

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Vietnam War

Personal Experience

O. H. 1475

Malfred L. Campbell

Interviewed

by

Darlene Pavlock

on

12-5-91

MALFRED (MONTE) L. CAMPBELL

Malfred (Monte) L. Campbell was born in Salamanca, New York --a small town sixty miles south of Buffalo--on July 26, 1944 to Malfred L. and Katherine L. Campbell. He is the oldest of four children, three boys and a girl. He did little traveling in his childhood. He graduated from Salamanca Central High School and attended St. Bonaventure College. His family relocated to Girard, Ohio in 1963. He joined them in 1964 to attend Youngstown University.

While at Youngstown University he enrolled in the U.S. Army ROTC program. After receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in June of 1969 he entered officer training (for the Signal Corps) at Fort Gordon, Georgia. He received advanced signal training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and was then stationed at Fort Hood, Texas until receiving orders to Vietnam in July 1970.

His first assignment was in Cu Chi with the 37th Signal Battalion. He was an electronics maintenance signal officer and ran the signal maintenance shop. He was also pay officer for the Vietnamese locals that worked in the camp. He was then transferred to Plantation near Saigon and assigned to the 39th Signal Battalion. He became the manager of the Officer's Club there and continued his job as pay officer until he left Vietnam in June, 1971. He was discharged upon return.

Monte and his wife Gail have been married since 1973. They reside on the South side of Youngstown. He is presently employed by the Dollar Savings and Trust Company of Youngstown. He is a member of the American Institute of Banking and also enjoys collecting old movies on video, refinishing furniture and swimming.

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INTERVIEWEE: Malfred L. Campbell  
INTERVIEWER: Darlene Pavlock  
SUBJECT: Vietnam service and assimilation upon return  
DATE: 12-5-91

This is an interview with Malfred (Monte) Campbell for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Vietnam War, by Darlene Pavlock at 275 Federal Plaza West, Youngstown, Ohio, December 5, 1991, at 6:00 p.m.

PAVLOCK: Where were you born and where were you raised?

CAMPBELL: I was born and raised in a little town in western New York; Salamanca, New York. It's about sixty miles south of Buffalo. I lived there until I was twenty years old. I came to Youngstown to go to school, which was Youngstown University at the time, now Youngstown State.

P: Really? And that's when you moved to Girard?

C: Yes.

P: Your whole family did?

C: My family had located down here a year prior. My dad had worked at that time on the Erie Lakawanna Railroad. They moved their dispatch offices out of Salamanca to Youngstown. So they had moved down here in 1963. I was working at the time, going to St. Bonaventure's part-time, falling asleep coming home at night. My dad suggested that I look at the Youngstown University. He

said I could live at home and work my way through school. So I looked into it, they accepted me, I came down and I've been here ever since.

P: Really? So you lived in a small town like Girard then you moved to a small town.

C: It was smaller than Girard. Probably about 10,000 people at the time. It was a railroad town.

P: How many were in your family?

C: Four. Three boys and a girl.

P: Tell me about your growing up years.

C: Well, I guess I was an average kid, an average student. I wasn't real good in sports. I just didn't care much for sports. I had no real ambitions to go to school, college particularly, but after working a couple years and finding out what I was going to be making for the rest of my life, I decided that I would be better off by going to school and I did.

P: Are you the oldest?

C: Yes.

P: So you went to St. Bonaventure's for a while?

C: Yes. A short period of time. But again, working and going to school. . . . I was getting home late at night. It was a long drive and I was just. . . . Maybe I wasn't into going to school at the time. I probably wanted to get some of the wildness out of my system. My folks had left town. I was there alone. It was wonderful.

P: So you moved to Girard and you started at Youngstown University?

C: Yes. I started at Youngstown University in September of 1964.

P: How long did you go, then?

C: Well, no one gets out of Youngstown in four years, so I graduated in June of 1969. It took me five years to get out of there.

P: What did you major in?

C: I started out as an accounting major, could not get algebra. I always hated algebra and that was a requirement for an accounting degree. The accounting

part of it was fine, but algebra was just not my forte. I was working for a trucking company at the time and it was really very discouraging. Things weren't going too well. I thought I was going to drop out and a friend of mine said, "Why don't you major in transportation?" So I decided, well, why not do that, because I was working with it all day long. After that, it was a breeze. Not that I didn't study, but a lot of what I was learning in school I had already done. So that's what my degree is in. I have a minor in Economics.

P: I didn't know you could get a transportation degree.

