

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Veterans Project

Vietnam Experience

O. H. 107

DENNIS RICHARDS

Interviewed

by

David Costello

on

October 30, 1974

DENNIS RICHARDS

Dennis Richards was born April, 1947 in Youngstown, Ohio. After graduating from South High School in 1965, Dennis entered Youngstown State University for two years but his college experience was interrupted by the war in Vietnam. In November of 1967, Dennis was drafted into the United States Army and was sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky for his basic training. During basic training, Dennis enlisted for another year in the service because the Army promised special schooling for him.

After basic training he was sent to Fort Lee, Virginia for this special training for approximately ten weeks and then was shipped to Vietnam. Dennis was trained in small arms and used his training while in Vietnam. He was stationed at Qui Nhon, South Vietnam from May 10, 1968 to the following May. When Richards arrived home in May of 1969, he was given orders to report to Fort Rucker, Alabama to finish out his "hitch."

Dennis and his wife, Cheryl, currently reside in Youngstown and Dennis is employed by the General Fireproofing Company. Dennis has very definite feelings about the war in Vietnam and feels, among other things, that amnesty should not be given to the men who left the country. He feels that the war exposed him to a dif-

ferent type of life and culture, but he wants to forget Vietnam. Dennis refers to his experience there as a "bad dream" and is currently involved in getting his life in the United States started again.

Julie DiSibio

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Veterans Project

INTERVIEWEE: DENNIS RICHARDS
INTERVIEWER: David Costello
SUBJECT: Vietnam Experience
DATE: October 30, 1974

C: This is an interview with Mr. Dennis Richards for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, Veterans Project, by David M. Costello. We're doing this interview at 2803 Cain Street, Youngstown, Ohio at approximately 7:45 on October 30, 1974.

First I'd like to begin the interview by asking you a little about your background, your schooling, family, where you grew up, are you married, and what you're presently doing.

R: All right. To start off with, I just got married last month. I've been married about seven weeks now. My schooling--I've completed high school and I have two years at Youngstown State University. I haven't had time to go back as yet, but I plan to in the near future when time allows. What other background would you like?

C: What are you doing now? What's your present occupation?

R: Right now I'm with the Firestone Company at the retread shop on the west side of town, Meridian Road. I've been there since, I did get out of the service now almost four years in March.

C: What's your age right now?

R: Twenty-seven.

C: I'd like to ask you a little bit about your first service experience. Why did you go into the Army?

R: Why did I go into the Army? That's a good question. First of all, I was drafted at the time.

C: When were you drafted?

R: November of 1967. I received my notice about the first week in November. I had just dropped out of school. I wasn't going presently. I was on probation at the university and when I did get my notice, it was really hard to take. At that time, the war was really into the swing of things. I had mixed emotions about going in. I didn't tell anybody at first because I didn't know what to do. I wanted to think about it.

C: I can understand that.

R: I was just dazed. After I told my family, I wasn't the type to back out, so I had my mind set on going into the service. It was in the Army, a two-year program.

C: I see. Where did you do your basic training? Where was that done?

R: After I left Cleveland, after I had my physical, we flew to Fort Knox, Kentucky. I was there eight weeks in basic training.

C: How did you feel about the Army at that point?

R: Well, by then I was starting to get a real insight into the Army. I didn't really care for it, but I was there and there wasn't much I could do about it. So I was just determined then that I'd make the best of it and pull my hitch. And I did want to state that after I did get in, I reenlisted for another year; I don't know why. So I was in three years.

C: What motivated you to do that? Any particular reason?

R: They had offered me a school there. They've got a school there where they'd take care of me, which they didn't. But I didn't know that at the

time.

C: Is that where you went after basic, to this school?

R: Yes. After basic, I went to Fort Lee, Virginia, for supply school and I was there approximately ten weeks and then I came home for thirty days and then went to Vietnam.

C: Then your M.O.S. [Military Occupational Specialty] was what?

