

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Vietnam Veterans

Personal Experience

O.H. 859

STAN BABICK

Interviewed

by

Tom Kirker

on

November 18, 1983

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE: STAN BABICK

INTERVIEWER: Tom Kirker

SUBJECT: Base camp, role of cargo personnel, Khe Sanh,  
TET Offensive

DATE: November 8, 1983

K: This is an interview with Stan Babick for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Vietnam Veterans Project, by Tom Kirker, at Mr. Babick's house on Franklin Avenue, in New Castle, Pennsylvania, on November 18, 1983, at 6:15 p.m.

The first question I would like to ask you is how you got into the Air Force?

B: I was getting drafted, so I went down--I was working down at Joseph's Super Market. I was getting tired of working and I was getting drafted, so I decided to sign up. I joined the Air Force.

K: What was the first camp you went to?

B: Laughlin Air Force Base, in Texas. [That was] for basic training.

K: What do you remember most about basic training?

B: The heat and the bad weather. Texas' weather changed all of the time.

K: When you were down there, what skill did they teach you?

B: There wasn't any skill in basic. It was, more or less, a little bit of everything, until you got to your regular base after you went to your tech schools and other stuff.

K: What school did you go to?

B: I went to heavy equipment training, air delivery, rigging parachutes for air drops, air freight and mail cargo, loading planes and unloading them.

K: When did you go over to Vietnam?

B: I didn't go there until September of 1967.

K: When you went over, what rank were you?

B: I was Airman 3rd.

K: That is E4?

B: That is E2.

K: Where was the first place you were stationed over at Vietnam?

B: I landed at the 9th Replacement Battalion, down in Bien Hoa. We came into Bien Hoa, and we went by bus from Bien Hoa to Ton Son Nut. It's about 14 miles away. We went up there, and the bus had fencing and everything on the windows, so they couldn't. . . . As soon as you stepped off the plane, the heat knocked the hell out of you.

K: How many guys went in at that time?

B: With me, from my base in Guire--I was stationed in Guire, New Jersey--there were five of us that went together. Most of the time, they used to send you one or two at a time in the Air Force. Where I was at, they did.

K: Where did they station you at, permanently?

B: It was like a base camp. We were on mobility teams there. We went out in the fields a lot. When there was a big operation going on, we participated in it right along with the Army. We had special forces camps, air raids and air drops down at Delta. It depended on whatever operations were going on and wherever they needed us, like Khe Sanh. Most of us got special forces camps.

K: What did you do?

B: When the planes came in, they would combat off load without shutting their engines off. We would off load them and move the supplies around to who was out in the field or whoever needed them. If we made the air drops, the chutes and everything were rigged. We went over the drop zone, and we would retrieve them, usually. In Khe Sanh, they had the seige on at that time. It was rough up there, because every time planes came in, they didn't stop for damn little time. Then, they had lakes drops up there, and they had the Jakes, which had the cable across the runway. It would come in with a hook, and they had one with parachutes on the. . . . When the wind hit them, we would retrieve them out there, and they would bring them back. Plus, we handled passengers going in and out, like the wounded.

K: How long were you at Khe Sanh?

B: About 30 days.

K: What was it like there?

B: It was kind of rough. You would get hit everyday. You were surrounded by 25,000 NVA [North Vietnamese Army]. It was kind of bad. You would get hit 100 times a day with artillery and the different things that went on.

K: That was during the siege in 1968?

B: Yes. They had rats; there were a lot of rats. They were a problem. You were constantly rebuilding your bunkers and stuff. It was just a pain in the ass.

K: Were you up in the line and stuff like that?

B: I was mostly in the air freight place. I was ready when the cargo came in. Most of the time, I was down south around Ton Son Nut, Bu Dop, and places along the Cambodian border. It was mostly in and around the central highlands. I was down in Delta a little bit, and different places down and around there.

K: You were in during the TET Offensive?

B: TET Offensive.

K: What was it like? Where were you at when that happened?

B: It started when I was at Ton Son Nut, when we got set up. It was partly around Saigon and that general area. I was at that base, but I mean all the areas that they hit around there. . . .

K: You knew that something was going on pretty big?

B: Yes, because we were on red alert at different times.

K: How old were you?

B: In Vietnam?

K: Yes, altogether.

B: I was there for 12 months.

K: [Were you] on tour?

B: I didn't want to extend. I thought about it, but I changed my mind, of course.

K: Did you fix parachutes and things like that, too?

B: No, we didn't fix them. When they made the airdrops, they had the aero delivery section of air freight. I was in the 8th Aero Port Squadron. They rigged chutes. We did a lot of flying with them on our mobility teams. They went on chutes a lot of times, and when they let them out, they would drop them over for supplies. They would go over special forces camps or siege camps. Whose ever mobility team was there at the time, you would have to retrieve them. That was our primary job, resupplying the areas where you were at, whether it was a special forces camp, a base camp, an LZ, [or a] fire base. It depended where you were at.

K: Did they use C-130s?

B: C-130s, C-123s, [and] caribous.

K: How many guys were on a mobility team?

B: It all depended. Sometimes they would send 10 or 15. Sometimes there would be three or four guys. A lot of times, I was on with four guys, a total of four.

K: When you were at Khe Sanh, what would it have been like for just one day in the morning? It was kind of bad sleeping in the bunkers. You would get up with them firing at you all of the time. You would get information of what planes are coming in and what cargo was coming in. Sometimes you didn't even know, and then you just went out and took your chances.

K: What do you remember most about Vietnam?

B: The stink. The towns stunk. And [I remember] the heat and how hot it was all of the time, [and] the monsoons were bad.

K: Did you meet many Vietnamese people?

B: Yes, quite a few. When we weren't on mobilities, we worked right at our base camp, like Ton Son Nut. I worked in the in-country section. When we were on mobility, we worked right there. We had civilians working for us. What we used to do is segregate the cargoes that would come in from the United States to what base it went to in Vietnam or the post or wherever it was, and we would write paper work on it. We would pelletize it and would ship it to the next section up, which would distribute it. They would get it ready for the planes and stuff. We handled all of the in-bound cargo from the states, into Vietnam. When there were mobility teams, they would come along and get you. You never knew when it was. They just told you where to go, and that was it. Most of the time, you didn't know you were going anyway, until after you got on a plane. A couple of times, I delivered heavy equipment to different special forces camps, like dozers, front end loaders, trucks, and stuff like that.

K: How often did you go on these?

B: Sometimes you went a couple times a month. One time, we went for eight days in a row. I went somewhere different everyday. We went down to Delta, then up north. Then, they had pallet retrievers. They sent you out to get the pallets that they take to air drops and cargo drops. You would go around and gather them up in the field. Mostly, a lot of special forces camps had them laying around. We would go in there for two days or so and get them all loaded up, then they would bring planes in, and we would load them on. It all depended on whatever . . . They had off-load bladders in a lot of places.

K: When you are out picking those up in the field, weren't you afraid of getting shot at and stuff like that?

B: Yes, but you were pretty well. . . . They tried to secure the areas where you were at, but you never know. There were a couple times that we rushed to get away and get into the camp. If they would get word of something going on, they could tell when they had a patrol out. They would let you know. Most of the time, when we collected them, they were pretty close to the special forces camps. They weren't too far out past. . . . If they were, we didn't know. We just usually gathered the ones right around the airstrip. When we were resupplying and staying there over night, they could have a big move on. I was at Songjin when they had a big operation up there. I don't remember the names; we never knew the names of stuff like that. Big people knew that, but we just went and would

resupply them. The planes would come in, and we would off-load them. You would have to stay there; they would keep you there for two or three nights. They needed you, [and] you were right there. We stood guard duty and stuff like that, just like the Army and that, or whoever was there. There was a battery of 105s or something.

K: Were you ever attacked when you were at one of these camps?

B: Yes, at Songjin we were attacked. By then, Ton Son Nut went TET Offensive. We were in bunkers all night there, right by the flight line, where our 130s were and next to the north gate, not too far from Ake Vihn. We had bunker positions right there. We were there all night. Like I said, the one gate was right down from us. It wasn't more than a couple hundred yards [away].

K: Were those living, fighting bunkers? Is that what they called them?

B: These were there in case we were ever overrun, and they were there when I got there. Most of the time, the Vietnamese slept in them. They were supposed to be working during the day. We were there for two days in the one. That was the night they attacked Mac Vinh and tried to get into the gate down there. There were tracers everywhere. They were right in front of you. There were a couple snipers around. I didn't see them, but we heard shots. Then, they had Air Force quick reaction teams come around, and they were checking the areas out. They were firing at something. There was a water tank not too far away, right above it. They blew that full of holes. They said somebody was up there, but we don't know for sure. We were up [for] about three days straight. We were over at our work area, and we weren't allowed to go back to the barracks, because we were on red alert, and they didn't want to take any chances of snipers. The airfield was closed for, I think, six days or so. The guys that made out were the guys on R & R [rest and relaxation]. They didn't have to come back. But you couldn't get out and get back in.

When we did get back to the barracks, they had snipers on the base there, and we were getting hit. Pretty often, they would have rockets. I think they had a barracks, two or three up from ours, that rockets came in on and, I think, killed four guys. We were off of Charlie Row, right there in the barrack section, right across from the flight line. We were getting hit with mortars and mostly rockets. There wasn't really any

real artillery, but mostly, it happened in the middle of the night or early in the morning, like when we would start work and stuff.

K: Did it ever hit any planes or anything?

B: Yes. I got pictures. They hit planes right next to the flight line, right next to where the office was for the flight line base place. They hit 130s. They hit a 130 there that was disintegrated. There was a lumber yard not too far from our place behind the flight line that got hit with rockets. It was burning bad. They hit a couple [of] buildings right on the flight line a couple of times. They just blew them up. Not too far from where our work area was, next to the flight line . . . at night, [they] blew up a couple pallets with the cargo on it and stuff like that. They did some damage. They hit the terminal a couple of times. In fact, when some of the guys were leaving to go home, they hit the terminal. A couple of guys got killed the day they were leaving. The terminal wasn't too far from where we were working.

K: How big a base was this?

B: Ton Son Nut was big. It was the biggest over there.

K: It was a supply and transport base?

B: Yes, plus it was headquarters. It was headquarters for General S. Morlan and Mac Vinh headquarters. It was pretty big. It was the busiest airport in the world during the war, in 1967 and 1968. That and Bien Hoa. Plus, fighters were leaving and returning, and all of your cargo planes were leaving. Vietnamese fighter planes were going out for air strikes.

K: Was something always going on there?

B: Yes, it was busy. Everything was going on. We worked 12 hour shifts. When you were there, you worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week. They tried to give you one day off. You got one day off. It all depended.

K: How many guys stayed in your barracks?

B: We had things called gooches, which were a screen with shutters on the outside. It wasn't even shutters. Halfway up, they would be coming out. There was, I would say, 25 guys from bottom to top. There were maybe 40 guys on the bottom. Then, they had a top floor, too. They had a bottom and a top. There would be about 40 guys on each floor. Then, they would



have--I don't know how many barracks there were. There were lots of them where we were at. There were barracks on both sides.

K: Did you have a company mascot?

B: Not really. We didn't have a squadron. We didn't have a company, so we were a squadron. We didn't have any mascot, really. We had a baby ocelot. We got a cat. We had that for awhile. It died. I don't know if somebody poisoned it or what. We had that around the barracks for about six weeks.

K: Were there a lot of drugs and things like that?

B: When I was there, the drugs were there, but very few guys were really into them like they were after 1969, 1970, and above. They were there, but they were never as big as there were like in later years. The Vietnamese and civilians all had their own pot and stuff. It was more or less. . . . I don't know if it was legal for them, but it was easily obtainable. It wasn't as prevalent as it was in the later years. Most of the guys were usually either a head or a juicer, they used to call them. Juicers were the drinkers, and the heads used pot. I don't know how much [there] was of either one, but we drank more than anything.

K: Do you think the people back in the United States knew what was going on?