C: I didn't know either when I first went in because I wasn't particularly interested in that. But yes. It deals a lot with rates, regulations at the time.

P: So how did you go from Youngstown University to the service?

C: My father was an officer during World War II. He was a Captain, an OCS. I guess maybe that was it. I was going to be the first one to go to college, wanted me to probably be an officer. I was sure he did. So I enrolled in ROTC. I took four years of that. Again, part of it was the money aspect, the second two years they paid you your junior and senior year for advanced skills. Then, obviously I had a commitment after I got out of college so I went off to the service.

P: How many years commitment was that?

C: At the time, two.

P: Was that in the Army?

C: Yes. I was commissioned Signal Corps in the U. S. Army.

P: How much traveling did you do as a child with your family or your friends?

C: Not much. My father worked shifts and when he was on vacation. . . . We never did vacation as a family. I don't know whether it was the money at the time or what, but we didn't seem to want to go any place so we never really did travel too much.

P: You basically stayed in your home town and moved to another home town.

C: I was terrified to come down here.

P: Well, you didn't take many vacations and you ended up two years in the service and that was with your commit-

ment with the ROTC and that was active duty.

C: Yes, active duty.

P: Where did you go for your basic training?

C: Basic Training was Fort Gordon, Georgia. Well, that was basic officer's school. Between your junior and your senior year you took your basic training. That was summer camp, ROTC summer camp. That was like six weeks and that was in Indian Town Gap in Pennsylvania. It was probably in 1968 when I was there. I know that's when I was there. The following August, I went in the service, I went to Fort Gordon, Georgia for basic signal school. That lasted until I think mid-November of 1969. From there I went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma for advanced signal school. I was at Fort Sill from November through March of 1970. That took care of the schooling part of it. Then they sent you to your first assignment. That was at the 57th Signal Battalion at West Fort Hood, Texas. From a little town in New York to Texas, yes. . . . To Georgia, to Oklahoma, to Texas.

P: Gee, what a difference in all the areas.

C: Yes, but I liked it. It was nice to see different areas. I enjoyed Texas.

P: Especially after not traveling very much as a young child?

C: Maybe. It was different people and a different area and a different type of terrain. The climate was great in Texas. It was hot. I like hot weather.

P: How long were you in the service before you went to Vietnam?

C: I got to Fort Hood in March of 1970. In June we got our orders to go overseas. We were there approximately six months.

P: That's where you went? Your first orders weren't strictly for Vietnam? Your overseas duty?

C: Yes.

P: I was surprised at that because some people went other places first and then some just went from training over to Vietnam. I wasn't too sure.

C: In my case, I did a stateside tour of duty first and then went over.

P: How long were you in Vietnam?

C: I was lucky. I was there ten months. At the time I went in, I had to be in-country. . . . It seems to me I left the States the 25th of August in 1970 and I had to be in Vietnam around September 1st. Well, obviously it didn't take six days to get there so I was there before September 1. So I would have de-rost. . . . I can't even remember what de-rost means. It means the date that you're due to return to the states. It should have been a year's commitment. I should have come back in September of 1971. But, in 1971, Nixon was supposedly to wind down the war. So I was due for an R & R. I went to Australia in February of 1971. I came back and found out we had a two month drop. So I came back in June of 1971. A delightful surprise.

P: Where were you stationed in Vietnam?

C: My first assignment was at Cu Chi. I believe that was with the 37th Signal Battalion. Cu Chi was up near the Cambodian border. I can't remember how far it was from Saigon, to give you an idea of where it was. It was north-west of Saigon.

P: When you flew into Vietnam did you fly into Saigon?

C: No, we flew into Ben Hoa. They picked you up from there. I think the orders were cut for someplace up north. I want to say maybe Da Nang. That sticks in my mind. That was a general order to get you in-country. Once they got you there, they put you wherever they wanted you. In my case, I went to Cu Chi.

P: Now what was your rank by then?

C: Well, I was commissioned as a second lieutenant. So when I went over to Vietnam I was still a second lieutenant.

P: What was your job there? What did you do?

C: Well, I ran a signal maintenance shop. That was my title. Electronic Maintenance Signal Officer. I had a couple E-6 Sergeants and they said to me, "Look, you're not going to be here forever, this is our career. You sign the papers, we'll do the work and we'll get along fine." We did. They took decent care of me. I didn't really know a lot about my signal MOS. When I was at Fort Sill, I never really worked a signal MOS. MOS--Military Occupational Specialist. I ran a signal maintenance shop in Vietnam. I was the pay officer for the Vietnamese locals that worked in the camp, or on the base. I was a supply officer. Whatever nobody else had, I guess, is what I took.