R: It was armor and supply, small arms repair.

C: Did you think that your training prepared you for what you were eventually going to do? Was it good training? What was your feeling about the training?

R: As it turned out for me, it was, because what they taught me in my M.O.S. in supply school and small arms repair is exactly what I went into. But as I found out later, most of the guys who were with me never got into what they were trained for and I was sort of lucky.

C: When you got orders for Vietnam, was it because you volunteered or was it something the Army decided for you?

R: It was something the Army ordered. When the orders came down, everybody went to Vietnam or [unless you were under eighteen years old then you received orders for] Korea.

C: What were your initial reactions to your orders?

R: To begin with, when I got to my training school there at Fort Lee after we had talked to other guys going through the courses, they said everybody was at that time going on to Vietnam.

C: You expected it?

R: Yes. It was expected that when the orders came down, we knew that we'd be going. And as it turned out, we did.

C: How did your family react to your orders?

R: When I finally found out, I called home and told everyone. They wished me a lot of luck. They were pretty well concerned, as I was too, because I didn't know the least bit what to expect over there. Everybody was concerned over the matter but they knew I could handle the situation and I did.

C: I'd like to now discuss your arrival in Vietnam and then we'll go into your experiences there. The first question I'd like to ask you, is what happened when you arrived? What was your first impression of the place?

R: Hot!

C: Hot! (laughter)

R: Yes. I landed at Bien Hoa Air Force Base in South Vietnam and when I got there it was really hot. You just totally sweat. What we had heard about it was true. I knew I was in trouble from the beginning but I did like hot weather, so I took it all in stride.

C: What did you think about? What were your thoughts the first week or so there? Were you confused or disoriented? What type of things went through your mind that first couple of weeks while you got adjusted?

R: When I arrived, we were at Bien Hoa for three days and you wait orders to where you'll be going for your duty station while you'll be serving your one-year term. While you were there, you were just put on various duties till you came down on your orders. You did various things there.

I had mixed emotions. There were a few bombings going around the area and this was the first time that I had seen or been associated with anything that my life was going to be threatened. A couple of days prior, one of the barracks was hit with a rocket; two days prior. You just didn't know what to expect.

C: What time of year was this, and what year?

R: It was around May 10, 1968.

- C: Were you scared or were you frightened at all?
- R: Not really. I took things pretty well in stride. I wasn't real nervous, shaking or anything like that. I had a lot of things going through my head that are hard to recall right now. But I knew that I'd be able to handle it as well as I could.
- C: What was your rank at that time?
- R: I went over as a specialist E-4.
- C: Then where were you finally stationed?
- R: I went to Qui Nhon, South Vietnam. It's along the Red Sea in about the central part of South Vietnam, about thirty miles south of Pleiku.
- C: Did you remain in this area the whole time you were there?
- R: I was stationed at my compound [the 87th Trans Company] from the time I got there until the time I left, approximately almost one year to the day.
- C: I think it's very interesting what you did there during your duty hours and your leisure time and living conditions. I'd like to discuss those with you now. You said that you did what you were trained for. Is this correct?
- R: Right.
- C: Basically what did you do? A job description.
- R: Basically, when I got over there, I worked in small arms repair. It was [located] in the barracks with the orderly room and first sergeant and the CO [commanding officer]. I had my own room upstairs while I was being trained. There was somebody else I was going to be replacing.

We kept all the ammunition and small arms for the unit. It was the 387th Transportation Unit there. Everything was kept there. We had to issue the arms in case of attacks, or whatever would occur. We just handled all the armor.

- C: Did you like your job? Did you enjoy it?
- R: I didn't really enjoy it but I didn't dislike it. It was something a little bit different because it was working with small arms. We went out in the field once in a while and checked all the weapons out. If you like to do something like that, it's all right.
- C: How long were your duty hours per week or per day on the average?
- R: Usually I'd have to get up around six-thirty or maybe earlier, five-thirty, and have to issue the weapons to the day crew. They would go down to the pier to help unload the ships coming into port at Qui Nhon.
- And then I'd have to be there when the night shift came off. I'd have to inspect their weapons and make sure they were cleaned and get ready for the day's work for making an inspection or whatever would be scheduled for that day.
- C: At the end of a hard day's work, what did you do? How was your leisure time spent?
- R: Usually, people were coming and going most of the time and I'd have to stay at my job. I'd be there off and on through the day. After I got to know the shifts of everybody--when they would be coming and going--I could pretty well make my own hours. Sometimes I would finish up seven, eight o'clock at night but it wasn't one continuous thing where I'd have to be there all day long. It was pretty liberal at my compound. Once in a while in the afternoon we would maybe play a little volleyball with a rope we just put up instead of a net, and just clown around for a while. If we had the time we could get some guys together. But usually it ran about a ten- or twelve-hour day.
- C: Did you have a chance to go into towns or villages for leisure time?
- R: The town had been off limits since I got there in May and it had been off limits since the February prior to my getting there. It didn't go back on limits till July of that year, and when it did, the hours were pretty well restricted where I didn't have a chance to really go into town; just

maybe a few times. But I did go over to the airfield which was just around the corner. They had a cafeteria there where you get a little bit of different food rather than the same Army chow that we would always have, just to break the monotony. It would be like a treat for us.

C: Did you find yourself ever bored at all?

R: Quite a few times, especially at night. You'd be gathered around with the guys and you'd sit on the back porch and just think what everybody else would be doing at home and what your girlfriend was doing; why were you here and why somebody else wasn't here. But at night, that was the most boring time, when you had a lot of time to yourself and nothing to do really.

C: What did other guys do in your unit for leisure?

R: Well, besides myself, there was the E.M. Club that we were associated with. You could go get a couple drinks or they did once in a while bring us movies where they could show them in a little theater that Vietnamese workers helped build. We would see maybe a new film once a week or go to the E.M. Club and have a few drinks; and talking and clowning around a lot. Other than that, if you didn't make it into town, that was about it.

C: How were your living conditions?

R: For our compound over there, it was I'd say not real good but they were clean. We were each assigned one of the South Vietnamese mommasons, they were called. You would pay them--it was equivalent to about eight dollars in American money--and they would take care of your uniform for the day. They washed them every day and cleaned your shoes. Usually, one mommason would have about three or four of the GIs to take care of for that day. They kept your little room real clean and straight as a needle.

The barrack itself was wood and screened in. There were the bugs and the spiders you had to contend with but for over there, you got along with them.

- C: How was the troop morale in your unit?
- R: The troop morale? At that time everybody wasn't against the war like they were now. Basically, everybody was concerned with pulling their time, getting out of there, their one year's time and moving on, going home or completing their service in the States. But mostly everybody was concerned with getting their one year out of the way. The Army life--it's one big hassle. If you've been in it, you should know.
- C: Right. In your barracks and in your unit, were there any racial problems at that time?
- R: It's been a while. It would take me a second to think on it but I can't recall. The blacks we got along with pretty well but I think they thought that they weren't being treated as fair as they should be. The only problem there was was maybe in making rank. They didn't think that they made rank fast enough over there. But myself, I couldn't really tell. Everybody got along with each other and there wasn't any fighting among the GIs over there in my compound as such.
- C: Did you have any friends that you met in Vietnam who you've kept in contact with yet?
- R: No, I haven't. My closest friend over there worked in the orderly room, Craig Callahan. He was from Seattle, Washington, and when I left, we'd said we'd always keep in contact, and never did. I wrote him a letter once when I got back and he was still over in Vietnam. I didn't hear from him so I just never did write back again to him. Some of my Army buddies in town I've come across but none that I was with in Vietnam.
- C: I'd like to talk about the combat aspect of the war itself and first ask you, did you see any action yourself? Were you ever in any fire fights or any situations where you were hit?
- R: No. Qui Nhon was pretty quiet. We did go on alert when I first got over there about every night for three or four months. It was just a precautionary measure mostly. But as far as fire fights or rocket attacks, our compound

wasn't involved with any. A mile or two away would be the closest that we did come to any action. I didn't see any action. There were some of my buddies that were on the patrols at night. When they went out to Pleiku they did come across some action but that's just from what they said. I didn't see any so I couldn't really say.