B: Not really. With all the protests, it used to make us mad over there, with what was going on. We would read in Stars and Stripes. I used to get the New Castle News over there. It used to come three or six weeks late, but I used to get it. Some of the things you would read in there. . . . You wouldn't like what was going on, but I think the media started a lot of stuff. I think they lied so much about what was going on that they just rowled the people up over there. The states would make it bad for us. We were just doing what we were told to do. You hated like hell that the country was divided, and you were over there, and you didn't know what was going on. You're just going by your orders. You were proud to fight and everything, and with the way the people acted, it made you feel like they weren't behind you. Half of the people were behind you and half of them weren't. That is just no way to fight a war.

K: When you went over, did you realize what Vietnam was, then?

- B: I never even thought about it until I got orders, when I was in Guire. I mean, I thought about it, but it was nothing to where I would be there. I talked to some guys that came back, but very few. I really wasn't concerned about it until we got orders. I didn't even know where it was at. I was in the Philippines for six months, too. I knew they were having problems. I was at Clark Air Base for six months on TDY. I knew how the weather and how the heat was. It was the same thing in the Philippines. I never thought much about it until I got there.
- K: Did you think it was going to end up the way it did?
- B: I thought we would have won. We were there. I was there from 1967 to 1968. I don't know. That's when it started escalating. They were bringing more people over, and that's when they brought the 82nd Airborne, 1st Brigade, or whoever it was in there. I was in on that, when they brought them into Bien Hoa. We were TDY at Bien Hoa for I don't know how long. I think it was Operation Bootstrap, if I am not mistaken. It might have been something different, but I'm not sure. They brought them over there. With the amount of men and the fire power that we had, I never thought it would go the way it did. It didn't work out that way.
- K: When you came home, was there a lot of animosity towards you?
- B: There was some. When I flew into . . . we left Ton Son Nut to come home, and there was a two hour delay at Ton Son Nut. Something happened to the plane, and he had to come back in. They had to readjust or do something to the plane. Then we left, and we went to Sakada, Japan, and then to Anchorage, Alaska. Then, we got into Travis Air Force Base, in California. We got in at 5 o'clock in the morning. Then, I went to San Francisco. After we got out of customs, we went to San Francisco to get a flight back to Pittsburgh. We had to stop off at Chicago, so I made sure I got home. I paid what they called back then [a] two-thirds fare for confirmed seats, instead of military stand-by. The military can go stand-by. You would pay half price. You didn't know how long or if you would make it back. You might get bumped off. So I paid the two-thirds fare, and I got a confirmed seat. When I got into Chicago, O'Hare [Airport], they told me I didn't have the two-thirds fare. I got there sometime early in the morning. I called my parents and told them that I would be in Pittsburgh within an hour. It was only 45 minutes to an hour ride. Here, I kept getting bumped. I didn't get there until 10 o'clock at night. They told me that I had no say so. They had all of these business men ahead of me, going back and forth. I

didn't get there until 10 o'clock, and that made me mad. I talked to some people at the airport, and it didn't do any good.

When I came home, my buddies never thought anything of it. It was not a big deal, and everybody was doing their own things. The only guys that I talked to were the guys in the neighborhood who were just going over. There were two of them. They were just going there. They were asking me about it. We would go out, and that was about it. Most of the other guys could care less. Nobody really. . . . They would just say, "Big deal," or, "I could care less if he was there or not." My family, they had a party for me when I came back. My one aunt, she had everybody out there. They had a big party. Other than that, it was just boring coming back. Do you know what I mean?

K: Did you do anything special for the holidays over there? Anything at Thanksgiving and Christmas?

B: On Thanksgiving, we were out on a mobility. We were out in the field. We didn't do anything that one Thanksgiving. We were out in the field, and we ate sea rations that day. I was in Bu Dop, in a special forces camp. They were supposed to fly hot chow in. We didn't get it until the next day.

On Christmas, I can't remember where I was. I am not too sure. I think I was in Ton Son Nut. I know we drank. That was about it. I don't remember doing anything special.

K: One of the guys told me that more guys probably killed themselves on Christmas from drinking and stuff like that.

B: They might have. I don't know. Where we were at, we drank a lot. We were working, too. You had to work regular days. We sang Christmas carols, I think. Everybody was drinking and singing Christmas carols, just trying to think of home. That was about it.

K: Did you get a lot of mail from home?

B: Yes, from my parents and different people, my cousins. That is about it. I wasn't going with anybody at the time. I didn't want to be. I wasn't engaged or anything. I didn't want any ties while I was in there and going over.

K: Did you join right after high school?

B: Yes. I graduated in 1965 and went in during April of 1966. I was going to go to school, but I didn't feel

like going to school. I was working, and then, I was getting tired. I was getting my draft notice, so I said, "I'll just sign up." I went in with five guys that I graduated with. I didn't even know that they were going. It just happened that we all went in at the same time.

K: Did they all make it back?

B: I think I was the only one that went to Vietnam, if I am not mistaken. A couple got out after they went in. Most of them were stationed in the states. They never went overseas.

K: What did you do the other two years that you were in? You were in the U.S., right?

B: I was in the Philippines. We were on mobilities in the States, too. I was stationed in Dover, Delaware when I came back, in the 436th Aero Port Squad. Whenever they had big moves going on. . . . We moved CV's to Vietnam up at. . . . And we moved them back. I went over to Greenland for nine weeks. We were up in Greenland resupplying them, clear up to the North Pole, at Tohle, Greenland. We were resupplying them with fuel. We had two flights a day on 141s. They hauled us all over. I went to Florida and North Carolina on TDY. We moved Navy submarine chasers over Bermuda. We moved whole squadrons out. We were there for two weeks doing that. We did that a couple of times. Some guys went to Operation Reforge, a NATO exercise in New York. I went to Greenland instead. We went to Greenland. They shipped us there.

K: Was there a big difference in the atmosphere between the guys in Greenland and the guys in Vietnam?

B: In Greenland, it's always winter up there. When we were there, it was six months late. They had six months of dark and six months of light. It was way different. Of course, that's a nice land to tour, too. Maybe some of the guys wished they were in Vietnam just to get away from the nothing up there. It was just a big rock. There were no trees or women. There was nothing. There's nothing to do except work, drink, and eat. It was boring as hell. I could never stand being a year up there. There was a big difference. Really, we never talked about it that much. It was just like when we came back to the states. Most of the guys that I came back with, the four I was stationed with over there, came back to Dover, Delaware together, but we never really talked a whole lot, just amongst ourselves. [We didn't talk] with other people. We just stayed by ourselves and stuff.

K: You said you had some pictures. Do you want to take a look at them?

B: Let me go get them.

This is at Ton Son Nut. These are the forklifts. We used adverse train forklifts to off-load the planes, and we used to take them on mobilities. They were four-wheel drive. You didn't have to worry about getting stuck too much.

These are some of the guys. There are a couple of the girls that were secretaries there on base.

K: [Were they] Vietnamese?

B: Yes. I don't know where they were in our section. That was when I was on mobility at Bu Dop.

This is the presidential palace in Saigon. I don't know what it is like now, but you could go into downtown Saigon.

K: What was downtown Saigon like?

B: Some places were dirty, but it was pretty in a lot of other places. There are big hotels, like the presidential palace and stuff. It was really pretty.

This is part of the guard place by the presidential palace. These are the streets there.

There are some of the guys in my barracks.

K: Were all of the guys in the barracks doing the same things?

B: Yes. Well, not everybody. They were in the same squad, but some guys worked on the flight line, some worked in different parts. It all depended. Some guys were steady mobility. They would go to outposts for six or eight weeks. They called them different operating locations. Then, they would come back. Some worked in the mail room for bulk and out-country mail. It all depended. Everything that came into the country and Ton Son Nut was handled by our squadron. Everything that went out was handled by our squad. That's counting the bodies and everything. Guys used to load them up.

There is the presidential palace. There are some more of the guys there. That was a band that they had down at the BEQ, in Saigon. It was where the officers used to stay.

This down at Delta, down at. . . . They had a big operation down there. It lasted the eight days that I was there. This picture was when it wasn't raining. See how clear it was. Here, it's raining like hell, and the mud used to stick to your shoes so bad. You had to work right in it.

K: Where are all the drums from?

B: Gas and JP4 for the choppers. The choppers were lining up over here. These are cobra gun ships. Here are the 123s. This is our squadron's radio jeep, air trap controllers, combat controllers. This is [a picture of] our men bringing in planes. They used to call in the frequencies, bring in the planes, and forward the frequencies for the choppers to come in to pick the guys up. They had Hueys coming in and picking them up. Cobras were refueling for air strikes. This is the Corski Sky Plane bringing supplies in. There is a Huey taking guys out.

This is a buy stop, [a picture of the] 82nd medical bus stop. They brought in two KIA's and one WIA. They brought them in. There was a makeshift hospital tent not too far down at the other end. They were bringing guys in right there. It was mostly Vietnamese there. They were bringing them in that time.

This is the same place, when it was raining and nice. We were out on a peninsula, three miles at sea. That is Greenland. Like I said, there is nothing up there.

That is Vietnam. These are the Saigon Docks, the docks in Saigon with ships.

K: Is this mostly U.S. stuff coming in at the docks?

B: Yes. I wasn't down there that much, but when I did see it, it was like that.

This is the Saigon Police. We used to call them "White Mice." They drove Harleys.

This is a picture of the Ton Son Nut med-o-vac. Our squadron used to have a fire truck there and a forklift all of the time. That's what they took the wounded back to either the Philippines or Japan [in], to other hospitals and stuff.

There's F4CR. F4Cs went out on constants or air strikes. That is what these guys here are, F4Cs.

That's a one-on-one Buddha. These are F4Cs here [in the picture]. That is a Canberra. It's from Australia. We called it a night bomber.

These are A1E's doing air strikes outside of Bay Tone TET.

K: Were there a lot of air strikes around TET?

B: Yes, around the air base, there was a lot. [They were] all of the time, especially when we were on red alert during the night. There was constant spooky flying around. All you saw were tracers all night long in front of you and behind you. This was down at Delta, too. We were down there. This is a chopper. This used to be a plane. It got hit with a rocket, about 100 yards from our barracks.

This is [a picture of] Son Bien [and] special forces. Actually, it's an advisory. They had advisors there, [the] CIDD troops. An AK47 could capture anything. Everybody used to get them and they would capture them. Everybody had one.

There's a mortar that we had set up. We had a battery. The 101st, I think, had a battery of 175s that they brought up. They moved them in, and it was right next to the airstrip. In fact, at night we used to keep our adverse train forklift there for protection, because the airstrip was unsecure at night. So we kept it in there. We stayed in there a couple of nights. Most of the time, we went back to our little camp. It was an old French fort, actually. We went through Batavia, Son Bien, and up to the old French fort.

This is Son Bien. It says, "Welcome to Son Bien, Gateway to Cambodia. Home of the Dirty Dozen." That was our shack we had on the airstrip. That was just for the day. It didn't mean anything. We very seldom had that many people going through there.

There is a 123 bringing in ammunition. There's a 175 and a 123 taking off. This is the way the strip looked. Everything was dirt and mud.

This was one of the mortar pits they had up there near the fence. They had eight inch SPs. They had a battery of them up there. This is a chopper here. This is inside of a chopper. I took this [picture]. I suppose this is Charlie Row. Our barracks is right on the other side. This is where they parked all of the 123s. The 11th Air Commander's Squad was right there. There's a 124 bringing in fire trucks and stuff. And these are some of the guys that were in our barracks at night.

This is at Bu Dop. This is a South Vietnamese CIDG troop. They had an operation, where they had to come

back off of patrol. We were there when they had. . . . Some battery 105s were supposed to come in that day, but they didn't. We were bringing in supplies. This is the strip. There is nothing to the place; it's just a special forces camp. There was nothing there. I got the NVA flag off of them. They brought it in. They captured it somewhere. It was up there for two weeks. This [picture] was down at Delta. These were guys coming in to rejoin their units out in the field. That's pretty much it. The rest of the stuff is of Dover, Delaware.

K: Is there anything that you want to add, like any stories?

