

ATTENTION: © Copyright The Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. 'Fair use' criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. The following materials can be used for educational and other noncommercial purposes without the written permission of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. These materials are not to be used for resale or commercial purposes without written authorization from the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. All materials cited must be attributed to the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University.

The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Jim Holt
Conducted by Jonathan Bernstein
November 12, 2001
Transcribed by Tammi Mikel Lyon

NOTE: Text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

1 Jonathan Bernstein: This is Jonathan Bernstein conducting an oral history
2 interview with Mr. Jim Holt. Today is...actually, what is today? It is November 12th,
3 2001. It is approximately one o'clock in the afternoon. Mr. Holt, could you start I guess
4 by giving us a brief biographical sketch of yourself?

5 Jim Holt: Okay, how far back do you want to go?

6 JB: Well, just go about...

7 JH: I grew up in East Texas. I was born in '46, September 24th of '46. Actually,
8 it says on my birth certificate Saltillo, Texas and the reason why I say that is because I
9 was adopted at about the age of I think 13-14 months. I'd always looked for Saltillo and
10 I thought it would be down in the border area of Texas and turns out its up in North
11 Central Texas. I finally located the town I was supposedly born in. I was in Longview,
12 Texas. That's where my parents were from. Like I said, I was adopted over there and I
13 grew up there. I was an only child. My parents had had one other child and he was kind
14 of killed in a freak accident. There was no chance of another child, so I was always told
15 that I was adopted and they made it a special deal and everything, so I always knew it and
16 I always thought it was a special deal. I guess I had a normal childhood, grew up spoiled
17 probably a little bit. My mother was a registered nurse. She was a county and state nurse
18 for her entire career, did other home nursing on the side sometimes for other people. My
19 dad worked for the railroad. In fact, he worked 51 years for the Texas Pacific railroad.

1 By the time he retired I think there was one man between St. Louis and El Paso, Texas
2 that had more seniority than my dad. Most of the time he was an engineer, so I grew up
3 early on my dad was on the road. There was a lady named Creola Davis that my parents
4 hired fairly early on that was just like a second mother to me. She was a black lady that I
5 guess you could say she was a maid but she was a lot more than that because mother
6 worked, dad worked, and she took care of me before I went to school, after I'd get home
7 from school, and once I was going to school. It was just like another parent. I always
8 called her my black mother and everything. In fact, I was a singer. My mother early on
9 discovered early on that I had an affinity for music and she started me on voice lessons
10 when I was five years old and so I was real involved in church music and singing around
11 the community for various groups like the Masons and Eastern Star and stuff like that.
12 So I grew up doing that and being involved in that all the way up through school, and
13 actually how I got in college because I wasn't what you'd call a super great student. I
14 made decent grades, but nothing that would get you in Yale or Harvard or anything like
15 that. I got a music scholarship to North Texas State University and took that and that
16 kind of indirectly led into my Vietnam stuff because it was my first time away from home
17 really and I got up to Denton where North Texas is and North Texas was a big party
18 school then and I got involved in the party scene and actually didn't do much except go
19 to the music classes that I had and the rest of them I kind of blew off. So I got in some
20 trouble and stuff like that and they asked me if I wouldn't consider going someplace else,
21 and then was enrolled in Kilgore College which was back down in East Texas near
22 Longview and everything, was still trying to party and didn't do real well there, either.
23 So, by early 1966 I'd been kicked out of two colleges and pretty much knew that I was
24 going to get drafted and go in the military. At that point in time I decided to maybe join
25 the military because I'd heard that the best thing to do was to join because you'd get at
26 least some sort of choice in your training and stuff. That leads up to that. I don't know if
27 that's enough on biographical or not. Like I said, my childhood was normal. I never had
28 what you'd call any bad trouble in my childhood or anything like that, normal childhood
29 diseases, and everything. My parents were not what you'd call overtly patriotic but I was
30 raised...I was in the scouts, got a lot of patriotism in Boy Scouts, went up through their
31 organization and everything. So, it was one of those things that I was patriotic without

1 thinking about it much. It was just kind of a given. You see all the movies on TV, the
2 John Wayne stuff and everything. I saw all of that growing up. I remember real vividly I
3 wasn't what you'd call someone who got sick very often but in junior high I was sick. I
4 think I had glandular fever or something like that and was out for a week or so. I was
5 home when Kennedy was shot and I saw all of that on TV and I think that made a big
6 impact on me, the response of the nation and everything like that. So, real vivid memory
7 to me of watching all that and of course the replay of his speeches and various things
8 because I probably hadn't paid much attention to it until that time and I guess that was
9 probably the thing that really got me to thinking more and more about countries and
10 service and stuff like that. So, I can really say I don't know that I'd heard much about
11 Vietnam in high school. I was real involved in music and all this various things and
12 shows and stuff like that so I probably wasn't paying a whole lot of attention to stuff that
13 was going on in Southeast Asia at that time and didn't really start focusing on it I guess
14 until such time as you'd get kicked out of two colleges and people start talking about the
15 draft and everything, and I remember I still have my draft card that says 1A on it. When
16 I got that I knew pretty well that I was on my way. I had a friend that we'd grown up
17 together and we were always going to go in the Marines together. You have these
18 childhood fantasies. We were going to go in the Marines and we were going to then get
19 out of the Marines after an indeterminate amount of time and become Texas Rangers.
20 That was our childhood dream and of course with no thought whatsoever of how you're
21 going to go about doing all of this stuff. But, when it came my time I kind of thought
22 about the Marines and I even got in touch with my friend Danny and he was still hanging
23 on in college by his teeth and he wasn't ready to join. Of course through some of this
24 Kennedy stuff that had happened I'd started hearing about the Green Berets, so I thought
25 that sounds real interesting and of course you never think about it. I kind of grew up, I
26 was chubby, I wore glasses, I wasn't what you'd call a jock or anything like that, so you
27 kind of wonder why I even thought at the time that I could do something like that but I
28 guess it was one of those things that I'd always been raised to tell myself that I could do
29 anything that I decided I was going to do. In my mind I thought, 'Well I may try to join
30 the military and see if I can get in the Green Berets,' and of course I brought that up to
31 the Army recruiter when I went in to talk to him, and of course he didn't really tell me

1 that there was a process other than I'd have to go to Airborne School so I kind of put that
2 down as one of my choices and everything and the fact that I wanted combat arms. Well
3 I didn't find out until years later that my mother, being a county and state nurse, she
4 knew all the people that sat on the local selective service board because really in truly I
5 didn't figure it out until later but there were people from my home town and the area
6 around Longview that were getting kicked out of college or weren't going to college and
7 the guys were going like that. I get kicked out of two colleges, it's the middle of April,
8 somewhere around in there, and I'm not getting a draft notice. I went down and talked to
9 the Army recruiter and pretty much signed a letter of intent or something they called it
10 that I was going to join the Army, but what we were going to do was we were going to
11 wait until my draft notice came, and then he would contact them and say that I had joined
12 and that would cancel out the draft part of it and then I would go on in. Well, I didn't get
13 my draft notice until the end of July, first of August, somewhere around in there. Like I
14 said, I found out years later I found out that my mother had gone and talked to some of
15 these people that she knew on the local draft board and they kind of slid me to the bottom
16 of the list so to speak, but the point was finally reached where there was no choice
17 because I wasn't going to school, I wasn't married, I was essentially just working at some
18 jobs. I'd finally gone to work and got a job at Sears and worked for them which was an
19 okay job but it wasn't anything that was going to keep me out of the draft by any stretch
20 of the imagination. Finally the draft came and everything and I went over to Shreveport
21 and took my physical and stuff like that and it was I think middle of August or towards
22 the end of August that I finally went in the military and of course because I had signed up
23 for combat arms, they sent me to Fort Polk, Louisiana and once I got down to Fort Polk,
24 that's when things got serious with me because I started realizing...I had a real good
25 friend in high school that his father was a retired colonel in the Army and he knew what a
26 knucklehead I was, and I'll never forget, he called me in before I was supposed to leave
27 and go down to Fort Polk. I was over visiting my friend and he called me into his study
28 that he had at the house and said, 'You need to understand something about what you're
29 fixing to do.' He said, 'I know how you are and everything, and you're kind of
30 boisterous and loud mouthed and have a tendency to pop off,' and he said, 'You can't do
31 that in the military.' He said, 'You need to keep your mouth shut and do what you're told

1 all the time and listen to what these drill instructors are going to tell you because if you
2 don't, they'll break you or you'll get a reputation for being a knucklehead or wise-ass or
3 whatever, and they'll just mess with you all the time,' and he said, 'And you need to just
4 learn to keep your mouth shut and do what you're told.' Well we got to Fort Polk,
5 Louisiana and it was middle of the night. It was after midnight by the time the bus got
6 down there and I'll never forget. They had these people coming on the bus and
7 screaming at us and stuff like that and of course I figured it out later that they were just
8 corporals or acting corporals and stuff like that, that the real sergeants didn't stay up until
9 midnight or whatever but these people were still wearing uniforms and stuff like that and
10 being real officious and I just decided I was going to do what Mr. Brown told me to do; I
11 was going to keep my mouth shut and see how it went and not try to be a smart-aleck
12 about everything. Basic training actually went pretty good for me. Of course after we'd
13 been at Polk for a while, we started hearing about Tigerland which was right across the
14 road from where we were was this AIT that they called Tigerland and the deal everybody
15 was told, even by our sergeants, was if you graduated basic and you get orders to
16 Tigerland, you're going to Vietnam as soon as you finish Tigerland because that was
17 infantry advanced training for Vietnam. But, they give you all these tests when you first
18 get in the Army and at your basic training and I've always been pretty good at like what
19 you'd call intelligence tests or multiple choice or tests where you had to figure things out
20 and stuff like that, and evidentially I did fairly well with all the tests they gave us. I
21 never knew what my scores were or anything, but I later found out that I had qualified for
22 like to be good enough to be trained in artillery, which required a little bit more education
23 or thought or whatever, and I'd also qualified for a possibility to go to officer candidate
24 school. So, that's two things. I don't remember what week it was in basic but at some
25 point in basic training they had some Green Beret's show up and give us a spiel about the
26 Berets and they gave us some tests and they were intelligence tests and it was a battery of
27 about five tests. It took nearly half a day to take all this stuff. Anyway, I qualified for
28 that also and everything. But, I guess the biggest thing about basic with me was I was a
29 little overweight and some of the physical stuff was a little hard, but about the second
30 week in basic or something like that they sent a whole bunch of us from my platoon or
31 my company down to take test drivers and my bunkmate was a National Guard guy

1 because we had National Guard and reserve and guys like myself. That was another
2 thing about basic, too; it depended on your prefix to your serial number as to how you
3 were treated, because National Guard was treated like dirt because everybody knew, the
4 sergeants knew and everybody, they were just coming in for their basic training and then
5 they were going back home.

6 JB: Weekend warriors.

7 JH: Then a little bit better, the guys were treated, were the guys that were what
8 they called ER's or IR's. Anyway, it was the guys that were the reserve and they were
9 treated a little better. Then, the guys that were US prefix, those were the draftees and
10 they were treated a little better but they were still...they had to be drafted. Me, because I
11 joined, I had an RA which stood for Regular Army in front of my thing and they treated
12 us a little... you didn't really notice a whole lot but you did notice sometimes that they'd
13 tend to not ride the RA's as much or something like that. You could sense it more than
14 actually see it. It wasn't real overt or anything, but you could tell that was happening.
15 Sometimes they'd line us up and they'd put the RA's up in front of the line or something
16 like that. Anyway, they sent us all down to take this driving test and because my
17 bunkmate was National Guard he'd already had some driving and taken this test and
18 passed and knew what it was going to be like and he talked to me and told me a bunch of
19 stuff and ended up he and I were the only two that passed the test. Out of about 15 or 20
20 that they sent down, we were the only ones that passed the test, so basic training was real
21 slick for me because essentially I was either driving the captain or the aid vehicle or he
22 was driving one or the other. Anytime we walked anywhere, one of us were driving. We
23 didn't walk. So, it was like I got to the end of basic and I almost didn't pass my PT test
24 to get out of basic because I hadn't had enough walking and exercise to get me out of
25 some of the stuff, but I did pass it by the skin of my teeth. I look back now, and basic
26 was fun. I liked throwing grenades, I liked low crawl, and I liked all that stupid stuff, and
27 ate it up as far as listening, focusing on what they were telling us because more and
28 more...and my two drill instructors were Vietnam vets. They had already been to
29 Vietnam, and some of the other...we'd noticed in a couple of the other platoons of our
30 company that some of their drill instructors were just old time drill instructors and they
31 just rode the guys all the time unmercifully but our DI's, they rode us, but they also

1 taught us. They'd get us aside and say, 'You screwed up, and here's what it means; this
2 will get you killed if you do it. This is why we're teaching you this,' and I'll never forget
3 that. I can't even remember their names, but if I saw either one of them I'd know them
4 and I'd kiss them because they really did, they taught us and stuff that probably you
5 remembered later on it helped you and everything like that. I got out of basic and got my
6 orders and my orders were for Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and a lot of the guys went to
7 Tigerland. But, I got these orders for Fort Sill and I didn't know what it was all about
8 until I got there and everything and I didn't even get to go home on leave. They just sent
9 us and put us on a bus there at Polk and send me to Fort Sill and I get to Fort Sill and they
10 were doing this thing called an OCS prep AIT and what they had done is they had taken
11 all these guys that had passed this test and were qualified for OCS and qualified for
12 artillery and from what I understand it was a fairly new deal. They were going to teach
13 us the artillery stuff in the AIT which is your advanced training and everything but they
14 were going to treat us like we were preparing to go to OCS. In other words, everybody in
15 this company that I ended up in at Fort Sill was all supposed to be eventually going to
16 OCS, so instead of having drill instructors we had brand new lieutenants just out of OCS.

17 JB: Oh boy, that would [?].

18 JH: It was a mess. They started us off, the first morning I was there, I mean they
19 pulled us out. It was five something in the morning and we took off running. I tell
20 people and I'm pretty sure this is right or pretty close to the schedule; we ran like the first
21 two weeks we ran a mile in the morning. In the second two weeks, we ran a mile in the
22 morning and a mile in the afternoon. Then the next two weeks or so we ran two miles in
23 the morning and the next one two miles in the morning and two in the afternoon, and then
24 the last we were running three miles in the morning and three miles in the afternoon. I
25 went from like 200 pounds down to like 145 pounds in eight weeks. I tried to quit a
26 couple of times, and we found out later because what they did is the first six weeks you
27 were there you were considered like lower class, and then the last two weeks you were
28 there you became like upper class and we found out later that the upper class people,
29 once we became one, had so many of the lower class guys that they were watching out
30 for and stuff and when they'd try to quit or something like that we were supposed to go
31 talk them out of it. It was kind of a mentor to them or whatever. It was a mess because

1 we did all the stuff that the guys did in OCS as far as the physical stuff and everything
2 and they made us really toe the line, all the stuff. I thought I knew about how to polish
3 shoes and do stuff like that, but we learned stuff there that they made us do like they did
4 in OCS and stuff and everything had to be just so, much more than basic training and of
5 course we finally became kind of a unit and started working against...I'll never forget,
6 they fell us out one morning, this lieutenant and there was something wrong with the
7 barracks, a footprint someplace or something and he had us out, it was misting rain and
8 cold and he had us out doing pushups in the company street and somebody in the back of
9 the platoon started singing the Mickey Mouse song. All of us finally took it up and he
10 kept us doing pushups until nobody could push up anymore but we never stopped singing
11 and he finally got disgusted and walked away, and from that time on we pretty much
12 became a unit, and started working together. My mother, being a nurse, had taught me
13 how to make hospital corners on a bed and even in basic training they come in the first
14 morning and they were tearing up everybody's bed and when the sergeant got to mine it
15 kind of shook him because I already had hospital corners on the bed, but it still wasn't
16 good and he tore it up. By the time I got to Sill I was pretty good at it. So, when we'd
17 have a big barracks inspection or stuff like that on the weekends I'd make everybody's
18 bed, at least on the ground floor. Then there was other guys that were better at polishing
19 boots and they'd polish everybody's boots. We worked together that way. But, I got out
20 of AIT, I finally graduated from that, and like I said, I'd also qualified and had signed up
21 for Airborne and had taken those Special Forces tests. So I had that in the back of my
22 mind but I was still considering OCS. So, I graduate and get to go home for I think I got
23 a couple of weeks or something like that, but anyway I got assigned to what we called a
24 gun buddy battery which was another training area there at Fort Sill and I was going to be
25 an acting corporal. Oh, and in the meantime of all this I'd finally become a pretty good
26 trouser and had become a Private 1st Class and everything. I think there at AIT is where I
27 got PFC, AD2 out of basic, I think that was the way it went or something, I can't
28 remember some of that stuff. Anyway, I was a PFC and I get to this training unit and
29 essentially was told that I was going to be an acting corporal helping the sergeant train a
30 platoon of these guys that fired the guns and everything. Well the sergeant I got paired
31 up with had 20 some odd years in the military, lacked about six months of having his 30

1 years, and he didn't give a shit and he essentially told me, he said, 'As far as I'm
2 concerned, this platoon is yours. You do what you want to. I'll give you the schedule of
3 what we're supposed to do. I'll get us lined out in the morning and then if anybody
4 wants me I'll be over someplace.' He was cruising, in other words, for the last six
5 months or four months of his military. He was going to cruise. I essentially got handed
6 this platoon and I guess I did okay because the guys liked me and I remembered the way
7 our guys in basic had done stuff, and we did what we needed to do and did the training
8 we needed to train. I would not spend all my time screaming at them and stuff like that.
9 I'd just say, 'Look, we've got to do this. Let's do it. Can I get some volunteers, or you
10 guys are going to have to do this, so get after it. When we get through with it then we'll
11 take a break,' and I didn't ride their butt but I made sure we got stuff done. So, before
12 too long I was promoted to corporal and got hard stripes and I kept seeing around post,
13 plus the ones that we'd had in this AIT thing, these 2nd Lieutenants that were idiots. They
14 thought they were God but they were idiots. They didn't seem to know their ass from a
15 hole in the ground, and I don't know, I started to get soured on the idea of OCS. See
16 what was happening then, the way I understood it, they had so many lieutenants going
17 through this OCS at Fort Sill because they had so much need for these lieutenants over in
18 Vietnam that they had a waiting list of people to start OCS and essentially that's what I
19 was. I'm sitting, waiting to go, waiting on orders to go and everything but in the
20 meantime they've got me doing this. I start liking it because hey, I get up in the morning,
21 essentially I had my own room in the barracks, they didn't inspect me anymore, nobody
22 jacked with me, the sergeant didn't jack with me, the officers didn't jack with me, my
23 platoon was doing good, doing their jobs so nobody messed with me and I liked it. I was
24 going, 'Why should I go subject myself to another nine months,' or whatever in the
25 hell...I can't even remember what OCS was supposed to be back then. I think it was like
26 three months. Why should I subject myself to this bullshit? So I started going down.
27 You find out things as you kind of get a little further in the hierarchy and you learn the
28 ways of the military. Well, they have this building there at Fort Sill and that's where all
29 the record clerks are and people that have got the orders and did all this stuff. So, I found
30 out who the clerk was that was supposed to be working on my stuff and I went down and
31 told him, I said, 'Blow it up, I don't want to go to OCS.' They had cut my orders for

1 jump school so I can go on to Benning and start that process and of course by this time I
2 knew that you just didn't say you were going to go Green Berets. You had to go to jump
3 school, pass that, then maybe get a chance then. Of course the fact that I'd already
4 passed the mental test stuff, that gave me a shot at least. So, I was still thinking that.
5 Well in the meantime this girl that I knew from way back when in high school was living
6 in Dallas and I was driving down there just about every weekend from Fort Sill and
7 visiting with her and stuff like that. We had a big fight one weekend and I'd been jacking
8 with this clerk trying to get him to send me on to Benning for a long time and everything.
9 I was mad at her and mad at the world and everything and I came back and I told this
10 clerk that next Monday morning and I said, 'Listen, asshole, if you're not going to send
11 me to jump school, why don't you just send me to Vietnam?' Very foolish remark.
12 Essentially that's how I volunteered for Vietnam without really even realizing I'd
13 volunteered for Vietnam. That was enough for him. I get my orders a couple of three
14 weeks later there at Sill for the 11th Armored Cav at Vietnam, and I still have those
15 orders, too. That was right on my orders. I started asking people and nobody knew who
16 the 11th Cav was. Nobody had heard of them.

17 JB: Really?

18 JH: Well I finally figured it out. You think the time period, we're talking by this
19 time...this is just very early or I guess let's say probably about May of '67. 11th Cav just
20 got in Vietnam in August of '66. Most of the people at Sill didn't really know them that
21 much or anything like that or anything. Nobody'd really heard of them because they
22 hadn't been there as long as a few of the other units had and nobody knew who they
23 were. But, I could see on the orders, the orders were to Howitzer Battery, 1st Squadron,
24 11th Armored Cav Regiment, Long [Gau?], Vietnam, the whole nine yards. Well, in the
25 meantime we had this commander of this gun [?] unit was a Green Beret that had served
26 two tours in Vietnam and they told him he was not going to do another Vietnam tour until
27 he just did a normal command tour in the States and he got stuck as captain of this
28 training outfit for a while and he was still trying to get back to Vietnam. Well, he got his
29 orders about the same time I did and this guy was something else. He was Hispanic. I
30 guess he was about 5'10", something like that, stocky, just built like a brick wall and he'd
31 get out when we were doing the PT test and stuff for these trainees he'd get out there and

1 run the course backwards and stuff with them to show them, to inspire them, and run with
2 them. He was a good commander as far as taking care of his stuff, but I'll never forget he
3 brought me in right before I was fixing to go home on leave for Vietnam and threw one
4 of these little first aid packs across the table, his desk at me, and he talked real gruff and
5 he said, 'Corporal Holt, this is your going away present from me for taking with you to
6 Vietnam,' and I thought, 'That's strange, why would you give me a dressing pack?' you
7 know, because that's what it was, one of these things that you carry a bandage in and
8 everything. So, he had me open it up and I opened it up and the inside was one of these
9 bristle, boar bristle shaving brushes that you use to lather up and later your face with and
10 a can of Army gun oil, and he told me in his own profane way that every time that I was
11 out in Vietnam and we stopped, he said, 'Before I pissed, before I lit a cigarette, before I
12 did anything, I took that brush and put some oil on it and clean my weapon.' He'd see
13 me later and somewhere back in East Texas I still have that thing and the bristles are
14 about a quarter of an inch long now but I did what he said and he's another one that I'd
15 thank because anytime that I did anything in Vietnam, any sort of dismount or stuff like
16 that and we took some sort of break I'd take out that thing and I'd clean the gunk and
17 stuff off my M-16 and I never had a misfire. He was also good to the cadre up there
18 because we had breaks in between some of these training cycles while I was there and he
19 let his cadre go down and train fire on some of the weapons and stuff. So, I got to fire M-
20 60s and 50 calibers and 45s and a lot of different things that I probably wouldn't have got
21 a chance to fire not being in an infantry unit or anything like that. He allowed us to do
22 some of that stuff.

23 JB: You didn't have any of that in basic?

24 JH: Well we had basic basic, you know. At that time, we trained on the M-14
25 and I'd never seen an M-16 until I got to Sill and we didn't train on the 50s or 60s either
26 one; that was in AIT once you went to the advanced training. I never messed with either
27 one of those. The M-79, I'd never had a chance to fire it until I got a chance. In fact, that
28 was the funny thing; when we got to train fire with those, we went out to the range and
29 for some reason or another the M-79 just felt right with me. They had a bunch of old
30 tank bodies out on the range and of course they'd been hit so many times there was holes
31 knocked in the side of them. I was sitting there firing this M-79 and I'd pumped out a

1 few rounds and got a feel for it and just as the captain walked up behind me I put one
2 through this hole in this side of this tank and he, 'Bet you can't do that again, Corporal
3 Holt,' and I said, 'Bet I can, sir. 20 bucks?' 'Sure!' I got and looked and I put another
4 one right through the hole in the side of the tank and he paid me and walked on off.
5 That's the way he was. He was cool. I never knew what happened to him. I looked for
6 his name on the Wall and hadn't found it, but I'll never forget him because he was kind
7 of one of these guys that he really seemed to care about his people that served under him.
8 But anyway, that's when I got my orders to Vietnam and that was like I guess around the
9 1st of June of '67 there at Sill and everything. In fact, it's real interesting, I met a guy
10 here at Tech. I've got his card at home, but he works...he may work here in this building
11 or whatever. He's come to some of our meetings and stuff like that, but I heard him
12 telling a story and he went through the same thing I did of waiting at Sill and going to the
13 OCS prep, and that's the first guy that I'd ever met that had gone through that same sort
14 of BS on the OCS prep platoon and then having to wait for OCS. I think he went on to
15 OCS. I decided not to and I kind of liked being a corporal and everything. Can we take a
16 break, just stop a second?

17 JB: Yeah, sure. Okay, we're back. Stepping back to training, the DI's were
18 Vietnam vets, and I'm sure that helped quite a bit. Did they do any mock villages, set-
19 ups, or anything like that?

20 JH: Actually, and I'm trying to remember, but I don't think I got any sort of
21 Vietnam training until I got to Vietnam. I'm trying to remember. I know I train fired on
22 the M-16 before I left Sill but there wasn't anything that I remember until I hit Vietnam.
23 The Cav had a kind of a little training program that they put us through once we got
24 there, but there wasn't anything...I'm sure there were at places like Fort Polk and
25 Tigerland and stuff like that, but the place there at Sill where I was at, the training I got
26 was in calling in artillery and various things like that. I got training in codes, I got
27 training in radio procedures and stuff like that. In fact, the irony of the whole thing was
28 kind of like because of some of this training that I got, is where I ended up once I got to
29 11th Cav because like I said, my orders read Howitzer Battery and everything so once I
30 get to Vietnam I report and one of the things I did, I want to tell you, was while I was still
31 home on leave before I went to Vietnam I hadn't heard anything about the 11th Armored

1 Cav and I'd still like to find it because I think it came out in June sometime while I was
2 home on leave, the Life Magazine had this two or three page article and what it was was
3 about this K Troop of the 11th Armored Cav getting in this big fight and getting the shit
4 kicked out of them. But, they had all these pictures of the 11th Cav in Vietnam and my
5 mother freaked, and I thought, 'Wow, cool, a combat unit, some guys that are really
6 doing something!' Of course it didn't dawn on me that what they were actually reporting
7 was this K Troop getting messed up pretty bad. So, I get to Vietnam and the same thing
8 that you hear all the guys talk about, you step off an air conditioned plane and it's like
9 walking into a blast furnace and the smells assailed your nose. In fact, I heard it all on TV
10 last night. I don't know whether you saw that thing on Channel 5 about Vietnam?

11 JB: No, I missed it.

12 JH: They had a program, about an hour program about Vietnam vets were talking
13 about their service in Vietnam. There was about 12 or 13 of them that told a pretty good
14 thing. In fact, I was thinking about that and thinking, 'Well, that's what you hear all the
15 time, the smells, the heat, the wire over the windows of the busses,' you know, but all of
16 that I experienced, but kind of a different twist on that was my family doctor that I'd
17 grown up with was in the reserve and was I think a major or a lieutenant colonel, I can't
18 remember which, and he went back in and he was in Vietnam. Well, my mother wrote
19 him that I was coming to Vietnam so I'm at 90th Replacement which is right there in the
20 Long Binh complex and outside of Saigon in that area, waiting to ship on to 11th Cav and
21 they have these loud speakers that they call various people. Well this loud speaker comes
22 on, 'Corporal James Holt, would you report to the front office,' or whatever they called
23 it, to the front of the 90th Replacement or whatever, and I go up there and walk in and this
24 sergeant says, 'There's a lieutenant colonel out front with a jeep that wants to see you.
25 He's asking for you specifically,' and of course he was puzzled. Well I walk out and it's
26 Dr. Slade and like I say, I grew up with this man was my family doctor and everything.
27 So, I got a little twist on the fact that he essentially got me cleared to go with him and he
28 took me around Saigon and showed me stuff and took me to a real nice restaurant in
29 downtown Saigon and we ate and talked and this that and the other before he brought me
30 back. That afternoon he takes me by his compound and shows me where he worked there
31 at 2nd Field Force and he was in charge of like communicable diseases there in the area,

1 and of course that's something that my mother had done and he had done a lot, too. He
2 was her boss, too, back at home before he went back in the service. He gave me this box,
3 this big cardboard box, and showed me what was in it and what it was was these five
4 gallon waterproof canvas buckets with a rope on one end and a shower head on the other.
5 There were like I think 20 of them in this box, and he said, 'I'm going to ship this to you
6 at Black Horse Base Camp,' and he said, 'I will mail it to you because if I mail it to you
7 nobody can mess with it. It will have to come to you.' He said, 'Now when you get this,
8 you give one of these shower buckets to your captain, one to your 1st Sergeant, give one
9 to your mess sergeant, keep one for yourself and several of them for yourself, and the rest
10 of them to your supply sergeant to do with as he wants to.' He said, 'These things are
11 like gold.' He said, 'This will get you in good with all your people,' and I thought, 'Oh
12 that's cool,' and he did that and I did that, and it did! It was really neat. But, we had
13 those things scattered around and everything, but I got to spend some time actually
14 instead of like a normal guy going through the 90th Replacement and just pulling shit
15 details until they flew you out to your unit. Well, I actually got to go with him and spend
16 nearly half a day just driving around with him in a jeep and he showed me Saigon, so I
17 could see some stuff. Unfortunately at that time I didn't have a camera so I wish I would
18 have had the camera so I could have gotten photographs of all that. Anyway, I stayed at
19 90th Replacement for a day or two there I think, two or three days, something like that,
20 and they flew me in this Caribou to Black Horse Base Camp which really wasn't that far
21 away. I don't know, it was just one of those things. I was just going with the flow and
22 we got to the base camp and of course everybody's supposed to check in at regimental
23 headquarters. Well, the day that I came in there was about 15 or 20 of us and I think
24 nearly all those guys went to K-Troop to replace those guys that were wounded and killed
25 and stuff and I went to How Battery, and at the time the unit was out and everything but I
26 did get some...they took all us new guys over to this area and we sat in bleachers and
27 then they took us through and showed us booby traps and pungy stakes and all that stuff,
28 but that was really about all the actual Vietnam training I got. It was just kind of like
29 almost a one-day indoctrination thing. There wasn't anything really where they taught
30 you escape and invasion or anything really a bunch of anything. I think I hung around
31 there in the rear area for a day or two and they put me on a helicopter and flew me out to

1 How Battery. It was kind of one of those things. Our base camp was really pretty neat
2 and they still had...I'm trying to remember this because How was out in the field but
3 there was one gun or something. It was either back for repairs or something because
4 where our hooch area was there at base camp, we were like at a corner of the base camp.
5 They had areas for the guns to set up when they came back in. I'll never forget the first
6 night some of these guys that were in this How Battery area were all I think guys fixing
7 to leave and they were already back and they'd been there. See, I didn't connect until
8 later on that I was in the first group of people for the 11th Cav that was coming in as
9 replacements because these guys came over in like July-August of '66. That's when they
10 arrived in country, and they came in boats. Then we were coming in then as
11 replacements and I arrived over there sometime at the first of July there sometime. I
12 think it was after the 4th but it was right in there someplace between the 4th and the 10th of
13 July.

14 JB: Of '67?

15 JH: Yeah, and these guys were fixing to start to rotate out. So these guys that
16 were there at the base camp were guys that had already served their year and they're
17 telling all these stories and filing my head full of all this stuff and I'm listening to them.
18 But, I realize now what is happening but at the time I didn't know the hydraulics on these
19 155 Howitzers that they had with the 11th Cav. We had self-propelled Howitzers in the
20 How Battery. Well, this one gun was set up and I guess it was going to fire some H and
21 I's or something. Well, they heard the hydraulics as the gun tube and all this stuff and of
22 course it was across the road in an open area from where these hooches are. But, all these
23 guys are watching me and that gun went off and I liked to tore a hole in that tent, just
24 because this big boom and everything! I heard the hydraulics, I know I heard them, but it
25 didn't compute. Everybody knew what it was; I didn't! They did, they knew what was
26 fixing to happen. This gun goes off and I liked to pissed myself and tore everything up,
27 jumping I don't know where. I think I tore outside to jump in this bunker that they had.
28 These guys are laughing and rolling on the floor and everything! That was kind of my
29 indoctrination to the guns, and that was just one gun instead of all six. But, it's funny
30 how sounds...how you get involved in sounds over there because after a while once you
31 got used to that stuff, you could be sleeping out in the field in your track, of course the

1 top hatch would be open or the back ramp would be down, and those guns could be 50
2 feet away and they'd be firing off and on, H and I's, and that was Harassment and
3 Interdiction fire where they just fired at trail junctions and stream crossings and places
4 where there might be somebody. It was just kind of keeping Charlie on his toes. It might
5 be somebody coming down this trail, we'll put a few rounds in there just to see. But,
6 those guns could fire all night long and you could sleep. 500 meters out, boom, boom,
7 boom, boom, and you'd be up raising the back ramp, closing the top hatch, getting
8 everything going because there's incoming mortars and you learned to recognize those
9 sounds. We could sleep...we were on...and I guess I ought to tell you how I ended up
10 there. When I first got to How Battery, the captain was this captain named Captain Love
11 and he was from Dallas, Texas. I've never been able to locate this guy again, but I
12 remember that. I'm almost positive it was Dallas. He was from up around Dallas or
13 something. But, he liked me or thought he'd take care of me because I was an East Texas
14 boy. He knew where Longview was and this, and that, and the other. They were going to
15 assign me actually to the fire direction control because that's the training I'd had. I
16 wasn't a gun buddy that fired the guns, but I'd learned in AIT how to plot all the stuff to
17 fire the artillery and fire direction control and they were going to put me in there. Well,
18 he thought he'd do me a favor and he was going to make me his driver. Well, I felt for a
19 while it might not be cool and then the more I got to thinking about it the more I got to
20 thinking I'm going to be riding with this guy in this jeep with these two antennas on it
21 and anybody that sees us knows that he's an officer and they're going to be shooting at
22 this jeep. I decided, 'Whoa, wait a minute, king's X! I don't want to do this!' Anyway, I
23 tried to talk him out of it. Of course the deal was I was going to drive the jeep to
24 wherever we were going and then I was going to work in fire direction control. It would
25 have been okay if I would have been in fire direction control, but driving his jeep was not
26 what I wanted to do. I just started screwing up and every time there was a buffalo
27 wallow that I could see that we were driving, I'd drive the jeep in it or get it stuck or do
28 something or hit a puddle and splash water all over him or something like that. It was
29 nothing. I just jacked with him all the time, and he finally got fed up with it and I had
30 been in the unit long enough to figure out that they had what they called FO tracks.
31 These were all guys that were in How Battery, that were attached to How Battery, but 1st

1 Squadron we had three FO tracks and it was niner-one, niner-two, and niner-three track.
2 Each track had four guys on it and they were all kind of pretty much like me. They knew
3 codes, they knew radio procedure and everything like that, but they operate with the line
4 troops, the actual troops that went out different places. What would happen in a tactical
5 situation in the field was we'd go to some area to work. They'd set up a big lobber
6 position and set up the guns there. But, then these line troops would go out into other
7 areas and patrol and look for Charlie and try to get into shit, and then the guns were there
8 to try to fire artillery support and everything. Well I wanted to be where the action was
9 so I kept jacking with Captain Love until he finally put me on one of the FO tracks
10 because I told him that's where I want to be, on the FO tracks. They threaten people with
11 the FO tracks in How Battery because a lot of these guys would prefer to be back at the
12 guns or back in fire direction control. They're in a safer area. But, I don't know, that's
13 just the way I was. I wanted to be out doing something. So, I finally got put on the FO
14 tracks and then that's where I spent the rest of my time in Vietnam on these FO tracks.
15 Essentially what we did was we were just a regular line track unless there was a
16 dismounted patrol and if there was a dismounted patrol...lots of times we'd be working
17 with 1st Infantry Division and the 25th or 101st Airborne, we might be in their area or we
18 might be working with some ARVN units or stuff like that. But anybody that was
19 sending out a patrol, one of the 12 of us went on that patrol. We were like forward
20 observers but we were also...my job on the track, I was left machine gunner and that's
21 what I started off on was left machine gunner. But, if there was a dismount and
22 depending on who was working the area because I might be in [niner-two] track and we
23 might be with A Troop, [niner-three] track might be over here with D Company, the tank
24 company, and they might be someplace else, in the same general area but not close
25 together. So it just depends. It was kind of one of those things. I was a machine gunner
26 if we were moving or if we were busting jungle I was just another machine gunner on the
27 track. But, if we got someplace and decided to send out an ambush patrol that night or
28 we were working with the 1st Infantry and they had a patrol that was going to go out and
29 work something or something like that, well one of us would go out on that patrol
30 because if the shit hit the fan, we were the ones that called in the artillery and stuff like
31 that and so essentially what you had is you had some lieutenants around but we didn't

1 ever have enough lieutenants to go around, and usually by the time they had operated
2 with us for a while, they'd pull them and put them doing something else. We were really
3 forward observers. Essentially that's what we did for the rest of the time that I was over
4 there. Like I told people, I did recon missions but it wasn't like I was walking point.
5 Anybody we worked with, they protected us because if the shit hit the fan, we had the
6 radio. We could call back. We knew the codes. We knew the frequencies and
7 everything. We carried the codebook. My job was to destroy that codebook. If it looked
8 like we were going to get overrun or something like that, I had to destroy that codebook.
9 But, it wasn't like I was walking point or anything like that. They usually put us in the
10 middle of any patrol we were at and stuff, and I didn't do a whole lot of dismounts
11 because most of our stuff was done operating off the tracks. But, occasionally from time
12 to time...and I was lucky enough that I got to work with a lot of the different units we
13 worked with. We worked with the Australians. I got to spend some time with the
14 Aussies.

15 JB: How was that?

16 JH: They're nuts, absolutely nuts! The guys would be drinking beer and having a
17 firefight, you know! Nothing seemed to bother them, just absolutely nothing. We'd be
18 getting shot at and we're ducking and this, that, and the other, and they're standing
19 around saying, 'I think he's firing from over here!' They're nuts, but great guys, fun to
20 be around. They had their duration out in the field; not to say that we didn't from time to
21 time, but they got it and had it and everything like that, good soldiers. We worked with
22 the Koreans; now they were exceptional as far as fighting. Very highly disciplined;
23 disciplined to the point of had great fear of their sergeants and their officers and stuff like
24 that. They ruled by fear. I kind of felt sorry for them because it was nothing for one of
25 their sergeants and their officers to just slap the shit out of one of these troops, and they
26 expected it. That was the way they disciplined them. But, I got to work with them. I got
27 to work with the Special Forces one time. We went up...I can't remember the route, but
28 we called it the Bamboo Highway and they had spotted the Special Forces, I think it was
29 the [?] Special Forces camp. It was up at the edge of the central highlands. But, they had
30 spotted some Russian tanks crossing the border and some tracks over on our side of the
31 border. So, we took the whole 1st Squadron up this road that no vehicles had been up

1 since the French pulled out. It was overgrown with bamboo; that's why we called it the
2 Bamboo Highway because it was just grown over and everything. Our lead elements
3 were pushing burnt out hulks of French tanks off the road where they'd evidentially
4 ambushed this French column and just essentially annihilated them or whatever. But, we
5 got up there and worked with the Special Forces for about three or four weeks hoping that
6 we could lure these Russian tanks to come across and fight us, but they never would. We
7 never could. But, they'd spotted a road that they'd built up there, too. Under triple
8 canopy, you couldn't even see it from here. That made me decide that I was glad that I
9 didn't get with the Special Forces because these guys hung out up there at the end of no
10 place. They were just amazed at our Howitzers and the firepower that we had and all this
11 stuff. This camp they were in, they had I think a couple of 50s and 60s and stuff, and that
12 was about the extent of their firepower. By that time I was so used to...like I said, in my
13 track alone we had a 50 caliber machine gun mounted on top and center and two 60s off
14 the back and we had 10,000 rounds per machine gun on my track, plus a cache of
15 grenades, plus an M-79 and several cases of grenades for that, our own personal
16 weapons, all sorts of clips for that. For a while we had captured a little 60-millimeter
17 mortar that Charlie had got someplace. It was a U.S. mortar but he had it and we
18 liberated it and we had that on our track for a while and played with it until they came
19 and took it away from us. There was no base plate for it so we were just putting the
20 bottom of it in a helmet, steel pot, and firing it by hand. It was one of those things.

21 JB: Did you ever use it in combat?

22 JH: No, we were just jacking with it. Half the time, that was the thing that was
23 bad about mortars over there. These charges they had for the things would get damp and
24 sometimes they wouldn't go off. Our four deuce guys had the same problem of I heard
25 about – I didn't see it, but I heard about – in base camp one night they had the four deuce
26 guys in and they were firing some H and I's and everything. There were some guys in
27 another part of the camp playing cards in this hooch and the charge didn't go off right on
28 this four deuce and it comes in, comes down through the tent, and embeds itself in this
29 footlocker that these guys were using to play cards on and of course they all un-assed the
30 tent and these four deuce guys come running over saying, 'Has anybody seen our mortar

1 round?' and they drug it out of the footlocker and took it back and re-fired it! Stupid, but
2 that was...some of these guys were real idiots.

3 JB: Did you ever have a problem with M-16 ammo getting damp?

4 JH: No. Like I said, there again different totally from the infantry. We had these
5 big 40 millimeter boxes that the helicopters...so 11th Cav had it's own helicopter unit,
6 too, so we could access this stuff. The way our track was set up inside, we had these 40
7 millimeter cans in a U shape inside the track. Now people that know APCs know that
8 there's seats in there. But, what the cab did was they tore all that stuff out. They didn't
9 even have the seat that slid up and down for the track commander. They took all that
10 stuff out because they learned certain things over there. If you were standing in that [?]
11 on top and the track hit a mine, that [cupola?] would blow off the top of the track if it was
12 a big enough mine. If you're standing up inside that [cupola?] and standing down in that
13 track, it would cut you half in two. So, the track commanders finally got where they
14 would put them aboard up there inside the [cupola?] and sit cross-legged up in the
15 [cupola?]. If you had a mine that blew off, you went with the [cupola?] and then you
16 could un-ass it in the air or even land in it and still not be as messed up as if you were
17 standing half in and half out. We as machine gunners rode on the back patch if we were
18 moving, especially if you were moving down a road or something like that, because if
19 you hit a mine it would blow you off the track but most of the blowing would go inside.
20 We lined the floor with three quarter plywood. They may have even had some of this
21 engineer planking stuff that they used that was steel. They put that in the bottom and put
22 sandbags over the top of it and then put these cans down and everything. But, we could
23 sleep four people inside that track dry because one across the back under the 50, two
24 down on the sides, and one laying in the middle of the U on the floor on this plywood,
25 and we've even in desperate situations have hung a hammock in the middle and slept a
26 fifth guy in there but it gets pretty tight. Essentially with these cans, they were
27 waterproof if they were sealed. So, we had cans that were loaded full of 16 clips and then
28 other cans that were personal gear and all this stuff and then of course the ammo for the
29 machine guns that was belted together already and ready to go and stuff, so all of this
30 stuff stayed pretty well dry and out of the weather and everything as long as it was sealed
31 inside the can. So, we didn't have near the problems with our weaponry as the infantry

1 does. Like I said, if you were out, you cleaned your weapon. That was one of the things
2 that we did pretty religiously. If we stopped anywhere, you checked your 60, you made
3 sure there wasn't anything clogging up on it or anything anywhere. The dust, you'd wipe
4 it off, get it off. Of course we had diesel with us because that's what the tracks ran on.
5 We could clean weapons with diesel real easy. We were able to carry and access a lot of
6 stuff that the infantrymen in the jungle didn't have a chance to. It was a whole lot easier
7 in a lot of ways for us than it was your run of the mill grunts. I never had a misfire on my
8 weapon.

9 JB: What did you think of the 16?

10 JH: I don't know that I thought of it much because quite frankly most of the time
11 that I dismounted, I carried the 60 because I love the M-60 and I was a big enough guy
12 that I could carry it and I liked it and given the opportunity if we were going to do a
13 dismount and I could take it, if they'd let me take it, I'd take the 60.

14 JB: Would you be carrying a radio, too?

15 JH: No, usually one of the other guys would carry the radio. Our job was to have
16 the radio there. They'd have the RTO for whoever was running patrol or whatever,
17 carrying I think usually it was a [?] 25 which wasn't the greatest radio in the world but if
18 we could get back to one of the tracks, and see my track was considered a command track
19 because we had four radios on my track; an FM and then three others and so we
20 monitored the squadron net, the company or troop net that we were with. We usually had
21 another radio set on anybody else that we might be working with, and then of course that
22 FM was set up where we could access the planes or the helicopters or anything like that.
23 Sometimes we'd have to switch them off depending on what we were doing, but my track
24 had access to all that and everything whereas the other tracks wouldn't. They'd just
25 usually be on the troop net and could switch back and forth between that and the other.
26 We were considered a command track sort of thing and that aspect because we had those
27 radios in there in case we needed them, if things got to going then we could from one of
28 the FO tracks we could call the helicopters, we could call the jets, we could contact the
29 various stuff.

30 JB: You would be directly dealing with air support?

1 JH: We did if we were ordered to. There again it depends on if you were out with
2 one of the troops and a lot of times it depended on what the troop commander wanted you
3 to do. He'd say, 'Okay, niner-two track, you get in touch with these guys and you bring
4 them in. In the meantime, I want to do this,' and he might be working with talking to
5 somebody else. Or, sometimes he did it and all we did was listen in so we'd know what
6 was going on. That was the one thing about our track, the FO tracks. We always knew
7 what was going on because we could hear it all whereas a lot of the other tracks, they
8 wouldn't know sometimes exactly what was going on. Plus, see, if we were...many
9 times they'd put the FO track back at the lobber even though we still weren't working
10 with the guns. If we were going to be in like what they called a squadron lobber and
11 going to be there for a while, lots of times we'd rotate the three tracks going out and a
12 couple of them would be out and one would be back at the squadron lobber and they
13 would be rotating us into the top. We worked in the top as the radio operators in the top.
14 That was another one of our duties was to be in the top and working a 24-hour shift
15 working radios. That was another sort of thing that we did besides going out with the
16 troops and stuff like that, and I really enjoyed when we stayed back and worked at the top
17 because then you always knew what was going on. Those radios, if you were a squadron,
18 then you know what D Company is doing over here, you know what A, B, and C Troops
19 were doing. You've got a feel for the whole thing that's going on because you're sitting
20 there and you're working with the colonel and the S2 and all those guys so you're really
21 up on what everybody's doing, and that was always pretty neat because that way you had
22 pretty good knowledge of what was going on at any given time and stuff like that. So, I
23 enjoyed that probably as much as...almost as much as being out with the troops. Like I
24 said, I didn't really spend time with the guns. The guys that I know that I see at reunions
25 now, I really don't know as many of the How Battery guys as I do guys from A, B, C,
26 and D Company, the Troops, because they were the ones I was out with most of the time
27 working with. It was kind of one of those things that was a little bit different type of
28 deal. I knew a few of the guys with the guns but you really didn't...you weren't around
29 them much other than they were set up over here and you'd see them, but you really were
30 working more with all these other guys and stuff because at any given time...I spent a lot
31 of time with B Troop. It seemed like that was the one I probably spent the most time

1 with over there. I had a lot of real good friends. I've got a friend up in Louisville now
2 that he and I usually always stay together at the reunions if his wife doesn't come because
3 he and I hung out a lot in B Troop. He was one of the drivers in B Troop. It was an
4 exciting year. I went through the first TET Offensive. I guess that was probably the big
5 event for me over there. We were set up...I think we were in [Hobo]. I know we were
6 up in War Zone C, but I think we were in the Hobo Woods up there and we had been
7 reporting for a while that we were not hitting or seeing the contact that we normally got
8 when we went up there. Nearly the whole time that I worked with 11th Cav we worked
9 War Zone D and C, Cambodian border area. We were kind of a blocking force between
10 the Cambodian border and Saigon-Long Binh.

11 JB: Basically west of Saigon?

12 JH: Yeah, that's what we did most of the time was work those areas. They were
13 free fire zones for the first point so we didn't have to worry about civilians a lot. It was
14 an infiltration route. That's where we seemed to get the most contact and of course that
15 was our job. I left my base camp and it was supposed to be a three-day mission and I
16 didn't go back to the base camp for over six months. It was just one little thing after
17 another and then TET happened. The day that TET happened, it was daytime for us,
18 we'd gone out and done a search and destroy, an S&D that morning and had come back
19 to the lobster position and sitting on top of a track eating C's and the radio came on and it
20 was essentially the colonel and he was going, 'Move out, all units move out. Saigon's
21 being hit! 2nd Field's getting hit! Hue's getting hit! All the compounds across the
22 country are being hit! We've been ordered to 2nd Field Force! Move out! Move out!
23 Move out!' We had a lieutenant on the track at that time and we didn't have a lieutenant
24 much but like I said earlier, sometimes they get a new lieutenant in, they put him on the
25 FO track for a while and if he did okay there then they'd jerk him off and put him
26 someplace else. So, we trained a few [recording ends] lieutenant, and this was a pretty
27 good lieutenant. In fact, I'd like to find him too. His name was Lieutenant Shumato and
28 he was off the block in New York someplace, neat guy, Italian, just neat fellow.
29 Anyway, we had liberated I think from one of the first infantry units that we'd worked
30 with we'd liberated this little small tent and we had fixed this tent for him to sleep in
31 because it was hard for all of us, and we liked him, so we fixed him this tent and we'd set

1 it up for him at night. It was fairly new tent. We didn't have time to take it down. We
2 just essentially took a machete and chopped it to pieces and just threw the gear on the
3 track and getting fired up. It probably didn't take 15 minutes and we were rolling.
4 Charlie evidentially knew where we were and where we'd probably go because they had
5 us mined in and we started coming out and we started hitting mines and we'd try to move
6 and go another way and hit another...it wasn't doing anything but a lot of them were
7 fairly small. But, I think we lost two tracks and one tank threw a tread and the colonel
8 essentially said, 'Get all the personal gear, get all the weapons and the codes and
9 everything, throw thermite grenades in them, and leave them.' That's how critical our
10 move order was. We came out of Hobo and stopped in the middle of the afternoon at Ly
11 Khe which was the 1st Infantry Division base camp and we pulled in there and the colonel
12 essentially said, 'All wheeled vehicles are staying here, and all track vehicles,' and he
13 kind of got gathered up in the middle of everybody and just told us what was going on.
14 He said, 'Everything is getting hit. This is a big offensive. We're going in right down
15 the highway in through Saigon into 2nd Field Force and there's little compounds,
16 American compounds, actually Vietnamese compounds that have advisors that have been
17 overrun. So, if you see an American load them on your track but keep moving.' The
18 thing I'll never forget is coming out of Ly Khe you hit a ridge and you kind of go down
19 in the valley. We hit that ridge and it was like dusk. It was still the sun had gone down
20 but still sunset in the sky and everything. Everywhere you looked there were helicopters.
21 I mean, it looked like every chopper in Vietnam was in the air and there was all this fire
22 going on from these choppers down at various places and stuff, and my track was in the
23 middle of this column and all I could see in front of me was tanks and tracks and all I
24 could see behind me was tanks and tracks, the whole squadron. We moved I think they
25 said, I've got it written down in a magazine someplace, but I think it as like we moved 96
26 miles from essentially 12 noon to before midnight, moved the entire squadron out of
27 Hobo Woods and pulled into 2nd Field. But, they knew we were coming because they
28 pushed burning log trucks in the middle of the road, set them on fire, and our lead tanks
29 and stuff. We had some of the tanks had roam plow blades on the front of them. They
30 just pushed this stuff out of the way and we kept going and went right through the middle
31 of Saigon. By the time we got in close, they were saying that there might be groups of

1 civilians that the VC had taken prisoner and they'd push them out in front of them and we
2 were told to be careful with what we shot at and make sure that it was the enemy before
3 we shot at anybody or stuff like that. Well, we were essentially told to return fire and
4 continue to move, no matter what happens, because normally our deal was if we got shot
5 at we broke down and attacked. But, this time we were told, 'No, just return fire and
6 continue to move,' and we got into 2nd Field Force and it was the neatest thing. Like I
7 say, it was the middle of the night and you could step off my track onto a bunker onto
8 another track onto a tank onto another bunker. You could probably walk all the way
9 around their compound without ever getting on the ground because we had everything
10 there and we just hit the perimeter. They had attacked, 2nd Field Force, they had attacked
11 the main gate from this widow's village across the road and it was the middle of the
12 morning and these idiots in there at 2nd Field, you're talking guys that were clerks and
13 typists and nothing had ever happened there. They got a few mortars occasionally and
14 maybe a rocket once in a while, but you're talking a four-lane highway up in front of the
15 main gate. Well they didn't notice that there weren't any villagers or kids in this widow's
16 village. This village across the road was a village for the widows and children of South
17 Vietnamese soldiers that had been killed. These guys that were pulling guard on the gate
18 didn't notice that there weren't any women and children walking around that morning,
19 they didn't catch it. All of a sudden they looked up and here comes a battalion of NVA
20 across the road at them. Well, they got them stopped and actually they say it was an MP
21 compound down the road that this E5 sergeant figured out what was going on and he
22 loaded up three jeeps with 60s mounted on the pedestals on the back and they ran to the
23 road like three times in front of 2nd Field and they said after the first pass there was no
24 rubber on the tires of the jeeps. They were running them on rims. They essentially kept
25 these NVA pinned down across the road until they got the gates closed and got more
26 people on the perimeter and got it stopped. Every one of these guys in the jeeps were all
27 wounded but I think they gave this sergeant like the Distinguished Service Cross and all
28 the other guys got Silver Stars or something. We got there that night and there wasn't
29 even anything going on by the time we got there. But, they had been attacking from the
30 back and everything and stuff so we're all just standing around on top of the tracks
31 looking and the thing I remember most is we'd never seen a Cobra. We'd seen them in

1 country but they'd been test flying them and they hadn't been firing them. We're on the
2 back perimeter was where my track ended up and we're standing there on the back of the
3 track just looking around thinking, 'This is good, there's nothing going on here,' and all
4 of a sudden this heavy team of Cobras come in and this first one is pumping out these 40
5 millimeters at the front and that's the first time we'd seen that and that was pretty cool.
6 Then that second one comes in and cuts loose with a mini gun and that scared the crap
7 out of everybody. Then the last one comes in and is firing rockets and of course we'd
8 seen the rockets before but that mini gun was something else. We're watching all this!
9 The way things are set up there, say this is 2nd Field Force perimeter, here's the road
10 running down in front of it, well the road kind of curves around over this way. Over here
11 is 90th Replacement. Out here is open field and rice paddies, but their back perimeter
12 looks out this way and 2nd Field looks out this way. What Charlie had done is they had
13 done an attempt to hit the back perimeter but out here in these rice paddies and weeds and
14 everything they'd left some snipers. These guys would pop up and they'd shoot over
15 here at these guys and shoot over here at these guys and they were having a fire fight with
16 each other, shooting at their own guys! So, we told them to get off the guns, that we were
17 there now and we'd take care of the place and everything because we figured out real
18 quick because we knew that Charlie didn't have a 60 and these guys are over here
19 opening up on their own, shooting at each other, and luckily weren't doing a real good job
20 of it. So, we stopped that and everything, and then somebody had been scouting around
21 and they come back and they go, 'There's a swimming pool up here,' so we all grab bars
22 of soap and went to this swimming pool and took a bath! They had to drain the thing the
23 next day. They said there was about six inches of scum on the water, but we'd never seen
24 a swimming pool, and they had flushed toilets and all this stuff. We were just amazed
25 and we thought it was great. Eventually we stayed anyway at 2nd Field for a while until
26 things died down and then they sent us to Cho Lan which was the Chinese section of
27 Saigon and that's where all the VC had finally holed up and had kind of been pushed to
28 after everything was settled down around the area and we did a lot of stuff down there,
29 mostly just would sit up on the banks of the river and were interdicting river traffic at
30 night and doing patrols through the Cho Lan section just looking for pockets of VC
31 during the day and gradually rooting them out. We all thought it was cool duty because it

1 wasn't anything like fighting in the jungles and it wasn't near as intense. There wasn't
2 any mines or anything like that or booby traps, so we thought it was pretty neat. That
3 was, I guess, my big event over there as far as really being involved in something pretty
4 big and everything. I'm supposedly able to wear four stars on my campaign ribbon
5 because everything that happened. I arrived in Vietnam and there as a campaign going
6 on and that one got over and another campaign started and then there were two real close
7 together, TET was one and then the post-TET and then right before I left there was
8 another campaign. Where a lot of guys might have only been over there a year and
9 gotten like two stars, well I ended up with four because of TET and post-TET campaigns
10 or whatever. That was the biggie for me. Let's see, I got wounded on my 21st birthday in
11 September and that goes back to I'd just gotten on the FO tracks and we were supposed
12 to be checking out an old base camp that we knew was there and all the guys on the track
13 except me were old timers and fixing to leave. So, when they asked for a volunteer to
14 dismount I said, 'I'll dismount because you guys are fixing to go home.' Well, you
15 know, we just dismounted guys off a lot of the tracks was all we were doing. We weren't
16 working with anybody. We were going to go down and check out this base camp and we
17 took off down this trail and like I say, I remember what I'd been told in basic. These
18 guys had been in this base camp area two or three times in the past and they thought I
19 guess it was a field day, and they were clumped up and everything and I just backed off
20 from the group. In fact, a couple of the guys behind me were trying to get me to tighten it
21 up. I backed off about ten or 12 yards from the guys in front of me. What they found out
22 later is they took a fruit cake tin that some GI had thrown away and they filled it full of
23 nails and little links of chain and ball bearings and nuts and bolts and just all kinds of
24 stuff that they picked up, covered it with plaster, and put a shake charge behind it and
25 they set it up and there was a curve in the trail and they actually let the point man and this
26 lieutenant walk past the curve in the trail and they popped this thing. It was command
27 detonated. They set it off and hauled ass, and I was the last one in line wounded and it
28 didn't knock me down. Suddenly everybody in front of me was down and it just scared
29 the crap out of me and I started firing over the top of these guys that was down and I'll
30 never forget, this A Troop 1st Sergeant at this time was this big old British guy and I
31 never knew his story but he spoke with a British accent and everything and he'd been

1 around everybody said since God was in Pampers. I guess he joined the American Army
2 and just stayed. But, he came down and grabbed me by the shoulder and wanted to know
3 what I was shooting at and I said, 'Anything that moves, Todd,' and he said, 'Well that
4 was command detonated. There's nobody there. Let's go help these guys.' But, when I
5 knelt down to the guy in front of me, they figured out later a length of chain about six
6 inches long had taken his arm off right above the elbow. So, he's lying there and he's
7 bleeding, so I knew enough first aid and I was going to try to get a hold of that main vein
8 in his arm and pinch it off until the medics got there. But, as I knelt down I noticed I had
9 a piece of blood on the inside of my leg and I said, 'Hmm, I must have been hit,' but I
10 didn't feel a thing. So, I knelt on down and got that vein and was holding that and trying
11 to keep him from bleeding to death. Well the medics got to us pretty quick, we had good
12 medics, and this medic got in and got a hemostat on that vein on that guy and was
13 working on him and he said, 'Are you hit?' and I said, 'Yeah, I think I may be.' I didn't
14 know what I looked like and I had this guy's blood all over me. So, this medic thought I
15 was in shock and was blown up and so he's ripping my clothes off. We get in and I've
16 got a little hole right here on the inside of my leg and another one he checked up in here
17 and it was beside my groin. Of course I was the slightest wounded of everybody and I
18 put my flak vest on that day and I had metal imbedded in the chest of that flak vest and
19 didn't even really notice it until...in fact, somebody brought it and showed it to me in the
20 hospital. After I was already there they airlifted...but there was 12 wounded and one
21 killed and one died later that day, and out of the 12 of us wounded nine came back to the
22 States with arms, legs, and eyes missing and I had two ball bearings. In fact, it wasn't
23 even bad stuff. I've got a ball bearing that's imbedded in this bone and the other's in my
24 pelvis and they left them both in because they said, 'We'd have to cut you wide open to
25 get them out and they're not hurting anything. They're half embedded in the bone and
26 the bone will grow over it.' I was lucky there, but that was my 21st birthday and I'll
27 never forget that because I remembered what my DI had said and I put my flak vest on
28 and I never wore it on a dismount again. They're too hot and too heavy. But, for some
29 reason that day I put it on and I don't know what made me do it; I guess it was because it
30 was my first dismount and I was a little nervous about it. That was the first time I was
31 wounded, and then I was wounded again in May and we tied into a big battle and this was

1 after TET and everything and we got back up into War Zone C. A lot of people didn't
2 realize that we pretty much decimated the VC during TET. So, after TET was when we
3 really started tying into the NVA units and stuff like that. One of our line troops was out
4 one morning and I was still in the lobster and they were patrolling through an area that
5 we'd patrolled through and the 1st Infantry Division had patrolled through and they ran
6 into this NVA battalion and these guys had come out of a complex that we didn't even
7 know was there and they were massing on the ground to move someplace and this line
8 troop surprised them and they decided to fight. That day we fought those guys eight
9 hours and eventually found out it wasn't just one battalion, it was two, and they had a
10 quarter mile bunker line at the edge of this rubber and about a quarter to a half-mile back
11 to this complex. We finally got it busted and some of the tunnel rats and stuff went in.
12 They had complexes underground for 150 men to sleep and stuff. It was a staging area
13 and had probably been there ten or 15 years. They probably had it when they were
14 fighting the French because they had hospitals and all sorts of shit and we just happened
15 to catch them on top of the ground. The thing that was tough was this front bunker line
16 was set up with concrete and stuff. It was just like pill boxes with firing slits and the
17 whole deal, but all this stuff was connected and we would push past the front line into the
18 rubber and then they were coming out of holes and stuff all around us and stuff and by
19 that time I had progressed to the point that I was track commander of niner-two track and
20 it was real hairy because we're firing and what we're seeing in front of us are some guy
21 jumps up over here and is attacking the track and you shoot at him to keep him off your
22 buddy and some guy jumps up over here and throws a [?] at you, so you're slapping that
23 down with one hand and firing the machine gun with the other. Everybody on my track
24 got wounded that day by either shrapnel or something, but what hit me right here on top
25 of this leg, I was sitting up in there like I was telling you, cross-legged, and we figured it
26 out later, you've got that [cupelo?] around you, you've got the 50 sitting there and the 50s
27 sitting in a shield, so when you move that thing the whole thing moves and the shield
28 moves with it. Well the only place that AK round could have come was a little slit right
29 where that 50 sits in that shield, and that AK round came probably down the right side of
30 the machine gun, hit over here inside the [cupelo?] and ricocheted into my leg. Well
31 remember I said the first time I was wounded, I didn't feel a thing. It didn't hurt until the

1 next day in fact. I never felt it. That sucker felt like Mickey Mantle took a full swing
2 with a baseball bat and I thought my leg was blown off. I'm screaming, cussing, drop
3 down into the track, screaming bloody murder, 'God, I'm hit, my leg's blown off!' the
4 whole nine yards and the driver crawls out of the thing there and rips my leg open and
5 here's this AK round laying flattened out, half in, half out of my leg, just laying there,
6 and my driver goes, 'You ain't hurt! Put a bandage on that shit and get on the 50!' and
7 that's essentially what we did. But that sucker...and it's because it hit right into that
8 muscle and of course I had my leg and your tense and adrenaline's flowing and
9 everything, and I thought I was dead! But that was my second wound. I was going to
10 stay another six months and had already signed most of my papers except for my final
11 signature and I kept thinking about it and I told the colonel I said, 'I don't think I'm
12 going to stay another six months. The third time may be a charm with them, too. I'm
13 going to get on out of here because they've got me twice now.' That kind of scared me
14 that day because that was the hairiest thing. Most of the time with us they hit us and we
15 attack them back and they ran away. Charlie and the NVA either one didn't really want
16 to jack with the 11th Cav because we had too much power. We could flat mess them up
17 big time. They'd mine us, they'd try to set off some sort of booby traps or stuff like that,
18 but as far as fighting us head on, they didn't do it. That was the main one that I
19 remember that we really tied in to them and they fought really all...that was the first time
20 we had to resupply with ammo. That'll give you an idea. We ran through our basic load
21 and had to pull back, and it wasn't eight hours solid. We hit them for a while, things
22 would die down, stuff like that, and then something would flare up again and they'd start
23 firing more and we'd hit them again and go inside the rubber and then pull back and
24 bring some more air support and stuff in. We finally busted that thing by bringing the
25 155s up and firing direct fire into that [?] because I mean by the time we finally figured
26 out what was going on because we were throwing all the vegetation away from all this
27 shit so you could see it, they finally brought the 155s up and fired armor piercing direct
28 fire.

29 JB: Sounds very reminiscent of the [?] Forest.

1 JH: Right, and that's how we finally busted those front bunkers and finally I
2 guess killed enough of them that they decided they didn't want any more. They put up a
3 hell of a fight that day.

4 JB: Did you deal a lot with RPG fire?

5 JH: A lot of RPG fire but there again, I guess it's because we were always
6 moving. They had a tough time hitting us unless we were stationary, and we learned a lot
7 of stuff about that as far as the Cav was the one that came up with the idea of putting the
8 chain link fence out in front of the tracks. That was so the RPG would hit the...that was
9 the thing we were worried most about at night in a night position, if you were online, was
10 them slipping up and putting an RPG into a track. I've got one picture of a track that got
11 hit at night with an RPG and it just cracked it wide opened. I've got a picture of my
12 track, a road wheel on my track, and we were not even on the perimeter. We were sitting
13 back inside the perimeter. They missed the track they were shooting at. RPG hit about
14 ten meters from my track and we were sitting sideways through the perimeter and it
15 threw stuff up and blew holes about this big around in the road wheel and I took a picture
16 of it because I was sleeping about two feet above that road wheel. If the guy had just had
17 his aim up a little bit...but didn't happen. We didn't have a lot of RPG stuff. There was
18 enough of it, but it was like we were always slinging so much lead back, and they got the
19 first shot and that was it. From that point on, I've got somewhere...and y'all may have a
20 series of them here, the Time Life Vietnam Series?

21 JB: Yes.

22 JH: You need to look through those because someplace in the back of one of
23 those books it shows an aerial photograph of one troop with the 11th Cav lit up from the
24 air, and it's awesome. You think about it; once we went into our position and somebody
25 got hit, we used to do mad minutes every once in a while, and you fire up everything
26 you've got and you've got a lot of shit going out. You're talking about 15 50-caliber
27 machine guns and 30 M-60s lighting up and everything going out. That's a lot of lead.
28 Usually if we were doing a [mad] minute, everybody that wasn't on a gun was going to
29 the perimeter and standing there and firing something else, too, just to get in on the play.
30 That's the thing that I was proudest about I guess about the Cav because the tactics over
31 there for us were essentially if we got ambushed and a guy spotted where the heaviest

1 concentration of fire was, if you were a track commander you'd go on the net and go,
2 'Have spotted heavy concentration of fire. Am turning into fire. Come online with me,'
3 and it didn't make any difference if the colonel was two tracks up, he would come online
4 with you and he would attack because that's the way...there was no, 'Stop and we'll fight
5 them from here.' It's, 'If they're over there and the heaviest concentration of fire is over
6 there, turn everything that way and go right at them.' It's the old busting through an
7 ambush deal just like you do on patrol. You go into an ambush because that's the fastest
8 way out. Don't try to run the length of it. Turn into it and go through them and that's
9 what we did with the tracks, and consequently it didn't take...see, where K Troop got
10 screwed up so bad, and I'll go back to this because I studied it and there was a real
11 mistake made that morning. They weren't but a couple of miles from our base camp area
12 that everybody was familiar with on the road, and I guess it was a captain or it could have
13 been a lieutenant. Anyway, the commander of K Troop made a tactical error. He spotted
14 double [?] of ARVNs walking down the side of the road, and didn't get on the radio to
15 call and see if there were ARVNs operating in that area. He assumed because they were
16 dressed in ARVN uniforms, carrying ARVN weapons, that they were ARVNs. They're
17 not ARVNs and he drove the troop in between them and they turned on him and the next
18 thing you know they pretty well decimated K Troop, shot these guys off the tracks, even
19 drove two of them away. They were later found because they didn't know how to drive
20 them good and they threw tracks on them and shit. They screwed up because standard
21 operating procedure was to call and make sure that there were ARVNs operating in the
22 area and he didn't do that. He just assumed, and they weren't ARVNs. They were
23 dressed in ARVN uniforms and they ambushed them big time. But, that's the sort of
24 thing. Other than that, most of the stuff that we did in the battles that I know the Cav has
25 fought in, we kicked butt. We captured some pretty high-ranking officers from the NVA
26 and they all knew our unit. In fact, here's one of my favorite stories from the Vietnam
27 Center; when we did the thing here almost three years ago now when they had the North
28 Vietnamese officers come in, the guy that they sent down from Washington to be the
29 interpreter for this general that came over, the way I heard it they wouldn't let him bring
30 his aid. They sent this guy from Washington and of course a lot of us read into that
31 political probably intelligence officer to kind of keep an eye on this general. Anyway, I

1 was attending one of the seminars and I've got this white shirt that's got a Black Horse
2 patch on it, and so I walked in late on this seminar and sat down at the back and just so
3 happened I was sitting beside this interpreter. He was just listening to whatever this
4 seminar was. Evidentially they didn't have anything going on. So, it got time and the
5 seminar was over and everybody's getting up to leave and for whatever reason I turned
6 this way and he turned towards me and it was my first face to face with this guy and I just
7 kind of stuck out my hand and said, 'Welcome to Lubbock,' or, 'Welcome to Texas,' or
8 something. I was looking him right in the eye and I saw him cut his eye down to the
9 patch on my shirt and he looked back up at me and he spoke broken English but he goes,
10 'Is that your unit?' and I said, 'Yes, that was my Vietnam unit,' and he looked back up at
11 me again and he said, 'Good unit,' and that's all he said and he walked off. He was kind
12 of gray haired and stuff like that and there's no doubt that he probably was out there and
13 fought against the Cav. But, we captured documents and talked to guys that said that
14 they had been told that if they saw that patch or saw that emblem to disengage. They did
15 not want to fight us because we had the tendency to kick their butt at any given time.
16 But, I don't know. Where are we at now? What are we...

17 JB: I was going to ask what your opinion on the 113 was.

18 JH: Oh, I didn't have enough knowledge at the time to really think one-way or
19 the other. I thought it was pretty good for what we had. There were some areas they
20 wouldn't operate in. The rainy season you had to be real careful where you drove them
21 but they worked well for us. We had them configured. I know now that Lord, I wish
22 we'd have had Bradley's or something but the way we configured them and the way we
23 used them they were pretty good. You had to make sure your maintenance was good, that
24 you kept your tracks tight and everything, but they worked well for us. The guys later
25 got the Sheridans and I never had any experience with them so I have no...I've talked to
26 some of the guys that really liked them and some guys that thought they were junk at the
27 reunions and stuff, I'll hear them talking, but I never saw them.

28 JB: Yeah, they came in in January of '69.

29 JH: I thought they were pretty good vehicles. It was our house. Of course an
30 RPG would cut right through them. They were not real good for stopping anything like
31 an RPG. Mines, it was a big mine. I wouldn't want to be a driver. To me that was the

1 most dangerous position on the track. Small mine, I got blown off twice I think that we
2 hit a small road mine and it just essentially blew the track off and just riding on top it just
3 pitches you off and you're real sore and everything.

4 JB: Did they tend to initiate ambushes like that?

5 JH: No, that was mostly road shift stuff. Ambushes usually they waited until you
6 were in the jungle and that was usually initiated with an RPG or something like that, and
7 like I said immediately we turned and attacked so we pretty well kept them...they'd nail
8 something with a...there was one night that we were out-posting a road for the 101st
9 Airborne to move their base camp and we were guarding the bridge and they mortared at
10 us to get us to come to this village that we could see and see that the mortars were
11 coming out of there and they planted a real big mine and I think like the third track, first
12 two tracks missed it and the third track hit it and it blew it all to hell and everything and
13 that was a set up deal that they had set up because they hauled ass, and we found out later
14 that the villagers, when the mortar platoon came in. They all went and hid because they
15 knew because we blew the shit out of the village after the mine went off and everything.
16 We didn't kill a civilian one. We didn't kill any enemy either. They dropped those
17 mortars to get us moving their way and that mine set there. I guess they were hoping that
18 they might get the lead command track or one of the officer's tracks would be in the front
19 or something. I think they said it was like an unexploded 750-pound bomb that they had
20 buried and set it up and everything. But, I really don't know. I talked to guys at the
21 reunions and stuff like that and in a lot of ways I had a fairly uneventful year. TET was a
22 big deal. That battle we got into in May was a big deal. Of course getting wounded that
23 time was a big deal. Actually the wounds got infected and I spent more time in the
24 hospital for the infection, trying to get rid of the infection than anything that came with
25 the wounds. But, most of the stuff other than that was just piddling stuff. We'd have
26 snipers that would be in a position and shoot at us, and half the time they wouldn't hit
27 anything. We had one that showed up every afternoon about two o'clock and fired about
28 ten or 15 rounds, and to the best of my knowledge he never hit anything for five days.
29 We figured by the third day everybody wouldn't even stop what they were doing, just
30 'Bing!' you know, and you'd hear it go over about ten or 15 feet up. I guess his job was
31 to come out and shoot at us and he was making sure he didn't hit anybody because he

1 didn't want to piss nobody off is what we figured. It was kind of one of those things that
2 just...I don't know. I look back on it now and realize that it was an experience that I
3 would never want to do again, but in a way I wouldn't take anything for it either. I'm
4 still looking for ten of those other 11 guys that I served with on the FO tracks. I found
5 one of them here several years ago at one of the reunions. I finally ran into Brown who
6 was one of the drivers. But, he's the same way. My mother made a bunch of black
7 scarves and put gold braid on them and sent them over to us and the 12 of us that were
8 out of all in my era had those scarves, and I've never found...for years and years I'd
9 never found anybody until I found Brown and I keep going to the reunions hoping I'll
10 find one of those other guys because several of those guys are from Texas. I don't know
11 where any of them...and some of them I don't remember anything but their nicknames
12 because we all had nicknames. That's where I got...my nickname was Kahuna, and we
13 had this Hawaiian 1st Sergeant that took over, in rotation like I did, and he said, 'You've
14 got to be a Kahuna because you go on these dismounts and y'all get into shit and you
15 come back without a scratch. It kind of stuck and I started using it for my radio call sign.
16 I was niner-two Kahuna. I have run into guys at veterans reunions, just big veterans
17 functions and you get to talking radio call signs and I've run into two or three guys that
18 I'd talked to on the radio and never met them the whole time I was over there, but you
19 start talking about call signs and you'll remember a call sign that you talked to because if
20 we were operating with the 1st Infantry of course I'd be talking to their people a lot or
21 whatever. Sometimes you'd talk to these guys but you'd never meet them, but you
22 remembered those call signs. It was an experience. Of course the joke in my home town
23 was I came back from Vietnam and two weeks after I was back I broke my neck, and
24 that's how I ended up in CBR stuff that I was telling you because by the time I went
25 through all the stuff and operation and everything with a broken neck and I got to Fort
26 Carson, Colorado and I was wearing a collar and wasn't supposed to lift over five pounds
27 and they didn't know what to do with me, so they sent me to battalion and I became a
28 battalion CBR NCO. There was another thing that probably decided me that I didn't want
29 to stay in the Army because my tactical job at Fort Carson was in case of nuclear attack
30 to put on a hot suit and go check radiation levels.

31 JB: That's got to be fun!

1 JH: You're talking the Air Force Academy at Fort Carson, there was an Air Force
2 base there and Cheyenne Mountain two miles away, which if you know what Cheyenne
3 Mountain is, it's NORAD and the Russians knew it was there. I told the colonel, I said,
4 'Let me tell you what the radiation level is going to be in case of nuclear attack; it's going
5 to be 100% for 1,000 years because they're going to drop 15 nukes over this whole area.
6 It's going to be a big hole in the ground where Fort Carson and Colorado Springs used to
7 be and it'll be glowing for about a 1,000 years.' But, that's typical Army, 'Yeah, go put
8 on a hot suit and go check the radiation.' I had a poster in my office up there. It's really
9 neat. I wished I still had it. It looked like an official...you saw on these posters, 'Things
10 to do in case of a nuclear attack,' and it lined out all this, 'Fill your bathtub full of water,'
11 blah, blah, blah, blah, 'Do this, do that, do that,' and down at the bottom it says, 'Bend
12 over and kiss your ass goodbye!' It was beautiful! I had that up and had it posted on the
13 wall in my office because I told the colonel, I said, 'Here I am up on the second floor of
14 this building,' and I said, 'There will be a big white flash,' and I said, 'Now I've got just
15 enough time to do what that poster says right there before I'm vapor!' but I don't know,
16 after serving with the Cav, and we had such good officers! We had good NCO's,
17 everybody did their job. We had no racial tensions that I can remember. In fact, for a
18 long time the right machine gunner on niner-two track was this guy named Mack. It was
19 a black guy, and he and I were just like this. We were tight because he watched my back,
20 I watched his back. But, after being in that type of unit, and then I get back to...I can't
21 even remember the unit I served with at Fort Carson, I couldn't care less, some infantry
22 battalion with the 5th Mechanized Infantry. They were idiots. I don't know, I couldn't
23 stand it because in the Cav, as long as you did your job and you did what you were
24 supposed to and everything and kept your weapons clean and were ready to go and had
25 your shit together, the officers didn't jack with us. We drank with them. I didn't go to
26 the officer's club but sometimes they came over to the NCO club and if they did, it was,
27 'Welcome in,' and, 'Sit down and have a drink,' or if we were in the field we might have
28 a little nip or something like that. There's been several times over there that the colonel
29 broke out a bottle [?] and everybody took a little nip because of whatever reason. It was
30 that type of unit. It was a combat unit that was good and knew it, and if you weren't
31 good, officer or otherwise, you'd suddenly look up and somebody would be gone. We

1 had one colonel relieved. We were up in...in fact, I think this was prior to TET, I think. I
2 can't remember. That's the thing, I wish I'd kept a diary. That is the one thing that I'm
3 sorriest about, that I didn't keep a diary of day-to-day events so I could chronologically in
4 my head know exactly what fell where. But, we went out on a resupply run to Ly Khe
5 just to get stuff we needed. One of the things you don't ever do is when you bust a trail,
6 you don't ever come back on that same trail. When we were coming back that evening,
7 we'd gotten a little late leaving Ly Khe and this colonel ordered us to come back in on
8 the trail we went out on. They had it mined in and booby trapped in. We got hung up
9 and had to stop and essentially get guys off the track and start looking for mines and
10 booby traps and stuff, and it got after dark and finally what they did is they brought in
11 Spooky and we buttoned up and he covered the area all around us with these guns and set
12 off a bunch of shit, and we came on in. But, they flew him out before we ever hit
13 because there were guys on that convoy that would have shot his ass. We knew that
14 wasn't right. They had him flown out in the helicopter before the convoy ever hit the [?]
15 position and we never saw him again. I'm sure when the regimental colonel, by the time
16 all this shit started and he started asking some questions and found out that he'd ordered
17 us, he probably flew him out then. He disappeared, never to be seen again with the 11th
18 Armored Cav. But, we had officers that led. Just like I was telling you with that thing at
19 Ly Khe, the colonel climbed on the second or third tank instead of flying on in in the
20 helicopter above us he led us into 2nd Field Force and that's the way our officers did. So,
21 I felt like I had such a good unit and everything and I got back State-side and I don't
22 know, I might have gone to another post and I might have stayed in, but Fort Carson was
23 so ricky-tick, so Mickey Mouse, they would not let you bring a car in that post if there
24 was a peace symbol on the car. Of course Southern Colorado State College is there in
25 Colorado Springs and it's kind of a rich kid's college anyway and a bunch of hippies.
26 We used to laugh and joke, you'd see these people panhandling on the street and it would
27 get dark and they'd get up from where they'd been panhandling and walk around the
28 corner and get in a Mercedes and drive off and shit. I, by that time, thought that was kind
29 of stupid, too. I didn't have anything for Jane Fonda or any of that shit, but at the same
30 time I did not believe that people that honestly felt that they were against the war, that

1 they had a right to protest if they chose because to me that's...who is it that said, 'I may
2 not believe in what you say, but I will defend your right to say it?'

3 JB: Alexander Hamilton.

4 JH: That's what we as soldiers do; we have a right to protest in this country and
5 everything, so I don't know, my views will change and I guess I would see and by that
6 time that was kind of a futile...

7 JB: When you were back in country, were you aware of the anti-war sentiment?

8 JH: We heard some of it. There again, you're talking 1968 so it's like I told
9 people, I came home to East Texas, and I didn't get spit on. I got met more with
10 indifference of I don't really care about that, that's not something I want to hear anything
11 about. Even my own parents said, 'It's over, you survived, forget it. Go on with your
12 life.' In a lot of ways I thought I did to some extent and everything, just blew it off
13 because nobody wanted to hear it. A few friends that I had in Longview and this and that
14 and the other that hadn't gone into the service, they were into other things and stuff like
15 that. By this time I knew that I was going to probably get out of the Army eventually and
16 go back to college, do something different. I'd blown two semester of my parent's
17 money. I joined the Army in a lot of ways, too, because if you joined at the time I joined,
18 for every month you served you got a month of college. Now they changed that law a
19 year or so after I was in where even the draftees got 36 months of college. They made it
20 a month and a half of college for every month served. When I joined, you figure four
21 nine-month semesters is 36 months. 36 months is three years, so I joined for three years
22 because that way I would get paid 36 months of college. I didn't want to get kicked out of
23 college, I know it was stupid, but it was just I was young and stupid then. Once I did get
24 out and go back to school, I got my degree. I changed degrees so it took me a little
25 longer, but the bottom line is that I got my degree and did pretty much...I had a little help
26 from my parents, but I did most of it myself. It was one of those things that at the time
27 that all figured into the factor as, 'Okay, if you go in as drafted, you're only going to get
28 two years of college or three years or something like that, other wise you'll get the full 36
29 months.' It's one of those things, and of course I was into the alcohol pretty heavy and
30 that's how I broke my neck. I tried for years to blame my alcohol and my drinking on
31 Vietnam but it wasn't really because I'm an alcoholic and that started a long time before

1 Vietnam and everything, and just probably got aggravated by Vietnam because we had
2 access to liquor more readily than other guys did and could carry it with us. I probably
3 drank more over in Vietnam than maybe a lot of guys did and continued that on, and then
4 after I got back and everything.

5 JB: Was there a lot of alcohol and drug abuse in country?

6 RE: We smoked marijuana over there when we knew that we weren't going
7 anywhere. We would have probably just beat the snot out of somebody that was stoned
8 on a patrol or anything like that. Now I have to honestly admit, we had a couple of guys
9 that seemed to function on it, and there again it goes back to that if you do your job,
10 nobody gives a shit. I mean, I had one driver for a while that if shit started and stuff like
11 that and something he'd reach in his pocket and light a joint and be smoking a joint. But,
12 he did everything he was supposed to. It wasn't like he was a stoner and completely out
13 of it or anything. That's all I saw. I never saw heroin. We had opium a couple of times
14 and that was like one of those things to try, and there was moderate alcohol drinking but
15 there again, the same thing; you never saw anybody get shit faced unless we were in base
16 camp and knew that we were standing down for a couple of days, and then people got shit
17 faced and stuff like that. But even if you had two or three beers at night or something
18 like that, you'd be surprised how mortars coming in or something happening would wake
19 everybody up! So, it was not what you'd call a problem. We never had any problems
20 with it. Probably the closest to a problem we had one time was a guy coming in from the
21 club when we were in base camp and standing down, and this happened in a hooch
22 several hooches over from me. Most of us had already gone to bed and all of a sudden
23 this 45's going off and everybody's up and trying to figure out what's going on and
24 finally when it was click, click, click, people went back into the hooch and what we
25 found out was this guy had walked in from the club pretty shit faced and had gotten a
26 care package from home and his story was he saw this rat sitting on top of the package
27 with a cookie in his fist, one of his cookies from his momma, and he took a shot at this rat
28 and of course blew a hole in his cot and the package too, probably. But he claimed that
29 this rat kept jumping up behind shit and grinning at him and he kept shooting at him. He
30 blew holes in the floor and the sides of the hooch and the whole nine yards until he ran
31 out of ammo and never did hit the rat. Of course, who knows!

1 JB: We're about to run out of CD here.

2 JH: This is probably a stopping place, anyway.

3 JB: All right. This will officially end the first interview with Mr. James Holt.

4 JB: This is Jonathon Bernstein continuing the interview with Mr. Jim Holt.
5 We're at Mr. Holt's house. It is February 23rd, 2002 at approximately 1:50 pm. Mr.
6 Holt, just had some questions for you about the OCS prep class that you were in at Fort
7 Sill. Basically, we went over a basic overview of it last time. I'm trying to get I guess
8 your impressions of it?

9 JH: I'll tell you quite truthfully I didn't like it at all because I thought the
10 impression I had gotten in basic training was AIT was going to be more a individual type
11 training where there wouldn't be as much I guess you'd say BS as you got from the drill
12 instructors in basic and might be a little more relaxed, and this was very intense because
13 we didn't have NCOs, we had 2nd Lieutenants directly out of Fort Sill OCS that were
14 essentially our instructors over our platoons and very intense, and they were like you
15 really didn't find out until about your sixth week that you became an upper classman and
16 you were responsible for so many of maybe someone who was coming behind you
17 because you kind of went through in cycles. You didn't all graduate at the same time.
18 When we were put together, it seemed like we had some of the guys in the platoon that
19 had already been there a while and of course didn't know what that was. You had to run
20 everywhere, real intense PT; essentially almost the same stuff that the OCS guys did as
21 far as the physical stuff with the exception that our academics were different because we
22 went to class most of the day. We didn't have guys pulling KP. They had civilians that
23 came in and actually did the KP because we were in class. Of course all of us there were
24 training to be essentially fire direction control. We learned that. We learned calling in
25 artillery, basics, not as intense as the OCS guys but all of us got to go out to the range and
26 call in some artillery and basic sort of stuff. Every morning you were up at the crack of
27 dawn. I can't remember. It seemed like I want to say four o'clock but maybe 4:30,
28 somewhere around in there and we were up running and everything and so I didn't like it
29 at all. Supposedly it was one of those things that you could quit. But, every time you
30 tried to quit it seemed like one of these older guys in the platoon would talk you out of it
31 or come around and talk to you and tell you to push on through. The thing that I

1 remember is somebody messed up one morning and the lieutenant came in to inspect the
2 barracks just about as soon as everybody got up because we had to be inspection ready all
3 the time and he came in to inspect and somebody had messed up and he had the whole
4 platoon out in the street outside the barracks doing pushups, and to this day to the best of
5 my knowledge nobody ever admitted that they started it but somebody in the back of the
6 platoon started singing the Mickey Mouse song and everybody took it up and the
7 lieutenant kept us doing pushups until finally nobody in the platoon could push up
8 anymore. We were all lying out there on our bellies but we were still singing, and from
9 that point on we were kind of a unit. We started working together. I made a lot of beds
10 for a lot of people because I was real good at making a good, tight rack. Other guys that
11 were good at spit-shining boots would spit-shine other people's boots. We just kind of
12 formed as a unit after that, but it wasn't until the sixth week that I found out that I'd
13 become an upper classman and that I was going to be responsible for some of these new
14 guys coming in to kind of guide them along and stuff. I learned a lot from it and
15 everything and I think it was a good experiment. I've only run into one person that ever
16 remembers it, and he works for Texas Tech. I'm trying to see. I think I've got his card
17 someplace here. I met him at one of our meetings over there at Texas Tech and he just
18 happened to hear me talking about this OCS prep and he said that he was the first person
19 that he'd run into that remembered it, either, because I don't know if they continued it for
20 any length of time or decided it was a bad experiment or something because this was like,
21 oh, October-November-December, somewhere around in there of 1967 and I don't know.
22 I've never pursued it to find out if it was something that they continued doing for several
23 years or multiple years or did it for six months and decided it wasn't working. But, I
24 didn't like it at all at first because I felt like it was more Mickey Mouse stuff. Of course
25 these officers were real tough on us you know, and everything had to be just so. Our
26 uniforms had to be perfect, just like OCS. Our brass had to be shined perfect.
27 Everything was real, real strict and I hated it at first but I finally got good at it and it
28 probably made me a better soldier because I learned to take care of my equipment better
29 and various things like that. Of course when I got to Vietnam, I actually was assigned to
30 Howitzer Battery and for a little while actually worked in fire direction control but then
31 went from that to what we called the Recon Tracks and got into that where we did more

1 of the recon and forward observer type stuff. I guess it was probably better for me. It
2 was a whole lot better than going...I was at Fort Polk, Louisiana and if I'd have gone
3 across the street that would have been Tigerland and been right straight to Vietnam. As it
4 was I went through this AIT and there were so many officers that they sent in through
5 OCS that they didn't have a place for me so I actually went then to an artillery battery
6 training guys to fire the guns and got a little experience further than that.

7 JB: Was this OCS prep strictly for artillery officers or was this just officers in
8 general?

9 JH: I have no idea. I think it was just strictly artillery because it was there at Fort
10 Sill and that's really all I know about it is the fact that they sent me...my orders were
11 directly to this and when I got there instead of being greeted by NCO drill instructors I
12 was greeted by a 2nd Lieutenant that said, 'I'm your momma!' and it was kind of scary,
13 'Oh no!' and of course we all joke now as vets that there's nothing more dangerous than
14 a 2nd Lieutenant with a little power, and that's kind of the way it was back then. But, it
15 was overall I guess a good experience. Once we formed as a platoon and started working
16 together we learned teamwork obviously and everything and like I said, it did teach me
17 some skills to take care of my equipment and do this, that, and the other. I don't know
18 whether it was a continual experiment in the Army. I never pursued that.

19 JB: Now you had mentioned I guess it was your company commander at Sill who
20 gave you the rifle cleaning kit before heading over there? What were your thoughts at the
21 time?

22 JH: Quite frankly, I thought it was kind of dumb. I mean, I was I guess touched
23 because he was nice enough to do something like that, and what he said made sense. I
24 took it home with me and took it to Vietnam and everything, and essentially thought
25 about it when I was out in the field. Of course there again he didn't know where I was
26 going to end up, and being in an armored unit we carried diesel and we carried all sorts of
27 stuff that an infantryman couldn't carry. The only time I used the little kit was when I
28 was on a dismount patrol and something like that because on our track we could break
29 our weapons down and clean them in a big pan of diesel and just almost immerse them.
30 That's what we did with our 60s was break them apart and immerse them in diesel, let
31 them soak a while, and then get them out, wipe them down, clean them down, use

1 brushes and everything, but a lot easier to clean that way. So, I used this kit. But, I'd
2 like to find the guy. If I ever knew where he was, I'd like to thank him because he just
3 put something in my mind that before you do anything else, clean your weapon.

4 JB: What was his name?

5 JH: Guerro, Captain Guerro. I'm not sure I could spell it correctly, but G-U-
6 E-R-R-O or something like that. He was a short, squat, broad-shouldered Hispanic, real
7 rough talking, kind of gravelly type voice. They said he'd gotten a field commission over
8 early in Vietnam but he'd originally been a sergeant, was Green Beret and had done
9 something over there to get promoted to an officer and it was kind of that way, like a
10 Mustang Officer, got a field commission/promotion. But, he was quite a character. He'd
11 get out, and of course we were trained...that was their AIT, the guys training on the guns,
12 and we were taking these cycles and of course they had PT tests and stuff like that. Well,
13 he'd get out and run the PT test backwards with these guys to show them that even as an
14 old man...and of course old man, he might have been late 20s/early 30s, somewhere
15 around in there. But, to all of us he was an older guy. He was quite a character. He
16 believed in his sergeants, his cadre taking up for each other. One of our sergeants, we
17 had a sergeant that was real bad about getting in trouble and getting in fights, and one
18 night I was on CQ duty and the captain walked in just about the time the phone rang and
19 it was one of the other sergeants telling me that this sergeant was in this fight at the
20 downstairs of this club called the Pink Pussycat there in Loton, Oklahoma and was
21 getting beat up on pretty bad. Well, the captain saw the look on my face and the captain
22 had just come from a party over at the Colonel's or the General's or someplace and he
23 was in like dress blues, the dress mess uniform, and when I told him what was going on
24 he said, 'Let's go,' and he had a Corvette and we jumped in this Corvette and our
25 company area was fairly close to the South gate of Fort Sill and I think when we went
26 through South gate we were doing about 80 miles an hour and the MP didn't know
27 whether to try to stop us or salute because he recognized the car. We went blowing up in
28 front of this club, and of course in Oklahoma a lot of the clubs were upstairs/downstairs
29 because upstairs you could drink free two beer if you were under 21, between 18 and 21.
30 Well, downstairs would be where if you were over 21 you could drink whiskey. We
31 knew it was happening downstairs and the captain jumped out and I was just following

1 him and we ran downstairs and sure enough, there was a big commotion going on over in
2 the corner of this club and our sergeant was over being beat on by about three guys. This
3 captain run over and he grabbed one of them and turned him around and knocked him
4 down, and another guy turned and was fixing to hit the captain, realized he was a captain,
5 and hesitated, and should not have hesitated because the captain nailed him, nailed the
6 other guy, I'm standing there watching him just nail all three of them just like that. He
7 picks his sergeant up, throws him over his shoulder. We go jump in his car upstairs and
8 as we're leaving the MPs are going in the door. We got back to the company area and of
9 course he chewed this sergeant out, busted him down to corporal again, and the next day
10 he called all of us in and lined us up to cadre, all the sergeants and the corporals and I
11 was just an acting corporal at the time. I think it was just a few weeks after that that I got
12 promoted to hard Corporal. But, he lined us all up and he said, 'This is the way it's going
13 to be; if I have to go to jail to pick up one of my cadre from this unit,' he said, 'You
14 better all be in jail if you were there. If one of you gets jumped on,' he said, 'Everybody
15 better pile in.' That's the way he was and that's what he believed and he chewed on
16 everybody pretty good, especially I think there were two guys with this sergeant that
17 didn't jump into the fight and he chewed on them real good and said, 'I don't care if I
18 have to pick one of you up from the MPs and you're there and somebody's jumped on
19 one of my cadre,' he said, 'You better all be in jail because that's the way it has to be.
20 You protect each other.' So, that's kind of the way he was. He believed that everybody
21 was a team and that's...it was very obvious that he was a good officer and he cared about
22 his troops. He was rough on the trainees but you could also see that he cared about them.
23 I thought a lot of him. I've often wondered, because he got his orders to go back to
24 Vietnam about the same time I did and I don't know where he ended up. I think he was
25 from New Mexico or someplace was where his family was or something, but I've always
26 wondered. I looked for his name on the Wall and I didn't find it, or at least anything
27 resembling him.

28 JB: That's encouraging.

29 JH: I hope he made it. He was a good officer.

1 JB: Now getting ahead a little bit to arriving in Vietnam, of course your
2 experience at 98th Replacement with your doctor, but when you got there you had orders
3 for 11th Cav?

4 JH: Yes, and my orders actually, which I found out later, were fairly unusual.
5 My orders went directly from Fort Sill, Oklahoma to Black Horse at [Long Gau] Base
6 Camp. I've still got a copy of those orders.

7 JB: Yes, that was definitely unusual from what I heard. Guys would be assigned
8 to 25th Infantry and would get pulled off and go to the 4th Infantry or something like that.

9 JH: Right. I think probably what maybe precipitated my orders being followed
10 more than anything else was because of K Troop, 3rd Squadron had gotten pretty well
11 decimated a week or two...I don't know if it was two weeks or three weeks before I got
12 there. Consequently a lot of the guys I guess with orders to 11th Cav had to go because
13 they had to replace these guys that were either killed or wounded in this battle that K
14 Troop got in because they did something real stupid and got themselves messed up real
15 bad.

16 JB: Yeah, it was with the supposed ARVN unit?

17 JH: Yes, took it in between the two columns of ARVNs and turned out it was
18 NVA. Anyway, that's the only way I could figure it because that's what I'd always
19 heard, too, that you'd get over there, whether it Cam Ranh Bay or 90th Replacement at
20 Long Binh and you might go anywhere, no matter what your orders said. Mine, like I
21 said, I followed my orders all the way.

22 JB: The Cav training program, when you first got there, there were a couple of
23 other units that had done similar programs. What was it like there getting indoctrinated?

24 JH: You know, I don't remember a lot of it. They gave us some classes, they
25 showed us some booby traps, they brought in a Vietnamese and showed him how easy he
26 could sneak in through the wire. It made an impact, but it was just everything was...just
27 everything was so new. It was like I can't even remember. I guess the one thing I
28 remember is them telling us to forget most of the stuff we'd been taught up to that point
29 and listen to the old timers. See, just about at that time everybody was in the field except
30 for your 1st sergeant, a few clerks, and then guys that were either fixing to rotate to R&R
31 or were back in recuperating from wounds or fixing to go back home. I was in the first

1 group, the 11th Cav arrived in Vietnam in August of '66 and I'm arriving in July of '67.
2 So, I'm in the first group of replacements to replace the guys that came over on the boats,
3 because at our reunions there's the boat guys, and they're the ones that all went over in
4 the boats, the very first, and then everybody else. I was in that first wave of everybody
5 else that arrived. There weren't a lot of people in our company area. There was I think
6 one or two gun crews in because they were working on a couple of the guns, and then
7 like I said, just a few of these guys that were recuperating or going back or going to
8 R&R. There wasn't even a full tent. At that time, we didn't even have wooden hooches.
9 We had just GP tents on wooden floor platform. I think in my tent, which was the
10 artillery tent, there was maybe only six guys where there would have normally been 15 or
11 20 sleeping in that tent if everybody had been back and everything. It was like they sent
12 us to some of these little classes and you listened and you tried to learn what they were
13 telling you, but a lot of what you were being told is you'll really learn once you hit the
14 field. I don't guess I was in base camp but about a week and then I'm in a chopper
15 headed out to the field. It wasn't any sort of lengthy class or anything like that. I don't
16 think it was near as organized as some of the other units had. It just wasn't real
17 organized. They just took you out and dropped you off out in the field, and of course
18 once I got to the field well then they went, 'Okay, this is where the fire direction control
19 guys sleep. You're FDC trained so,' they know and see what you've done up to then. I'd
20 had some radio training, some code training, stuff like that that I got at Fort Sill before I
21 left. So, they immediately stuck me in FDC.

22 JB: Would FDC be on a track?

23 JH: No, actually FDC normally they had a track but we would set up the tents
24 that came off the back of what we'd call the command APCs. They were the taller APCs.
25 Yeah, I think they're 115s or something like that. I can't remember the nomenclature but
26 they would go out and set up pretty close to wherever the guns were, set that tent off.
27 The interesting thing that we had that was just starting was this [?] computer. They had
28 the first computers where you didn't have to compute your logarithms, use your
29 logarithm books to compute your firing data. You punched your data into this huge
30 thing, probably four and a half foot by four and a half foot that sat up on this table, real
31 primitive, but we just thought it was neat because we didn't have to flip through these log

1 books and everything and look stuff up to compute our data. It was all done for us. They
2 were using those over there. But, then I don't remember the time span, it wasn't too
3 long, was when we got the new captain and I can't even remember what the old captain's
4 name was that was leaving. But, we got this Captain Love and he was from Dallas and
5 that's when he took a shine to me because I was from Longview and so he wanted to
6 make me his driver and I didn't really want any of it because the deal was he rode in a
7 jeep with two antennas flying off of it and all I could see was day glow target. But, he
8 thought he was doing me a favor. I started screwing up and everything and he kept
9 promising me he was going to send me to the FO track and that's right where I wanted to
10 be because I was real gung-ho.

11 JB: Did you tell him that's what you wanted?

12 JH: Well, no. I didn't want to hurt the guy's feelings and everything. I had a
13 tendency in a way to piss him off as often as I could until he finally got tired of me and
14 sent me on to the FO track. It's kind of like Brar Rabbit and, 'Please don't throw me into
15 that briar patch,' type of deal is kind of what I did. I just couldn't see being his gopher
16 for a year. He'd gotten there, like I said, probably about the same time I did really but he
17 was going through a different indoctrination than I was of course so we wouldn't have
18 met up until he got to How Battery.

19 JB: I guess you mentioned being gung-ho, wanting to get into the action. Any
20 particular reason why, movies, state of the world?

21 JH: I think just growing up in a part of the United States where I grew up hunting
22 and fishing and out in the woods and watching the John Wayne movies. East Texas is
23 sort of like West Texas, its still patriotic and you support your country and you do what
24 needs to be done. So, I don't know. I just always having spent a lot of my life being in
25 choirs and being involved in music...excuse me a minute. I just think it's the way you're
26 raised as much as anything else. If I was going to be in Vietnam I wanted to be where the
27 action was. I wasn't particularly crazy in the fact that I was volunteering to go out on
28 every patrol or ambush patrol or stuff like that there was, but it's like my first dismount
29 was the reason why I volunteered to go on it was because everybody on the track just had
30 a few weeks left in Vietnam and I was the new guy and I thought that was fair because
31 I'd been out with them long enough that I felt like this was in September so July to

1 September and I'd had a couple of months, so I thought I'd go and everything and there
2 were old timers going and stuff like that. It was one of those things. I don't know. I
3 wanted to be involved in more action because fire direction control, you're inside the
4 squadron logger. You're sitting back from where the tracks and tanks are out busting
5 jungle and actually looking for stuff and I wanted to be out there. I ended up getting out
6 there. There was a few times I wished I wasn't out there. But, I still think I would have
7 rather done that than been a year in fire direction control. The thing is is being in an
8 armored unit, even the guns and the fire direction control was not like an infantry unit
9 that was out someplace on a hill and could be attacked by large NVA unit or something
10 like that. I think early on the first year the Cav was in Vietnam, the NVA tried to attack
11 some night logger positions and found out that was not a good idea because you're
12 talking about a position that's reigned with tanks and tracks with 50s and 60s and tank
13 guns and stuff like that, and we kind of had a tradition that once we went into our circle,
14 there's never been an enemy in sight and there never will be because interlocking fields
15 of fire and stuff like that, it was pretty difficult for them so they didn't bother those
16 positions very much. Mortars, you got mortared there, occasional RPGs fired into the
17 perimeter, and I guess it was after I left because we didn't do it when I was there but it
18 was sometime after I left that they figured out that they'd take these pieces of chain link
19 fence and put them in front of the tracks and the RPGs would hit the chain link fence and
20 go off there instead of hitting the track. We didn't do that, but I heard guys talk that they
21 started doing that later and somebody thought of it and it worked and turned out to be a
22 real good tactic.

23 JB: Did you do anything as far as sandbags on the exterior?

24 JH: No, a few places where we got in some real rough areas and had the wrong
25 plows with us, they actually would dig us I guess a huge ditch that you could drive the
26 track down into and then we could drive down in there and the guns would be sitting
27 maybe five-six inches above the ground and then you had real good protection then
28 because they had to hit the guns directly with an RPG instead of driving them into the
29 side of the tank. That was usually up in war zone D and C when we got up there that we
30 did that because there was a communist NVA infiltration area and so we did that a few
31 times, but not every time.

1 JB: Were you mainly engaging the NVA units or were there VC as well?

2 JH: There were VC and NVA both. It seemed like after TET that we engaged
3 more NVA units because a lot of the VC units were involved in the TET Offensive and
4 kind of decimated out on their attacks on Saigon and this, that, and the other. But, the
5 areas that we operated in, we had a tendency to run into more NVA units because number
6 one there were no civilians in the area to be VC unless it was one of the hard core VC
7 units. Then, being in the infiltration route, that's where we hit a lot was the NVA units
8 coming in to move further on down South. So, it was a mix. We could always tell
9 because if you hit somebody you were getting small arms fire and not very disciplined
10 fire then it was usually a VC unit. But, if you started getting a lot of heavy automatic
11 weapons fire and RPGs, then you know you'd tied into the NVA. So, it was a little of
12 both.

13 JB: During TET, 96 miles in 12 hours, I guess what was the sentiment or the
14 feeling once you arrived at 2nd Field Force? What was the situation there?

15 JH: By the time we got to 2nd Field it was late at night and everything because it
16 was after dinner when we started moving out. It was late afternoon by the time we hit Ly
17 Khe and actually left all our wheeled vehicles. To us, it was kind of interesting. They
18 were glad to see us because this was the first major attack on any of those type of
19 facilities so we had all these guys in the bunker that were clerks and typists and various
20 jobs like that that had never...with the exception of a few mortars and maybe some
21 rockets from time to time and never really experienced any sort of concentrated attack,
22 and to them they were real scared and we were all just kind of milling around waiting to
23 see what was going to go on because we didn't really hit anything but some sniper fire
24 and stuff coming through, so it was kind of like a holiday for us. We were standing
25 around on top of the tracks and looking around. I think like I said before, somebody
26 found the swimming pool and we all went up and took a bath because we didn't know
27 they had showers. We thought the swimming pool would work real good. The showers
28 were a real plus the next day. So, I guess it was like a holiday and there were serious
29 parts of it. My unit didn't very even tie into anything real tough. Some of the line units
30 actually went out and hit some pockets of pretty heavy resistance and had some pretty
31 good little intense firefights in areas of the city. In fact, my track spent most of the time

1 there making water runs. We'd hitch a 500 gallon ton water trailer on because they did
2 destroy a lot of the facilities and stuff, the water points and stuff like that, and we actually
3 once we moved to the Cho Lon section of Saigon, which was the Chinese section, and we
4 were set up on the river, we would have to go in once a day and use a green garden hose
5 at one of the surgical hospitals in downtown Saigon to fill up this 500-gallon water trailer
6 for water! It would take forever, but broad daylight in downtown Saigon we'd leave one
7 guy on the 50 on the track and the rest of us would go find girls or bars or whatever. It
8 was like a party! Somebody would come back and relieve the guy on the track so he
9 could go and it would take two or three hours to fill this water trailer up, so we did that a
10 lot, every day making these water runs and going back and of course we caught some
11 sampans one night coming down the Saigon River and we had one of the dusters from
12 one of the mechanized infantry units where they had these quad 50s mounted on the back
13 of a five ton truck and we had two of those with us and they let these three or four
14 sampans get like in between these two dusters and then just opened up and made confetti
15 out of about three or four sampans. There wasn't even enough to see what it was. They
16 got some secondary explosion off of it, though, so they were carrying ammunition or
17 something. They tried to sneak past us and didn't know we were there and we messed
18 them up, but mostly it was kind of boring really.

19 JB: I remember one of our first conversations you'd mentioned driving down one
20 of the streets in Saigon and just sort of sweeping the windows with the 60?

21 JH: That was at night down [?] because we caught some fire out of one of the
22 buildings and that's what they told us, just return fire and keep going.

23 JB: Okay, so you were actually fired upon?

24 JH: I'm trying to remember which one of these has the...there's my induction
25 physical, my statement of acceptability and my orders to report for induction. I kept
26 everything. This is my first picture in basic. That was my vehicle identification card. I
27 think I told you about taking the driving exam. Boy, I was a strapped troop, wasn't I?
28 I'm afraid I look like Freddy Flufner. There's my orders, 7 June, Fort Sill, Black Horse
29 Base Camp, Bien Hoa, Oakland, California and then from Fort Sill to Longview, that's
30 where I lived, and then straight on through. They gave us some of this stuff when we got
31 to Vietnam. I think that was stuff from...

1 JB: Standing orders for [?] Rangers?

2 JH: Yeah, they gave those to everybody, which I always kept. These are the first
3 pictures of base camp when we were still in tents. I bought a little Polaroid camera,
4 various things about the Cav and stuff we did. That was a church service that was out in
5 the field that we did. See, here's how we'd clean the weapons. We'd put the trim vein
6 down on the front of the track and we had diesel in these cans, some of them, and we'd
7 break them down and clean them out. There was my track and some of the guys. This is
8 horsing around back at base camp after we got back and actually had wooden hooches
9 you can see now. That's how it would get in the rainy season with the mud. I got one in
10 here someplace of a helicopter, one of the little bubble choppers. There it is right there!
11 That was the only place he could set down!

12 JB: Yeah, a little dry spot!

13 JH: There's my orders for my Purple Heart. I was with A Troop when I was
14 wounded, which I thought was kind of funny because they had me as also a member of A
15 Troop.

16 JB: That was with the command detonated mine?

17 JH: Yeah, and see it says the 22nd of September but it was actually the 24th
18 because it was when we were wounded, that's evidentially when they cut the orders
19 because the 24th was my birthday, 21st birthday. This, I wish we could find this girl.
20 When I was in the hospital at our base camp, they had this little baby and they nicknamed
21 her Peaches and she was 11 months old and one of the doctors adopted her and took her
22 home because she had no...her wrist had been shot out and everything and they tried to
23 save her hand. But, this Rafferty, Major John E. Rafferty is a doctor and he adopted her.
24 I've always wondered if we could find her and find him and get her to one of our
25 reunions. This is Hong Kong. I went there on R&R because my wound had gotten
26 infected and I lost quite a bit of weight, so they sent me on to R&R. I'll never forget, the
27 company clerk didn't record it as such and I got another R&R later. I kept my mouth
28 shut!

29 JB: That's great!

30 JH: These are various battles that went on. Part of our unit I think assisted in the
31 battle of Loc Ninh and stuff like that.

1 JB: Doc Tho?

2 JH: Yeah. Some of it we weren't really in, but I cut out stuff that I thought was
3 really interesting. I wished I'd kept a lot more of these. We had papers over there that we
4 put guy's poems and thoughts in and I had a whole bunch of them at one time and I wish
5 I'd have kept more. This is when we started building the hooches back at base camp.
6 That was the Hawaiian 1st Sergeant that gave me the nickname Kahuna. That was fire
7 direction control back at base camp. That was our FDC. They could have hit that with a
8 rocket and not messed it up. This is when the 101st Airborne came in and we were out
9 posting the LZ for them. I found a guy later, I can't remember which one of these it was.
10 It's one of these pictures. It must be that one right there. I was at a reunion. Everybody
11 takes their books and lays them around where people can look at them and I was looking
12 at this one guys' book and he has this same picture and he and I got to talking and he
13 must have been standing right over here and I'm standing here! It's the exact same
14 choppers and the trees, this log thing! He's got maybe this much of it and I've got a little
15 more over this way. We just cracked up because we didn't even know each other,
16 evidentially. That's kind of how we lived out of our track. That's our track and we'd get
17 off at the end and road march someplace and put a water can under the ramp and
18 everything and this was me here leaving on a long range patrol with some guys. This is
19 the Montagnard's. This one was working with Special Forces. They got up in an area in
20 War Zone D where they had spotted some Russian tanks. This chopper is crashing, and I
21 just threw up my camera and caught it. He was auto rotating in. He lost power and
22 nobody got hurt. He came in and bounced, and there it is. They bring it in and hook up,
23 just pick it up and lift it on out, take it back to fix it. That's the [Avoi?] one of the
24 bridges that they have. One of our guys, we give him a hard time because he left one
25 over there. We got him. I think it was during the Cambodian invasion or something, but
26 they were in a hurry, in a rush, and they threw it down and he didn't have time to pick it
27 up. When they came out, they came out another way and we had guys that went back
28 later and went to the place and they're still using it as a bridge. They put side rails on the
29 thing and the whole nine yards. We told him, the guy took video of it and said, 'You're
30 going to have to go retrieve that!'

31 JB: I'm surprised the Army didn't make him pay for it.

1 JH: This is that swimming pool I was telling you about after they cleaned it up
2 and everything, had to drain it and get all the scum and stuff out of it. Then they started
3 letting us use it. That's during TET, see, but that's how it was because once we run
4 everybody out of 2nd Field it was just calm again and you could kick back and relax. This
5 is outskirts of Saigon, Long Binh, and some of the dock facilities. That's a thing to the
6 ARVN there. That's some sort of military. Of course I'm sure they're out [?] going
7 through downtown Saigon and stuff. Some of these were taken when we were going in
8 on those water runs that I was telling you about. This is when we were on the river that I
9 was telling you about, so you were kind of just set up and this is all town over here and
10 back here was the river and this was across the river. This is my track here. We were
11 just set up and we were interdicting anything that's going down the river at night and
12 watching this village section over there during the daytime but it was real calm during the
13 day and everything. There's the dusters I was telling you about. They'd gone out and
14 found those someplace in Cho Lon probably. Those things kick up, and you talk about
15 kicking some ass, four 50s going. That was a pet. Did I tell you that story about the little
16 Vietnamese coming up and stealing this iguana? That's the iguana. That was that damn
17 iguana that we chased all over. This is a letter I wrote to the Dallas News from Vietnam
18 in April of '68. It pissed me off. They had a photograph of a machine gun, and M-60
19 sitting on the Capital in DC because they were having problems because of the riots and
20 Dr. Martin Luther King and everything. I was real proud of that letter. They published
21 it. This was my buddy that was killed, and I found out later he was killed in a battle that I
22 fought in and I probably saw his body and didn't even know it. His parents were bitter.
23 This was up in the Iron Triangle someplace. We assaulted a tree line. There was some
24 stuff and we got in and we found some rice. This was a track I was sleeping in.

25 JB: Is that the one that the RPG hit?

26 JH: Yeah. I was sleeping right here inside, if you can see. The RPG burned
27 some fragments burning through the road wheel. It actually hit down here and then blew
28 up into it because if he'd have aimed high enough he would have probably messed me up
29 big time. See, there's one thing that they dug and they decided to move the perimeter out
30 so we just put a tent for this lieutenant that was working with us down there. That's what

1 they'd do, they'd dig these things and you could drive down in them. This was a defector
2 that we caught, one of the highest-ranking defectors that had ever been caught.

3 JB: Who was he?

4 JH: He was Tranh Van Dau.

5 JB: Lieutenant Colonel?

6 JH: Yeah. Here's a B-52 strike, and even though we knew that it was supposed
7 to hit you still wouldn't get anything, wouldn't get it to flash.

8 JB: Caribou?

9 JH: See, that's how we'd set up a logger out in the field. That's from the top, and
10 all around out here is your outer perimeter and then spotted out at different places then
11 would be your other stuff. You'd do it at random because that way they couldn't be as
12 easy. They'd attack with mortars. This was a MedCAP we did in some village
13 someplace.

14 JB: Did you do a lot of MedCAPs?

15 JH: We did them whenever we could. We didn't do a lot because we were
16 mostly in areas where there weren't any villages. But, if we were operating our medics
17 would go out and do it. That was my area back at base camp. There's that clerk that
18 didn't put me on the first R&R. I'm going to have to find him and thank him! See, here'
19 the way the [?] was set up. This was at Long Binh when we were set up up there.

20 JB: That's a [?] track, isn't' it?

21 JH: Yes, and we set up two or three of them all together so you'd have a big area
22 out there that everybody could operate under. We slept here, just set our tents up there
23 and everything. This is back at base camp. I'm still going to have to find these guys,
24 especially Mack here. I was the left gunner and he was the right gunner. He's from
25 Georgia someplace. I've gone to all the reunions and he's never turned up. I'd sure like
26 to find him. This is just some stuff from some magazines and stuff stuck in here. They
27 arrived. That's when [?] took over. This is my freedom bird, started leaving to go home.
28 Another transition base camp, Tan Son Nhut. That was in New Jersey and I think that's
29 coming over. That's in New Jersey, kind of one, two, three, four that way. I'll give you
30 an idea what you look like after a road march, how dirty you get! Then I cleaned up.
31 This is some AK's that we captured here. Notice the guy taking a shower with one of

1 those shower buckets and stuff [?] behind, they really loved those. Like I told you, I got
2 back home and I broke my neck. This is Fort Carson. That's where I went, to Fort
3 Carson, for my training and CBR and shooting flame throwers up there and everything.
4 Then my final classification, 4A. That was a thing they gave us over there. That was my
5 dates, the 16th through the 9th. This was just about general stuff, it wasn't 11th Armored
6 Cav. I've got a book someplace, and it may be in here. [?] that's my...you know. I
7 don't know what they thought they were doing there. I've never seen anything like that
8 on any of our tracks. But, this is how ours was set up like that; of course we carried a lot
9 more shit on the front and stacked everywhere. They cleaned it up; usually we had C-
10 rations stuck everywhere and strapped down. It's a pretty good little book about the
11 various configurations of...

12 JB: 577?

13 JH: Yeah, that's what those are, 577s.

14 JB: Did your track have a name?

15 JH: No, not really. We flew the Texas Flag and the Rebel Flag off of the three
16 recon tracks in 1st Squadron because there was four guys per track, three tracks, and out
17 of the 12 of us I think like seven came from Texas and the other guys all came from
18 South. We had one guy I think that was from Chicago or someplace like that but he'd
19 been born in the South. In fact, my mother...I've got mine someplace around here. I'd
20 like to dig it out and find it. Mother sent us some black silk scarves with gold braid on
21 them and we all had those that my mother made up for us that we wore. It was a good
22 unit. I'll be forever thankful that I got the Cav. You can ask anybody that has any
23 knowledge of Vietnam to name the five top units in the 11th Cav, we'd be in that five
24 someplace and one of them might put them three, but I think I could safely say that
25 anybody would pick one of the Cav to be in the top five because just the way they
26 operated, the length of time they were over there. We operated everywhere but the Delta
27 essentially. They couldn't operate down there. Our 2nd Squadron went on up to the DMZ
28 and supported the Marines up there for a period of time. In fact, most of the time that I
29 was in Vietnam, the year that I was there, 2nd Squadron was at the DMZ. Then they
30 finally pulled them back down either during TET or aftermath right after TET they came
31 back down and everything. It was a good unit. I was lucky to be with them instead of I

1 talked to a lot of guys in all these veteran things that I go to and stuff that hated their unit
2 and always talking about the blacks and the whites having troubles or stuff like that, we
3 didn't have any of that. It just didn't happen, and even talking to guys that were there
4 after I was said that that still didn't go on in that unit. We were all 11th Cav and proud of
5 it. If you were Cav, then you were one of us.

6 JB: There was no tension as far as Martin Luther King?

7 JH: There was a little, but we talked it out. There were a couple of black guys on
8 my track at the time that that happened and we sat and talked about it and everything.
9 But, we were tight so I understood their feelings and everything and sympathized with
10 them because I thought well of...I don't know, see, I came from a prejudiced
11 environment in a way but I was raised...my mother worked, my dad worked, and I had a
12 black mammy and she was just like my mother and I was raised with her, by her and my
13 parents of course, so I had a different view. My mother was a county and state nurse.
14 When I wasn't going to school lots of times if she was going out to the black schools I
15 would go with her to help her do immunizations and stuff. So, she taught me that people
16 were people. My dad was always more prejudiced and stuff and after Vietnam the one
17 thing that I would not allow him to do is use the term 'nigger' in front of me. I'd jump
18 him every time he came out with it. So, he finally got to where he wouldn't say that
19 around me and that was about the only battle I ever won with my dad. In a way he didn't
20 even mean anything by it. He wasn't like a Ku Klux Klan-er or anything like that. That
21 was the way he was raised and he was born in 1902 and they were niggers and that's all
22 he knew. So, it was kind of one of those things. But, have you got everything?

23 JB: I guess, we've been going for a while. It's been about an hour, so sure!

24 JH: Let me show you what I got just to show you some stuff and then I need to
25 go meet a friend of mine, if it's okay with you.

26 JB: Sure!

27 JH: If you want to come back later, you're welcome anytime, Jon. If you think of
28 something else or maybe the next time I could come over there if there's something else
29 you want to talk about. I want to show you a lot of the stuff I've got around here that I'm
30 going to try to give to the Archives. There's two shelves of books over there that I may
31 go through and just keep...there's some of them that are actually given to me and signed

1 and stuff like that that I may keep. What I'm thinking of is I've got an application in for
2 a job in Austin, and if I get it I don't see any need to move this stuff when it's already this
3 close to Tech. I may get you to come over some Saturday.