- C: Did the men in your unit who went out on some patrols think that the ARVN were good allies, good soldiers, reliable?
- R: From what they said not really, no. They didn't have too much confidence in them. They seemed like they were afraid, that they couldn't really rely on them; if it really came down to a fighting time that they couldn't really count on the people to back them.
- C: I see. Who do you think then was the enemy in Vietnam? Who was our enemy there?
- R: Who?
- C: Yes.
- R: [The V.C. or Charlie, as we called them. South Vietnamese people were] against you for being there to begin with, this was their fight. After a while we were caught in the middle, and so it was really . . .
- C: Difficult to tell who it really was?
- R: Yes. You had mixed emotions about it. You couldn't really trust anyone over there.
- C: Was this your overall feeling about the Vietnamese people?
- R: Yes. You just couldn't trust them. They would try to steal from behind your back even if you were real good friends with them. They would try to take your money if they had the opportunity and pat you on the back five minutes later, if they could get away with it and win your confidence over that they didn't do it. But there were times when they were caught over there with black marketing, and they would want you to, if you could, get American currency for them to black-market it.

They would give you more money for it. You'd be contributing to the black market.

C: What was the Vietnamese peoples' attitude toward American soldiers, basically?

R: Well, they liked us being over there because we could help them with, basically, the little things that they couldn't get. My mommason would help me. I'd go to the PX [post exchange]-- she'd always want me to buy cigarettes once a week for her and [detergent] soap, things that they couldn't get and then they would probably sell it for a higher price when they went home.

But I always helped my mommason out. I bought her everything she wanted. I was probably too good to her. But they were nice [in their own way]. You couldn't very well turn them down.

C: You said that you have sort of mixed feelings about the Vietnamese people, that you couldn't trust them. Do you think this was the U.S. soldier's feeling about them also, the average GI?

R: Oh, yes. Some of them would always give you trouble. We had some working around the orderly room, just cleaning up and there'd be papers missing. Eventually, we did catch the one that did clean up around there. He was stealing papers that might not seem so important but it would contribute as a factor of somewhat hurting us. Letting someone else know what we had there, who was there. Just getting hold of a name might help the North Vietnamese or whatever.

C: Did your attitude change at all as time went on toward the Vietnamese people or did it remain basically the attitude you've just told me?

R: It remained about the same. As I think back, after I left there, it was just like a dream being over there to begin with. It's hard to bring back because I really don't like to think of it. It's just like a year gone out of my life that I'd like to forget about.

C: Was there anything you liked about their way of life?

- R: No. They're pretty poor people and they did, sort of, look up to us, but they lived in slums and I do mean really slums. It just made you sick to think that what you had to what they had was just no proportion; they didn't have anything. You just felt sorry for them really. But they were like a low-class cave person. They didn't even know what it was like to really live.
- C: Do you think they really wanted what we have then, like the American way of life?
- R: They definitely did. They'd always ask questions about your family or when you'd be going home. They would tell you some of their problems, but you couldn't really get real close to any personal matters with them; they wouldn't really talk about it. They're just a real low-class people and it would take a lot to help them. You just didn't have the time.
- C: It's well-known that most troops, while they were over there, had a chance to go on R and R. Did you go on R and R?
- R: No. I stuck it out. I don't know why. I didn't take my R and R. I had an opportunity to take two or three if I wanted to, but I never did. I was saving my money for when I got home. I thought I might get married and I was just saving all I could, really. That was my thought. I'd ask the guys, when they did go on R and R, what they thought of it and it was nice to get away, but when they got back, they said it was like they never left to begin with. So I just figured, why go? I've got to come back here. I just said to myself after I had some time over there, that once I leave, I'm leaving for good. So I didn't take my R and R.
- C: That's interesting. That's very interesting. Now you were there one year, right?
- R: Right.
- C: What were your feelings about going home?
- R: Well, like every GI when he gets over there, after he gets some time, like about six months when you're headed down toward finishing up your year

over there you had a little calendar called a short-timer's calendar and each day you block out that day, it leaves you one less day to stay over there. When you broke a hundred, you were finally considered short over there. Every day somebody'd ask you how many days you had left. It was just like a thing, conversation, how many days you had before you'd finally go home.

When I got down to less than a month, I could really tell that there was a change coming over me, especially around two weeks. I really started to get nervous and couldn't eat and just couldn't wait to get home. It was like you were in prison and you were finally getting out. It was hard to believe. I really looked forward to it. It was the time in my life I'll never forget--leaving there--because it was an experience you have to go through really to appreciate what you'd have back home, what was there. You were trapped and couldn't do much about it, being fifteen thousand miles away from home.

C: When did you get home? What day was that?

R: I flew into Seattle, Washington. I finally arrived home around May 11, 1969.

C: When you were in Vietnam there were a lot of demonstrations and protests going on in the States, which you probably heard about or read about. What was your feeling about the protests and demonstrations against the war? How did you feel about that?

R: Well, when I was over in Vietnam I wasn't too much concerned with it, but when I did get back to the States, I was stationed at Fort Rucker, Alabama, and they didn't really demonstrate anything at the fort, but around the various towns they did and sometimes some units would have to be called out to riot duty. You'd have to be prepared for that. I, myself, never got called out for that, but I just thought, after you'd heard everybody demonstrating, and what was right was right and wrong--who knew what was right or wrong? Everybody had their opinions about the war and they still do. It's a big controversy. A lot of people think it was just a political thing. I just pretty well have my own views, but I served my time and I don't think it was

wasted. But the demonstrations, if that's what they wanted to do to show that they thought the war was unjust then that was all right.

C: You say you were at Fort Rucker, Alabama. Is that Alabama?

R: Right.

C: Is that where you were stationed after you got home?

R: That's correct.

C: And did you then get out of the service, after Fort Rucker, your experience there?

R: Right. After I got there the end of June 1969, I stayed there approximately eighteen months till I finally got out December 1, 1970.

C: Why did you leave the service?

R: Why? Well, I didn't really see any future. I had had it pretty well fairly made. I was a sergeant E-5, buck sergeant, after just eighteen months in the service and that's the best rank you can make when you're in the Army. I did have it pretty well made as they say. But the Army is just a big hassle, just with the small things that make you want to get out. And if they know that you're not going to stay, they just make it worse on you and I just didn't like that. I couldn't see making a future out of it, really.

C: Then Vietnam didn't affect your decision at all?

R: No, it didn't.

C: When you were in Vietnam what was your biggest fear?

R: The biggest fear was probably never getting home again. It just seemed like when you were over there that you might not come back, even though I wasn't around any action. But there was a war going on and you never knew what to expect. Just something small could happen. [It could be all over with].

C: What was the most demoralizing thing you saw or experienced while you were in Vietnam?

- R: I think it was when they caught some North Vietnamese downtown after the big TET offensive of 1968. I do have pictures of it. They stacked the bodies, literally stacked them in the main square to show the people what would happen if they would try to overthrow the government, if they were on the side of the North Vietnamese. They were just so full of bullet holes that it was a sickening sight to look at. I did one time going through town see that. I just couldn't believe that. It really shook me up.
- C: It brought the war kind of right home, didn't it?
- R: Yes, it did.
- C: Now another question, but it's a little lighter: What was the funniest thing that happened while you were there? Can you recall anything that stands out as the funniest thing?
- R: In Vietnam?
- C: Yes, in Vietnam. Is there any one event or one thing that comes to mind that was the funniest thing or perhaps the most hilarious thing you saw or experienced?
- R: I can't think of really anything funny, although [there was] this one mommason; we used to clown around with her quite a bit and really put her on. We would just always joke around with her to give her a hard time and she'd throw boots or something at us. Just clowning around with her or doing something to her was really funny, to me.
- C: A lot of people say that in adverse situations people sort of create their own type of bathroom humor, personal jokes. Did humor seem to sustain you a lot? A lot of guys kidding around a lot is a source of kind of letting off steam and forgetting about what you were doing or where you were.
- R: Yes. Well, it's like I said, when I left Vietnam I just wanted to put it out of my mind. It's hard for me to recall day-to-day incidents. But the guys did joke around with one another quite a bit. The time did go fairly fast when you

consider you didn't have much to do over there besides your job and it just got boring when you sat down to a day-to-day job. But the guys were pretty well friendly over there. We had a good group and I couldn't complain too much about the guys over there. There were practical jesters and just little things going on. It's hard for me to recall right now offhand.

C: We right now have the 1974 perspective of the war as we look back. It's been over about a year and a couple of months now and we all have had a little bit of time to think about it. Do you think that the American experience in Vietnam was worthwhile?

R: For us being over there?

C: Right.

R: Well, I think it showed the people that the United States did make a mistake and it did sort of pay for it in a way. I've got, right now, mixed emotions going through my head, but it seems like we did make a mistake going over there. It was trying to cover up its mistakes and couldn't and to the present day it's still paying for it.

C: Do you think the government's policy then was wrong to go over to Vietnam?

R: Then, it didn't seem like maybe we got too involved. I think we got too involved in the war as time went on. But you couldn't really tell them to pull out. How can you say once you're involved in something you just drop it all of a sudden? It's just hard when you had [fifty] thousand lives lost and just pull up stakes and leave. What was it for? It was like a wound that just kept getting bigger and bigger and then all of a sudden you just couldn't cover it up. And that's what had happened to the war.

C: Do you think we should have tried to have won that war militarily?

R: Oh, definitely. That was our opinion when we were over there. It just seemed like they weren't doing anything about it, that we were so much more advanced than the Viet Cong were. It seemed

like we weren't doing anything about it, like our MIA [missing in action]. We couldn't just go over and bomb the hell out of them and just get out of there and drop an atomic bomb. You couldn't really bomb them and just get out of there because they were pretty well dug in the jungles. All that bombing it seems like was useless.

- C: Do you think then that might have been the answer--we could have just gotten it over quicker if we would have bombed them and gotten out of there?
- R: That's easy to say but there's probably more to it. It seems like that's what we should have done to alleviate the problem of getting out of there.
- C: Do you think most guys felt like that then?
- R: Definitely.
- C: And what was your attitude about the Army? Do you think it was their mistake or that they were just doing what the government wanted them to do in Vietnam?
- R: They were just doing what the government was telling them to do. If you were in the Army and you had a job to do, you did it. You couldn't really question it saying it's wrong, or that was it.
- C: What did you think about the massacre at My Lai? [From] what you've read and what you've heard and discussed with people, what's your opinion about the My Lai massacre?
- R: That's a good question. I'm glad you brought that up. When you look back on the My Lai massacre that's when you say, "Well, the government was involved." Lieutenant Calley had a job to do. He did it. Then all of a sudden this thing just blew up out of proportion where it was like a hand-me-down thing and he finally got the rap. He was the goat in it all and he couldn't pass it off anywhere; it just came down to him. It just had to be that somebody had to pay for it and that was him.

It was just one big cover-up after cover-up until it came down to him. And you might know about a Major Herbert, who was in the Army. Something similar happened to him. He tried to tell how wrongdoings were going on over in Vietnam and when he did tell his side of the story, they just accused him that nothing of the sort was true. I never knew what did become of his story but I think there was a cover-up after cover-up.

But Lieutenant Calley--when he was sentenced, the public reacted to it like it wasn't fair. There was such a reaction to it that the people themselves finally got him to get a reprieve. The government probably thought that they would let things die down and then have a retrial, and they did. And by then the people had overcome their anxieties over it and it had died down. When he did get sentenced the public didn't really react to it like they did at first.

- C: Do you think that it was sort of inevitable that something like this happened in Vietnam?
- R: Well, I don't know exactly when it came out, when the My Lai incident did blow up, how it came out. But it seemed that the people were so frustrated over the war and that the U.S. was involved so long they wanted to get the war over with as soon as possible. They thought, well, an incident like this might help the people. I don't know how. I don't know.
- C: You mean help the country's conscience a little bit?
- R: Yes, sort of.
- C: Do you think that Calley was guilty then?
- R: No. He just happened to be the goat that got caught. He had to take the rap. It just couldn't be handed down. He had the orders to do a job and like he said, he carried them out; and he would have done the same thing over again. It just happened to fall on him that he had to take the responsibility of that.
- C: Who do you think then was responsible? Do you think you can pinpoint anybody in particular?

R: You'd probably have to point if anybody to the Army itself. You're sending people over there to kill and they do kill and when something like this does happen, your reactions [are] you have to defend yourself. You don't know who's who and like he was probably saying, "You'd shoot first and ask questions later." If you had anybody to blame, it would have to probably be the Army, I would think.

C: Do you think if you were in the same situation you would have more or less done what he did?

R: Definitely.

C: Do you think most guys would have?

R: Sure. You're just following orders and you're almost drilled to the point [where] you have a job to do and you have to get it done. Whatever cost it is, the job has to be done.

C: Now, one or two final questions. One concerns amnesty. What do you think about giving amnesty to guys who have deserted or have been draft dodgers, went to Canada and other countries, to avoid the war?

R: I'm definitely against it. I figure if they aren't good enough to fight for their country then whether the war was just or unjust the amnesty shouldn't be given. You'd have to say that if we did have another war, my feelings are you couldn't really depend on anybody then. If there's another war, who would you send? Everybody'd just say, "Well, I don't want to fight." That's my view of it. If everybody said that then who would fight the war? You have to draw the line somewhere and that's why I'm definitely against it.

C: When you look back about your whole military experience, Vietnam included, what is your overall impression, if you could give any? Was it worthwhile? Did you learn anything from it? What is your overall feeling, the taste it left in your mouth, so to speak?

R: Well, the Army, itself, is really a waste of time, but it does give you a lot of experience in life [itself]. You do get to meet people

and encounter different situations, and it really sort of changed my life. When I went in, I was pretty quiet. When I came out, I was sort of a little bit more mouthy. I changed my view on life a little bit in that I have like a no-care attitude really. When I did get out, I couldn't say I wasted three years of my life, but here you didn't know whether you did or didn't because of the war. [It] wastes your life, three good years of it. But personally it was a lot of the experience for me that now as I look back on it, I don't have any regrets serving. I'd probably do it over again. I wouldn't be a draft dodger. The experience itself I have no regrets over.

- C: Are there any further comments you'd like to make in this interview--anything you'd like to add that we haven't discussed?
- R: Not that I can think of offhand. Well, if I had more time to think of my experience over there, in detail, I could probably dwell more into it, but like I said, when I left Vietnam, I just wanted to forget about it. It was like when you left there, it was a dream. It was like if you were twenty-five and went to twenty-seven, you just skipped that one year, that it was a dream and you just wanted to forget. When I got back I just wanted to forget about it and I almost have, as you might suspect in this interview, I don't know why.
- C: Well, thank you very much for your help. I really enjoyed talking to you and as I said, we'll send you the transcript of this when we have it completed. Thank you.
- R: Very good. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW