

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Vietnam Veterans Project

Personal Experience

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JOHN R. FISHER

Interviewed

by

Thomas W. Kirker

on

October 31, 1983

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: JOHN R. FISHER
INTERVIEWER: Thomas W. Kirker
SUBJECT: Training, Special Forces, S. Vietnamese troops
DATE: October 31, 1983

K: This is an interview with John R. Fisher for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Vietnam Veterans Project, by Thomas W. Kirker, on October 31, 1983, at Mr. Fisher's house at 1229 Randolph Street, New Castle, PA, at 2:00 p.m.

How did you get into the service? Were you drafted?

F: I enlisted in the Army, June 19, 1961. I volunteered for special forces, and I volunteered for overseas assignments.

K: What special training did you get in special forces?

F: I went to ranger school and airborne school. I received a special course in underwater demolitions by UDT Team 12, on Okinawa, after I was there. As a cooperational type of educational program, we put them through jump school. I was a master jumper in the military. I was a qualified UDT man, and I was an airborne ranger.

K: You were quite a specialist.

F: I received very extensive training, and I felt that my extensive training is the reason that I am talking to you on this tape right now.

K: Did you basically train here in the United States at

Fort Bragg?

F: I trained at Fort Bragg. I trained out in Colorado. I went to mountain school. I trained in Panama. I went to jungle school; I went to the Malaysian Jungle School in Malaysia. The rest of my training was medical school at Fort Sam, Houston and at Fort Bragg. The vast amount of my training was from practical experience through people, who had served in either World War II or the Korean Conflict, that were already veterans serving on Okinawa with the First Special Forces Group. We had team training. We trained each other to do each other's jobs.

K: How many were on a team?

F: There were twelve men on a team. We had a captain, a first lieutenant, a team sergeant, a sergeant first class designated as team sergeant, and an operations intelligent sergeant. Then, we went down through the medical ranks. You could split a team in half. In other words, there were twelve men on a team, and you could take that first half of the team; and they could do the same thing as the second half of the team.

K: What different types of . . . MOS's are in the Army?

F: The MOS's I am not sure of the classifications of them now. We had medical MOS, which was 914. We had a weapons MOS, which was 111. Demolition was 056. Communications was 051. Your operations, I really can't remember the MOS.

We had two communication specialists, two demolitions specialists, two medical specialists, two operations intelligent specialists, and two officers on a team.

K: That is quite an expertise. When you got the training in the United States, then, you trained extensively as a team?

F: Absolutely.

K: Then, you went into Vietnam as a team?

F: I went to Okinawa and picked up the rest of the team, and we stayed together for the entire time that I spent between Okinawa and Vietnam. At the time I first went, we went for six months at a time. Unless we lost a person on our team, we stayed together. We lived, slept, and breathed together. We respected each other, and we helped each other. This is what it is all about. You had to help each other.

K: What was the unit designation?

F: I was on an A team. In the first special forces group, I served in Company B, First Special Forces Group Airborne on Okinawa. I served in the 7th group and 6th group. I have a little thing here where I kept track of the different units that I was in a Vietnam. Not only in Vietnam, but also in the States.

I served in the first group on Okinawa, the fifth group in Vietnam. I was in instructor in Medical School special forces training group airborne at Fort Bragg. I was in the 7th Special Forces Group, and I was in the 6th Special Forces Group.

K: Were there any major differences between each group?

F: Sure. These two were basically in Vietnam, the first group and the fifth group. The seventh group came later. Special Forces Training Group were people who had served in Vietnam and had served through special forces training and came back to instruct new trainees. This was special forces training group, and it was a white flash. The First Special Forces Group is a yellow flash. You will notice that it has a black outline on it. This happened after President Kennedy was killed in 1963 in November the next month coming. We decided that President was the only person that believed and trusted in us. He was at Fort Bragg, and I met him personally. I shook his hand; he put my beret on my head on December 7, 1961. He was the only one who believed in what we were doing. We honored him by putting the black outline when he was killed.

The seventh group at Fort Bragg was the forerunner of all special forces. It used to be known as 77th Special Forces Group. I belonged to that just before I got out.

In the sixth group, I was interim before I went to the training group as an instructor when I came back.

K: How did you first get interested in special forces? I know that they are the elite.

F: My brother was a paratrooper, and I wanted to be a paratrooper. I really enjoyed jumping out of airplanes. I got interested by a fellow in New Castle, Bill Gorst, who was a skydiver, and I got involved in that. When I went into the Army, I already had six jumps.

K: How many do you have now?

F: I have a total of 283 military jumps and 187 free falls.

K: That is almost two jumps a week when you were in the service.

F: I was also attached to a group of people who were involved with the airborne test committee at Fort Bragg. I might have had that backwards. It was 187 military jumps and 283 free falls.

K: Is that where you trained?

F: The ARVNS had nothing to do with free falls or anything like that.

K: When did you first go into Vietnam?

F: [In] 1962.

K: You were one of the original advisors, then?

F: Yes.

K: What was your grade at that time?

F: Specialist 4th Class.

K: What province did you go into at first? Did you go directly to a province or a city?

F: We went directly to an A Team sight, Ba Don. We had lost a couple of American advisors out there. We were feeling our way through it at first. That is what you do. You have to gain the confidence of the people and insure them that you are there for their benefit. They, in turn, either respect or disrespect you, and you know whether or not you can trust these people. Some you can, and some you can't.

I found that being in the mountain region of Vietnam . . . I was associated with the Rah Dei tribesmen. They were very, very highly respected people and very good soldiers. They were always to be trusted. We did operations together. We would work with two or three Americans and a company of what we call Strike Force. They were the Rah Dei tribesmen, and we did very well together.

When I was associated with the regulars, I didn't have the confidence in them, and I didn't feel that I could completely and fully trust them. They were subject to through down their weapons and leave you with one or two Americans, which ever was on the patrol.

K: They didn't have the tendency to stick it out then?

F: They didn't have the will to win or the esprit de corps that I was used to being associated with the unit that I was involved in.

K: Today, we often hear that term "advisor." What exactly was an advisor in early Vietnam? What actually did you do?

F: We trained those people in guerrilla warfare. When we first sent them out on patrols, some of them were scared. A lot of us guys were afraid. I was a very young one at the time. I was scared also. They would not fulfill a mission. They would not go where they were supposed to and report back information that we needed, so we found it necessary to send Americans with them to make sure that they reached the designated area and make sure that they fulfilled the mission that they were sent to do. This is how the advisor capacity expanded. We weren't really supposed to go with them. We were supposed to train them and trust their intelligence reports back to us. We found that they did not return correct intelligence to us, and so, we accompanied them on patrol.

K: You trained them in such counter in sergency, demolitions, and things of that sort?

F: Yes, but not demolitions so to speak. There were some that were. We had no part in that. Basically, what we had was an infantry country to go along with us, and we would make sure that they reached their designated areas and reported properly to us. We taught them how to make intelligence reports correctly and bring back correct information. We used to get involved in fire fights and things of this nature. At the time that I first went to Vietnam, there was no such thing as a "Do not put a magazine in your weapon. You are not allowed to shoot," or anything like this. If you received fire, then you returned fire. You didn't intentionally, as later on when I came back home . . . none of us every intentionally injured any women or children or hurt anybody. I don't want to say that, on purpose. If we received fire from an area, and we returned fire; and at the end of the fire, who really did the damage, who is to know? They had us labeled as "Kennedy's Killers" and "Hired Assassins," or whatever. All we were trying to do was help those people. At the first time when I went to Vietnam, those people appreciated us and appreciated what we were doing and tried to help to the best of their ability.

K: Were any of the teams inside villages or did you. . . ?

F: We lived in the village.

K: You got to know the people?

F: And the chiefs. This was with the Rah Dei people. We got to know the other people throughout my different tours in Vietnam. Some you could trust, and some you couldn't. Some of them were actually on your side during the day and stepping off paces for the mortar rounds during the night. You had no way of knowing who was who because they all look exactly the same. They all wore the same kind of attire. There was no military uniform in Vietnam other than the NVA. Those were uniformed soldiers. I never really had too much to do with ARVAs or any of those. Basically, when I was involved with Vietnam, we were associated with the Vietcong as a black pajamad individual, that could wear black pajamas at night and wear the uniform during the day. It was very difficult to distinguish between the two.

K: Did you ever know if you faced any NVA regulars or anything like that?

F: I never faced any NVA regulars.

K: Mostly Vietcong?

F: Yes, right, per se. The North Vietnamese people wanted that country very bad and that is why they got it.

