

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Vietnam Conflict 1961-75

Personal Experience

O H 1029

MICHAEL VILLAGE

Interviewed

by

Michael Lowery

on

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L This is an interview with Michael Village for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Vietnam Veterans, by Michael Lowery, on January 17, 1983

What branch of the service were you in and what unit?

V I was in the Army I went in 1965 to 1969 I was with the first cavalry, first and fifth I was a door gunner

L Door gunner?

V Yes

L I read a little about them Were they pretty competitive with the Marine Corps?

V Yes, they were competitive They worked together, like us I guess you could consider us mainly as a supporting unit, with the Marines and the Army We gave them supplies when they needed them There was no preference, as long as you took them out if they needed taken out

L I have read that a lot of times the women take the guys out, that the Marine trappers would not go in and get

V Yes, there was a lot of places we would go in, I mean, I could never understand why It seems that the Marines would not go in or what not There did not seem to be any reason why they would not It is just the fact that we were told to go in and we felt we should go in It may have been the fact that the Marine pilots on the choppers were by a great means affecting the Marine officers and the majority of the pilots that were in the Army who were not officers. But they were mainly considered civilian pilots and that made somewhat of a difference there

L Okay, you said you went there in 1966?

V Yes, 1966 to 1968 I did two tours.

L Did you volunteer for both tours?

V. Yes.

L When you went, did you feel that there was a need for U S involvement in Vietnam?

V Well, when I went, I was eighteen and I really did not have a good understanding

of what was going on, I think part of my idea of going there was mainly for curiosity. I felt that it was the right thing to do by going over there. I did not see that there was anything wrong about it. But I really did not understand what was going on until I got there. I had no idea of the war; how complex it was or what it really meant at the time. All I knew was there was something going on there and the United States was involved in it. I just wanted to get in and be a part of it.

L Do you think now, after looking back and since literature is coming out, that maybe we should not have gotten involved? Does that bother you?

V No, that does not bother me. I feel the United States was trying to serve its purpose over there and was trying to help out a country that was in need. We took over after the French, if I am not mistaken. We pulled out, and we sent some people over there as advisors. The United States, I thought they were just trying to lend a helping hand and they got more involved than they really anticipated.

L So you still believe that what we did was right, but that we went a little too far?

V. Yes, I think we did go a little too far. I thought a lot of it was senseless. There were a lot of men left over there, you know, the ones that were killed over there. As a matter of fact, I think it was 57,000 that were killed, for one good reason. It was considered war. It was considered conflict. Korea was considered a police action. I thought it was, like now, a great waste of lives.

L Does that come from the fact that we pulled out? A lot of people say we did not really try to win the war.

V I would not say we did not try. We tried. We had the strength. We had the manpower. We had the knowledge and the sophisticated equipment. It is just that the NVA regulars, and the Viet Cong was one hell of a fighter. And to sum it up, we lost.

L What would you say was the most memorable experience that you had that has affected your life?

V Well, when I was over there in 1966, my first experience was seeing my first kill. It makes it bad and makes it sort of frightening when the family does not understand. It was on December 23rd. It was something that I thought I would be ready for. I thought I could accept it. I figured, well, you get the John Wayne macho thing over there and you got a lot of balls. But after seeing the first kill and really realizing that you were involved in it, it is hard to grasp. It is something I forgot throughout the year, but subconsciously I know when I was

getting toward that big date again. It took about a week, two weeks sometimes, before I really grew out of this bad state of thought. It is a shitty remembrance, it makes Christmas bad for me. Personally, it makes it bad for my family because I am never in a good mood from it. But that is some of the most memorable things that I ever had.

L: Does that still affect you even now, seventeen years later?

V: I just never forgot it. It is something you cannot forget. I do not think it was the fact that I was just going on nineteen at the time or the fact that I myself had never seen a person that was killed, except in a funeral home. I never seen anything up close like that before. And we came in to it, before we hit it, trying to pick up some troops. It was something that I did not really expect. They used the term called "body cart."

L: Do you feel guilty about that?

V: I guess I do. I cannot say I really am, but I guess I do feel guilty about it. It is something that you cannot really ever get used to. You know, I am not a religious person, but I really do not believe in killing. But there was a job that we had to do and that was part of it. I mean, you fire. When you are in a chopper, you are up at 800 feet and fire a pattern. What the chopper does a lot of times is it would bank back and forth. You fire into a zone. You just do not realize if you did any destruction from firing, you do not see anything. But when you get down in there afterwards, the ground people there are praising you for what you did. There was nothing at all you could do.

L: You said this affects your Christmas. Do you think you will ever get over that?

V: Hopefully I will, but I think it is doubtful. It is something that you just will not forget. I mean, it has been seventeen years now and I still remember it.

L: When you came home, you said you asked for another tour?

V: I extended my tour over there, I was still in the service. I was only in two years of combat and extended my tour over there.

L: I presume you were not at home very much between the first and second tour.

V: I was home thirty days. That is just general rotation time, they let you come home for thirty days.

L: And then they sent you back down?

V· Right

L So when you came home the second time, did you ever have a cooling-off period? A time when you could just sit down and re-group your thoughts before you came back to this country?

V No, when I came home, there was so much I wanted to do, and so many things that I wanted to do I never gave it any thought I just ran around a lot. I was not married at the time, and I just never gave it a thought, of me cooling off I just did my thing and went back when I was supposed to.

L So you still had a year left in military service after your second tour, right?

V· Right

L When you got back into civilian life, how did that affect you?

V I had a problem one time, looking for a job In 1969, I went to General Motors, when I got out of the service I felt they held it against me They would not hire me because they said I was too nervous They said, "Your physical condition would be dangerous to the other employees." So I felt that, you know, coming back and trying to get adjusted to civilian life, I did not think there was any hope whatsoever People at that time put you down It sounds sick The first thing out of their mouths was, "How many people did you kill?" Things like that, I think the general public made it very hard for us to try to get back into the swing of civilian life

L Do you think this was intentional, or do you think they just did not realize the extent of the war itself?

V I do not think they understood it They went by propaganda It was put on the news media and stuff They thought that the average veteran who came back was drug-crazed and, you know They said that They said they were always sick, just a bunch of dumb killers So, I think the general public just really did not know how to accept this It could have been that they were prejudiced I felt that they really put us down

L· Would you say that the media propagated this? Helped increase it?

V Well, I think they did not clarify things. They put it in writing and they put it in the papers where it sounded good. I think they used their own versions of stories to sell papers If there is something happening, let us say an air craft had trouble on the runway, and the news media was there, instead of saying, "Craft had

trouble," they would use the term maybe that he was shot down by the Vietcong, which I saw over there. This was quite awhile ago. There was, I think it was a C-130. It was coming in for a landing and something happened to the landing gear. When it hit the runway, you know, it was damaged, it was pretty well destroyed. From the news media, they said that this particular aircraft was shot down. It came in for a crash landing. It was just little things like that. They just built it up to try to sell papers. They just did not bring the truth out of some things.

L: What about the voting coverage? In *Life* magazine, after the Battle of Khe Sahn, they had Marines on a tank going down. All you see is wounded Marines. Things like that. dead Vietnamese. Even My Lai, they blew that up into a gigantic story on American involvement. Do you think these pictures that were coming back and hitting the American public ruined the chance for the veteran to have a good adjustment when he came home?

V: I think so. That is what I think swayed the American public, made it look bad. They did not show the brighter side of the war. They did not show the men enjoying Christmas. All they showed was death and destruction. There were just two sides to it. It was not all the time, kill and fight constantly. There were two sides to it. I think they just blew it out of proportion. They really did.

L: What kind of adverse affects would you say you have had from what happened when you were in Vietnam?

V: How do you mean?

L: Adjustment problems, like delayed stress.

V: Delayed stress is the one that is starting to catch the eye of the public right now. I say we all suffer from delayed stress. You could break delayed stress down, I guess, into two situations: chemical stress and situational stress. It is harder to determine what type you are drawn into. Like chemical stress is when your body chemistry, for some reason, becomes unbalanced. One minute, you can be sitting here talking to me nicely, then all of a sudden, you completely lose it, like Jekyll and Hyde. And then I learned, just like out at General Motors, they have a situational stress. A lot of people cannot take being coaxed and told what to do from a figure head. They are having a lot of problems. Stress is a hard thing to sum up. I think some guys are really blowing it out of proportion, I feel. There is so much stress that I do not think anybody knows how to handle it.

L: What about the Agent Orange situation?