P: Did you have people under you? These two sergeants that took care of you, but you had how many people under you as a second lieutenant? You would have been the boss.

C: Well, I never thought of myself as the boss, necessarily. Maybe forty or fifty. It's been a long time since I thought about this.

P: This is fascinating.

C: Not really.

P: What was your typical day like?

C: A typical day was that you were up by about 6:30. Breakfast at 7:00 usually at the Signal Maintenance Shop by 7:30 in the morning. I checked that, maybe stayed there until 9:00. Go to the supply room, wherever it was where we had supplies, check with my sergeant there.

P: How long was your work day?

C: [It was from] 7:30 a.m. until maybe 4:30 or 5:00 in the afternoon. There was a break in there. It would get so hot that we would take a lunch hour from like 11:30 until 1:00.

P: Now was this a compound?

C: Yes.

P: What was it like?

C: Well, I guess any base camp is like a little city. They had facilities there. They had a PX, they had theaters there. They had barracks there.

P: That's where you lived too?

C: We had our own hooches. We had little grass huts. They were made out of bamboo and mats and weaving. It was functional.

P: More than just a tent?

C: No, I never was in a tent. We got our own hooches. The EM's (enlisted men) got their own barracks. They were like little cottages, is all I can say. They were bamboo cottages lined up and that's where the officers lived.



P: How many of you were in there?

C: We each had our own. It was a room about as big as this, 12' by 10', maybe. That's about right. It had no running water but it did have electricity. You could retreat there in the evening for a couple hours.

P: I didn't picture that.

C: I didn't either when I first went over there. It was completely different.

P: What were your impressions?

C: When I first went there? I was terrified because they would tell you, and again--I didn't tell you this part of it-- but when you got your orders from Vietnam, they put you through a jungle survival school. This took place in Texas. You had these mock raids and they would capture people and torture them, not really torture, but. . . . They kind of taught you that every Vietnamese was your enemy. So when you flew in-country, I guess you sort of felt... They said, "Well, if we're rocketed as we're flying into Ben Hoa, you head for these bunkers immediately." Well, obviously everybody was like. . . . They were expecting to see things that happened in John Wayne movies, "Back to Bataan" or something, blowing people down right and left. But it wasn't like that at all. I'm sure there were some snipers around and after I got back I found out that Cu Chi was considered the city of tunnels. The Vietnamese had tunnels all underneath. I didn't know that when I was there.

P: You found that out after the fact?

C: Yes. Years later I found that out. I happened to be reading Time Magazine and they had this illustration of all these tunnels and I thought, God, there I was and they were under me like that!

P: What were your impressions when you flew in and saw the country? Was it the way you imagined it to be?

C: I don't remember. Cu Chi was very dusty. I remember a lot of red-like clay soil. It was very dusty and dirty I guess is what I want to say it was. The vegetation was real lush. That's about all I remember about Cu Chi. This part is what I always remember. Do you remember when the movie "Platoon" that came out?

P: Yes.

C: I was going to watch that. I said, "Well this would be interesting." They showed the helicopters coming in

and all this red dust. That brought back Cu Chi and I just shut it off. I never watched it.

P: I've seen it at least six times. You're lucky you haven't seen it. It was a tough movie to take. It was the closest thing, in my impression, of what it probably was like there.

C: Maybe one day I'll have the strength to watch it. It just. . . . I didn't want to see it.

P: It took me a while but then I was sort of forced into it by my husband. He watches those things a lot. What major events stand out during that time?

C: Well, after you got over being afraid, you could only go so long and you figure, "Well, I'm going to be here for a year, I might as well make the best of a bad situation and hope we get out." I was very lucky. After we left Cu Chi I went around Saigon. It was around Plantation. Again, Nixon was supposedly winding down the war. So they disbanded the 37th Signal Battalion and we moved closer to Saigon, right outside of Saigon. It was called Plantation, to the 39th Signal Battalion. I was in Cu Chi probably two months. Around Christmas time, they dismembered that, or disbanded that and we moved to Plantation. Nothing real traumatic happened. There were a lot of funny things that happened. When we moved to. . . . I had a black friend of mine who had the hooch next to me when we were at Cu Chi. So we both were transferred into Plantation which is outside of Saigon.

We got down there and our living quarters were a little bit different. We had a barracks and each officer had their room there. This was on the second floor. It was like a little townhouse, smaller rooms than we were used to at Cu Chi, but cleaner. We had a colonel that was from Alabama. The colonel hated black people and Irish Catholics. He was black and I was Irish Catholic. Well, we didn't stand a prayer in hell from there on in. He was very bigoted. We were from this ragamuffin outfit so therefore, we were not his caliber. Funny stories about him because we used to sit and laugh and scream at night about some of the ridiculous things, and mimic him and things like that. The guy was actually a bigot. Again, funny things like that.

P: Now in the service you are very structured. You have to wear your clothes a certain way, move a certain way, wear your hair a certain way. When you were there did you have to do those kinds of things?

C: Not there you didn't. We wore jungle fatigues. They weren't the camouflaged, they were the green ones. If

you could get your laundry done and done decently, I suppose you could look okay, but everybody was dirty. No, there wasn't really a dress code there. The base camps or the ones closer to Saigon probably were spiffier and maybe your uniforms were cleaner and better pressed, but out in the bush, no.

P: Did this colonel bother you about that?

C: Well, I didn't have him when I was in Cu Chi. We had another colonel who was real nice. In fact he was the one that promoted me when I was due for first lieutenant. I can't remember his name. He was a nice guy. He didn't bother anybody, he was kind of laid back. But Colonel McNasty as we called him, his name was McNeider. We called McNasty because he was just always picking on everybody. He had a fixation on one of our warrant officers, Mr. Mixon. Poor Mr. Mixon was an alcoholic and on the way. . . . We had jeeps we would drive around on our way to Saigon. Mr. Mixon, at 9:00 in the morning, would stop off the side of the road and buy a six pack of Budweiser from one of the local Vietnamese kids who were selling beer. Well, he probably was an alcoholic. But anyway, Colonel McNasty, maybe one night at supper, announced that he had Mr. Mixon under house arrest, because he caught Mr. Mixon drinking at 4:00 in the afternoon. By that time, most people were [drinking] too, so what was the big deal? He was nuts. He would pick on everybody.

P: So it was structured more than at the Plantation, dress-wise and things like that?

C: I can't say that it was more structured. Your facilities for keeping clean were probably better. You didn't have all that dust around constantly. So therefore, you looked better. But more often than not, you couldn't help but be sweaty and gritty.

P: It was still a more relaxed atmosphere?

C: I found it to be.

P: Did you do the same thing at the Plantation as you were doing before you moved?

C: No. Colonel McNasty decided that I would become his club officer. We had an officer's club. That became my primary duty. It wasn't supposed to be, but I managed to work it into a full time KP. So that's what I did. I ran the club. I bought the liquor, I bought the steaks, put on the steak fry on Friday night or Saturday night whenever we had it. I also was pay officer for the Vietnamese there too, which involved a weekly trip to Saigon and back. By the time I finished

with it, it was like two trips a week two and from.

P: Doesn't sound like bad duty.

C: All things considered. I was very fortunate. I came back with all my body parts. My brain or what's left of it today. . . . It could have been a lot worse.

P: Well, that's an interesting event.

C: Here's another interesting event, too. People say we were shot at. I was shot at one time, but we didn't realize at the time. My black friend that I was telling you about, he had a signal side on the Cambodian border. This was back at Cu Chi. He had said to me one afternoon, "I'm going to drive up to this signal sight. Why don't you go with me?" I had nothing to do so we went. Coming back, we heard the bullet go by. He said, "They're out there shooting at us."

P: Were you in a jeep?

C: Yes. So needless to say, we didn't spare the horses. We got out of there as fast as we could. The other thing was that when I was on R & R in Australia, the 90th Replacement Battalion which was right behind our compound at Plantation was rocketed. So, when I came back, my one friend said, "What happened?" "We were rocketed last week." The only time we were rocketed, I was out of the country. Thank God. Nobody in our compound was hurt. They had a lot of guys that were. . . . They used to line them up at the battalion and call role to get your next flight out, the whole group that was going. They had all these guys out at 4:00 in the morning calling role, to get them on the bus to take them to the airport to put them on the plane for home. They were rocketed and it killed ten or twelve people, injured some other people. So after that they never had the role call. He said, "Boy, you should have seen people move that night. Naked bodies all over the place, people were dying." I was lucky. It could have been a lot worse.

P: Cu Chi is an unusual place to be fortunate. When you were there, it was a different environment, naturally. A far cry from home and your family, what images of home did you carry with you? What did you think about home-wise while you were there?

C: [I thought about] getting home again, and what I would do when I came back. One of the things was, "I don't think I'll work for six months," which I didn't when I came home. I didn't have the money to do anything. I never really had a vacation. I always had worked from the time I was in high school and I worked my way

through college. I said, "If I get out from under this, I'll never deny myself anything as long as I live." Well, time changes that. But at the time I had the money and I was single so I didn't work for six months.

P: Did you take a vacation?

C: No. I came home. I started dating my wife at the time before I went to Vietnam. I came home, we took up that part of our lives again. We started to date again. I just bummed around for six months and the rest of the time, relaxed.

P: It's an adjustment so you needed time.

C: I thought I did.

P: I think that was a wise choice, because there is not a lot of people that would have thought about that. You not only thought about it, but you did it.

C: The only thing I regret, I planned to do this. When I came back I thought about buying a car, having it waiting for me in California and driving across the country alone.

P: For the experience?

C: Yes. I didn't do that and wished I would have. That's my one regret. But at the time, I wanted to get back.

P: When you flew back in, you flew to California?

C: Yes.

P: Then, did they discharge you after that?

C: There is a funny story there too. When we got ready to go to leave, my friend Lieutenant Jolly, my black friend, said to me when we were getting ready to leave . . . we used to sit and talk at night. He would say, "We've become good friends. It's too bad that we can't go home together." He had gotten there a couple months before I did. I said, "Yes, it's too bad we can't come home together." Well, when this drop came, we did get to go home together. At the time, black power was strong in Vietnam. You could get anything you wanted. This was their own little world. Lieutenant Jolly being black, had a lot of connections. A lot of the lieutenants that were in our battalion at the time found out that he did have some influence in different places. He was friends with the transportation officer. They were asking him if they could get them out of there early.

We had roomed next to each other all the time we had been in Vietnam. I had never asked him for a favor. I had done favors for him. We were getting ready to leave, we were getting a replacement battalion which was in June 1971 and because of Nixon winding down the war. . . . They were trying to get them out of there as fast as they could at that time. Flights were booked. We were going to be stuck there for four or five days. In the meantime, our baggage had all been shipped ahead. We had the clothes on our back and maybe another spare uniform and that was it. All you could do was really lay in your cot all day long or go to the officer's club and sit around and drink. Well, drinking in the morning until 5:00 p.m. was a little too much.

So we got there this one morning and Jolly said, "Well, excuse me, I want to go outside and make a phone call." So he did. He came back maybe a half hour later. He said, "Lieutenant Campbell, I'd like to see you outside." I said, "Okay." In the meantime, we were around this big table with all these lieutenants from our battalion who were going home with us. So he said, "I'd like to see you outside and while you're at it, bring your camera with you. I want you to take my picture." So I picked up my camera and went outside. He said, "Call your driver back to the battalion, we've got two seats tomorrow morning on a plane out of here." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "You've done so much for me and you're the only one who never asked." These guys never saw us again. They probably figured we disappeared off the face of the earth. I called my driver. I said, "Get over here, get us to Saigon." He took us to Saigon, we spent the night in the airport. 6:00 the next morning we were on the plane. We were probably home and discharged five days before these guys even saw a flight.

P: Boy, that's amazing. Did you see him much after that?

C: We never saw each other again. He said to me in the airport. . . . He was leaving to go back to Skeehee, Alabama where his family was. This was three days later. We were sitting in San Francisco. I was waiting for a flight to Cleveland, he was going to Georgia. We got processed together, had dinner together that night, took the bus to the airport, sat around and talked awhile. When seven o'clock came, it was time to get his flight. He got up and left. I was up doing something. I came back and realized he was gone. I started down the concourse after him. I said, "Hey Jolly, what are you doing?" We shook hands. He said, "That's it. We'll never see each other again. You did me a favor, I did you a favor, that's just. . . . Our

lives are just different." We never have seen each other. I'll never forget him. He was a great friend.

P: Being an officer, you were the boss. You were in an entirely different situation than most of the men that were there. How did you feel about that? How did you feel responsibility-wise towards them in how to treat them?

C: I probably was a very poor officer. I treated my men as I would want to be treated. Whether that be dignity. . . . We had some problems. They were basically a real decent bunch of guys. We really didn't have much of a problem, surprisingly. We had some guys that did grass, but everybody did grass there. Anybody who tells you that they didn't is crazy. So maybe sometimes you did have a little smoke with your men. We partied together. I told you I ran the club. If they were having a party and needed liquor, I sold it out the back door to them. I had no problems. Nobody fragged my hooch.

P: I would picture you a fair man.

C: I tried to be.

P: When you came home, the images that you had over in Vietnam of your home and how possibly nothing changed. You know, people like to hang on to things while they're away; that there isn't going to be change, and everything stays the same. When you came back, what were your impressions of the images that you had taken with you? Were there many changes?

C: What had changed? I guess you kind of expected a hero's welcome, maybe. There wasn't anything like that at all. I couldn't wait to get the uniform off. I came home and my dad was in the hospital at the time. It was 6:00 a.m. I had a great friend that I called and I said, "I'm going to be in Cleveland at. . . ." I forget what time. It was 6:00 in the morning. I said, "Can you come and get me?" She said, "yes." She picked me up and I came home. I think I got in about 9:00. It was a Sunday morning. My mom said, "You must go up and see your father." My father was so proud that I was this officer, and all I wanted to do was to change. I wanted to put on a pair of jeans. He said, "No, no, I want to see you."

P: You had your uniform on?

C: Yes. I had been in it for three days. My God, the crust under my arm, it was terrible. My brother, I think, drove me up to the hospital to see my dad. He got out of bed and cried. I was home. I wasn't in a

cast or there wasn't half of me there or anything. He was just so proud. As for me, I just wanted to put it behind me for a while.

P: Did your house seem to change. Did any of the people that you remember change or anything?

C: No. I can't say that they did. My mom had had some health problems while I was gone and they didn't tell me about that. I guess I adjusted to that okay.

P: Did you have your own room at home?

C: I shared a room with my brothers. We were a fairly big family. We had finished the upstairs. I had one side and two brothers on the other side.

P: So they didn't take it over while you were gone?

C: Oh, yes. But, I moved back in.

P: So you basically just assimilated right back into your family life?

C: Well, I think I had become a little bit more independent. I guess it was hard to adjust at first. I don't remember it all that well. It's been twenty-some years. I went my own way. Of course, I was living under my parents roof. Maybe they thought, "Why isn't he home, it's 3:00 a.m.?" If I didn't walk home at 3:00 a.m., I didn't come home at 3:00. I felt I deserved. . . .

P: How old were you then?

C: I was an old college graduate. When I came out, I was twenty-seven.

P: That would have been different too--the age factor and coming home to your family and how things were different. How the attitudes had changed. . . .

C: I didn't realize the attitudes had changed because. . . . Well, Lieutenant Cally. Remember that? The Mali Massacre. My wife can't believe that was wrong. I keep telling her, "You don't understand, They used to tell us they were all our enemy." That was 1968 when that happened. I can understand how he may have felt. He probably was scared. He was in the jungle. The circumstances were probably a lot different than what I had. I was fairly safe. I was in a base camp. I could have been killed, there was no doubt about it. But she can't understand why he killed those people. I can. I think it was maybe fear. The other thing she tells me is, "You don't understand how



people were." People were so against this war at that time. No, I didn't understand that because we never were privy to that information. We had the stars and stripes and we had the armed forces, the radio station. They told you what they wanted you to know. On television at night we had reruns of "I Love Lucy". Things like that. They really didn't tell you that all of this was going on in the States. So I think that was kind of why we were hated. Those that went to Canada as it turns out probably were better off. I don't know that I could have done that.

So to sum it up, I suppose when I got back I felt I had been used. I felt that I had been used and all it was, was basically a year out of my life that was wasted that could have been devoted to a career someplace, or the beginning of a career.

P: Not a military career?

C: No, but as I think of it today when they are talking about early retirements and everything else, why didn't I stay? It really wasn't that bad a life. I probably could have adjusted. But at the time, I just wanted to get out. Our area, had I known, maybe I would have stayed.

P: When you came back, you were discharged or did you choose to leave the service? How did that work?

C: You were eligible for discharge. The other thing being you talk about the thing I told you, two years. Actually it was six-year commitment. I failed to take into account the reserve time. If you went overseas, you did not have an active reserve requirement. Those that were stationed State-side--I had a couple buddies that went from Fort Sill to Fort Riley, Kansas-- they did the second half of their tour state-side, then they had a four year commitment with the active reserves. That's going to camp in the summertime for two weeks, monthly meetings and that type of thing. But with us, or anybody who had been overseas, we didn't have any. Well you were kept on reserve status for the rest of that four-year period, but as far as any active duty, going to meetings, or summer camp, no. You could sign up but that was optional. That was your choice.

P: So you were basically out.

C: I was out.

P: What did you do after your six month staying home?

C: I tried to get a job and by that time, this was in 1971, the economy wasn't real good in 1971 either. I

went to the unemployment office. They didn't do much for you either. They said, "Well, we're not sure. Things are bad. . . ." Finally after three or four weeks, I took the book, I turned it around and I said to the girl, "Look, I can do this, I can do this, I can do this. Set me up on an interview." I got a job, I went to work as a production control assistant at a place in Warren.

P: Now you had a hard time, not really finding employment, but a hard time at the employment office. Did that have anything to do with your Vet status or did you have a problem finding employment because you had been in Vietnam?

C: I don't know if it was that. I think it was the fact that it was just a bad time. A lot of places weren't hiring at the time, or maybe they didn't have the need for my skills. I just remember that they didn't seem to have much on the market.

P: How long were you there?

C: About two years. Then I had a contact at Packard Electric. I started working there. I've been a lot of places.

P: In this time, did you have contact with other Vets? Did you guys talk about your war experiences, so to speak?

C: I never talked about them.

P: How about your impressions of coming back and how you were not accepted after you came back?

C: No, because there was no one from here that I kept in contact with. There was no one from Youngstown University that had been in my ROTC class. If they went to Vietnam I never saw them and didn't keep in touch with anyone there. I still hear from one guy. This was state-side. I was in service at Fort Hood and that has been twenty-some years. Every Christmas, we still correspond but that's the last one. He was in Vietnam but he was up north and I was down south so we never saw each other there. We still keep in touch.

P: So Vietnam was not like it didn't happen but it was set aside for you.

C: Yes. I'm just glad to be back that's all.

P: Have you traveled a lot since then?

C: No.

P: By choice?

C: No, we'd love to travel. It's that other things take priorities like house payments and utilities and that type of thing.

P: Well I think we covered most of our questions. How did you adapt to the changes and what methods did you use and find successful to adapt to when you came home?

C: Well, there weren't that many changes as I remember so I don't think that I used anything as far as adapting was concerned. I was probably a little bit more independent. I really didn't care so much anymore about what people thought of who I should be.

P: We were really brought up with that. We had to act like this and people would talk about you if you didn't do that. That was a real big thing with us from our small-town background.

C: I think I liked being alone at that time in my life.

P: Even though you had people that you were with in Vietnam, you came back more loner-oriented?

C: I guess for a time. I probably snapped out of that.

P: Now you're not a loner?

C: Well, I think I have a fair amount of friends and acquaintances.

P: I think you're a social person.

C: Yes.

P: Is there anything that I didn't cover?

C: You started to ask me when I got married. I got married about a year and a half after I got back, I guess.

P: You dated her while you were in the service?

C: No, I met my wife in 1966 at a funeral home of all places. We had a mutual friend whose father had died. I'd see her at different parties that this friend would have and we would talk. I came home Christmas of 1970 and had ended a relationship, an engagement. I happened to run into her and she said, "What are you doing? Are you home? New Year's Eve, why don't you call me while you're home?" I never thought she would be interested in me. So I said, "Well, I'll write you

when I get back." "Oh, you'll never remember my address." I said, "Yes I will." When I got back we started to write and we dated a couple times before I went overseas and we continued to write. I came back home, I looked her up, I called her and took it from there.

P: Did she write you a lot while you were over there?

C: A couple times a week.

P: Did you have her picture in your memorabilia while there?

C: She sent me a couple pictures. Yes. I kept them out.

P: So then you just picked up when you got home?

C: Yes.

P: You came home to California, then you were discharged or did they station you somewhere else for a while?

C: No. I was discharged in California. Right away. I came in on a Friday and I was processed the next day which was a Saturday.

P: Then you just came home after that?

C: I think I would have stayed out there for a while, had I come home with some of the friends that I had state-side. But other than Jolly my friend, he was going home to Georgia which was the East Coast. I did have friends that were in Nevada and California, had I come home with them, I think I would have probably spent some time there because my one friend from Nevada, we had made plans to do that if we got home together. We got over there together and if we came home together, we would party for a couple of weeks and wind down. But that didn't happen.

P: Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

C: Well, I was never sorry I was in the service, I suppose. It was a learning experience. I think my existence was kind of sheltered up until then. I learned to adapt to situations and new people. I found out I could live other places and adapt without that homesick-type thing. I had a lot of fun. I really had a lot of fun state-side. I have a lot of fond memories. It wasn't all laughs, but a lot of the crazy things that went on, the people that were our bosses at the time. There were a couple of West Point graduates that were in Vietnam with us who were complete buffoons. We'd sit and laugh at them at night and the different

funny things that they did. So all in all, I guess it was the people that I was with that made the best of a bad situation. They were doing the same thing. They were there for two years, the officers that I worked with and knew and even the enlisted men. They had their lives planned when they went home, so I think that's how we got through it. Other than that, I came back with my brains and all my body parts, so I'm thankful for that. But, still, to this day, I don't feel appreciated for what we did.

P: I wanted to ask you about that. How do you feel about that? I had one man say that all he wanted was his parade. Not so much parade, per se, but just the recognition.

C: I think I would have to agree with that. There was no recognition at the time and no respect. Those that did nothing were thought of more amnesty and the people who ran to Canada. No, I don't think that was particularly right. My wife disagrees but that's her point of view. It was a year out of my life that I felt was wasted because it could have been put to use developing a career again. I think, we were talking about jobs and finding jobs. When you went on interviews, they did kind of look at you differently. "Oh, is he spaced out on drugs?" You know.

P: Have you found that in people that they sort of look at you more with a stereotype image if they knew you were in Vietnam before they actually get to know you?

C: I don't as a rule tell people that. Unless it comes out. It's only recently that I will talk about this. My dad used to want to talk, "Well, tell me what you did in the war?" I'd say, "Well, I really don't want to talk about it." I knew he was interested but I just didn't want to talk about it. I was fortunate. Nothing real real bad happened to me there. It could have. Like I said, you went in-country for thirty days. You think, "I'm going to die, I'm going to die, I'm going to die." But once you're there, you figure, well, I've got 365 days to be here, I can't continue to think like that. It's time to get on with your life. I think I was more terrified thinking about going and being in the States than I actually was after I got there. The fear of serving. . . .

P: You've chosen not to really think about it all these years, or dwell on it?

C: Well, not so much think about it. Sure I do think about it maybe unconsciously. My wife has said that too. It's only recently that I will tell her what happened to me. Now if I would have run into someone

that I had served with, we probably would talk about other things that went on.

P: Then, I called you on the phone.

C: Yes. Then you call me on the phone and tell me that you want to dig up my unsavory past.

P: You're really not giving me anything unsavory.

C: There was really never anything unsavory that went on. The one thing that I'll tell you was, yes, I smoked grass. Honest to God, I never did a thing when I was in the States. It wasn't a problem up there. I got over there and somebody said, "Try this, it will mellow you out." I said, "Oh, no, I'll get addicted." They said, "Believe me, you're not going to get addicted to this."

P: Our hometown background I think had a lot to do with that.

C: Yes. A small town. The town I came from, if you had a six pack of Rolling Rock and a pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes on a Friday night, boy that was big time!

P: Is that where you started smoking?

C: In Vietnam? No, I've been smoking since I was fifteen years old.

P: I had some guys tell me that they never drank, they never smoked or they never did drugs until they went there. The same thing. Only there, did they do drugs. It was just . . . you get caught up in the moment. You get caught up with what you're in. That's just the way it is.

C: I saw some younger kids get awfully messed up on cocaine. We never did that.

P: No hard stuff. It was just that you had to get through. It was there. It just was part of everything else that was there. Basically. Well, I thank you for giving me this time. Did I cover everything?

C: It was an experience. It was part of life. It was something that had to be done. Again, I was fortunate. It was a learning experience. I'm still bitter that a year was gone.

P: Do you feel bitter?

C: Yes, because I still feel that it was a year wasted.

- P: Do you feel guilty about anything? Do you feel guilty that you came back alive, that you weren't wounded, that you weren't in combat?
- C: I can't say that I feel guilty about it. No. I was very happy to come back with all my pieces and parts.
- P: I've had people tell me that and I just wondered.
- C: They've felt bad that they had come back?
- P: They almost feel guilty.
- C: Maybe that's because the recognition factor would be there. Like, oh, you were wounded and you do have a scar. . . .
- P: Have you ever been to the wall?
- C: No, I have a friend who has been there. I think I'd break down. I really think I would. I'd really love to see it sometime, not to break down. I think if I were in Washington, I'd make it a point to go, but I think it would affect me.
- P: I really thank you. I wanted to do this because I felt it was important that people like you are heard because there are a lot of things which are important to be said.
- C: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW