got cousins into it. Just absolutely rabid. Still. Ha. I mean, I've got a cousin. She and I grew up together. She was born. I was born on September 10th. August 10th, and she was born on September 10th. So we were raised together, basically. And she is the most anti-war person I've ever met.

01;18;12;10 - 01;18;44;10

And she was back then, too. But didn't keep us from having a great relationship, having her, you know, we were we were kin then over that was that over, right? Right. Everything in the way I grew up where your anti-war cousins, veterans or just family members, I don't think I had any veterans that were, any, friends or relatives that were, veterans that were anti-war.

01;18;44;12 - 01;19;04;29

Were you aware of active duty military personnel who opposed the war? I was not, neither in Vietnam or in Germany. You mentioned earlier some of the guys that were around you that were previously against being in Vietnam. Did you hear about them doing anything back in the States, any, activism like the ones that I saw with Vietnam?

01;19;04;29 - 01;19;42;23

Right. You mentioned earlier that a lot of people were really vocal about not being very happy that they were in Vietnam. Well, that was everybody. Nobody was happy to be there. But it wasn't that they they weren't anti-war. They just didn't want to be there. You know, there were none of us did. I mean, I'm serious now. There might have been some lifers there that that, you know, it was a step to their next promotion or something, you know, but, most of us, most of us at my level, you know, E1, e2, e3, four, e5, we weren't particularly glad to be there, even though I knew it was going to

01;19;42;23 - 01;20;11;16

happen, I didn't fight it. And, when I was there, I was not anti-war, you know? So these people were against the war. They were just against themselves being in the war. They didn't want to be there. And, you know, it was it was self and I can't mind. Well, I didn't want to be there either. You know, I, I, you know, it's like a daily thing or a daily cloud hanging over your head, you know, is this day, you know, is this a day?

01;20;11;19 - 01;20;35;14

And it could happen any second. It could happen in the middle of the night. It could happen. And, you know, but in general, it could happen running down the road or going through a village, it could happen any time. And, it was it was I won't say scary, I won't say I was frightened, but I was, yeah, I was scared.

01;20;35;16 - 01;20;56;22

I think all of us were. And those there were some of them that were much more scared than others. Some of them that would duck down inside their vehicle rather than, you know, exposing, exposing themselves to do their job. So we dealt with those. And on that note, you mentioned in the pre-interview that you discovered that you were okay, well, after the war.

01;20;56;23 - 01;21;23;26

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I, I, I wanted to see if somebody had told me that there was, somebody in fact, somebody, another veteran or veteran's group had told me about the, the thing in, either Texas A&M or whatever it is, Texas Tech or whatever. That, that has the largest library, Vietnam archives in the world.

01;21;23;28 - 01;21;37;15

So I got the URL for it. Now, this has been a lot longer after I got out because we didn't have URLs. We didn't have internet back then, but, so I went in and I.

01;21;37;17 - 01;22;09;11

Went to a search bar and I searched for my name for several, but then, it asked me for my Social Security number. I put it here. Boom. I printed out, I had been killed, and, middle of 1970, and, somebody had come to the U.S. embassy in 1984, I think, with my bones and the bones of three other guys he claimed he had found and that, he wanted to, return them to the to the U.S and get a reward.

01;22;09;13 - 01;22;37;05

So was that the dog tags, too, or just. Yeah, they had one of my dog tags. Now, years later, and this has been in the past few years, I was talking about this to one of the guys at one of my reunions, one of the old motor pool sergeants, and he said, oh, I know how that happened. He said, what happens is when you go a in a field hospital like that, they take one of your dog tags and it, you know, they put it with your chart, okay.

01;22;37;08 - 01;22;55;06

And then when they send you back out in the field, they forget to give you that other dog tag. And if you're already gone, I just take that and throw it in the trash. And then they have these Vietnamese villagers and whatever, they come in there and dig through the trash and try to find us dog tags and that, he he guessed that that's what it was.

01;22;55;06 - 01;23;05;00

And, that they had, but they had dug through the trash at that Mash hospital and found that dog tag. Fascinating.

01;23;05;00 - 01;23;08;17

Have you been to the wall in DC? I have

01;23;08;17 - 01;23;20;00

the 40th anniversary. The wall? When was all. When was the wall constructed? I'm not sure. 4 or 5 years ago. Maybe longer, but 4 or 5 years ago.

01;23;20;03 - 01;23;48;14

Are you veterans organization? Contacted me. They're going to it's an organization in Augusta, and they took a busload of Vietnam veterans and their spouses to the wall for the 40th anniversary of the war. And so we were there for the ceremony, and, the, Secretary of defense spoke, and it was it was, it was a huge gathering, but, that's the only time I've been there.

01;23;48;20 - 01;24;12;01

Well, I take it back when I was when we had the reunion there, which was years before that, I think one of my buddies and I went to the war. We didn't have a guided tour or anything, but, we did do the scraping on the wall to get, like, I got my my buddy, and that's where I got my buddy.

01;24;12;01 - 01;24;33;01

And, Stan, I got the imprint of his. I don't know where it is now that I lost it a long time ago. What did you think of the Wall as a memorial?

01;24;33;03 - 01;25;03;12

I got emotional at times, but. I think it was because there were so many thousands of names there. And now they have the little statues off, you know, to the side. There's more to the wall than just wall,

but, it was well, it was emotional. Well, at times, but not, you know, not crazy. I think it's, I think it's it was long past.

01;25;03;12 - 01;25;36;14

It should have been done during or shortly after the war. I know that, you kept the fact from most people that you were a Vietnam veteran, for 20 years after you got back. Your friends and your family all know about it, but other than that, you didn't go around worrying, like, people do today, you know, wearing the vests, you know, say they're veteran or, you know, the cap that says, you know, the Vietnam veteran.

01;25;36;17 - 01;26;15;10

I have a couple of those, by the way, but they were given to me at these reunions. And, I never wear them. You know, I don't, I don't remember what your question was. Well, do you think the Vietnam War Memorial is fitting? Yeah. It's good, it's good. It kind of shows the scope. You know, he put one soldier up on a horse with a sword to commemorate the Union Army or whatever Confederate army.

01;26;15;12 - 01;26;46;13

That doesn't show the scope of the two worst casualties in any war that the U.S. has fought in. You know, just one Confederate soldier up on a top of a mountain, a monument to one Union soldier. You know that that doesn't give the impression of the the, the size of of the tragedy.

01;26;46;13 - 01;26;48;23

Have you been back to Vietnam?

01;26;48;26 - 01;27;09;19

Oh, no, I haven't. I haven't had an opportunity. I would go if I hadn't have opportunity. I have a lady in my Sunday school class is Vietnamese. She was one of those people that came over. She's. She's my age. She's old. But, she's, she's one of the ones that came across where when, when they were doing the big evacuation.

01;27;09;22 - 01;27;34;18

So you would like to go back to Vietnam? I would like I if I knew I was safe. Yeah. Yeah, I'd like to. And there are Vietnamese or Vietnam guided tours that are put on by different different some of the different veterans organizations. But I haven't been invited. One I, I'm not aware of any. Do you think that would be a emotional experience to go back?

01;27;34;22 - 01;28;08;02

I think it would. There's a couple of things, a couple of places I really want to go. And, so yeah, I think it would be. Well, this is my last question. Do you have a favorite book, poem or movie about Vietnam? I do, I can't remember the name of it. I think it's called 24 Hours to Freedom, and it's about a man that was, shot down over Vietnam and who was captured and imprisoned by the Vietcong for, I don't know, three or 4 or 5 years.

01;28;08;04 - 01;28;32;07

And he's the only one that ever escaped and made it back to the U.S., the only one in that war history that escaped from the, from Vietnam prison, Vietnam, Viet Cong prison. And I haven't read it for years, but I may read it again. And it was it was pretty cool. It was it was almost like a fantasy.

01;28;32;11 - 01;28;36;25

You know, that that one of our guys to do that.