- V Agent Orange, that is pretty tacky right now. The VA had a study on Agent Orange, and were straggling their feet; some people were starting to get on their case about it. Who knows how long it is going to take them for their study. I think what they are doing is that they are just dragging their feet and waiting for all of this to die out. I got a lot of problems, which I think are a factor of Agent Orange. [For instance] you lose your toenails. I have got big tumors on my legs and my back. I have got a rash that will seep and bleed and sometimes it fills my sock with blood and I can hardly pull my sock off. I have to soak my foot to get it off.
- L I heard one vet say that right now because of all the deficit cutting, they are afraid to pay the vet for Agent Orange poisoning. Eventually, they are going to have to face up to the fact that they owe the vet compensation for what he went for. Do you think that eventually they are going to own up to it? Or do you think it is going to be like a Watergate again? Covered up?
- V I think that they are definitely going to just keep covering it up until the majority of the vets are gone. That is what I think they are doing. That is my own personal opinion though.
- L Has your opinion of the government changed since you served your time?
- V. Yes, I think they suck. That is the only way to put it. For example, the dedication in DC was done by the vets, not the government. The government did not do anything for us. And I do not think they ever will.
- L. You say you lost trust, or have you just lost a little faith in them?
- V I have lost trust and faith in the government. I would never even vote until just two years ago. And my wife, she would get on my case about it. She said, "Why?" I would say, "What for? They are dragging their feet. They are not doing anything to help me. They are trying to help themselves." To use the example about the Iranian hostages, they really kissed their asses because they were big shots.
- L They do not want to do anything for the little guy?
- V What do they do for the families? Not a thing. But the Iranian hostages? What did we get? We got put down, we got persecuted about it. They tagged us as drunken, crazed killers. You know, baby killers. We are rotten apples. It is a shame.
- L Do you think that the government was to blame by not controlling the media?

- V The government just let the media run amuck and do what they wanted to. I did not feel that the government tried to stop them and say, "Hey listen, it did not happen this way" They did not do anything to help us whatsoever
- L Do you think the government did not help only the Vietnam veteran?
- V I think it was mainly the Vietnam veteran Korea, I feel that they were taken more care of by the government The vets, for example, had what was called the debrief, a cooling down period, coming back state side And World War II, they had time to help bring their thoughts together For example, if they come in off cruise ships, there was plenty of time that the guys could sit down, talk, cry, laugh, have a good time They came home to tears and parades, they came home to nice welcomes and ticker-tapes In Vietnam, there was not a debriefing or a cool down time They would not do this for us, we were just sent home
- L Do you think that the fact that they did not give a debriefing, to try to bring you down, made you get jumpy at the sound of loud noises and stuff? Do you think that a debriefing time could have avoided say twenty percent of the men now that are suffering severe stress problems?
- V Oh, I think it definitely would. I think it would give them a better state of mind Say the average person that went there was approximately nineteen I would say, I am probably wrong, but I think at least maybe forty-five or fifty percent of the men that were there were in the age of nineteen Being that young, they just did not know how to deal with their problems. How do they cope with something that they did not understand? They did not realize what was going to happen in the future to them, that they were going to have problems I did not have problems, though. Say someone sat down and had a drink in a bar or something, and a person came up and slapped him on the back, he would turn around and smack them because he was so damn jumpy. I made an ass out of myself a couple of times We were having a picnic and somebody shot off a firecracker and I hit the ground People, they laugh at you, make you feel like an ass You look around and you do feel like an ass They say, "What is the matter with you, are you drunk?" or whatnot.
- L It was just a reaction and you had to have that reaction to stay alive
- V Right
- L What about the anti-war movement? Now this got pretty heavy around 1966, 1967, 1968 They really started rolling with the anti-war movement then They marched on the Pentagon and in Chicago Do you think that was good or bad for the vets?



- V I, personally, did not follow it I did not believe in it so I did not pay any attention to it whatsoever I felt the majority of the guys that were over there believed in what they did, and the anti-war movement was a political move. Some guys, the younger students, may have been swayed by, maybe this socialist move It was something that I really did not understand I figured they did their thing and I did mine If that made them happy, fine But it did not bother me at the time and I still to this day, I never gave it any thought
- L What about Jane Fonda? She went to war She came back and said, "Well, POWs are being treated nicely " This was a bunch of crap She made the statement, to the effect that, what we were doing there was wrong, and in the North they were really nice people We should just let them walk into the country and take over.
- V It is like anything else, if you do not understand what is going on I felt that she was really swayed Say, for example, when she went up there, she talked to the North Vietnamese Anybody can put on a show, okay, to make it look good If she did interview, or see some of the POWs over there, anybody could make it look good I think mainly, she was swayed by them The just wined and dined her and she did not understand what was going on She may have understood what she read, what she thought she was doing It was just a human error on her behalf, I feel
- L When people in the anti-war movement like Jane Fonda and political figures, like the President, come out against the war, what did this do to the vet when he came home? What did this do to his adjustment? Did it just increase the tremendous load he was already carrying because people were already against them
- V If so many vets were like me, I did not pay any attention to it You know, I was just glad I was home It did not bother me in the least I did not follow anything after I got out of the army I just did not care who did what
- L You already said you did not trust the government or how they deal with things What would you say are the major things they did or did not do for the vets?
- V The major thing that they did not do? I would say one thing, but I do not know if it was the fault of the government, I would say we did not get a welcome home We were just brought home and that was it
- L Like you did not matter.
- V Right It I just like, "Okay, you were there, you came home and you were done "

- L One vet told me that when he came home he was disappointed because when he got off the plane there were only four old ladies waving flags That was their homecoming He said, in retrospect, he felt almost privileged, because he knew guys who had been taken on back routes so that nobody would see them coming home When you came home, did you just land and nobody was there?
- V When I came home, I think I landed in Washington State We came home and all we had was a change of clothes and one of these dirty-looking burnt steaks That was it. Trying to get on the plane was a hassle I had to fly first class ticket to try to get home I came home in uniform. When I went into Chicago, I was approached by a couple of people who said, "You are in the service Were you in Vietnam?" I said, "Yes " The one guy said, "You know, you guys are a bunch of fucking animals " The guy spit on me
- L Because you were in the service and you went home?
- V I do not know I feel that is what it was for
- L Was this an older man?
- V I would say he was in his mid to late thirties There was not much I could do about it I had to take it
- L Was there no respect for you when you got home or for any other vet who served in that war? Was there just a total disregard for them as human beings once they returned?
- V I think so I think nobody there had respect for them when they came home I think we were all expecting a little praise when we got home and all we got was persecution You did what you thought was right and when you came home you were just shit on
- L Do you think that is from the view that the public landed on the vet instead of landing on the people that were directly responsible for you being there?
- V Right, I think that is what it is, people blaming it on the vet. Like take for example, General Motors. Nobody blames the big shots If there is a problem, there is something that the news brings out They always put everything on the little guy
- L Do you think we really should have gotten involved in the first place?
- V No, I do not think we should have been involved at all The French wanted out,

so the United States, being the good Samaritans that they were, decided to go in and advise. One thing led to another, and I think in either 1958 or 1959. The U.S. lost its first casualty.

L: Well, yes, it was around 1958 or 1959.

V: The first U.S. casualty was killed over there, and I think that is what started the whole thing going. One man killed there and they brought in advisors.

L: Supposedly.

V: I think that is what started the whole thing. I do not think the United States really wanted to get involved, but I think just to save face, they brought more in and more in and then the thing just got completely out of hand. They got more involved than they wanted to in the first place.

L: Because of the amount of money they spent supporting the French?

V: Supporting the French and then staying in there. When the French pulled out, the United States was left holding the ball.

L: And ordered not to lose all investment.

V: They decided to stay on. I would really like to find out what they lost. Equipment-wise.

L: I can give you a rough estimate. Supposedly we were spending a million dollars a day, everyday, since 1965. We spent a million dollars a day on equipment and bombs. But they did not say that there were 57,000 vets that died. It is just that we lost a million dollars a day.

V: A million dollars a day. And that million dollars a day is not worth a vet that was lost and the 2400 men still over there. Who knows if they are alive or dead?

L: That is definitely not worth the guys that are still here and suffering from it.

V: Exactly.

L: But they do not want to face up to that responsibility?

V: What I cannot understand is that they will spend millions on millions of dollars on aid. They are probably going to start packing money into Vietnam again and rebuild the country, give aid to other countries.

- L Do you think they should go in and help them out? I mean, they have asked for at least recognition as an independent country
- V No, I do not think they should
- L Let them sink or swim on their own now.
- V Right Who was supporting them before? Was it Communist China? Where did all these troops come from?
- L [What about] the movement into the Hollywood scene? They came out with "Deerhunter," "Coming Home," and "Apocalypse Now " What do things like that do? Does that just add more attention to the vet?
- V Yes, I think it does Okay, "Deerhunter," I feel, was a pretty good movie It showed love, it showed suffering, it showed crime But it was blown out or proportion, I feel. But on the movies that pertain to the Vietnam war, I feel that is about the best movie there is It does not really blow the vet out of proportion too much Like "Apocalypse Now," that movie was so far-fetched It was a shame They made the veteran look like a real moron "Coming Home," that was a fine move, I thought I do not know why Jane Fonda got into it, after some of the statements she made, but that is neither here nor there "First Blood," to me, is a Disney movie. That does not pertain to it That puts them down It is just Hollywood They make it what they want it to sound like They did not care They were in business trying to make money They did not care who they were hurting
- L Do you think, like the Green Berets, that they try to make them look glorified killers Then everybody thought, "That was what every vet was like "
- V That is right That is what I think they did I think they just tried to stress the point that a Vietnam veteran is nothing but a crazed killer I think that is the impression that you are bringing on to the public I think, with all these movies coming out like that, that the vet is going to start having a recurrence of problems
- I think in public broadcasting, they get a little bit more involved They had something out called, I think, "The 10,000 Day War," on TV. I never got to see it, which really disappointed me, but that was, I think, a documentary I think that showed what it was like instead of Hollywood and any of their ideas I think they ought to bring more out with something like that Now, there was something on television I do not know what it was, but they had an interview with Westmoreland

- L "60 Minutes "
- V Was that on "60 Minutes?"
- L Yes
- V To me, that was interesting They showed what it was like Now the public has to accept it.
- L You still think that they are harboring these feelings that they do not want to have anything to do with the vet?
- V Well, I would not say that they do not want to have anything to do with the vet, I just think they just want to publicize everything They do not want to raise any dead horses They are trying to put it to rest.
- L Do you think the scars are so deep that they are trying to cover up?
- V: I think so. I think it was really a black mark on the United states Now there was never a war that the United States lost Well, they did not consider Vietnam a war, some books consider it a war It was a conflict I think, like you said, people are scarred, and it is a shameful thing that the U S lost A lot of guys would disagree and say, "No we did not " But we did lose If we did not lose, that country would not be like it is now
- L Do you think it is a good idea for the vet to come out and give his story?
- V I think more veterans should come out and talk I think that it would be more beneficial to them and it would be more helpful I found going to vet centers is a great relief in itself to me. You have problems, they have problems There are times when he has a lot more problems than you. You understand just a little better what is going on Regardless of what kind of problems you have, there is another vet out there who has a lot worse of a problem than you
- L Would you group the statistics that eighty percent of the guys who came back have adjusted well, and that there is about twenty to twenty-five that did not? They are still having emotional difficulties?
- V No, I think that it is a lot higher than twenty percent I think that is in reverse I really do Like I said, the majority of the veterans that came back were under twenty You might as well call them, to put them in a category as a man, in the ways of a young man I will use myself as an example I was not old enough to really realize how to understand it I was not mature enough to really understand

it. I still say that. Using the term mature or immature I am not saying I was a little baby or nothing, it is just that you were not prepared. There are a lot of people who they call closet vets. They try to forget, or they just cast aside the fact that they are having problems. You talk to almost every vet on the street and he will say, "I do not have any problem." They are using figures, I guess, by people they have talked to.

L Do you think that this is going to explode?

V I think so. I think there is going to be a mass of problems in the future. Now they say the suicide rate for the Vietnam vets is heavily unbelievable. As a matter of fact, one of my crew members committed suicide.

Something is going to happen. I do not know what, I am afraid to think of what might happen. There are strange thoughts that go through your head at times. I am unemployed now, and I have to degrade myself. I have to go on welfare. I think that is shameful. What I have done for the country, I served two years over there, I spent four years in the military and I cannot get a job. I have to go on welfare now. I cannot hold a job.

L Do you see that as a direct outcome from Vietnam?

V What? [That there are] no jobs or not being able to hold jobs?

L A little of both.

V No, I see that as new policy from the government. Now Reagan offered to help the rich. He does not seem to care about the vet in any way whatsoever. It is just that type of government. I feel they just do not care. When we got into World War II, I think they had the WPA. They had people to help you.

L Yes, that was a direct result of the Depression, then.

V You know, there has got to be something where the government could fund, try to help out to get us back on our feet again.

L What about your personal relationships? Is it harder for you to trust somebody now?

V Yes, it is very hard. I mean, I cannot gain trust or faith in anybody. Even my wife, for example. I have been married for fourteen years now, and I cannot confide in her. I cannot just sit and really talk to her. And I have one friend that I am close to who is my cousin. He was a Marine and a Vietnam vet. He is the only one that I really have any trust in. My father, I could never talk to him. Him

and I never got along. He was never in the service. So, how could he put a tag on us in the place? I do not have any trust in people. I am afraid to make friends. I have slight acquaintances, but a real good friend, I am afraid of making them because the friends I had were on the chopper. I got one left and that is it. One got killed, and one committed suicide.

L: Would you say that is because you worked with four other guys and you became so close that you depended on each other so much, that it is hard for you to depend on anybody else? You cannot find that kind of trust?

V: In anybody right now?

L: Yes.

V: I think that is right. You did have a bond, and you really got to trust each other. I mean, we partied, and we ate, slept, we fought together. It was like a family. It hurt so bad.

It is an impact. It is just like somebody that you have known all your life, even though you did not know him that well, was killed. I do not know, maybe it is the fact that I am afraid that something like that may happen again, or it is the fact that I am really making friends with people that I might lose again. I do not really socialize. I do not go to parties or anything. It is just maybe that I am afraid to make friends with a lot of people.

L: How have you coped since you came back?

V: I just go by day to day. I mean, it is probably the wrong outlook to have, but I just do not give a shit. What happens is going to happen and there is no way that I can stop it. It is probably the wrong attitude to take, but I feel there is no other attitude to take.

L: Do you think that it would have been different if you would not have went to Vietnam?

V: Oh, I think most definitely it would be different.

L: That one experience changed your whole life?

V: That is right.

L: Would you say you are adjusted?

V: Just living here right now? No, I do not think I am. If I said that I was completely

adjusted, I think I would be a liar. I guess being adjusted to civilian life is where you can go out and maybe party and socialize and just mingle with people a lot. I feel that is adjusted, and I cannot do that. I mean, I do not even like to go over to my mom's house for Christmas. I do it out of respect. I am just not comfortable.

L: Around other people?

V: Yes. Now I can talk one on one, but getting in a group, I get real nervous.

L: Are you afraid of something happening to you?

V: I do not know. I have experienced what I call a "Jekyll and Hyde" personality at times. I am ashamed of myself for it. There are times when I get so pissed that I verbally abuse my kids. It is such a shame. After it is all over with, you have hurt them. You just wonder, "Jesus Christ, why did I do this? Why did it happen?" I am afraid something like that is going to happen.

L: Are you afraid of getting violent?

V: I have gotten violent. I have a friend of mine that used to live here in town, he has moved out now. He weighted a good 340 pounds. He was a big boy. When I had my other house on the South Side, I was sleeping, and I guess I was having a dream. I do not remember. My wife said I started shaking and carrying on because it was waking me up. Well, when he approached me and touched me, we got into a fight. I do not remember it, and I pushed him through a window, which cut him up pretty good. You know we never really lost the friendship, like I say, he is out of town. It is things like that, I am afraid they might reoccur. Maybe that is why I do not go anywhere. But that was the only real violent outburst I really had.

L: Do you still have nightmares?

V: Once in a while, I will wake up and I will be so sweaty and cold and shaking. I know I had a nightmare, but I do not remember it. A lot of times, I will wake up and I will be so disoriented that I do not know where I am. I will be completely lost. One time, I went out fishing and all of a sudden, I was between some rocks, sitting there. I kept looking around and you sort of snap out of it. You think, "Why am I here?" [It is like] you are trying to get away from something, trying to hide.

L: Do you wish now that you would have never went?



- V. Yes, I do wish I never went. But at the time, I did what I thought was right. Maybe this sounds stupid, if something like that should happen now, I feel that I would go again. I did what I thought was right at the time, but I wish I did not go. But if it comes down to the fact that maybe my kid would have to go or something like that, or my nephew, I would go instead.
- L. To save them?
- V. Right. Because they have such a life to live ahead of them. I think I would want to go so that they would not have to go through the same experience. I would rather go instead.
- L. Do you think you will ever adjust completely?
- V. No. I do not think there is an answer for complete adjustment. I mean, there is doctors that pump you with pills, barbiturates and all these drugs and shit. That is not natural. I have talked to a psychiatrist before. To me, he is nothing but a pill pusher. You know, just getting me pumped up with barbiturates. I mean, he gave me qualudes. Anything I wanted, he would give me. I guess I had the strength to realize that I stopped myself. And I thought, this is not the answer. Working with vets, I have set myself a goal. I want to work with the veteran and help out other people. To me, getting pumped full of drugs is not the answer. I think helping the other vet is the answer.

End of Interview