Our government would not allow us to do what we were sent there to do in the first place. I feel that what should have been done in my own estimation was to bring the Republic of Vietnam soldiers here, train them, send them over there, and defend their own country. We were there as advisors to help them with their communication problems, guerrilla warfare tactics, and encounter in sergency missions.

We were hamstrung, because we had to go through Vietnamese channels. Some of those people could be bought and sold. Before we went on an operation, they enemy had the information before we did. Consequently, we went out and lost a lot of Americans.

I don't feel that the answer was a troop build-up. I don't feel escalation in that war was the answer. I feel that our mission was appropriate, and had we been allowed to carry out our mission to the fullest extent of our capability, that war would have never gone as far as it did; and I don't feel that there would have been 50,000 American lives lost.

They had people. They sent Marines, Navy people, seals, Army . . . , YDT people wastefully. They were not allowed to do the job that they were sent there to

do. They were highly trained individuals. They were very knife-edged individuals. It is a straight line. We going to go here, and we are going to do this. Fine. Let us go do it, but we don't have to clear it through Vietnamese channels. We don't have to do this. Let us do our job.

K: They wouldn't let you do that?

F: No, they would not.

We were not allowed to cross borders. It is very difficult for me to recollect a lot of things. We were really hamstrung. We weren't allowed to do our mission as we were trained to do it. We were very, very well trained individuals, highly technical in all fields. So were the Marines, Seals, Larps, and the UDT people and the special operations group that was involved in Vietnam. We were very highly trained individuals that were honed to the knife edge and were not allowed to complete their mission as we were trained to do.

K: Did you every have occasional work with the Larps and the long range patrols?

F: Yes, I did. I worked with special operations group, and I associated with Marines, Navy personnel; and it was a good thing. We had a good thing going.

President Johnson and Mr. Harold K. Johnson, who I think had something to do with defense, said it would never work, and that is when they started dismantling special forces and they sent the big troop build-up to Vietnam.

K: When you were there, they were just starting the strategic camps?

F: When I first went to Vietnam, we had strategic camps.

K: You were then already in that program that they had set up?

F: Sure. We set it up.

K: Did it work very well?

F: Sure, it did. But you had to . . . some security for these people because the VC would run ramped over these people, and they destroyed a lot of them. It was a shame what happened over there. The biggest shame of all was, after we committed ourselves to 50,000 Americans or 55,000 Americans killed, that we gave it back. We dumped helicopters off of ships and blew up ammo dumps and just left military equipment there and never

brought it back. All of a sudden when I got back here, there was a gasoline shortage. I saw thousands of barrels of gasoline and all kinds of vehicles over there that they just left here. When I came back home, I had to face a crisis in my own country. I get off of an airplane, and somebody spits in my face. I didn't expect that. I expected those people to spit on me, but not the American citizens to spit on me. All I did was what I was asked to do. I did it to the very best of my ability, and that is why I am talking to right now.

K: When did you get back?

F: I got back in 1966.

K: They were already giving you a hard time then?

F: That is right.

K: When you were at base camp, how many different ones were there or different ones that you were at, special forces camps or training camps?

F: I have a map here. I can't remember all of those things. It has been too long.

K: That is all right.

F: I will just give you a few. A Long Ban Don, Ban Me Thout, Bumic, Bun se da, Bump Brang, Da Lat, Teta long lei, Long Swen, Can Tho, Long ton, Phu Bi. I was in a C Team at Nha Trang for awhile.

K: Basically in the southern China part.

F: They were down here and up here. I traveled all four course for thirty-seven months.

K: How many tours did you do?

F: I had thirty-seven months in Vietnam.

K: That is a little better than three tours.

F: When they first sent people to Vietnam, we went six months at a time. Afterwards, we went for a year at a time. So, I spent thirty-seven months there. I spent fifty-two months in the Far East.

K: Did most people stay that long?

F: I had a lot of friends that did. Anybody that was in special forces that wanted to stay and make a career out of it did. They stayed as long as that was your

job. Once you decided, you could quit at any time in special forces. You could quit and they would put you in a regular unit. I didn't want to go with a regular unit because I didn't feel that the regular units received the training that some of us did. I wanted to stay with guys that had been there, did, knew, and took care of each other.

K: How many green beret special forces were at a base camp? Was there a set amount?

F: There was. For an A Team it was twelve. For a B Team it was in the twenties, and for a C Team it was a little bit more than that. I can't remember exactly about B Teams and C Teams. I can't remember exactly how many people that they did have.

K: They were the fully forethought wire and fortifications also?

F: We had fortifications at our base camps. We set up fortifications. We were not there to allow the enemy to. . . .

There is an interesting article in this National Geographic 1965 that explains about the Ra Dei tribesmen and Ba Don and Boo Prang Boon Sar Pa--Bumiga. Captain Gillespie was a team commander at Bou Prang.

K: Did you know him?

F: Yes, I did. I knew Captain Cockran and Captain Donlon, who got a medal of honor in Vietnam.

Here are some interesting pictures of tribal life and the costumes, tribal dress, that they wore. The sacrifices and the way they treated us. . . . We had these things whenever a team came into the country or get through those sleepless nights and gave us a lot of guidance.

That is why I say that nothing replaces experience. We have a lot of talent in a lot of educational things that we can do with our military through people that have served and have been battered up, hurt, and seen a lot of war. Not to take those people back or do something like that, but they could be very helpful advisors, instructors in a capacity like this. This is what we need. Everybody had to experience something the first time.

It behooves the government if they are going to get involved in something like this again to understand that the American people, the children of our nation, have understood what has happened to the Vietnam sol-

dier, the Korean, and any soldier that served. As soon as the purpose is done, you forget them. They are no longer viable to you. They have to understand that these people have feelings too. They were used for whatever reasons, political reasons, as in Vietnam.

I feel that it was strictly a political war. They do have something to offer this country and all they wanted was the same benefits that World War I and World War II Veterans benefited from. With the present administration and other people, what they are trying to do is take away the hospitals and what little bit of benefits we do have. The guys say, "Well, why should I go risk my life and do that." It wasn't any politician that sat in Washington that had his butt on the line. It is hard to imagine. People are very callus. As long as it is not them, it doesn't hurt them. "Go take that hill." It is fine to say that. "It shouldn't have taken you that long." That is fine to say that too, but he wasn't the one who was getting shot at or whoever it was.

I just feel that we did the very best that we could in Vietnam, and I feel that a lot of the news media hurt the Vietnam soldier because they didn't show the typical Vietnam soldier. They didn't show the guy that was out on the line and doing the job. They showed the guy that made a mistake. They played that up to the hilt on television. When I came home from Vietnam, that is they only thing they showed, who was involved with dope or something like that. It didn't show the guy that served and was trying to do this country proud. They didn't show him. They didn't show the guy that went out and was really putting forth an effort and was hurt because of it. They didn't show of that.

K: What would a day be like while you were on patrol, if you had to get up and jump off this morning?

F: We never went for a day. We went for several days, a week, ten day, and sometimes two weeks. You would just get up and go do it. I can't put it any simpler than that. It wasn't something that you could put into words. You have an objective. You have a reconnaissance mission, and you have your maps and intelligence. You have a situation report that you want to file when you get back. You have to go collect information, and you have to go do it. This is during my period of time in Vietnam. The people that served later were involved in a lot a contact. We were involved in contact almost every time that we were on patrol. Some of it was small contact, and some of it was large contact. You never knew what to expect. You never knew what you were going to face. You never knew if you were coming back or if you weren't.

You just took one day at a time. It is nothing that I had done, or anybody that had served in Vietnam had done, that anyone else back here couldn't have done or wouldn't have done if the circumstances would have been different. Everybody went through this period of time that they were saying it was a political way, and I suppose it was. A lot of this stuff transpired after I was there. I didn't here about it over there. You don't here about those things over there. "They show all these people those things back here. We never saw anything over there. We just went on a day-to-day basis and daily routines.

We would rotate two to three American with a company size unit of strike force. I would come back, and somebody else would go out. It was a search-and-destroy type of thing. There is supposed to be a cache of supplies here, ammunition, guns, or food supplies. You want to destroy the supplies. It was a search-and-destroy type of thing.

K: Did you think it worked when you were there with search-and-destroy missions?

F: I think we had a lot of good results with it. I think what happened [was], when they had their first big troop build-up after the Vietcong or North Vietnamese regulars bombed that hospital in Pleiku, President Johnson decided that was enough of that and he committed a large amount of forces in Vietnam. In my estimation, what that did was give the Vietcong, the North Vietnamese regulars, the Chicongs, and whoever else a large target. As small unit, we were very effective with hit-and-run tactics. With a large-sized unit, consequently, they lost a lot of Americans. If you take a battalion size unit in the Marines, Army, Air Force, or anybody else and put them in a confined area and run patrols out of that, the Vietcong or the North Vietnamese regulars are not going to take those small patrols that are operational. They are going to drop mortars or whatever they can drop on a large size to kill more Americans.

I think the entire operation would have been better off if it had been kept as a guerrilla or a counter sergen-cy operation.

K: Did you think that were going to escalate it back in the early 1960s?

F: The last time I was in Vietnam was when they bombed the hospital in Pleiku. I was in Nha Trang ready to leave the country. They took a bunch of special forces medics and soldiers there to go up and assist. I

didn't know what was going on; I was back in Okinawa. They were sending a contingent of Marines over there.

They hamstrung those guys. They weren't allowed to lock and load and whatever. From my understanding of different people, it was the wrong way to do it. If you have a weapon in your hand and your life is in jeopardy, the life of your comrade or the life of the people that you are defending is in jeopardy, you should be allowed to return fire and do whatever is necessary to take care of the situation. They weren't allowed to do it.

K: Overall, what did you think of the country Vietnam and the people?

F: When I first went there, the Vietnamese people appreciated us and wanted us there and appreciated what we were doing for them. As the latter part, whatever changed their minds or that, they weren't as receptive, pleasant. They were kind of standoffish and arrogant. They weren't like the way they were when I first went to Vietnam. That is why I say that I feel that they should have just kept it on a low keel--train those people, let them fight their own war and not have involved so many thousands of Americans.

By the same token with those thousands of Americans that were involved, had they allowed them to go over there and do the job, it would never have lasted as long as it did. A guerrilla was in a very tough situation, because you don't want to get involved with unnecessarily injuring citizens, women or children. This Calley deal and Mai Lai Massacre was a farce in my estimation. First of all, I saw the pictures. If those individuals were machine-gunned as they say, no one falls with their arms at their sides in a straight line in a ditch. I don't know how many people have seen people who were machine-gunned, but it doesn't happen that way. Your body is twisted and turned, and you just don't lay down in a straight line.

When I was in Vietnam and you were on an operation where you encountered enemy contact, you had to account for bodies. You lined them up and took samples of dirt from under their fingernails, took a clip from their toenails. You sent that all back, so they could register this with the B-Team. They could determine by the calcium by their fingernails and hair as to what diet they were on. The dirt that was under their fingernail could determine what region of the country they came from. They were trying to determine where these people were coming from.

I just feel that he was in a situation where he had no

control over them. I don't really believe that Lieutenant Calley or any officer in any military branch in Vietnam would directly order a massacre like that to take place. I have seen the way the Vietnamese [soldiers] treated the kids and the women and people. We never did those kind of things. I feel that it was definitely and injustice to Lieutenant Calley.

K: Did you feel that when you came home and even today are facing a lot of prejudice after serving the war?

F: I haven't for a long time. When I first came home I did, when I first got off of the plane in Oakland, California. Back here, you are among friends and people that understand you and know your moral fiber and what you are about. Anybody that had served in any military branch did what he was told to do and did it to the best of his ability. I don't care if it was the World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Dominican Republic, Laos, or wherever. Whatever a soldier was told to do, he did it to the best of his ability.

K: I think most people get an impression of green berets and special forces from the movie The Green Beret with John Wayne in it. How does that depict the green berets?

F: I will tell you about that movie. I am not a person about glory things like that. It was a very philosophical movie in this respect. It took the time to go into detail about so much as the Rolex watch and the special forces lighter. We all had those. They flowered it up a lot for commercial use on television as far as all of the stuff that went on up in North Vietnam and things like this and him crashing in a helicopter and escaping. They kind of made it a flowery thing. A lot of the things in there were very true as far as the camp being overrun. It was a similar camp to Nam Dong. It was overrun in about the same manner. They did a lot of research on it. It was a flowery type of thing.

The Deer Hunter, I didn't care for. It was too much on the psychological thing and too much on blood and guts. I don't like that kind of thing.

Vietnam was a very nasty place. It was the butt of the world, but there were a lot of good people there and a lot of good soldiers that did a lot of good things. I don't feel that these soldiers should be represented in this manner. I feel that they really worked hard and really tried hard. To bring movies out and show the kinds of things that they show in some of these movies is way off the wall. It is all of the power production

and the power of Hollywood. This is what they American people want to see. The American people are into horror movies now. This "Amityville" and "ghost story" and all of that is involved with the devil and blood and all of that kind of stuff. This is what these people want. That makes big Hollywood production. I don't buy that. I like to see something that just shows.

They go into detail in The Green Beret about the scrounger who went and got stuff. We had those people. You had to. You just didn't have the equipment at hand. You went and scrounged from this guy and that guy. You got what you needed to continue you mission. These kind of things I appreciate in a movie. As far as all of the nasty stuff, I don't like that. I have seen enough of that stuff, and everybody who served there has. It is something that we would soon like to forget.

The only reason why I agree to talk to you is I would like to enlighten the teenage Americans. We are Americans, and we have the best darn country in the whole world. If we don't show our government and our people that we are willing to stand up and do what is right by all of the free world, we are not going to have a free country. We are all going to be speaking Russian. That is one thing. They will have one hell of time coming to my door and knocking on my door and getting me to speak Russian. That is one thing that I will stand up for, the American rite, the American way. We are all here, and that is why I am allowed to make this tape with you; and that is what I believe in. I believe in God, and I believe in my country. I believe in the President of the United States although he doesn't make all the right decisions. He makes good decisions as far as he understands. He does just what he can do with what the Congress and the Senate will allow him to do. He is only one person. I am only one person, and I am only stating my opinion.

K: Is there anything else that you would want to add or anything that you feel that we missed that you would like to go over?

F: I was proud to be an American soldier. I have never done anything in my life, in the war, or serving in my country that I am ever ashamed of. I have never intentionally hurt anybody or did any of the atrocities that the press in this country wants you to believe. We guys were just like you and me talking right now. We were just soldiers. We were just kids. We were going through a learning experience. It might be something that we can pass on to somebody and let them know, "Hey, believe in what we have done and try to do

right." That is basically what it was all about. All I would like the country and all of the people to know is that all of the Vietnam soldiers believed in what they were doing at the time they were doing it and just trying really to do the right thing. That is all that I can say. I am not a very colorful person.

K: What high school did you go to?

F: I went to New Castle Senior High School. I graduated.

K: What year did you graduate?

F: [In] 1961.

(Referring to pictures). This was taken on Okinawa in the Yomitan Drop Zone on Okinawa. This is a parachute jump over there. This was taken on Okinawa. That is Bill Purser, a buddy of mine and Bill Mowry another buddy of mine. This young fellow, John Kendra, lived right down the street here. We served all of our military career together and never enlisted on the buddy plan. We served in special forces together. He was a radio operator at the time, and I was a medic. These are some more jump pictures here. Yomitan Drop Zone on Okinawa.

This is at Fort Bragg. These are some pictures of Sicily Drop Zone. This was taken at Ba Don at Vietnam. This is a kid by the name of Griffith. This is my interpreter E. Bluey. This is my team leader Papper Cochran. You can't see very well there, but he had a little monkey. We used to collect little animals that we would find along the way. We were feeding that little monkey. That is a picture of me relaxing a little bit.

This is the fellow that I mentioned to you, Sergeant Major Warren. He served from World War II through all of the major conflicts.

Truman Ford served in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and the Dominican Republic

Sergeant Panky served in the World War II and the Korean War. He didn't make Laos, but he made Vietnam.

Sergeant Faulkner served in Korea, Laos, and Vietnam.

That is Sergeant Warren and myself and Long. He served through the three wars. E. Bluey and E. Nar were my two interpreters. Sergeant Faulkner was the Senior Medic on the team. He was pulling a tooth there. This is that little monkey that we had out there. That is Pappy Cochran with the monkey again feeding him.

Sergeant Cole and Sergeant Fanning. I had the names written on the back of the pictures. My little tabs kept falling off, so I glued them in there; and I can't read them.

This is our Commo bunker. We had an arrow on the top of it that you turn whichever way you were getting hit from and you had smudge pots on the top. You would light those. The air strike would come in and know what direction the enemy was coming from. They would drop their arsenal on the enemy from whatever direction you would point the arrow.

We used elephants for resupply when we were at Ban Don.

This was a medical shack. This is inside the compound. This is the barbed wire that we had around the compound. There is a C-123 at our airstrip. This is going from Ban Me Thuot. This is the road. I think it was 46. We used a forward operational basis. We lived in shacks made with ponchos. This is what we stayed in.

This was just before an encounter. There was a group of VC here just before we made contact. This is a 60 millimeter mortar bunker that we had inside the compound.

We had a pet dog over there.

This is inside our team mess hall. We had a little poker table. That was before we left.

This was in Saigon. We were on R & R. This was my hooch inside the compound where I stayed. This is where I slept. That was my bunk. This was coming in from patrol, and this was after I cleaned up.

This was taken in Bangkok, Thailand. We were on R & R. This is a typical punji-stake mortars. They had the old french triangular forts, and we had punji stakes in there. These are all punji stakes here. These were all taken over in Bangkok. This is in An Loc. This was one unfortunate VC that was killed on an operation, and we brought his body back.

We had these gun boats that we used over there. We had airplane engines on them just like they use down in Florida.

K: Air boats.

F: Yes, air boats. We had machine guns on them.

This was taken at a dispensary we had in An Loc, Vietnam. We had hospital beds for all of the local people. We ran people-to-people programs. We went to the different villages. Basically, what those people needed in those villages was just some soap, water, and personal hygiene training. Our medics really did a lot with people-to-people. Your medical thing was a really big thing in Vietnam. The team medics that we had had proto-type kits that we used for gram stains and BURNELL Purnell disease and all different kinds of things that we could pick up on these people. The guys really did one heck of job over there. They were really involved with this, and they wanted to help the people. This is what I am trying to tell you, the guys had their hearts in the right place.

I showed you that first mortar bunker. This was an 81 mortar bunker. This is a new type that we built over there. It is all reinforced concrete. This is inside the compound at An Long. This is a medic on the team, Roland G. Marquis. He was one heck of a fine medic. Choffey was a radio operator. This fellow here. . . . Do you every read Mad Magazine?

K: Yes.

F: He was one of the finest machine gunners of the locals that I have ever seen. You can look at him, and he looks likes Alfred E. Newman.

This is Marquis again. He had been wounded there.

These were the nurses that we had. They were the local Vietnamese nurses that worked with the medical detachment. We had a big tower. We had .57 P rifles and rifle and .50 caliber machine gun on it.

This is coming into our base camp at An Long. You can see the tower. You can see the field of fire that we had. This was taken at Hong Nu. It was a place that we used to go up, and maybe we would have a beer or two once in awhile. We used to run a medical dispensary here at Hong Nu. We used to go up there on a daily basis and treat anybody that had any problems.

This is all An Loc here coming into our camp at different places here.

This was taken at Fort Knox, Kentucky when I first went into the Army.

These pictures are a couple of buddies of mine and me. This was inside the barracks at Fort Knox. This was taken at Fort Sam. This was taken at the dog lab at Fort Bragg where I went to be an instructor later on in

my military career. These are some old friends and some nice things.

These were taken at Ton Son Nut Air Base. There were fortifications around military airplanes. This is after I was there. That was when I was taking basic training. Here is a picture of me when I was in jump school. This is a jump picture here with some parachutes on it.

K: Did you take this one?

F: No, a friend of mine took it.

K: Are you in here jumping?

F: Not that one. I had one someplace. A guy took a picture. I had a malfunction one time.

There is my Vietnamese driver's license. This is interesting here. There is a picture here of an elephant that stumbled through our mine field. It got blown up. After everything took place and all the tissue was gone and everything, that is the skull of an elephant.

K: Did you see many elephants there?

F: Oh, yes. We used them for resupply for our fort operational bases at Ban Don.

K: How many of them did you use?

F: Usually four to six. We used them to carry resupplies to fort operational bases when we couldn't get helicopters.

A friend of mine gave me this picture here, Bob Proneir. We belonged to the skydiving club together. We had a parachute motto--you call; I'll fall. We dive at flue. . . .

I came back, and I was in a plague survey with a very good group of fellows that were all special forces soldiers. Dir. James Rust Sergeant Wellington, myself, and some other guys were out in New Mexico. They requested a special forces medical team to come out. We were out there for six weeks.

That was at a military ball on Okinawa. That is myself and a buddy's wife. He was still off island. I took her to the military ball that we had. General Lincoln was leaving Okinawa.

That is about it. I have some other pictures, but I

don't to show those.

K: How long were you in the service altogether?

F: Six years.

K: That must have been 1961 to 1966.

F: Yes. My term in the service was June 1961 to November 1966.

K: That is it then.

END OF INTERVIEW