B: Not really. About the TET. . . . After the TET, the areas of Saigon was just shattered. I got pictures of them, but [they're] mostly slides. We went through there, and we were going back to Bein Hoa. We were going up there for seven days on mobility. We went through Chulong on my truck, by convoy. Chulong was just shot up everywhere. Saigon and a lot of places were a mess. Then, we went down there after the TET. The radio stations and stuff was all. . . . That is when they got into the embassy and stuff. Everything was just shot up downtown. They had an antique race track there. I don't know how old it was, but they used it for the batteries of 105s in there. I forget what they used to call them. We were just seeing what happened. Chulong was almost leveled after that.

When I got to Dover, when I came back, we handled all of the bodies on the East Coast. They had the mortuary in Dover, Delaware. You saw all of these guys from Beirut come home.

K: Yes.

B: We handled all of the bodies that were killed while I was down in Dover, during 1969 and 1970. When they came in on the East Coast, they'd come here. When they went in on the West Coast, they came into Travis. We used to handle all the ones from Hamburger Hill and all of those. Sometimes we had 20 a day. Sometimes, [there were] 10 or 15. They were in transfer cases, so we would off-load them, and if they were going back out, we would ship them back out somewhere else. The mortuary would take care of them after that.

K: Did it affect you? Did you think about it at all?

B: Oh, yes. It reminded me . . . I had seen quite a few dead over there. The guys were really town up. There were a lot of dead gooks.



While I was there, we took pictures of them. We got hit one night, and there were a bunch of them on the wire. They were laying there, and we all took pictures and posed by them. It was a big deal, then. I have them, but I don't usually show them. I don't care to look at them.

It brought back memories. I used to read the transfer cases when they would come into the records, to see if there was anybody that I knew. I think one kid died in Ellwood, if I am not mistaken. I read it. It said Ellwood City, but I can't remember. It has been so long ago. We used to read the records and maybe there was somebody that we knew. It told you where they got killed, and who were their witnesses and how they died.

It brought back memories. The smell from the transfer case itself, brought back memories from over there.

K: How long did you do that?

B: It was just right along with our other job down in Dover. We would off-load the planes when they came in. When they had cargoes on, we off-loaded. Most of the time, they'd tell you on the manifest what was coming in. If it was bodies, you had to off-load them. They were on pallets, and they were tied down and everything. You just had to off-load the pallet. If there was maybe one of. . . . Most of everything was on a palletized load, it wasn't. . . . Whenever they would come in . . . somedays you wouldn't even off-load them; another crew would. We had four crews. There were six guys on a crew, on a shift, plus bus drivers and stuff. You were pretty busy down there. It depended if they came in or not. On the West Coast, they used to go to Travis. They used to handle everybody out there. It all depended. We worked three shifts down there. They would come in at night turn, day light, or anytime.

K: Over in Vietnam, did you load them on and things like that?

B: Yes. As far as Ton Son Nut, they were loaded on in the out country, out of our squadron. They would ship everything to the states. Once in a while, you would see a transferred case there. As far as in the field, I loaded the rubber bags and stuff like that. Most of the Vietnamese, a lot of the time, if nobody claimed them, they would lay them out and bury a lot of them. The ones that we had up there, after that one fire fight the night before, they just had the other groups bury them. We took their papers and stuff, and then they would line all of their guns up. They used to ship the stuff to what they called seamat, down in

Saigon. It was all captured equipment. It used to go down there. Sometimes, they would ship it back to the states, to the Aberdeen Recruiting Grounds. They would check it out. We had a captured truck over there one time. It was a Chinese [one]. I don't know actually who made it, but it had new China tires, and it had Chinese writing on it. It looked just like one of our trucks, like a GM or something. It looked like a 40 millimeter canon.

K: Did you get a chance to drive it?

B: No. It wouldn't run, because it was hit, and they wanted to keep it. So they towed it into Bu Dop. From there, we loaded it on a 130, and they hauled it out. They took it down to Saigon. I don't know what they did there. A couple weeks later, they shipped it back to the states, I guess. They used to get a lot of captured equipment, like canteens, pictures, and stuff like that.

K: All right.

B: That is about it.

K: Thanks a lot.

B: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW