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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Douglas Young
Conducted by Jason Stuart
Date 16 February 2010
Transcribed by Blair Barnhill**

NOTE: Any 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.

The transcription of this interview was paid for by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

1 Jason Stewart: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University, conducting an Oral History interview with Mr. Doug Young. Today is
3 February 16th, 2010. I'm in Lubbock, Texas, in the Special Collections Library on the
4 campus of Texas Tech, and Mr. Young is joining me by phone from McAllen, Texas. Is
5 that correct?

6 Douglas Young: That's correct.

7 JS: All right, Okay. Why don't we begin, if you could tell me a little bit of
8 biographical information about yourself? First off, when and where were you born, to
9 begin with?

10 DY: I was born in Rome, New York, October 21st, 1943.

11 JS: All right, okay. Could you tell me a little bit about your parents? What were
12 their names and what did they do for a living?

13 DY: My father—I'm going to put this on speaker phone if it's all right.

14 JS: Sure, not a problem.

15 DY: Okay. My father's name was Carey, spelling C-A-R-E-Y, Lyon, L-Y-O-N,
16 Young, and he was a salesman for the H.J. Heinz Company. My mother was Marion, M-
17 A-R-I-O-N, maiden name of Wiemer, W-I-E-M-E-R, last name Young, and she was a
18 homemaker. She started out as a school teacher.

1 JS: Okay, All right. Did you grow up there in Rome, New York?

2 DY: No, we moved to a lot of different places so, when I was a small child we
3 moved to the suburbs of Boston, Massachusetts, and then the beginning of high school
4 moved to Hialeah, Florida, which is outside of Miami. Then off to college in the central
5 part of Florida. So, I've lived in a lot of different places.

6 JS: As a kid growing up, did you have any interest in the military?

7 DY: No, not at all. In fact, to the best of my recollection, I was the first person in
8 the family to have served in the military, really, in anybody's lifetime. The closest was an
9 uncle who had served as a Minister in the USO during WWII, and as it turned out one of
10 my sisters married a career Army Officer, but I was really the first.

11 JS: Before we get into Education, College, and then off to military training. Could
12 you talk a little bit about growing up and what that was like for you? Did you play any
13 sports or anything? Any jobs as a kid? Things like that?

14 DY: I was blessed to have been in a strong, stable family. I was the third of
15 eventually four children. I have two sisters who are older than me and a younger brother.
16 Very strong, very stable family, very much glued together. Let's see, went through most
17 of my schooling, except for the first grade, the rest of it was in Medford, Massachusetts, a
18 suburb of Boston, until I moved to high school, which was in Hialeah. Jobs that I had, I
19 started working as early as junior high school delivering groceries on a bicycle for a little
20 mom and pop grocery store in Medford and earned fifteen dollars a week. So, that was
21 the start of it. High school I did not work, but I did through college, and other things like
22 that.

23 JS: Well, as a kid growing up, did you pay any attention to the Cold War, and
24 what was going on in the world?

25 DY: You know, I really didn't have a lot of memories. I'm not one of those that
26 has a lot of—I guess I just didn't remember a lot of things from my youth, but I do
27 remember things like, duck and cover, and air raid drills, and civil defense shelters, and
28 things of that nature. I vaguely remember the Korean War, and that it wasn't very nice. I
29 think probably like a lot of boys I grew up with are interested in war. I don't think that's
30 unusual. I remember reading a lot of books about WWII. I was and still am a lover of

1 history; I just absorb history. So, I would read a lot of books as a kid about WWII, books
2 like, “Thirty Seconds over Tokyo,” and things of that nature.

3 JS: Well, what year did you graduate from high school?

4 DY: 1961.

5 JS: 1961. Okay, and did you go directly to college after high school?

6 DY: Yes, I did. I went to Florida Southern College, which is in Lakeland, Florida,
7 and graduated from there in 1965. Florida Southern is a land grant college, and as set, is
8 required to have ROTC. At that time all young men, young men, that’s significant. Men
9 who had not had prior military service were required to be in ROTC in their first two
10 years. So, I did that, and then went on and did the second two years, which of course was
11 voluntary, and you were paid a stipend for that, and all of that. In other words, by that
12 time, you’d determined that you were going to be a reserve officer.

13 JS: What was it that made you decide to go through with those second two years?

14 DY: Yeah, Florida Southern College is owned by the Methodist church, and it
15 was then too. When I originally went to college it was with the idea of becoming a
16 Methodist Minister. I’m convinced to this day that the Methodist church needs to
17 celebrate every year the fact that I did not become a Methodist minister. Talk about
18 something I was ill suited for. I think I was probably just swept up with the idea of
19 military, and all that. It just seemed like an adventuresome thing to do. In retrospect, I
20 look back on it, and realize I just had a personality that always likes to do adventuresome
21 things, and so that seemed like it. Now, at that time, Vietnam had not sprung up. When I
22 joined—I mean we had forces there, but it was not on the front page. It was not a big deal
23 every day. So, you really didn’t think much about it. It was a low key guerilla warfare.
24 We only had advisors there at the time. So, I didn’t really think about the obvious
25 consequences, you know, as what eighteen, or nineteen years old, young and dumb, and
26 all that sort of thing. It just looked like it was kind of cool.

27 JS: All right, I’d like to talk a little bit more about the ROTC, but before that,
28 what did you major in there at—

29 DY: I majored in history with a minor in philosophy in religion.

30 JS: With that plan to be the Methodist minister, right?

1 DY: Yeah, originally it was. That's why the religion minor, which originally was
2 going to be my major. Then about a year into school I realized that wasn't for me, and I
3 changed my major. Actually, it was before I even had to declare a major, but I just did
4 history. Not much else you could do with that degree except go into the Army anyways,
5 so, unless you go on like you, and get a PhD in it, which I never did.

6 JS: Well, still working on the PhD.

7 DY: Keep going. Good for you.

8 JS: Right, well thanks. Did you, did you give any thoughts to teaching, or
9 anything like that, or just get the degree, and go off in the army?

10 DY: In all honesty, I don't think I had any real plans formulated, until I was, until
11 I had joined the second two years of ROTC as a junior, and of course, that meant that I
12 was obligated for two years of active duty once I did that, and I don't think I had any real
13 plans beyond that. I just didn't think about it.

14 JS: Well, I guess, could you talk a little bit about the ROTC training, and what
15 that was like for you?

16 DY: Yeah, let's see, I'm trying to remember what day, I think it was Wednesday,
17 or whatever. Everybody that was in ROTC, had to wear their uniform all day long. Most
18 of the lower classmen did not take it very seriously; they thought it was a big joke. Of
19 course, if you were upper classmen and you were in it, and then you had volunteered, so,
20 you took it a little more seriously. It was really nothing more than going out on the parade
21 field, and doing, marching around, and there really wasn't much else to it. I was rather
22 attracted to it, however, I had joined something that they called, the honor guard, which
23 was nothing more than the drill team. So, I did that the first two years. I enjoyed that a lot
24 because we were doing something productive, and we were in parades. Think *Animal*
25 *house*, and you know exactly what I'm talking about. I mean that's exactly what we did.
26 So, we'd go in a few parades, and it was kind of fun. I thoroughly enjoyed that, and then
27 when I went on to the second two years, I was given command of the honor guard during
28 my junior year, and so, I enjoyed that, and then was the next level up in my senior year.
29 The training itself was not strenuous, either academically or physically, until you got to
30 the mandatory summer camp, which was six weeks, and that was between your junior
31 and your senior year. That was at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and that was ROTC's

1 equivalent of basic training. Yeah, that was, that was hardcore stuff. They did us a pretty
2 good job at that. I went in with a recommendation of—I'm trying to think of the
3 distinguished military student, yeah. If you were able to retain that, and you became a
4 distinguished military graduate, then you could go into the Regular Army if you wanted
5 to. As it was, the rest of us would go into, into the reserve core. I lost my distinguished
6 military student rating at summer camp. I was not nearly as well good as putting a spit
7 shine, and making nice tight beds, like the guys who were there from VMI [Virginia
8 Military Institute], and the other military schools. I did all right otherwise. In fact, I think
9 I did pretty good, but I just, I guess I just didn't learn how to spit shine things very well,
10 that's all.

11 JS: Right, Yes, sir. Well could you talk a little bit about the instructors there?
12 Well, also in ROTC, were they WWII, or Korean War vets?

13 DY: Most of them were, they had been in Korea at least, but not all of them.
14 There were a fair number of people who had not seen combat, or anything like that. So, I
15 don't remember that there were any WWII vets. There may have been, but I wouldn't
16 know. This was in the day when the usual uniform was khakis, and if you remember on
17 the khakis you didn't wear any unit patches. So, normally, if you were wearing what
18 would be BDUs [Battle Dress Uniform] today, or a dress uniform of some kind, they
19 would have a right shoulder patch, which would give you an idea as to whether or not
20 they had been in a unit in combat, and I really don't recall that many were. I do remember
21 that the professor of military science was an armor officer, even though he didn't have a
22 right shoulder pa—didn't have a CIB [Combat Infantry Badge] obviously. I do remember
23 he had a right shoulder patch. I forgot which one, but it was from Korea.

24 JS: Well, despite the spit shine of shoes, did you feel that you were adjusting to
25 the military lifestyle pretty well?

26 DY: Yeah, I liked it. I thought I—I really didn't have a quarrel, in fact, I'm going
27 to jump ahead a little bit and say, as I told you in an email, my wife also served in the
28 army. In fact, we met in Vietnam. I'm jumping way ahead of this, but after I had gotten
29 out and after we had gotten married, I tried to get back in. We both have commented
30 many times that we had enjoyed military life. We loved the sense of community and the
31 feeling with it. So, that goes way back even to ROTC. I loved the camaraderie. I like the

1 idea that you're doing difficult things together with other people, and you kind of bonded
2 with them, and I liked that. I still do.

3 JS: Well, overall, looking at the ROTC training, the full four years of it, did you
4 feel that it was a good introduction for the military, as far as preparing you, for I guess,
5 your future career?

6 DY: No, It really wasn't very strong academically, very challenging, with the
7 exception of summer camp, and like I said, that was just really a slightly modified
8 version of basic training that any enlisted man would've gone through. So, I'd have to
9 say in retrospect, and I think a lot of other guys that I knew that went through ROTC
10 agreed, that our training in college was pretty shallow, pretty superfluous. It was
11 enjoyable, and all that, but in no way did it really deeply prepare us for what was going
12 on later on, I don't think.

13 JS: As a result of that, did that impact you as you got into further training? Did
14 that have any impact, or—

15 DY: No. I learned what I needed to do once I got in the army, and that was fine.
16 So, no, I just think that that was just a sign of the times, when the reserve forces were not
17 well thought of. They were not well funded, and the active, only, was huge, and really,
18 the reserve, and the National Guard forces were just kind of an afterthought. I think that
19 has changed a lot, but at that time it was just, okay, get some of these college kids enough
20 information where they can at least pretend to be officers for a while. The real training
21 didn't happen until we went on active duty.

22 JS: Well before getting into graduating, and going on into active duty, of course,
23 the biggest thing that happened while you were in college was the Kennedy assassination.

24 DY: Right. Yes.

25 JS: Could you talk about your memories of that?

26 DY: I certainly do, I remember that like most people do, extremely well. I was
27 over at one of the girls dorms, no I wasn't looking for a date because it was in the middle
28 of the day, and I was waiting for one of my classmates to come downstairs; we were
29 going to share some notes, and I even forgotten what the class was. I'm just sitting in the
30 lobby, the lounge area talking with the house mother. That gives you an idea how long
31 ago I went to college, huh? Anyhow, she was a nice lady. The TV was on and I do

1 remember, literally watching Walter Cronkite come on, one and announcing that he had
2 been shot. Of course, by that time, everybody that had walked through was just riveted to
3 the thing, and I remember him taking his glasses off, and all of that, and saying the
4 president is dead. So, I really, I deeply remember that, and I remember when Jack Ruby
5 was killed because I was over at my dorm. It was on a Sunday, and a bunch of us were
6 just hanging around waiting for the crowds to die down in the cafeteria, and we were just
7 flopped over the sofas, and everything else watching the tube, and we saw that had
8 happened. I remember that very well, us kind of looking at each other and say, “Did, did
9 you, did you see that, he just got shot!” We were all kind of like in disbelief because we
10 had actually saw a man get shot on television. So yeah, I remember all of that pretty well;
11 I really do. The other thing I remember too, was the Bay of Pigs, that went down. The
12 reason why I remember that is, not so much where I was at exactly when that happened,
13 but of course, the military buildup in Deep South Florida, which was where I was from,
14 was extreme. I remember going home; it was about a four hour drive from college to my
15 parents’ home in Hialeah, like I say, it’s a suburb of Miami, going home one of those
16 weekends right afterwards, and just convoy, after convoy, after convoy on all the roads. It
17 took probably twice as long to get home because of all of those convoys. The old airstrip
18 where I used to go drag racing when I was in high school was now a tent city filled with
19 the 82nd Airborne, and I remember most of us were pretty scared. We really, we knew we
20 were in range of any rockets that could be launched out of Cuba. We all remembered that
21 pretty well, too. A bunch of us guys just kind of hanging around and listening to the radio
22 a lot, watching television, seeing the news, and all of that sort of thing. We were a little
23 spooky.

24 JS: Sure, I bet. I guess, towards the end of your time—well first off, when did you
25 graduate?

26 DY: In 1965.

27 JS: When in '65?

28 DY: May.

29 JS: May. Okay. All right, so by the time you had graduated, Vietnam was
30 beginning to heat up—

1 DY: It was. I remember being over at my girlfriend's house, who was, as we
2 called them, a townie. Hello? Oh, okay. The phone sounded like it went dead there for a
3 second. So, I was over at her house, and I don't even remember where she was, but I
4 remember kind of watching the tube with her mother one day, waiting for Judy do get
5 back from whatever she was doing, and watching the media, of course covered it very
6 well, as the marines came ashore at Red Beach at Da Nang. I remember watching that on
7 the tube, and kind of looking at her kind of like, "Oops, I guess I have a pretty good idea
8 of where I'm going to be in a couple of years." So, yeah, by that time I was a senior by
9 then. That happened in March of '65.

10 JS: Right, yes, sir. So, you did have a sense that you would probably end up there
11 eventually.

12 DY: That was the first real time I gave it any thought. By that time I had—by that
13 time we had been in ROTC. We had already made our applications for what branches we
14 wanted to join, and I had asked for the infantry, like an idiot. (Laughs) That's not true.
15 I'm very proud to have been in the infantry, and I still would probably do that again.

16 JS: Yes, sir. What was it about the infantry that made you want to choose that
17 branch?

18 DY: Again this is a personality trait that I still have; it's the belief that if you are
19 going to do something, be right in the middle of it. So, the rest of the military, and I'm
20 not trying to start any fights about other services here, but the, everything else in the
21 military is built around the guy on the ground. That's where everything happens. So, hells
22 bells, I might as well be where everything happens, and that's the infantry. So, I asked for
23 it. Most of the guys went into transportation core, or whatever. Very few went combat
24 arms, and I don't think there were about three of us that went into the infantry.

25 JS: After graduating, were you then commissioned as a second lieutenant in the
26 reserves?

27 DY: Right, yep. Immediately after graduation, in fact I wore my uniform
28 underneath my robes, and we left graduation with our families, and we went over to
29 another place on campus where we were commissioned. My mother pinned one bar on,
30 and my girlfriend, actually my fiancé by that time, pinned the other one on me. I've got a
31 picture of that somewhere around here.

1 JS: Did you have some time off before going to further training, or—

2 DY: Yes, I didn't have orders to report for active duty until the end of February of
3 1966. So, I had what, eight months or so? I used that time; I went ahead and got married
4 at the end of August. It was my first wife, not Cindy, my current wife, the one that I met
5 in Vietnam. So I had all that time and I found a little job to help sustain us, and that sort
6 of a thing before I reported for active duty in February of '66.

7 JS: Well, I may be jumping ahead here, but when did you make the transition
8 from the reserves to Regular Army?

9 DY: Well, I served, as most of us did, as a reserve officer during my first tour in
10 Vietnam, and then in order to stay on active duty any longer from that, I just, trying to
11 think of the name. Extended active duty, but I was still a reserve officer. So as long as
12 you jumped ahead, I will too. When I made the decision to get out of the army, and that
13 was a personal one that had to do with my first wife, I actually by that time had made an
14 application to go to the Regular Army. I wanted to stay in the army and make it a career.
15 That was obviously not to be. I served both of those tours as reserve officers.

16 JS: Okay. Let's see, after those eight months were up and it was time to report for
17 further training, did you go to the infantry officer's basic course at that point?

18 DY: Certainly did, at beautiful downtown Fort Benning.

19 JS: (Laughs) Could you talk a little bit about the training there, and what that was
20 like for you?

21 DY: Yeah, this is when things got serious. We quit screwing around, and I think a
22 lot of us college kinds were a little surprised at it, and on the one hand we didn't have to
23 put up with the crap and silliness of OCS [Officer Candidate School], which we all
24 developed a deep dislike for, I certainly did. Nonetheless, the actual training itself was
25 the same thing they went through. It was not gentle; it was good solid hard training. A lot
26 of the NCOs [Noncommissioned Officer] who taught us were combat veterans from
27 Vietnam, and it was damn good training. We got good stuff then, not easy at all.

28 JS: Could you go through, I guess, say a typical day of training there at OCS?

29 DY: I'm trying to think of when reveille was, and since I was married, I didn't
30 live in the BOQs [Bachelor Officer Quarters], but I did live on post. I'm trying to
31 remember whether reveille was at 5:30 or 6:00; I'm thinking it was 5:30. Of course, that

1 meant that I was up by four o'clock in the morning to get down there and do all of that.
2 Kind of depends upon where you were in the training at that time. A lot of it was
3 classroom sorts of things, but a lot of it was field exercises where you were learning to
4 adjust artillery, you were really learning how to use a compass, and shoot a back azimuth,
5 and navigate, and do all those kinds of things. Some of them were leadership drills.
6 Didn't do a lot of weapons training, because as officers, we were doing more
7 familiarization, so we knew how to clear and fire an M-60, and do those kinds of things,
8 as opposed to the enlisted who got a lot more detailed training than we did. A lot of it was
9 range training, so I couldn't tell you exactly what it was, but there was a split between
10 classroom training, and field training. Probably more the field training than classroom,
11 but a pretty sure amount of it, yeah.

12 JS: Let's see. How about—you mentioned that it was pretty tough training, but
13 did you feel like you were adjusting to this training pretty well?

14 DY: Yeah, I didn't have any real problems with it. You know, we did physical
15 training every morning. I was then, and still am, not a man with a lot of upper body
16 strength, but I can run forever. So, it kind of depended what we did in PT, as long as we
17 were out double timing around, I could sit there and have a conversation with my buddy
18 if I wanted to. That didn't bother be a bit. Doing other things, like push-ups, and things
19 that involved arm strength were more of a problem for me, but I enjoyed it. We got closer
20 together, and what was interesting down the pike with that was, we eventually, a lot of us
21 had orders to go to different places. For instance, I was originally on orders to go to the
22 8th Infantry Division at Baumholder, Germany. I remember one morning before reveille,
23 and looking up there, and some major standing up there. We all kind of went, "Uh-oh."
24 (Laughs) "Uh-oh," was an appropriate reaction because he was kind of smarty about the
25 whole thing, and he said, "Okay, everybody here that's got orders for Germany, raise
26 your hand!" and of course, probably three quarters of us raise our hands, and he says,
27 "Nice try guys, you ain't going there anymore!" The Army had gone in and taken every
28 one of us, with very rare exception, and I don't even remember what those, who those
29 exceptions were. They'd taken the whole class and were going to send us to the brand
30 new 199th Light Infantry Brigade [LIB] that was being formed there at Fort Benning at
31 that time. Now, what that meant was the guys that I went through IOBC [Infantry Officer

1 Basic Course] with, were in my same unit. So, we got to know each other pretty well that
2 way, and then also, because we were all a bunch of second lieutenants, we all lived in the
3 same general area of post. So, like on Sundays it was not unusual to get us together, and
4 barbeque and drink beer, and that kind of a thing, too. So, we developed some, probably
5 some tighter bonds than a lot of other guys might have, simply because we went through
6 out initial training, and then into this new unit all at the same time. We just kept on going,
7 and then on over to Vietnam. That same thing happened, by the way, in the 1st Cav when
8 they formed. When the 1st Cav, I'm sure you know enough about all of this, it was
9 originally the 11th Air Assault Division test, but also law at that time said, if you had less
10 than four months to go, you weren't deployable. Well that stripped out a lot of the
11 officers, the young officers, and they did the same thing there. They went in and got an
12 OCS class, and just changed the orders for every single one of them, and sent them to the
13 1st Cav, and that's who they deployed with was all these young officers who still hadn't
14 gotten the tarnish off of their gold bars yet.

15 JS: Before moving into your time with the 199th LIB, and I guess building that
16 unit, and the training you received there before going to Vietnam, let's talk a little bit
17 more about OCS. I guess, if you could talk about—well first of all were there any
18 particularly memorable moments, or funny moments, anything like that from OCS that
19 stick out in your mind?

20 DY: Wellbeing with those in IOBC, I wasn't in OCS.

21 JS: Yeah, sorry, sorry.

22 DY: That's okay because I do remember that, we who had already commissioned,
23 of course, we were treated quite differently than the OCS guys, but I remember at that
24 time developing an attitude about OCS because all of who had gone through ROTC were
25 looking at what those guys were doing, and were trying to figure out why, what would
26 pushing a peanut around the barracks with your nose, what did that have to do with
27 developing leadership skills? I had a lot of heartburn with that for a long time, and in
28 some ways still do. I think that was a great fault of it, but that's where I developed that
29 first instinct, as we'd go marching by or whatever. We'd watch all of this sort of silly
30 stuff going on and we went, "What in the world is the idea behind that?" Funny
31 moments? No, I really can't remember anything in particular that happened. Nothing in

1 particular, no. Before we went to the 199th though, we had about a month between the
2 time we got through with IOBC and the 199th was organized sufficiently to take us, and
3 in face most of us from that class went to the same battalion, and we eventually joined the
4 last battalion that was formed. We had about a month, and I don't know who it was.
5 Somebody had asked, "Gee, could we go through jump school?" So, that's when I went
6 through jump school was in the May when we finished IOBC, and between we actually
7 reported for duty with the 199th. So, I went through jump school then.

8 JS: I'd like to ask you about jump school as well, but one more thing about IOBC.
9 How about the leadership training? Did you feel that it was pretty good, as far as
10 preparing you to command troops?

11 DY: I think it was about as good as it could get, and by that, I mean there is
12 nothing like hard experience to really teach you, and I'm not sure that there is any
13 training in the world that will ever prepare you for leading troops in combat. Nonetheless,
14 I do remember some of the exercises they put us through, and learning some hard lessons
15 out of those exercises, problem solving exercises, team building exercises. I was to find
16 out later on that they used those same exercises in, for the noncommissioned officer
17 school that we later on called shake 'n bakes. Those were pretty good exercises. They
18 were tough. They make you think your way through things, and of course they made
19 them go though you when you were sleep deprived, and everything else. That's pretty
20 close to the real thing there folks, when you got every reason not to be able to think
21 clearly. So, they created situations that made things difficult for you to do.

22 JS: One last question about IOBC. How was discipline enforced there?

23 DY: Well we were the officers, and probably we were a little on the better side.
24 (Laughs) I say that because that was a huge difference between OCS and us. First of all,
25 they've got noncommissioned officers screaming and yelling all the time, which they
26 couldn't do with us. If the NCOs had to say anything to us, of course, they had to end it
27 with, sir. Of course, they could make "sir" sound like the most disgusting word in the
28 world, I mean, they were great at it, especially in jump school. Generally speaking, we
29 were officers, we were expected to act that way, and I don't remember any real problems
30 with that. We may not have been quite as respectful as some of the older officers might
31 have wanted us to be, but I don't think we were a handful. I don't remember anybody

1 being disciplined by the attack officers, or anything like that. We hardly ever saw our
2 attack officers. Very seldom did we ever see them. There was only two anyway, so.
3 Again, that's a huge difference between us and OCS. We were expected already to act
4 that way, and we knew that. That had already been told to us, the expected behaviors of
5 an officer, even if you are a brand new second lieutenant. You just don't do certain
6 things, that's all.

7 JS: How long was IOBC?

8 DY: Nine weeks.

9 JS: Nine weeks, okay. Once you completed that it was directly on to jump school?

10 DY: Went to jump school, yep. Did that for three weeks, had about four or five
11 extra days thrown in there with really nothing to do before we actually reported for duty
12 up to Kelly Hill to form the 199th.

13 JS: How many jumps did you have to make to qualify?

14 DY: Five.

15 JS: Once you reported to the 199th, you said that was also at Benning as well?

16 DY: Correct, yes. That's where it was formed.

17 JS: How long were you there before the unit was sent to Vietnam?

18 DY: Let's see, there were three battalions that were originally formed to the 199th.
19 Ours was the last, and we started—how long were we there? Let's see, we reported for
20 duty the first of June, right around the very beginning of June, and we actually, since we
21 were the last one to form—the other battalions all took a boat to Vietnam, but our
22 battalion, in order to get over there on time, we flew over there in the second week of
23 December, 1966.

24 JS: During those months, between June and December, what types of things were
25 you doing?

26 DY: We worked our asses off. We were in the field all the time, I mean all the
27 time. Memory serves me correctly without exaggerating too much, I believe reveille was
28 at six o'clock Monday morning, we were there usually a little bit earlier than that to meet
29 with the CO [Commanding Officer], and we skipped off a lot of the fancy stuff that goes
30 in the normal garrison duty, and by 6:30 we were on the cattle trucks going out into the
31 weeds in Fort Benning, and we stayed out there all week long. We camped out there. We

1 lived out there. We did everything out there. We would come back Friday night, and we
2 had officers call on Friday night, told to bring the wives along. Saturday morning was
3 inspection, and it was not white glove. This was all, are your weapons clean, is your gear
4 together and all maintained, and we did that until noon. Then came home, we would have
5 Saturday afternoon and Sundays with our families before we repeated the process all over
6 again. I remember also, going to—trying to remember the camp that’s outside
7 Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

8 JS: Oh, yeah, Camp—

9 DY: Shelby

10 JS: Camp Shelby, yes. I ought to know that—

11 DY: We went to Camp Shelby for our FTX [Field Training Exercise] to see if we
12 were qualified to be sent to Vietnam, like what are they going to do, flunk us? Right.
13 Went through all of those field exercise, and everything else, but we stayed in the weeds
14 the whole time. I mean, there was very, very little garrison duty, per se.

15 JS: Was it all field problems getting ready for combat situations?

16 DY: Absolutely, absolutely, yep, it was at varying levels. In other words, in June
17 we were probably doing mostly squad, and maybe the beginning of platoon exercises,
18 and then we would go on up progressively levels, so that by the time we went to our FTX
19 at Camp Shelby that was battalion exercises we had already practiced all of those. We
20 really did it under field conditions. Comparing what we were doing there to the way we
21 actually lived in Vietnam was a little different because it was still states. I remember
22 doing helicopter exercises where we had to fasten our seatbelts before the helicopter
23 would take off. Yeah, right, like we did that in Vietnam. It was Stateside, and we
24 understood those sorts of things, even if we didn’t know that it would be that much
25 different in Vietnam. We always put up actual tents, shelters, you know as they were
26 called in the field. Hells Bells, we never did any of that crap in Vietnam, it’s too much
27 stuff to carry around in your bag, but the exercises were the same. I can remember, for
28 instance, a couple of times actually doing live fire artillery adjustment exercises where
29 the rounds were going over our head, and those were live rounds, folks. So, you know, it
30 was kind of beforehand, you’d say, “Okay, Lieutenant, you’re calling them for real.” You
31 screw up and people die, then, “Oh, shit. Look what I got myself into.” It was hard, and I

1 do remember that somebody and COs that I had were Korean War veterans, and they
2 were invaluable. Don't ask me who gave me the advice, I probably got it a few times
3 from some of the old officers, basically they said, "You treat that platoon sergeant that
4 you've got, and give him all the respect he deserves, and if you do that, if you treat him
5 like a polished, professional soldier that he is, he will take care of your young ass,
6 Lieutenant." That's exactly what I had, Staff Sergeant Hamilton, who was a combat
7 veteran from Vietnam, and I treated him like a king, made sure his beer glass never get
8 empty at the NCO club, and he took care of me, but he taught me. He didn't just do
9 things for me; he taught me. He'd call me off the side and say, "Now sir, maybe the next
10 time we need to do it this way." He was always correcting the way you said it, but he
11 took care of me, and that was true of most of us young officers. We were all blessed with
12 good NCOs who knew how to do things, knew how to take care of the troops, and they
13 knew that as young lieutenants how to take care of us too. We also had to repay them
14 with respect, and better show them that we knew how to learn, and they expected us to
15 learn. If I ever was considered a decent officer, I owe it to those NCOs that I had because
16 they were good. They were damn good.

17 JS: Did Staff Sergeant Hamilton, did he go to Vietnam with you as well?

18 DY: Oh, yes, yep. He was my platoon Sergeant during the first few months that
19 we were there, and eventually he was promoted, and he went to another company. I have
20 no idea what eventually happened to him. I just don't know, but yeah, he was good.

21 JS: Were the guys that you were commanding in the field, in these field
22 maneuvers, were they the same guys you would command in Vietnam?

23 DY: Absolutely, yep. We all went over as a unit, yep, sure did.

24 JS: Were there any guys who did not go?

25 DY: Yeah, there was one—why do I remember this? You are pulling things out of
26 me. This is good. There was a guy by the name of Cook that I remember who was
27 arrested on a murder warrant from Chicago. Obviously, he did not go with us. I think,
28 because I think the murder had occurred before he was in the army, so he probably joined
29 the army to get away from that. There was a couple of guys that were hurt that didn't go,
30 but other than that, we all went.

1 JS: Since you—again, this may be jumping ahead a little bit—since you all went
2 over as a unit together, how did they keep the entire unit from coming back at the same
3 time?

4 DY: They had a system, whereby they would trade people out, and so we
5 swapped a lot of people with elements of the 9th Infantry Division, in order to mix them
6 all up. That was one of the great mistakes of the War in Vietnam, was doing that, by the
7 way, and I'm so glad that they see that they corrected that in Iraq and Afghanistan, by
8 sending whole units over there together, and bringing them home together, rather than the
9 way we did it, of the unit stays there, but all the personnel rolled over. You constantly
10 had new guys who had difficulty adjusting because they are all by themselves, and that
11 was a real problem. When we originally went over it was all of us, but they broke that up
12 within a matter of months, and so we were like anybody else, and we had new guys in
13 there and had to adjust to it.

14 JS: So, you pretty much lost original unit cohesion within a month or two?

15 DY: Absolutely, yep. One of the great huge mistakes that was made in Vietnam.

16 JS: So, you said that the first two battalions went ahead and went over by boat.
17 How much longer were you guys there after they left?

18 DY: Maybe about two more weeks, two, three weeks, somewhere in there while
19 we finished up, got out final issue of equipment, weapons, and all that sort of a thing, so
20 the idea was that all three battalions would arrive, generally speaking again, about the
21 same time. So, that's why we flew and they went by boat.

22 JS: Well, overall, did you feel that this time, these months before actually going
23 over to Vietnam, did you feel that they prepared you, I guess as well as they could.

24 DY: That's a good way of describing it, as I have said previously. There is no way
25 to truly prepare you for that first firefight, and I think that somewhere deep down inside,
26 you know that. I think that the training was about as good as it could get, considering the
27 technology of the day. They didn't have a lot of the training tools then that you have now.
28 So, yeah, I thought it was pretty good.

29 JS: Before we get into the actual transition, and going over to Vietnam, let me ask
30 you, how did you actually feel about going?

1 DY: Oh, I was ready to go. Let's go, folks. Yeah, let's go over and kick some VC
2 ass. Hey, I was young, stupid, and gung ho, and you know, this is what I'm trained to do.
3 One side story, and I don't know if this is totally appropriate to what your interview is
4 about, but I think it's apropos to tell this. In 2003, the 1st Cav was getting ready to deploy
5 to Iraq for its first tour. I don't know how, but the battalion commander of the 2nd
6 Battalion of the 5th Calvary, which was the unit, the battalion that I had served within
7 Vietnam found out that I lived down here, and I was invited to a "dining in" as it's called,
8 A formal, regimental thing that attended the officers, and that kind of thing. I remember
9 talking to the lieutenant that I was working with, and I said, "Are you sure your colonel
10 really wants this pony-tailed, semi academic to come up there and talk to them?" He said,
11 "All the more reason for you to do." So I did. I was a guest speaker in a way, giving a
12 locker room talk, you know, think football game if you will and the coach. During a
13 break that we had, I had a young lieutenant come up to me, and he was stuttering, kind of
14 nervous, you could tell that he was a little bit in awe of me. Why? I don't know, I guess
15 basically because he knew I was a combat vet. He said, "I know I'm not supposed to
16 think like this, and we are supposed to hate war, and my wife just doesn't want me to go,
17 yada, yada." Finally I interrupted him, and said, "Lieutenant, what you are trying to say
18 is, you want to know if you've got the balls, if you've got what it takes to lead men in
19 combat, is that right?" "Yes, sir, that's exactly it." That feeling describes how I felt at the
20 time. I wanted to know, "Could I do this? Did I have the courage, the ability to be able to
21 lead men in combat?" What was I? Twenty two years old? You're young and gung
22 hoeing and you want to get things done. So, yeah, I wanted to go. I was ready.

23 JS: Had you, throughout your training when you had the time, had you paid
24 attention to what was going on? Did you know how the War was going at that point?

25 DY: As much as we could because we were out in the field so much. It wasn't
26 like I could sit down with a beer and watch the evening news on the tube, but as much as
27 I could, yeah, we did. Of course, obviously, we all talked about it whenever we got
28 together, especially over a beer on a Friday night we would talk about it. So, yeah, we
29 had some idea what was going on. For instance, when Ia Drang Valley happened, we
30 were aware of that.

1 JS: Well, one last question before going over, how did your family feel about,
2 about you going to Vietnam?

3 DY: Oh, boy, it was a difficult thing. When I was in IOBC, my father died. We
4 had been a very close family, always were. My father took sick. I went home on
5 emergency leave. He was in some surgery. I saw him. He was doing just fine, and the
6 surgeon came up to me and said, "You can get back to the army, son, if you need to.
7 You're fathers just fine." A couple of days later I remember that, I was in the hand to
8 hand combat class at the time, learning all that, and I just looked over at the parking lot,
9 and I saw this olive drab sedan pull up, and I went, I knew it was a chaplain, and I knew
10 he was coming to talk to me, and sure enough my dad had died. Going home for the
11 funeral was kind of a blur. So, there I am with a recently widowed mother, a young
12 brother who is still at home. My brother is nine years younger than I am, and I knew it
13 was going to be very difficult, but I got absolutely nothing but support from her. My
14 mother recently died this last summer, she was ninety three. I remember talking to her a
15 number of times about that, and she said, "I'm just not one of the worrying kind. I just
16 knew that you were going to be okay." It's just as simple as that. I just didn't worry about
17 it. So, they were pretty supportive of it. Now, I was newly married at the time. I don't
18 want to get into too much personal stuff, but it was a marriage that was doomed to fail
19 from the very beginning. She did not adjust to military life very well, in fact she hated it.
20 She couldn't, she found it difficult to make friends with the other young wives, and she
21 kind of isolated herself, and to compound that is, she wanted a kid. I went, "I can't think
22 of anything stupider than for you to be back here as a twenty year old widow with a
23 newborn child on your hands," and we would get into the sort of irrational things that
24 really young people say and, oh, if you are killed, I mean I was a second lieutenant of
25 infantry, mortality rates are pretty high for them. I mean, I knew better, and what I was
26 getting into, and I said such. She said, "Oh, if that's the case then I want a child to
27 remember you by, and all that." So, sure enough, she got pregnant and the child was born
28 while I was over there. He was six months old before I ever saw him. So, I can't say that
29 she was terribly supportive, but the rest of my family was.

30 JS: Okay, talk about the trip over.

31 DY: I barfed in my steal helmet most of the way over there.

1 JS: Did you go by civilian or military?

2 DY: (Interviewee talks to third party) The whole battalion flew over on C141s. I
3 don't know why, I had never been air sick before that time, nor have I been air sick since
4 that time, and maybe I had something else, but I pretty much filled up my steel pot on the
5 way over. (Laughs)

6 JS: Where did you guys stop over?

7 DY: Let's see, we flew from Fort Benning, itself, to Elmendorf Air Force Base in
8 Alaska. I remember getting off the plane there and walking through snow banks that were
9 over my head. Then, let's see, trying to think of the name of the airbase just outside of
10 Tokyo for re fueling. I've forgotten the name of that place, and then from there into Bien
11 Hoa.

12 JS: Upon arriving in Vietnam, what was your first impression of the country?

13 DY: It's hotter than the hobs of hell. (Laughs) We got there in December, which I
14 was to find out much later, that in the areas around Saigon, which is where we were, that
15 is the hottest time of year, not the coolest, but the hottest. We didn't know that, and we
16 were going to set up our base camp at Long Binh, which was the huge logistics base north
17 of Saigon. I'm sure you've talked to other vets, and you've heard that word many times
18 about Long Binh. The 199th was to build its main base camp at the northern end of Long
19 Binh. So, that's where we were. Engineer units had come in and basically just denuded
20 this hill top, so there was nothing but red dirt up there. So, it was dusty, hot, nothing
21 around. I remember one thing on that, they did set up some GP medium tents, and so
22 forth, and laying on our cots, all of us lieutenants, nothing to do at that time. So, we are
23 sitting there in nothing but our pants on, it's just hot, and it's just before Christmas, and
24 we are all going, "What in the hell am I doing here?" It was the first real recognition that
25 something was wrong, and of course the other thing that you remember is the smell. I bet
26 other vets have told you that same thing too, the smell.

27 JS: Had the other two battalions arrived by that point?

28 DY: We really did all get there just about the same time. It might have been a day
29 or two after them, but we were all very close in together, so most of that first few weeks
30 was just getting, just getting settled in, getting the Conex containers squared away that
31 had our equipment and ammunition and all those kinds of things in them. We did go over

1 with our own weapons, and individual gear. We had everything except ammunition with
2 us, but, you know, a lot of the other equipment, and so forth came in on big Conex
3 containers, and so forth that had to be done. So, that was it for about the first week, the
4 first few weeks and so forth. We didn't really move into the field until after the first of
5 the year. So, we probably spent three weeks screwing around trying to get things settled
6 in.

7 JS: In that time did you do anything to, I guess for acclimatizing, to get used to
8 the climate and, well, any sort of training during that time to get ready to go out in the
9 field?

10 DY: Not really. We did do PT, and that was, if there was any sort of
11 acclimatizing—you know, most of the major units, as time went on in Vietnam, did
12 through that, each of them developed some sort of a little training school. In fact, one of
13 our lieutenants who was a first lieutenant because he was in graduate school when he
14 finished up, he was already a first lieutenant. He eventually was pulled out to form that
15 first one that the 199th did, what we all used to call charm school. When a new guy would
16 come in, they would spend a couple weeks zeroing in their weapons, getting
17 acclimatized, and doing those kinds of things. When we first got there, there wasn't any
18 such thing as that going on. We just did PT first thing in the morning, and just kind of got
19 used to the heat, the humidity.

20 JS: What type of, I guess quarters and housing did you have there? I know you
21 talked about the actual set up the base there at Long Binh, but what type of quarters and
22 housing did you have?

23 DY: Oh, well at first, we just in GP mediums, that's all we had. I think it stayed
24 that way until we actually started working in the field. It wasn't until later on that I came
25 back and they actually had buildings up. We never saw that because we were out in the
26 weeds someplace.

27 JS: What was your, what was the battalions AO?

28 DY: We were a part of, what had later become known as "Operation Fairchild,"
29 and 199th came in to basically be the palace guard for Saigon. So, we surrounded it, and
30 our battalion was just to the south. Our battalion headquarters was in a firebase in, what
31 was then in a small town called Binh Chanh, B-I-N-H C-H-A-N-H, Binh Chanh. That's

1 where we built our firebase, and we worked that general area. In other words, we
2 straddled route four, which was the main arterial highway up from the delta.

3 JS: I know you had already had experience with most of these—with all the guys
4 that you had first arrived with. You don't have to go into specific names if you don't
5 want to, but could you, I guess, discuss some of the other personalities in the unit, and
6 how the unit got along.

7 DY: Oh, okay. Let's see, amongst the officers, I can't remember all the names, to
8 tell you the truth. I do remember one by the name of Jim Davis. He came from a long
9 military family, had gone to school at VMI, it was almost as if Jim, if it wasn't expected
10 that he'd become a career officer, he would at least serve honorably from a long
11 established South Carolina family, that sort of a thing. He took a round to the knee in our
12 very first firefight. So, his time was over, blew his knee out. I mean, took an AK round
13 right there, and Jim was really sad about that. He wanted to be able to prove himself, so
14 man, I really want to get here, and I get wounded, and it was a go home wound, I mean,
15 just his knee was gone. I mean, you think about a bullet hitting you right, sideways on the
16 knee. Let's see, he had 3rd Platoon, I had 1st, and I'm trying to think of the guy that had
17 2nd Platoon, little short guy. It was an Italian name, I want to say Tedesco, but I'm not
18 really sure. No, that was Arexo's name. Anyhow, the young officers, we got long great.
19 We were good friends, and our CO was a guy by the name of Bruce Drees, D-R-E-E-S,
20 and I think Bruce retired as a general, if I'm not wrong. We were really pissed not much
21 after we got to Vietnam. I think he went through our very first firefight with us, and then
22 they pulled him, and they pulled him to be the Commanding General's aid. We were
23 pisses because we really liked him, and the men did too. They trusted him, I mean, he
24 trained us and all of that. So, we got another CO after that who we didn't know. I don't
25 remember where he came from or anything else. So, that was the first thing that happened
26 to break up the unit. That was too bad. As far as the men were concerned, I couldn't
27 remember individual's names in my own platoon. I can remember Sergeant Hamilton
28 obviously, my platoon sergeant who was so good, but I first I really don't remember.
29 Some of the names come back to me from some actions later on, they kind of just stuck
30 in my mind, but beyond that I really don't, I couldn't tell you who my RTO was for
31 instance, I don't remember.

1 JS: Well, upon arrival in Vietnam, how was morale at that point?

2 DY: Oh, sky high. This is the earlier parts of the war. There wasn't a lot of, the
3 protests hadn't really formulated back in the states. I think the majority of people were
4 supportive of the War at that time. Well, I'll give you one example. This goes back to
5 when we were still at Fort Benning, they took selected lieutenants from throughout the
6 199th and sent them up to the Mountain Ranger Camp in Dahlongega for some night patrol
7 training. I remember standing there getting ready to go out on one patrol, and an officer
8 came by to check us out. I looked at this guy and he had this horrible scar on the right
9 side of his face. Then I looked at his name tag and it said, "Marm," that was Joe Marm
10 from the Ia Drang Valley, who won the Medal of Honor. We all recognized him and
11 went, "Shit, talk about the experienced instructor here." We were really gung ho about it,
12 I mean I don't think we all wanted to get our face half blown away like Joe did; he got
13 pretty torn up by that. Nonetheless, we were ready to go, and there weren't any of those
14 FTA and peace symbols, and all that sort of a thing. Now, having said that, there were
15 typical American GIs that bitched about absolutely everything, and all of that. I'm sure
16 you've heard the old saw about it, if they aren't complaining then there is something the
17 matter. So, there really wasn't any real problems that we had, there truly wasn't. We had
18 no refusals, or any of that sort of a thing.

19 JS: How about, were there any racial tensions at that time?

20 DY: No, in fact, I do want to tell you one story. This goes back; we'd been over
21 there for a while. I couldn't tell you exactly when, but there was a time when we were
22 there when, in '67, when there was the riots in Detroit. And my lieutenant friend at that
23 time was a great big huge black guy, by the name of Willie. Big surprise there, huh? We
24 were out in the weeks just kicking back reading the *Stars and Stripes* on day and pardon
25 my language a little bit. I don't know how you will handle this but, I remember very well,
26 it was almost a quote. He was reading this thing and he looks at me and says, "Louie,
27 them's a bunch of dumb motherfuckers. If they want to fight so goddamned much they
28 can come over here and take my goddamned place!" (Laughs) We just—we didn't have
29 those kinds of problems at that time, on that unit. Maybe other places did, but we didn't. I
30 do remember, of course, being an officer, when we came out of the weeds, I didn't go
31 into the enlisted clubs except on those times when I needed to. I never saw, I saw fights

1 in the enlisted club that we had to break up, but they from too much beer and it didn't
2 have anything racial to it, they were just letting steam out, that's all. The fights were all
3 just fist fights; nobody was trying to really hurt anybody else. I never saw any racial
4 problems myself. I think that was true of my second tour too; I never saw it then.

5 JS: How about, were there any tensions between the original guys from the 199th
6 and when they began bringing in the replacements as they divided up? Was there any
7 problems there, or did everything seem to go well in that—

8 DY: It goes as well as it can when you are just trying to blend in new people who
9 are unfamiliar, and you don't know them. You don't know if you can trust them, and all
10 of that. The 199th was not a unit that saw a lot of heavy combat, most of the wounded that
11 we had were from booby traps. There were a few firefights, but the vast majority of it
12 was screening patrols, where you are going through the markets, and that sort of a thing
13 to provide security during the day time, or were setting up ambushes along canals at
14 night, and we didn't really have a lot of contact. I mean, that's not to say we didn't have
15 some fights, but it was nothing like when I went through my second tour when I was with
16 the 1st Cav. It was like I was in two different wars, and so you had enough time for the
17 trust factor to kind of buildup, that kind of a thing, so, just the uncomfortableness of
18 being around people that you didn't know, that kind of a thing, but I don't remember any
19 huge problems. In some cases we picked up experienced people from the 9th Division,
20 because you remember you are trying to adjust DEROS dates here, so some of these guys
21 have been in-country for eight, nine, ten months, and they had some experience. They
22 were good for us in that sense.

23 JS: Did this, I guess, did this divvying up of the unit—did that take place before
24 you actually had some contact with the enemy?

25 DY: No, our first combat was, our first firefight was right there at Long Binh.
26 They would send us out into the surrounding jungle just to provide screening patrols. I
27 really, to tell you the truth, I think the, probably the brasses were surprised we actually
28 found something out there. I don't think we were supposed to be getting into firefights,
29 we were just supposed to get used to navigating the jungle, and getting used to the heat,
30 but we did. We flushed something out one day, and we get into, not a huge firefight, but
31 like I say, it was enough to ruin Jim Davis. We had a couple of other casualties, nobody

1 killed. Yeah, it was a legitimate firefight, that's for sure. That was our first one, and
2 probably within about two weeks after that we moved out of there and went down to Binh
3 Chan, and moved into a firebase that I believe, I'm not positive, had already been built
4 for the 9th Infantry Division, somebody in there. We didn't have to build it, I know that.
5 We expanded it and all that as time went on, but it already existed by the time we moved
6 in down there.

7 JS: How long had you been in-country when that first firefight took place?

8 DY: About three weeks.

9 JS: About three weeks, okay. I guess, could you talk a little bit about what—you
10 talked a little bit about it, but if you could go into a little more detail about what you
11 remember about that first—

12 DY: That first firefight?

13 JS: Yes, sir.

14 DY: I remember it was a fairly large exercise, this is why I say, if we had really
15 been out there looking for trouble, we would've moved around in squad sized exercises,
16 but it was big enough for the entire company was involved. That's why, you know, one
17 of the other platoon leaders was hurt, because we were all out there. I do remember that
18 we were in some kind of a fairly open area. We were beyond—we were no longer able to
19 see Long Binh itself, so we were probably out four or five clicks, something like that in
20 thin jungle, not really heavy duty jungle. And the VC were the first to fire. Scared the hell
21 out of us, but I remember for the most part everybody did what they were supposed to.
22 You know, we all got down and covered, figured out where the fire was coming from,
23 began fire maneuver, the basic things we had done during training. I don't remember
24 anybody being terribly scared, doing anything inappropriate, or—I don't have a lot of
25 memories of it, just that I remember, like I say, I remember Jim Davis because he was so
26 pissed. You'd think that if he was getting his knee blown away, he'd be a little worried
27 about that, but he was pissed because he couldn't finish his tour. So, I don't remember. I
28 was not a huge firefight, but it was a legitimate firefight with three or four wounded,
29 something like that. Maybe lasted five minutes, something like that.

1 JS: Before getting in to any further action, if you could talk a little bit about—you
2 mention primarily going on screening patrols and ambushes at night; could you talk a
3 little bit about those type of, those type of operations, and I guess tactics involved in—

4 DY: Okay, yeah. Even though the battalion was located on a big firebase at Binh
5 Chan, they would take one of the companies to secure that, because it also had an artillery
6 battery on it as well as the platoon headquarters. So, the, and later on they even released
7 that. It was Vietnamese ARVNs who would secure most of the base itself. That released
8 the Americans to actually move out, so we lived in an old schoolhouse that had been kind
9 of blown out at one time, and we made our own little mini firebase there. That's where
10 our company headquarters was, and that straddled a farm road so we could screen with
11 over traffic went through and all of that, and then eventually they took 3rd Platoon and
12 made an even smaller little mini base down the road from there as well. Of course, now
13 all of us were within artillery range and that sort of a thing, and we all had at least one
14 mortar in these little places so we could get illumination if we were hit at night. We never
15 took anything more than a little sniper flare every now and then, and we were just outside
16 of a village in order to be able to do that. So, during the day time, we would send out
17 small patrols that were intended to be very visible. We would go through the village.
18 We'd go through the market place. Those kinds of things, and the idea was for the
19 populous to know that we were there and we were trying to secure them. At night we
20 changed over to sending out squad sized patrols, and they, generally speaking, would go
21 to one of the many canals in that area. This is the northern part of the delta, and so it's all
22 rice patties. Its agricultural with little hamlets here and there that are populated, and
23 there's lots of these canals that go all over the place. So that was a major way for the Viet
24 Cong to get supplies in on, was small sand pans that would go up these canals and rivers,
25 and they would hug the side with the foliage that would kind of grow over the side of
26 these things which shield them from the reconnaissance aircraft and helicopters that flew
27 overhead all the time. So, if you will, it flushed them in towards the banks where we
28 would be set up. And we would be set up in ambushes, and we'd do things like, we
29 would cling more mines up into the branches that over hung the water. One of the guys
30 on either end would be on the lookout, and kind of relay to us when he realized there was
31 a sand pan coming towards us, and we would be just as quiet as can be until the sand pan,

1 or sand pans were right absolutely dead center and there were these claymores that we
2 had set up all set to detonate down, and it would be whoever was the patrol leader would
3 detonate those, and that would of course would be the signal for everybody else to open
4 up with their M-16s. Then after that had passed for a little while, then we would throw
5 grenades into the water. In fact, when we could get them, we used concussion grenades
6 intentionally, because shrapnel didn't make a difference. What we were trying to do was
7 to blow them up to the surface if we could. You know, anybody that jumped into the
8 water was able to get away. So, we, we didn't get a lot of action that way. It was pretty
9 much one way. When it did happen, they never had a chance to fire back. That was the
10 idea, was to interdict the supplies that would come up that way. Most of the people we
11 were fighting were local VC. These were not regional or main force VC units. They were
12 locals, and we knew that. They were very, very poorly equipped, and we used to see them
13 with old bolt action lee enfield rifles that probably they had gotten sometime during the
14 French occupation or something like that, but they didn't have AKs or anything else.
15 Now, occasionally with some of the sand pans, if we were able to do a weapon recovery,
16 which sometimes we could and sometimes we couldn't. We'd get AKs or SKSs out of it,
17 but for the most part the locals were very, very poorly armed. Like I had said earlier,
18 most of our casualties were incurred because of booby traps, not because of actual
19 firefights. I would say seventy-five to eighty percent of our casualties came from booby
20 traps.

21 JS: So how often would you say you think you would come into contact with the
22 enemy on these ambushes, and on your typical daily patrol?

23 DY: During the daily patrols we never did, and that was never the purpose of
24 them was to flush out. That was really to show the populous kind of a thing. The night
25 patrols, this is a really wild guess, you could find it out by checking some of the reports
26 that were generated at the time, but I'm going to make a guess and say about every two or
27 three weeks we would spring a booby trap, or we'd spring an ambush or something like
28 that. I do remember one in particular, let's see, 3rd Platoon, and at that time 3rd Platoon
29 was the one that had its own separate little mini firebase set up. They had a reinforced
30 squad sized platoon that was set up on one of the bigger canals in the area, and they were
31 right near a village, and Ron Housel, who was the 3rd Platoon leader at that time, he took

1 Jim Davis' place, was with them, and I guess the villagers probably had seen them sit into
2 position, or whatever, but the VC definitely knew they were there, and while Ron and
3 everybody was sitting watching the river waiting for a sand pan that came up, they came
4 up behind them, and attacked them. They got hit pretty hard, and I led a patrol out to bail
5 them out, to take them out. That was more than interesting because it was the rainy
6 season. So, that means the rice paddies were all flooded. Trust me, if you ever try to walk
7 through rice paddies when they are flooded, its damn near impossible, and so you had to
8 walk the dikes. Well, the enemy wasn't stupid, that's what they booby trap all the time
9 was the dikes. So, it means you had to move slow at night to try to find any trip wires,
10 and that sort of a thing. So, we are trying to get there in time to keep Ron Housel's patrol
11 from being wiped out while we are trying to make sure we don't get ourselves blown up
12 at the same time. That was an exciting night.

13 JS: You've mentioned that, of course these booby traps several times, but could
14 you describe what type of booby traps?

15 DY: The vast majority of them were American grenades that they had recovered
16 in some way. I don't know whether they found them, or they bought them on the black
17 market, or whatever. A lot of them were the older WWII, what they used to call
18 pineapple grenades, but some of them were the more modern grenades that are made with
19 basically spring wire that's wrapped around the explosive, which then produced the
20 shrapnel, which is a lot more lethal. Whatever it was, what they would do is, take the fuse
21 from a smoke grenade, that goes off almost instantaneously, it's like a half second delay,
22 that's all, as opposed to a regular hand grenade fuse, which is, oh boy, three seconds, five
23 seconds, I've forgotten. At any rate, they would take fishing line, and hook that on to a
24 needle, usually, a needle because that would be very thin, and so forth, and that's what
25 would go in to replace the regular pin on the grenade. Now, that grenade would be
26 secured somewhere along the side of a dike to a small tree, a stake, something like that
27 that would be kind of hidden by vegetation or whatever. Then the trip wire would be
28 placed at about ankle high, and of course because it's made out of fishing line it's pretty
29 hard to see to begin with, and that would be stretched across the dike, so, when you trip
30 that, and it was pretty east to pull that pin out, and then that fuse is almost instantaneous.
31 It's just the size and everything else; you just unscrew the igniter from a hand grenade,

1 and screw in the igniter from the smoke grenade. They are the same size, and everything
2 else, so that's all you had to do was just replace on with the other. So, they had to have
3 those two components, they had grenades, I don't know where they got them, and they
4 had to have smoke grenade fuses, I don't know where they got those either. Fishing line,
5 of course, they all had, and the rest of them they just set up. So, they had to be locals
6 because before the villagers would go out first thing in the morning to go out to the fields,
7 then those booby traps all had to be taken up so that the locals didn't get hurt. So, they
8 were locals themselves. I think on that particular night that we went out to bail Ron
9 Housel, that was part of their overall tactics against us, was to not only attack Ron, but to
10 have all of the avenues of access for us to be able to get up there, they had all of those
11 booby trapped too.

12 JS: While we are on this subject, I guess, if you could talk a little bit about your
13 impressions of the enemy and their abilities.

14 DY: Pretty ingenious, pretty hardworking, hardly ever saw them, that we knew
15 they were enemy of course, because we all knew that, you know, just about anybody you
16 passed might be one. You've heard that a few gazillion times as you didn't know who
17 your enemy was. Not much different from the British when they were fighting in this
18 country during the revolution, you know. Joe Farmer out there might be the one taking a
19 pot shot with you with a Kentucky rifle later on. This was much the same sort of a thing.
20 Very passive, I mean when you have local population, they pretty much ignored us.
21 Yeah, I guess I have to give them a grudging sense of admiration for their ability, or even
22 their desire to do what they were doing. It kind of gave you some idea that they must've
23 actually believed all this stuff because they were willing to work outside all day long and
24 then spend a healthy portion of their night fighting us. I don't know when they ever got
25 any sleep, but you know, that says something about their tenacity and their abilities. I
26 don't think that they were greatly skilled fighters, but they were darn good at those booby
27 traps, and that was their main weapon.

28 JS: Could you talk a little bit about—how would they use the environment to their
29 advantage? You always hear about how they were able to do so, but could you talk a little
30 bit about that?

1 DY: When you say the environment, you mean like the villages and the rice
2 paddies, and things of that nature?

3 JS: Right, yes, sir.

4 DY: Well, as I just described the, they were very good at making sure the dikes
5 and the rice paddies. That's where they put the booby traps out. The villages, as well, of
6 course, I'm sure you've heard this from other vets that most villages had at least one or
7 two shelters in which the women and children and the older men would be able to go to.
8 We really, we knew, of course there were tunnels of some kind, but we didn't have the
9 ability to find those things. We knew, for instance, in some of the training that they had
10 tunnels where the exit was under water in a canal. Well, how in the world are you going
11 to find those things, you know? We knew that they did these things, but it surpassed our
12 ability to be able to find them all. So, they used that pretty well to be able to do small
13 tunnels, to fight in, to escape with. For instance, if we were to go into a village sometime,
14 if there were any young fighters there, they were able to get away and probably use these
15 tunnels. We knew it, we just, what do I do about it? Who knows where they are; it was
16 too much. So, they were really clever when it came to doing that. The majority of our
17 operations were like that. We did not do a lot of heliborne operations, but I just happened
18 to think of a major thing that I need to tell you about. We had been there three or four
19 months, or something like that, I don't remember exactly how long when they took the
20 199th and married it up with Vietnamese Special Forces, and they married us all the way
21 up down to squad level. The formal name for that I think was "Operation Fairchild." You
22 could look that up and get that, but it's something Fairchild. I think Fairchild. The idea
23 was to take these higher level ARVN troops, marry them up with Americans, and see
24 how we did things. So, I had an ARVN lieutenant working right with me, and my squad
25 leaders would have an ARVN sergeant working right with them. You would have an
26 ARVN machine gunner humping his machine gun right alongside one of our machine
27 gunners. That was the idea, and we'd camp out together, and the idea was that we would
28 run the operations one day, and once they kind of figured out, then they would be the
29 command element for the next day. What we were to discover was the individual soldier,
30 and the NCOs, and the ARVN army, they were pretty good. They were the equal of ours,

1 maybe even tougher. I remember one time, being out there at night, and some young
2 ARVN, you know what I mean by ARVN?

3 JS: Yes, sir.

4 DY: Okay. Lit a cigarette, the first sergeant went over there and just kicked the
5 shit out of that kid. I mean literally, he was unconscious by the time first sergeant was
6 through with him. That's about our reaction too, we went, "Damn. Don't piss off Tom
7 from that outfit." Also, knowing at the same time that that kid would never do that again,
8 and he also probably would remain alive for that reason. The officers were some of the
9 sorriest sacks of shit that I ever saw. They were totally worthless. They were worse than
10 useless. They were dangerous. We used to call them, we immediately pick up the name,
11 we called them Saigon cowboys.

12 JS: Right.

13 DY: Oh, you've heard that expression too?

14 JS: Yes, sir.

15 DY: All they wanted to do was go back to Saigon with their plush living, and they
16 probably pissed off somebody up the chain who had sent them out in the field, but they
17 were useless. Their company commander would have—I mean he pulled ten guys out of
18 the line company just to take care of him, cook his food for him, and carry his equipment
19 and everything else. I run into rats that have more brains than some of those guys did, but
20 they were corrupt, they were useless, and I can remember, even at the time, saying to
21 some of the guys, and some of the other lieutenants, and some of the NCOs that, "Geez,
22 with proper leadership these guys could win the War tomorrow," because the soldiers
23 were good, the NCOs were good. They knew how to fight. They were tough, but the
24 leadership absolutely sucked. It was worse than worse. It was really bad. Anyway,
25 somewhere around here is the maroon beret, the Vietnamese special forces that I got from
26 my counterpart. That's what we did for almost the rest of the time I was there.

27 JS: How far up the, I should say rather, how far down the chain of command did
28 this go, as far as the officers being horrible?

29 DY: How far down? The lieutenants were just as bad as everybody else.

30 JS: So the lieutenants, all the way up, would you say it went all the way up to
31 generals as well?

1 DY: I don't know, that's a little out of my pay grade, as the saying goes, so I
2 really don't know, and my problem there is, I've become such a student of the war, as
3 I'm sitting in my home right now looking at a, literally a library that is full of books
4 about the War in Vietnam because I'm such a history nut. So, in that sense, if I were to
5 give you an answer, it would probably be covered by what I have read since that time,
6 which I know quite a bit about the, the senior level generals, and that sort of a thing who
7 were pretty corrupt for the most part, with rare exception. So, I'll leave my answers to the
8 ones that I actually knew at that time, which I had developed a really strong dislike for.

9 JS: But, by and large the regular men, the enlisted men were very good, though?

10 DY: Yes, we were very much impressed by them, and I can remember on some
11 few occasions, we would go down and exercise and there would be no Vietnamese
12 officer with us and the ARVN men preformed great. They were superb; they were good
13 soldiers. They did their duty; it was just a failure of the leadership.

14 JS: Did the GIs, did the Americans seem to get along with them fairly well?

15 DY: Yeah, I don't remember any real problems. It would be interesting to ask
16 somebody else who had been through that same situation. See if they remember it, but I
17 don't remember any myself. They would be in fox holes next to each other, but not
18 necessarily in the same fox hole.

19 JS: From your perspective did you think that over all marrying the two groups
20 together, did you think that it was successful, and that it worked?

21 DY: No, I don't think so, and that was because of their officers. By the way, I
22 need to change that. It was not special forces, it was airborne, Vietnamese airborne with
23 the maroon berets.

24 JS: That was one of the questions that I had coming up, was your impressions of
25 the ARVN.

26 DY: Yeah, the enlisted ARVN were, were quite good, but the officers were
27 terrible. I might say that my second tour, in 1969, I don't even remember ever seeing an
28 ARVN. That was purely a different situation where it was just us, but that first time we
29 were in populated areas, and there were a lot of ARVN. The other thing that we saw on
30 occasion, or some of the sweeps that we would do on occasion, would be the national
31 police who would come out. We used to call them white mice. They were a little on the

1 badge heavy side, but they were the QCs, the military police. They would come in to
2 basically do the interrogations and that kind of a thing. We didn't see a lot of them; that
3 was their primary job. We did a few heliborne operations with the 199th, not a lot. There
4 was just one that I remember. It probably was the biggest single assignment we went on,
5 and it involved our whole battalion. It was the only time I remember us doing a battalion
6 sized helicopter assault, or a CA as we called them, and that was to go into a pineapple
7 plantation that was southwest of Tan Son Nhut airbase. They knew that a lot of the 122
8 missiles, rockets were coming out of that pineapple plantation, which hadn't been farmed
9 in a long time. I think that that was an old French operation, I'm pretty sure. So, we went
10 in there. That was extremely difficult because these rows that they grew the pineapples
11 on are quite tall, they are like four feet high. So, you had to go up and over these things
12 all the time, and that was—and it's really tangled with old growth, and everything else.
13 So, that was difficult, but what we found in there was, I think unexpected, I don't think
14 that the intelligence boys had knew that there was as much going on—I remember
15 finding an underground hospital in there, and we had surprised them so much that we
16 went in—one of those operating rooms that we went into, there was still fresh blood on
17 the sheets, so they had literally, probably in the middle of an operation when they heard
18 the helicopters overhead. Some poor schmuck was half cut open when they had to move
19 him out of there, and there were tunnels out of there. I don't think they could've done the
20 same kind of tunnels that they did at Cu Chi because we were at water level, it was pretty
21 swampy, but nonetheless, they had tunnels cut through these, kind of like hedges, these
22 ridge lines that they had built that were part of doing pineapple. That's how they were
23 able to communicate and move around. That was one of the few times we operated in an
24 area where there was no populous. We could shoot anything that moved.

25 JS: Did you have much contact with the enemy on that op?

26 DY: Not on that one. As a matter of fact, I don't think we had any at all. At least
27 our company didn't, no. Somebody else, we may have flushed somebody towards
28 somebody else, and maybe somebody else did. I really don't know, but we did not have
29 any contact ourselves, and there were no booby traps, but we found a lot of stuff, a lot of
30 rice, for instance, fuel oil, radio batteries, things of that nature, plus this hospital, which,
31 there was at least two operating rooms that I can remember, there may have been more.

1 JS: Oh, wow.

2 DY: Yeah, plus there were a lot of beds. When I say beds, I mean they were cots
3 that—and all of these are inside these, these ridge lines that they had set up. So, this was
4 probably a major staging area of some kind for VC, and the, south of Saigon, I'm going
5 to guess. I was a pretty good sized area.

6 JS: Do you know how the hospital was actually discovered?

7 DY: Yeah, I think some of the guys in our company were just kind of prodding
8 around, and saw a hold, and that kind of a thing, and you kind of yell into it, and you fire
9 a few rounds, and you throw a concussion grenade in there, and they got no reaction. So,
10 they kind of poked their heads in there and went, "Damn, look at this."

11 JS: Before I—a tunnel rad operation like that, to actually go in to the hospital,
12 how was that done? Would it be volunteers, or would you assign people to do that?

13 DY: Now, we did not do tunnel rad—I know what you are talking about. We did
14 not do tunnel rad operations because where we were at, like I said, that's really the
15 northern part of the delta, you couldn't really build a lot of tunnels because they would be
16 underwater; they would be flooded all the time. So, if you are thinking Cu Chi tunnel
17 kinds of things, they couldn't do that there. The only tunnels that you saw, they didn't
18 think they would be excavated with the shelters, which every village had, and there
19 would probably be some small tunnel that might go out of there, but they would go out,
20 intentionally, into the river. They were relatively short; it's not a place where they could
21 set up like Cu Chi, where they would have kitchens, and all of that sort of a thing. That
22 was strictly an escape area, or maybe to go from one hamlet to another for a short
23 distance, something like that, but they weren't a big maze of things like they had at Cu
24 Chi, or some of the other places. So we didn't do tunnel rad operations, per se. As to like
25 the hospital, I think it was the guys that were just the first ones there. They just kind of
26 kept on going in, probably yelled at their squad leader and said, "Hey, come on over here.
27 Look what we got!" That sort of a thing, I mean, we'd probably call the lieutenant, I
28 mean, it was not a—he kind of just went in wearily. You could stand up inside these
29 places, so it wasn't like you were crawling through a really tiny hole or anything. When I
30 say stand up, Vietnamese could stand up, we were hunched over, but you know what I
31 mean by that.

1 JS: Getting back to the ARVN for just a moment, I have one more question about
2 them. Seeing those ARVN officers behaving the way they did, did you guys talk much
3 about that? Did it cause you to, I guess in any way, to think twice about what we're doing
4 here, that type of thing?

5 DY: Absolutely, absolutely, yeah. I mean, that was one of the questions I used to
6 ask. "What in the hell are we doing here if this is the way you are going to act? If this is
7 the leadership, what in the hell are we doing here bailing their asses out for? They don't
8 even want to fight themselves." And they didn't, they would do anything to avoid a
9 firefight, I'm talking about the officers. They really did. In fact, I can remember a couple
10 of times where our company commander had hard intelligence that came down through
11 Westmoreland about where something was going on, and the next day was supposed to
12 rotate to the Vietnamese to plan and carry out the operations, and they went literally in
13 the opposite direction. My CO just went through the roof when that would happen. Ah,
14 he would just ricochet off the walls, and they would just sit there and smile at him.

15 JS: Were there any times when they would actually be out in the field with you
16 guys—did they ever make any attempt to sabotage the operation to keep from having
17 contact?

18 DY: Good question. I don't know. I don't recall that. It seems like I would've, but
19 I don't recall an incident like that where they actually tried to sabotage an operation so
20 they didn't have to get in contact. They would do things like I just told you, if they knew
21 the intelligence was where the enemy was, they would go the opposite direction. I do
22 remember that. If you want to call that sabotage, I guess that's kind of what it amounts to,
23 but if we were on the field and we made contact, and that only happened a couple of
24 times when we were with them, then usually what the officers would do is, they just
25 wouldn't do anything, and they would just let the Americans lead everything. They
26 would just stand there and get out of the way. So, in essence we were leading ARVN
27 troops. We were leading our own, plus the ARVNs. The ARVN soldiers would go along
28 with is willingly.

29 JS: Did you know if most of the ARVN troops there, were they locals? Were they
30 from that area? Do you know?

1 DY: You know that's a good question. Considering that they were airborne, I'm
2 going to guess and say they were not because there was only, what, one airborne brigade?

3 JS: I believe so.

4 DY: And those were usually under presidential command, because they were kind
5 of considered elite troops. I'm going to make a guess, it's a guess, that they were not
6 local troops.

7 JS: If we could switch topics for a moment, and talk a little about, I guess the
8 relationship between the Americans and the local civilian population that you would
9 come in contact with.

10 DY: They did everything they could to ignore us. You know, we would go
11 through the market, or something like that, and they wouldn't look at us or much of
12 anything else. They were pretty much nonexistent. We did not have interpreters with us,
13 which I don't know whether that was a major mistake or not, but we really, even though
14 we were around them all the time, and the road went right through our little mini firebase,
15 we really didn't have much to do with the local civilian population. We really didn't. I
16 don't know history might look at that and say, "Yeah, that was one of our serious
17 mistakes." I don't know.

18 JS: What was your impression of them, of the Vietnamese civilians?

19 DY: I remember at the time thinking, "All they really wanted was to be left
20 alone." They weren't terribly crazy about the Americans, and they weren't terribly crazy
21 about the ARVNs, and they weren't terribly crazy about the VC. They just wanted to be
22 left alone, farming and feeding their families. Now, that's what I used to think, whether
23 there is any basis of rational thought to that, or not, I don't know, but I can remember a
24 lot of the guys that I was with, we all had that same impression, it was like, "The peasants
25 just wanted to be left alone."

26 JS: Could you talk about when you would come into a village or into a market
27 area, what type of sweeping operations, and what kind of tactics would you use to search
28 those areas?

29 DY: Yeah, it was classic sweep stuff where we would, before dawn get into
30 formation outside of a village. Basically just a line, and that's all, and then just go
31 through very, very slowly with a reaction force behind us who might come on over. Most

1 of the time we had, like I said the Vietnamese national police, the QC, the ones we used
2 to call white mice, who would be looking for military age young men. If we found any of
3 those, we would turn them over to the QC who would interrogate them. We would have
4 the QC with is down to about squad level who then could look at identification papers,
5 and things of that nature to see if they were essentially correct. They were pretty simple
6 sweep exercises. We'd be through with them by ten or eleven o'clock in the morning.
7 That would be it. We would go on back to the base and get some sleep before we went
8 out and ambushed that night.

9 JS: Would you ever find weapons and that type of thing in—

10 DY: Yeah. Afterward we would find these old beat up Lee Enfield's and
11 everything else. They would usually be in some sort of wholly secured place, you know.
12 A lot of times you could just tell when somebody would act a little hanky and they are
13 standing next to a hay stack or something like that, and you kind of wondered, "Why are
14 they worried about that hay stack?" You just kind of gut check stuff, that's about all I can
15 really say. So I would tell a couple of the guys, "Hey, check that haystack out over
16 there." They sensed it too. If you'd been there for a while, after a while you just kind of
17 pick up—it's kind of difficult to describe, but you kind of knew something wasn't quite
18 right. Probably because of the older gentleman that was standing near it probably
19 shouldn't have been, he should've been standing over with someone else, but there had to
20 be some reason why something was just a little out of sorts. We'd go digging through
21 that, and they, a lot of times we but a bayonet on the M-16 and just stick it into the hay
22 bell, then all of a sudden, you'd feel something go clank, and you go, "Ah ha!" and you'd
23 find things of that nature, but really not very often, and I don't remember ever finding
24 any really serious weapon. I can remember finding old bolt actions with the stalks almost
25 rotted off of them, and they were just mostly junk, they really were. We never found
26 anything serious like RPGs or mortars, or anything like that.

27 JS: How about things like rice stores and food?

28 DY: Well we were in a rice producing area, so yeah, there was rice all over the
29 place. That would've been abnormal if there hadn't been rice.

30 JS: Well I guess I meant like, an extra-large store that you knew was feeding
31 someone else, things like that.

1 DY: No, and I can remember us talking about that, but what is too large? It was
2 just hard to figure out, you know? So, no, I don't remember doing anything like that, and
3 I don't remember the QC ever confiscating rice or anything like that either. That's what
4 this area was, a big rice producing area of the country. If you went to other parts of
5 Vietnam where there wasn't quite that much, yeah, you'd be able to figure that out,
6 particularly if you were in an area where they didn't grow rice, but that's all that they did
7 there. So, yeah, it was pretty hard to figure that out.

8 JS: If you did find a weapon or something like that, what would the procedure be
9 to deal with that? Would you have the QC come in at that point and interrogate and deal
10 with them?

11 DY: Yeah, the QC would take it from there, yeah. All we would do would be to
12 tag the weapon, and we would send that in through our channels. The QC weren't going
13 to be able to get anything off of that anyway, but sometimes, I guess, I don't know. We
14 were told that sometimes our guys could figure out stuff from that. I don't know if that
15 was really true or not, but we would tag it with date, location, unit, that sort of a thing,
16 and send it in on the next re supply helicopter, something like that, and we'd go to
17 battalion, and who knows where it went after that.

18 JS: Were the, I guess, were the villagers always fairly passive when you would
19 come—I know you said they pretty much ignored you, but I guess—

20 DY: They did everything they could do to avoid any eye contact, or anything else.
21 They would do whatever you told them to, but all we wanted them to do was just kind of
22 stand in a particular area or get out of our way if we were going to go through and look at
23 a hooch, or whatever, that's all. So they, I don't know, they all poker players. It's pretty
24 hard to read exactly what they were thinking.

25 JS: So no conflicts in the villages or in the populated areas?

26 DY: None that I remember. No, I don't remember anybody ever getting mad at
27 us, or anything like that. We weren't that stupid, I mean, here's 100 GIs under the teeth
28 you know, so, and QC who were stupid enough to hurt them. Like I say, they tended to be
29 kind of badge heavy.

1 JS: Well, I guess we've talked about things in some general terms, and some
2 specific terms as well, but are there any other specific firefights or incidents that stand out
3 in your mind from that first tour that you can think about?

4 DY: Yeah, a personal one. I had a squad leader by the name of, Ben White. Ben
5 was a corporal, was a busted sergeant. He was a career NCO. I was one of those crazy
6 officers that actually found that some of my best NCOs were guys that have been busted
7 at some things. I mean, they had a set of balls about them. Ben was one hell of a good
8 squad leader. He was really good. His men believed in him and trusted him. One night
9 I—one afternoon I just finished giving out all the orders for that night's ambushes, and so
10 forth, because we were sending out two or three. I've forgotten exactly how many our
11 platoon was sending out. And he came up to me and he said, "Lou, I just want you to
12 know that I really enjoyed serving with you," and I said, "The hell you talking about
13 Ben?" He says, "Well, when we go out tonight, they are going to be waiting for us, and
14 I'm going to bite it with the first round." I went, "Ben, dammit! Don't be talking about
15 that, that's dumb," and he said, "No, I'm cool with it. It's okay. It is what it is. That's
16 what's going to happen." I went, "Hey Ben, knock that stuff off." Well with the guy who
17 had Ben, my RTO, a guy by the name of Bill Pockett, and Bill had just been promoted to
18 sergeant, and he was kind like of doing his OGT to learn more about being a squad
19 leader, and he was going out with them that night to see how Ben did things, and so forth.
20 He was going to hump the radio, and sure enough they got hit, and Ben took the first
21 blast. He was dead before he hit the ground. Bill Pockett took an explosive round but the
22 radio protected him from doing much of it. He wound up being badly wounded. He
23 retired a couple years ago as a stock broker in New York, and we've talked a couple
24 times about that night. He remembers Ben coming up to me that night too, predicting his
25 own death. That was pretty spooky. That was pretty spooky. Another thing that I
26 remember, we had—I told you about Captain Bruce Dreese. He was our first company
27 commander who had trained us in the states, and then gone over, and everybody thought
28 very highly of him. Then we went through another company commander, I really, I can't
29 even remember him. He didn't last very long, but I don't know why. I don't think it was
30 bad, but something happened. The next guy was totally worthless. He was a coward. He
31 was an absolute, total, utter, coward. I mean, the one night we were getting some

1 incoming rounds into our little mini base there. I asked one of my men, I says, “Where’s
2 the old man?” He says, he kind of looks at me with this crummy look in his face, “He’s
3 over there, Louis.” I look into the little pock we had there, and there he is crouched
4 underneath the table where we had our radio equipment set up. He is crouch underneath
5 it. He was a total coward. He couldn’t fight. Word got out about that really fast. Us
6 lieutenants were really upset with that too. We said, “What are we going to do about this,
7 guys worthless. He won’t go in the field at all, under any circumstance.” He just refused
8 to. He gave crappy orders, and nobody trusted him, so what are we going to do? Well, we
9 swallowed real hard, and the next time we rotated into the battalion firebase, we screwed
10 up our courage and went to go see the Battalion Executive Officer, who was a man that
11 we all knew and trusted and was pretty much assumed to be a pretty good guy. I don’t
12 remember his name now, Major something. Of course, we got what we expected, and that
13 was a royal ass chewing. We knew that had to come, you know. He said, “You guys
14 know what you are saying?” “Uh, yes, sir, we do.” He said, “If this comes out the wrong
15 way, you guys will all—if you have any idea of making the Army a career, you can
16 forget it.” Yes, sir, we understand that, but in the meantime this is not good.” Well, he
17 realized we were serious by that time, so he said, “Okay, guys. Tell me what’s going on.”
18 So, we did. Well, the next day, as it just happens, it was just perfect. It was kind of like
19 this guy slit his own throat. The company came in to take over the palace guard at the
20 firebase, and he stood up on the sand bags for one of the mortar pits to talk to the men,
21 and he just chewed them out. “You raggedy ass sons of bitches. If any of you go into the
22 village, and you get drunk, and you cause problems for me, I’ll court martial you”—this
23 is reeling these guys out for no reason. Us lieutenants are just kind of standing towards
24 the back going, “What an idiot.” Something, I saw something move out of the corner of
25 my eye. I looked over, and here by the corner of one of the lab docs was the XO, the
26 Major, and he had heard this little speech, too. Two days after that our company
27 commander was gone. We never knew what happened to him, although, strangely
28 enough, I ran into him years later when I got out of the Army. Yeah, my wife was still in
29 active duty at the time at Fort McPherson, in Georgia, and I had gone into the PX [Post
30 Exchange] one day, and I met him as he got out of the car. He knew who I was, too. He
31 remembered me, but at any rate, he was replaced by one of the finest human beings that

1 I've ever known, and never had the privilege to serve with. Captain Kenneth Burkert.
2 Boy, I loved working for him. He was good. He was a total polar opposite of the other
3 guy. So, let's see, I remember that—I remember being very surprised towards the end
4 when I came out of the field and I was company executive officer, and talking to Captain
5 Burkert, and just kind of, "Well, what are you going to do, sir, when your tour is up?" He
6 says, "Well, I'm going to the University of Pittsburgh to work on ROTC, and I'll be there
7 for eight months, and I'm getting out of the Army. "Getting out of the Army? Sir, why
8 are you getting out of the Army, you're a damn good officer?" He just kind of smiled,
9 and he said, "Yeah, well, sometimes you—it's just the way things are." I have no idea
10 why he got out. I think he just got tired of some of the idiots he saw in the Army, but he
11 was good.

12 JS: Could you talk a little bit more about what type of qualities did he ex—

13 DY: Well, for one thing, he made sure if all of the lieutenants, and anybody else
14 who worked directly with them—if you made an honest mistake, that was just fine with
15 him. You were trying to solve a problem, and you just did it the wrong way, but you did
16 it honestly. If you screwed up because you were lazy, you better hang on to your ass with
17 both hands because he was going to own it. I remember us lieutenants joking' about it.
18 Man he didn't need a radio when he wanted to chew your ass. You could hear him for a
19 mile. He just had a deep booming voice. He was a physically imposing great big guy,
20 smart as a whip, very mission oriented, and I guess a good way to describe him is, he was
21 kind of a concrete colored marshmallow. There was a lot of yelling and screaming, all of
22 which was totally justified, but inside he really cared deeply about the men. He really did,
23 and he did a lot of that screaming and yelling because he didn't want to get anybody hurt,
24 but that doesn't mean that he wasn't going to accomplish his mission. So, he was an up
25 front leader. He was very intelligent. He was a good teacher. He had just about all the
26 qualities that I can think of, and the right fellows, into making a damn fine officer. He
27 was honest as can be. He never ever lied to you, or tried to play silly head games with
28 you, or any of that sort of a thing. He was straight up. I loved working for that, I really
29 did. That's why I was so aghast when he told me he was getting out of the Army.

30 JS: Was he the CO for the remainder of your time?

1 DY: Yes, in fact, when I left just to DEROS home, he left maybe a week before I
2 did or something like that. We pretty much had a little bit of about the same time there. I
3 remember our first sergeant being replaced on time, and we had a National Guard for a
4 sergeant come in, who had volunteered for active duty. He was just the nicest guy, and
5 that was his problem. Finally, Captain Burkert just had to kind of go to the Sergeant
6 Major and say, “You know, I don’t want him busted, or anything like that because he is a
7 really nice guy, but he’s an army for a sergeant.” So, they hustled him off to become the
8 assistant NCO of paperclips someplace, and you know led him to that, and we got a real
9 first sergeant in, that sort of a thing. I don’t remember his name. Oh, I remember one
10 story. This is about after I came out of the field—I’m just rolling’ now, you got me going
11 here. As I said before, Binh Chanh was in the south side of Saigon, but the brigades main
12 base was at Long Binh, which is north of Saigon. As the executive officer, I was
13 occasionally making trips back and forth between the battalion firebase and the brigade
14 main base. Things like pay duties, and things of that nature, which I had to do as part of
15 my duties. So, I go through Saigon, and have you ever heard of the Rex Hotel?

16 JS: Yes, sir. I’ve seen it before.

17 DY: Okay, the Rex Hotel, of course, was famous because it was the BOK for
18 senior level officers, and they had a rooftop bar. I had been by there any number of times
19 and one time I said, “Screw this shit, I’m thirsty. I want a beer.” Now, I’m a second
20 lieutenant, I don’t think my boots had ever seen polish—no, I’m a first lieutenant by that
21 time—I’m a field soldier. I remember, with my driver, who linked up with one of the
22 MPs out-front so he can go get a beer too. I got on the elevator and went up to that
23 rooftop bar at the Rex, and I ordered me a beer. Oh, the looks that I got from all those
24 starched, khaki, colonels, and all that sort of a thing. My reaction to every one of them
25 was I sat there and just enjoyed that cold beer so much. What the hell you assholes going
26 to do? Send me to Vietnam? I remember enjoying that, and the post story to that is, when
27 we go back to Vietnam now, and I told you that I do that. I’ve been back many number of
28 times. That’s usually where we stay, is the Rex Hotel, and that bar is still there. The first
29 time I had a picture of it, I made sure I had a picture with me, with a beer in my hand, and
30 the background you can see the communist flag flying above the hotel.

31 JS: I’ve had a beer there myself.

1 DY: You have, okay. Well, now, see, you really do know what it's like then.

2 JS: No, no, not trying to claim that at all.

3 DY: Absolutely, you should claim that. We have that in common. We've had

4 breakfast there, and all that. Now, have you been there since it's become a five-star?

5 JS: Yeah, well, I can't—when did it become a five-star?

6 DY: About a year ago, a year and a half ago.

7 JS: Well, no I haven't. The last time I was there, was in '07, so, it's been a little

8 while, but we usually ended up staying in the Majestic.

9 DY: Oh, okay, yeah.

10 JS: Anyway, we are coming up on two hours, and I'd like to certainly continue,

11 but we should probably go ahead and stop today, if that's okay.

12 DY: Okay, that's fine with me.

13 JS: Okay, last time when we left off, we were talking about memorable moments,

14 and memorable experiences from your first tour, and before wrapping up and moving on

15 to leaving Vietnam, and leaving that first tour, is there anything else we should cover?

16 Anything else we didn't cover last time?

17 DY: Wow.

18 JS: I know, that's kind of a broad question.

19 DY: Not off the top of my head. I'll say no subject to the ability to revise that

20 answer later on.

21 JS: Sure, sure, absolutely. If you could talk a little bit about your experiences of

22 leaving Vietnam that first time, and—well first off, when did you come out of the field?

23 Did you operate right up until the point of leaving, or was there a little bit of time there

24 in-between?

25 DY: Yeah, I came out maybe about after about nine and a half months. I came out

26 and was a company executive officer, which just means that I was on the firebase, but I

27 was not in the weeds anymore. I spent the last two and a half months, relatively

28 comfortable. At least I had a cot to sleep on.

29 JS: Could you talk a little bit about your duties there?

30 DY: As the XO?

31 JS: Yes, sir.

1 DY: Just kind of overall in charge of whatever administrative and logistical
2 functions the company itself had, so if the company called back and said we need some
3 more whatever that particular item would be, I would work with the supply sergeant and
4 make sure that it got out on the birds and get that sort of a thing done. We would be doing
5 things like, guys come in out of the field to go on R&R [Rest and Recuperation], and I'd
6 handle those kinds of administrative matters, but that's all it was, was just pure
7 administration. Also, would mean the occasional trip up to the brigade's main base up at
8 the north part of Long Binh. You may remember what we were talking about with the
9 Rex Hotel, that's how I wound up doing that because I'd have to drive through Saigon to
10 do that. Nothing very exciting there.

11 JS: I can't remember, did I ask you last time about things like civic action
12 programs, or anything like that? Did you guys participate in any of those type operations?

13 DY: They did those on a minimum scale, and also the medics would go out and
14 do med cap operations. I do remember those. Our function for that was primarily just to
15 secure those operations when they did them. We didn't do a lot of them, but yeah, we did
16 them.

17 JS: Also, I can't remember if I asked you about R&R. Did you get a chance to do
18 that?

19 DY: Yes, I did. I went to Japan, and in fact, by coincidence, that's when my son
20 was born was then. I actually flew into Tokyo, and then one of the places that we could
21 go was Akami, I think was the name of it, which is kind of a hot springs resort south of
22 Tokyo. While I was there in the hotel I, like everybody else does, called back home and
23 got my mother-in-law on the phone who said, "Guess what? In about an hour or so you
24 are going to be a father." My son was born while I was over there, so that means he was
25 six months old before I ever saw him. That was in June of '67.

26 JS: I guess now if you could talk about that experience of coming home that first
27 time, and what that was like for you.

28 DY: Let's see, besides the obvious fact of the excitement of seeing my son for the
29 first time, and I went back to Lakeland, Florida, which was where my then wife—
30 obviously now I am remarried, have been married to my—I told you before about the fact
31 that my wife is also a Vietnam vet—that was my first wife, and it was a little

1 uncomfortable I guess, as it was for most of the guys, is you try to get back into a family
2 routine, and that was particularly true since I had to get used to having a kid as well, too.
3 I don't remember any serious difficulties, but you know, we spent about a month or so
4 there in Lakeland. I'm trying to remember where we spent Christmas, and I really don't
5 remember to tell you the truth because I came back just before Christmas. Then we went
6 to Fort Campbell. I'm trying to remember too, my wife's mother was quite ill, so I think
7 that's why we spent the time. She had terminal cancer and died not much after we went to
8 Fort Campbell. I think that's why we stayed in Lakeland. I'm sure that I went and gone to
9 visit my mother. I talked about the last time, she was widowed right after I went in the
10 Army, in April of 1966. So, I'm sure I went down to see her, I just don't remember any
11 of the particulars about that. I really don't remember anything more than just trying to
12 kind of get used to being back in the states, and to readjust going from an all-male culture
13 to one where you have to kind of watch your language a little bit.

14 JS: Let me ask you about this, on the actual return trip in the airports and all that,
15 did you experience any problems with war protests or anything like that at that point?

16 DY: No, I never did, and in fact, that's a good point. I'm going to jump ahead
17 with your permission here to talk about, not only that in '67 when I came back, but later
18 on when I came back in '70. I know that that is something that you hear a lot about, and I
19 can't vouch for anybody else's experiences, but not only did that never occur to me, but
20 when I came back in 1970, I had a long layover in Atlanta airport waiting to fly out to
21 Orlando where my wife was. I had nothing else to do, I had hours to kill, and I walked
22 into one of the airport bars, and there was a group of business men sitting over in one
23 corner—these were back in the days when everybody had to fly in uniform, and so I
24 walked up to the bar, and one of the businessmen got up and walked over to the bar next
25 to me, and he called the bartender over, and he said, "Whatever this soldier wants, it's on
26 me." He looked at me and he said, "Thank you so much for the service you've given us."
27 Shook my hands, went back over and sat down with his buddies. So, I have always been a
28 little dubious about the anti-war protests. The only thing that I saw, again, was a 1970 as,
29 since I processed out at Oakland, there were three, maybe four, at the most quasi
30 protesters out there holding signs that they looked like they had held up for six months or
31 so. They were all kind of wilted. That was it. There was no tumults, nobody screaming,

1 no spitting on me, none of that stuff, just a bunch of old hippies that looked like they
2 were kind of worn out anyway. They were holding up old signs. I don't even remember
3 them being very adjective. I think they were just sitting there, nobody in the bus paid a bit
4 of attention to them. We could've cared less. I don't know, I've heard other peoples'
5 stories, and I have yet to talk to any of my fellow veteran friends who can say, "Oh, yeah,
6 that happened to me." I just don't know any.

7 JS: Talking about, after you came home, and that first assignment at Fort
8 Campbell, what were you doing there?

9 DY: I went to the aborted 6th Infantry Division, which the Army was forming to
10 make into a regular infantry unit to be based in the States, but the backup, Europe. There
11 was only one small problem with it, and that was the fact that they forgot to ask Congress
12 for the authority to do that. So the 6th Infantry Division did not last very long. They
13 turned it into something else called, The Combat Arms Group, and essentially what it
14 amounted to was, it was the best thing that they could come up with as to figure out a
15 place to put kids when they got through with their basic and AIT [Advanced Individual
16 training], and before they went to Vietnam, and also a place to bring people who had
17 finished their time in Vietnam but didn't have quite enough time to be able to get out of
18 the Army yet. It was a really screwed up outfit. There is one story though, that I really
19 remember when I first reported there, and that was, I'm in class As, and I'm still a first
20 lieutenant, and I was approaching the brigade headquarters that I would be reporting to,
21 and as I approached it, two second lieutenants came out of the building, walking towards
22 me, both of them cracked off a really sharp salute, and said, "Good morning, sir," and I
23 literally, I was befuddled. I kind of glanced over my shoulder to see who was behind me.
24 There wasn't anybody, and I went, "What the hell is two lieutenants saluting me for?" Of
25 course, I have a CIB on, and all of that, but that was really the difference in that unit. It
26 was—let's see, when I finally was assigned to a battalion, which was just for me, they did
27 not have a battalion commander at that time. The two senior officers was a guy by the
28 name of Bruce Wilson, who was a West Pointer, and myself. We were both first
29 lieutenants. (Laughs) We got a battalion commander within about a week, or so, but
30 nonetheless, it was a long time before we had any other officers come in, and so all you
31 had was a bunch of brand new second lieutenants right out of wither IOBC [Infantry

1 Officer Basic Course] or OCS [Officer Candidate School]. Bruce and myself had just
2 both returned from Vietnam. That's it, so because I had a week's date of rank on Bruce, I
3 was the battalion executive officer, and he was the S-3. We were first lieutenants. So,
4 everybody else, company commanders, staff officers, everybody else was all second
5 lieutenants. It was the most screwed up thing you ever saw. It eventually kind of worked
6 out, but it was not exactly what you'd call a dream assignment. That was at Fort
7 Campbell right after the rest of the division had pulled out, but the way. The only other
8 activity on the post was basic training, at that time.

9 JS: What were your—well, first off how long did you remain in that position?

10 DY: I only stayed there for thirteen months, and that was a decision on my part.
11 After—I told you about the first battalion commander that came in, it was Lieutenant
12 Colonel Stephen Woods, and he was superb. He was a great guy. I learned a lot from
13 him. He was a true soldier, a real warrior. He really made Bruce and I work hard until we
14 finally got some senior level officers in and I finally got a company, finally got my first
15 command after I had been promoted to captain. I really liked working for Woods. I truly
16 did. He was a fine officer. He was not happy, however. He was special forces and he
17 went on to bigger and better things. The guy that took his place was what I derisively
18 refer to as a “strap hanger.” He was a commuter in uniform. The last time he had had any
19 sort of leadership position was as a second lieutenant in the 82nd Airborne, and since that
20 time he had had nothing but staff jobs, and he came from the United States Army Pacific,
21 in Hawaii, as a lieutenant colonel. So, this is the first time he had had command, and he
22 was a total, absolute, screaming jerk. He really was. So, I finally had enough of this guy.
23 I just couldn't ham it, picked up the phone, and I called Infantry Personnel Office at the
24 Pentagon, and said, “What do I need to do to go back to Vietnam?” They said, “You just
25 did.” Literally, within a week and a half I had my orders, and that set off, nailed the
26 coffin shut on my marriage because my wife was already pissed at the Army anyway.
27 When she found out that I volunteered—but you know, it really wasn't that much of a
28 difference because at the time I did that I had been, it was thirteen months that I spend
29 back in the States, but the normal turn around for company grade infantry officers at that
30 time was fifteen months. So, big deal, I just went back two months early is what it
31 amounted to. I had decided by that time I wanted to stay in the Army as a career. That's

1 kind of how that worked. I didn't spend that long back in the States. I left there, took the
2 thirty days terminal leave, and then went back on over in March of '69.

3 JS: One more question about this time with the 6th Infantry Division, or Combat
4 Arms Group, or whatever it was called at that point. I know you mentioned that it was
5 for, primarily for guys that had just gotten back from Vietnam, or for guys that were
6 about to go to Vietnam. Well, because you were one of those guys that had just gotten
7 back, did you have any opportunity to talk to these new kids to kind of give them some
8 training, as far as telling them about your experiences to let them know what would be
9 facing them when they went over?

10 DY: It did, and then later on, once I became a company commander there, I got an
11 executive officer that came in, coincidentally from the 1st Cav, a guy by the name of
12 Bass. Bass had taken an AK round right through his mouth, so he had this great big scar
13 on the side of his face. He was kind of a baby faced guy with his jagged looking scar,
14 which really made him look, well, it made him look like a mean guy. We used to, Bass
15 and I literally used to do that along with some of the more senior NCOs who had seen
16 combat, is that we would, in the field, we would do some of the exercises that we could
17 think of that would help some of these guys survive over there. That was an intentional
18 part—that was something that we did, that was not part of our regular training plan. It
19 was that we were supposed to be training for straight leg warfare in Europe, but when we
20 had the chance, we would do that kind of a thing. Particularly the NCOs would do that. It
21 was really odd how they staffed it. It really didn't seem to make much difference what
22 the MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] was, so we would get men in that were not
23 infantry MOS. We'd get pioneers, that was one. What in the hell was the other one? Oh, a
24 bunch of Kabul guys one time they sent us, right out of AIT. I don't know what good our
25 little war stories did, but we tried to help them what we could. They knew they were
26 going to be there for a couple of months, and the younger NCOs, and by that, I mean,
27 those who had been in Vietnam, and had gone over as PFC [Private First Class], and I'm
28 sure you know this, an awful lot of guys came back as buck sergeants. That was not
29 unusual, it was, if you will, kind of a reward for having done your job, and done it
30 reasonably well. We knew that they weren't really NCOs, in the truest sense of the word,
31 not in the old time grizzled sense. You know, for a draft deed, to be able to go on home

1 with sergeant stripes on his sleeve and showed that off to his family is kind of a reward
2 for a job well done. The Army pretty much did that for the most part, but they weren't
3 garrison NCOs, they haven't the slightest idea how to do that. Nonetheless, they may
4 have been pretty useless at knowing how to do PT drills, or any of that sort of a thing.
5 They could sit down with these young kids that haven't been to Vietnam yet, and there is
6 a lot of that going on in the barracks at night, just over a beer telling some stories. I don't
7 mean war stories in a sense, but I think sincere effort on the part of the young NCOs to
8 try and help the new kids out. It was never anything formal. We didn't do that.

9 JS: Also, during that time when you were home during those thirteen months, did
10 you keep up with the War fairly closely through the media?

11 DY: That's a good question. I don't think I did anything more—you're provoking
12 me a little bit to think about that because really, I never have really thought about that,
13 but the Tet Offensive had happened when I was back home. There wasn't enough in the
14 local newspapers or on television to kind of give the kind of specifics a military person
15 would know because they never use military designations. It wasn't any great secret, but
16 most everybody doesn't know what all that stuff means anyway, and I get the same sort
17 of a thing now in Iraq. They never identify the units. That was kind of hard to keep up
18 with that. I didn't know what anybody was doing. One thing that I do remember during
19 Tet was that my old unit and the 199th helicoptered into the race track in Saigon to take
20 that back over, and literally did door-to-door fighting in Cholon, the Chinese section of
21 Saigon. I remember seeing pictures of that. I do remember that in the newspapers.
22 Generally speaking, though, Jason, I don't think I kept up with it in detail.

23 JS: Since you mentioned Tet, what was your general reaction to the Tet
24 Offensive, from what you saw?

25 DY: I know it's going to sound strange Jason, but I'm going to back off from
26 answering that, and my reason for that is, I have read so much about the Tet Offensive,
27 plus the fact that I actually lived in Hue for a year and a half. I've got books up there. I
28 think my answer would be really swayed from what I have learned from that time. I just
29 don't think I could give you a straight answer because it would be mixed in with what I
30 remember from then, and from what I have read since then. I'm just not sure I could give
31 you an honest answer and separate the two.

1 JS: Sure that's understandable. I guess then let's move on to your return to
2 Vietnam. You said it was March of '69 when you went back?

3 DY: Correct, yes.

4 JS: Where did you arrive in-country this time?

5 DY: At Bien Hoa again.

6 JS: What was your impression of the way things were going in morale upon
7 returning at this point, just from the point when you first returned, do you remember how
8 morale and things like that were at that point?

9 DY: When I first got there, before I actually wound up with a unit, I don't know if
10 I can make any assessment. I mean, you're in a—let's see it was called the 90th
11 replacement battalion there at Long Binh, and I was there for a week or so until my
12 orders were cut and all that. I'm hanging around other officers anyway. I couldn't really
13 make a decent assessment on that, not really until I got to a unit.

14 JS: So, you were—what unit were you assigned to?

15 DY: I was assigned to the 1st Cav, and I asked for the 1st Cav. Because I was on
16 my second tour, we were given priority choices to be able to select the units that we could
17 get, and we were asked to give two choices. I selected the 1st Cav for my first choice, and
18 my second choice was the 173rd Airborne. Again, for the same crazy reasons that I asked
19 to join the infantry in the first place. If you are going to do it, might as well do it right,
20 and those were the two best units in Vietnam in my estimation, so that's why I did it.

21 JS: Where were they based at that point?

22 DY: Here's a story that comes to mind. The division had moved from the northern
23 part of the country to the southern part of the country. I'm sure you've heard about An
24 Khe?

25 JS: Yes, sir.

26 DY: So, the division leader was still at An Khe. They hadn't moved everything
27 south. So, once I had my orders, I went to An Khe, where I normally would've gone
28 through charm school, the week and a half long adaptation school they had, but once I got
29 there they went, "Hell, this is your second tour, Captain, nothing for you to do." So, I did
30 not have to go through that, but by the greatest of coincidence, my buddy Bruce Wilson,
31 that I had told you about before at Fort Campbell, he was on his second tour back with

1 the 173rd Airborne, and they were moving into An Khe. He's a couple of rows of
2 buildings over from me, and we got very drunk, every night. We really did. We just got
3 absolutely ripped out every night. We were both going, "What the hell are we doing back
4 here? Are we both crazy?" Don't ask me why I remember this. I remember watching the
5 movie *Gran Prix* one night, at some sort of a club, I don't know, and I do remember that
6 Bruce passed out before I did that night. We really did. We just got ripped. He had to go
7 to work in the mornings, because he was the adjutant of one of the battalions. Then
8 after—once they got that done, and like I say, I just killed that time when I was supposed
9 to be in charm school, but by that time the division was operating in the south, in and
10 around Saigon. They had been moved down there in the fall of 1968 because the threat to
11 Saigon had been not considered the most serious. I flew into, on C-130, flew into Tay
12 Ninh, and was met by a Jeep from brigade headquarters, and taken by the driver on over
13 to brigade headquarters to meet the colonel who was commanding at the time, I don't
14 remember his name. I just remember his reaction when I walked in the door. He said,
15 "Damn, not only do I get a captain, but a second tour guy at that. Damn were we waiting
16 for you." Then I talked to him for a couple minutes or so and he said, "We really need
17 guys like you right now." You don't see colonels grin like that very often. Then the driver
18 took me on over to my, I found out at that time I was going to be given command of a
19 company, which thrilled me to death. Driver took me over there, got me into the
20 company, drew my TA-50, my weapon, that kind of a thing, came on back, got on a
21 helicopter with the colonel, and we flew out to the firebase, that at the time was operating
22 out of at that time, met my new battalion commander. We got on his bird, and went out
23 into the company, and he left me. Within the space of one day, I went from trying to get
24 over a bad hangover, to being out in the weeds with my new company.

25 JS: Could you talk a little bit about your impressions of your company and about
26 the battalion as well, and I guess, I will ask that morale question, once you—

27 DY: Yeah, okay, I can be a little more specific now, yes. When I took over
28 Charlie Company, it was about two weeks after Easter, and on Easter Sunday they had
29 been hit hard, really hard. In fact, my predecessor, a guy that I was to meet later, by the
30 name of, Phil Boatner, was wounded seriously enough that he came all the way back to
31 the States. It took about four or five KIAs [Killed in Action] that day, a bunch of them

1 wounded, and a lot of them were right out of the company headquarters because a
2 machine gun had just, just happened to be in the right position, and just really hit the
3 company headquarters' a lot. There was one officer left in the field and that was a second
4 lieutenant who had been in-country for about two months. A guy by the name of Mike
5 Bataka, and while he was confident, boy he was, you know, second lieutenant, two
6 months experience, and he's the company commander. They were down severely in their
7 foxhole strength. I couldn't tell you exactly but it was like fifty or sixty men. Normally, a
8 company like that would operate with somewhere around ninety to a hundred men in the
9 field. So, they were really down low. They did, however, have a very experienced, very
10 good first sergeant. I thought when I took over, that Top Allen, William A. Allen, was his
11 name. The other senior NCOs called him "Red." I called him "Top." He called me, "Six."
12 Top Allen, I thought, had been with the company for some time. It wasn't 'til a lot later I
13 found out that he was almost as new as I was. Top Allen was a real—this was a soldiers'
14 soldier. A machine gunner at Bastogne during World War II, Korean War vet on his
15 fourth tour in Southeast Asia, this guy was just a warrior, a real warrior. The first thing I
16 did was, once we moved, once I got down on the ground, and of course, we had to move
17 immediately, and we did that, got all settled for the night, and so forth, and I pulled up
18 my helmet, sat down with Top Allen, and we discussed the fate of the company, and then
19 I kind of took a little trip around the perimeter, and kind of let the guys know who I was.
20 I had the impression that they were very tired, physically and emotionally. They'd had a
21 lot of contact, been in a lot of firefights, and they were just flat ass worn out, but I
22 detected no feeling of rebellion. I didn't get any sense of hostility. None of that, this
23 might be my own imagination. I'd like to think, however, that a number of them looked
24 at me, then I had a right shoulder patch, which means I wouldn't have to put up with the
25 rookie company commander. They were going to get somebody new who knew what the
26 hell he was doing. I didn't sense any real difficulties outside of the fact that they just
27 needed a break, which they didn't get, but, nonetheless. I didn't sense anything more than
28 that. I will have to tell one story on top that one, however. I had been with the company
29 for maybe about two or three days. Before, I was to find out that Top really wasn't, he
30 hadn't been to—the previous first sergeant had had his back hurt in a helicopter crash,
31 non-combat related, and Top had been taking his place for about a week. He had been

1 only out in the field with the company for about a week longer than I had, but I didn't
2 know that at the time. So, about the second, maybe the third night we were out in the
3 weeds, and we quickly established the custom of doing that every night. Once the
4 company was in, were settled down and all that sort of a thing, the two of us would sit
5 there and talk about the state of the company and the men, all that. Well, Top Allen
6 looked at me, and he says, "You know, Six," he said, "It's kind of a tradition in this
7 company." I said, "What's that, Top?" He says, "Well, the old men always has a
8 mustache," and I went, "Okay, Top. I got you, not a problem. I can grow a mustache."
9 Shit, he was just trying to figure out what the hell I was like. He had no idea. He'd never
10 met another company commander before. I didn't know that for a long time. That sly old
11 fox. He was exactly the kind of first sergeant that this young captain needed. It's not like
12 I hadn't been in combat before, and I like to think that I was reasonably confident, but
13 Top Allen was just so good. We really developed a very, very close bond. We truly did.
14 To this day, I couldn't remember the names of a lot of my lieutenants. I just don't
15 remember their names, but I sure as hell know and respect Top Allen a lot. I do know
16 what happened to him after I left the company. A couple of months after I had left the
17 company, and I was the battalion S-1, the adjutant, the company got into some heavy shit
18 one day, and as per our usual, those of us in the S-1 shop split and went to the different
19 hospitals to check on where the men went. You couldn't tell at the time, they just—I went
20 over at Tay Ninh to the 45th Surgical Hospital, which was a must hospital with those
21 inflatable things. I hadn't even entered the building yet, and I heard Top Allen at the
22 absolute top of the—and he had a classic for a sergeants voice. I mean, you could hear
23 him miles away. He had a deep booming voice. He was a big man. I heard him just utter
24 every expletive that one of these creative for a sergeants could dream of. He's basically
25 saying to these doctors and nurses, leave me the hell alone. I've got to get back up to my
26 troops. Kind of came around the corner, and kind of peeked around, and sure enough he
27 is just raising hell. One of the docs looks at me and says, "You know him?" and I went,
28 "Yeah, yeah I do." He says, "If we can't get him to calm down, he's going to lose that
29 whole arm and his shoulder." He took an AK round right into the bone of his left
30 shoulder, and it just shattered it, just absolutely shattered it. So, I went, "Okay, so, you
31 want me to calm him down, huh?" And he says, "Yeah, if you can." Now like I said, I

1 had developed a deep and abiding respect for this man. So, I had to do something that I
2 had never done before, and I walked over, and I looked at him and said, “First Sergeant
3 Allen, you know who this is?” and I got nothing from him. I said, “First Sergeant Allen,
4 this is Captain Young. Do you know who I am?” “Yes, sir.” “This is a direct order First
5 Sergeant, a direct order that you will stop yelling, you will allow these medical personnel
6 to carry out their duties and to work with you, and you will be quiet. Is that understood?”
7 He didn’t say anything. “First Sergeant Allen, do you understand a direct order from your
8 superior officer?” “Yes, sir,” and he did. I walked away and I was just crying like a baby.
9 I was, the nurses had to look at me and make sure I was okay because I was really crying.
10 I never figured out what happened to him outside of the fact that I know that he did not
11 get out of the Army immediately. He went to Fort Jackson, where he was running a basic
12 training company there. After that, I don’t know, and I have tried to find him, but I have
13 no idea what happened to him.

14 JS: I guess if you could talk a little but about your—the duties of a company
15 commander and what was expected of a company commander.

16 DY: Okay. In the 1st Cav, of course, because we had our own helicopters, we
17 normally, we did a lot of combat assaults, far, far more than we did with the 199th, which
18 did not have its own helicopters. Generally speaking, the way we operated at that time
19 with the 1st Cav, and we are all out in jungle, and maybe this will set it a little better. As I
20 had said with the 199th, we were in a densely populated rural area. This was the complete,
21 total, absolute, opposite. We were out in deep jungle. There wasn’t any villages around.
22 There were no villagers, no civilians. If it moved, you shot it. We didn’t have to worry
23 about anything like that. We were really fighting another equally armed, and equally
24 trained conventional force, just like us. They were not local VC. These were all NVA
25 troops from the North. That’s why there was no booby traps, is hell, they were in an area
26 as strange to them as it was to us. They were all uniformed, very well armed, and outside
27 of the fact that they didn’t have an air force, they were as well armed as we were. They
28 had heavy artillery, 1-22 rockets, and mortars, and all of that just like we did. So, we
29 were fighting the conventional force with a lot more horsepower than I had been used to
30 before. We did a lot of CAs, or combat assaults as we called them. The normal way of
31 working this was, a battalion would be out on a firebase, and they would be out in the

1 jungle, completely isolated from everything else. Very often no roads, and everything had
2 to be brought up by helicopters. There were four line companies in the battalion, and each
3 company would spend fifteen days out in the weeds, and your basic job is to try to find
4 supply caches, and to set up large ambushes on the mini trails that entered and went
5 through that area there underneath. I don't know if you've ever heard of something that
6 was called the Mustang Trail, but that was a major infiltration for supplies and troops that
7 came out of Cambodia, going in towards the Bien Hoa and Saigon area. That was what
8 our job was, was to interdict that. We spent fifteen days out there, and then you come
9 back and you spend five days as palace guard on the firebase. During the four and a half
10 months that I had command of that company, we spent a grand total of three days back at
11 the Tay Ninh base camp, that's it. The rest of the time we are out in the weeds. My job
12 was to translate the orders of my battalion commander, whom I hardly ever saw because
13 usually he is 5,000 feet over my head in a helicopter, who would usually give me the
14 ideas of what we needed to do that day. So, it might be along the terms of, at night I
15 would get a radio message, and it would say, "Okay, I want you to just patrol in the area."
16 Which basically said, "See what kind of trouble you could get into," and that was pretty
17 much up to me, or because we—if we didn't find anything, then we would normally have
18 another helicopter assault every three days. That was the norm, of course, these norms
19 were broken up a lot if we, if somebody got in contact. We would Charlie alpha out. We
20 would probably be resupplied at that time. We only got resupply every three days, and
21 that was to get enough water, and food, and ammunition in. Then we would just see what
22 kind of trouble we could stir up, and then at night when we would set up our perimeter
23 defense, out night defensive positions, we would try to straddle a trail or two. It was kind
24 of like a large ambush, but we weren't really set up that way, but I would do things like,
25 put the machine guns for enfilade fire along the trails, so that I would get maximum
26 effectiveness out of that, but you never put out LPs or anything else like that. I did have a
27 strap hanger colonel once that told me to do that, and I lied to him and told him I did it,
28 but I never did. The truth would've hung me up if I'd done that. It was a stupid thing, but
29 he didn't know any better. He had never been out in the jungle. At any rate, that's
30 basically what the duties were, were to translate those things and to do the CAs. So, let's
31 say, as an example, early in the morning or so I might get a call from the battalion

1 commander, and his call sign was “Prescott Arizona 6,” and the first heads up would be
2 my RTO would say, “It’s Arizona 6, for you,” and he would hand me the radio and I’d
3 say, “Comanche 6.” He’d say, “Okay.” I’m just kind of giving you a broad—I mean, they
4 might say, “Oh, Delta Company had some contact last night. I’m going to put you into
5 his east as a blocking force and have him move in your direction.” That was a fairly
6 standard tactic that was used, that sort of a thing. Then he would say, “I’m going to, I’m
7 out doing a VR now, visual reconnaissance, from the helicopter,” looking for a place that
8 he could pick me up. That meant then, that I had to be able to get my men fed, get their
9 gear picked up, bring them their claim orders and all that sort of a thing, and be able to
10 move to a pick up zone some place in a relatively short period of time. For that reason,
11 and because your radio operators were usually really sharp kids, they really were, they
12 had their act together. That’s why you picked them. They didn’t have any special training
13 to be radio operators. I had two of them, and when they could hear my side of the
14 conversation, the guy that carried the radio, that I could talk to the rest of the guys in the
15 company, was way ahead of me. By the time I got through talking to the battalion
16 commander, my lieutenants were already standing there. I might turn around and say,
17 “Okay, here’s a partial order for the day. I don’t have the PZ [Pick-up Zone] yet, but we
18 are going to go out on this order.” It was kind of like, “2nd Platoon, you are going to go
19 first.” This is going to be complicated to describe without seeing it as a text, but you had
20 a normal flight would be six helicopters, and it would take four lifts to be able to get the
21 entire company moved. So, once you got to an open field that was going to be your pick
22 up zone, the first platoon that got to that field would actually go around the sides of it and
23 be just inside the line to provide security for everybody else. Then the number two
24 platoon would actually go out in the field, and they’d be the first ones to get picked up.
25 Those were the classic pictures you’ve seen with the guys standing out in the fields with
26 the rifles overhead while the helicopters come in and all that. I would usually send my
27 artillery forward observer out with them, so, that when they got out to the other end, that
28 lieutenant would be on his own, but he would have an experienced artillery observer in
29 case it was a hot LZ [Landing Zone]. Then back in the PZ, the helicopters coming back to
30 pick up the second lift, and I would usually be on that. In other words, I’m in the middle
31 group there. Then go on in if it’s green LZ, go on it and all that. They pick everybody up,

1 including the last bunch and then you go. That would be the normal operations, and the
2 way it worked is, I told the lieutenants the order they were going to go out with, and what
3 I wanted them to do. For instance, that lead platoon would let me know when they go to
4 the PZ and stop. Then I would be able to contact to find out when the birds were going to
5 come get us, and then once we realized they were about fifteen minutes out. Then he
6 would start to circle around. You never when out into that field because you did know if
7 you were being observed or not. You didn't want to give yourself away that there was
8 going to be a helicopter assault landing. While I'm telling the lieutenants this, the senior
9 NCOs are figuring out which men are going to go on which birds. So, they actually took
10 care of the logistics of assigning people to helicopters while I'm taking care of the tactics,
11 so that I'm keeping the units together in such a way so they can fight as soon as they get
12 on the ground. Once we get on the ground, then I would deploy, and I told the lieutenants
13 this beforehand, let's say we were this blocking force. I put everybody on line, really is
14 what it amounts to, so that I would stretch along, maybe an entire, oh 500-600 meters or
15 so with the attempt, if there were NVA [North Vietnamese Army] fleeing from the
16 approaching American forces coming towards us, we'd have the best chance of catching
17 them that way. If we didn't have an exact operation like that, then I would give them a
18 compass direction to go, the order that I wanted them to march, and they would go in that
19 order. We normally moved in a column of threes, just think of three long strings of
20 troops, and because we were in fairly heavy jungle, you had to move them that way. You
21 couldn't move much more than that because literally, 10-15 feet away, you might not be
22 able to see anybody. The point man, of course, was the guy hacking the machetes, and
23 moving through. They would last—they would have to rotate out and everything because
24 it was such tiring work. That's essentially what I was doing all the time, and then the first
25 sergeant took care of the logistics. He would send in the report to the battalion every
26 night about what we might need as far as food, that kind of a thing. The log bridge would
27 come in. We would know who was supposed to go out for R&R and who was going to be
28 coming back, and those kinds of details. He took care of that while I took care of the
29 actual tactics, and that kind of a thing. That probably doesn't make a lot of sense, does it?

30 JS: No, it does. I think it definitely does. On these combat assaults, how often do
31 you think you would come into contact with the enemy, just a guesstimate?

1 DY: I don't really remember many actual hot LZs. That didn't happen all that
2 often, but we did get into a lot of contact. Sometimes we would initiate it when we would
3 find somebody, sometimes they would start it on us. I'll give you an example. Let's see,
4 it would've been in June sometime. There were two really big firefights we had in June
5 that I recall. We were moving along a fairly well-traveled—the Mustang Trail was not
6 just one single trail. It was actually a network of trails. Some of them were bigger than
7 others, and those are usually the ones that had bicycle traffic on it, which means they
8 were carrying the most equipment along them. So we had come across a dirt track that
9 was a couple of feet wide. Now, that's pretty big. We knew we were on a major place.
10 We had gotten logistics that day, we gotten a bird come in so we got water, food, and any
11 ammunition we might need and so forth, and replacements. A couple of men came in as
12 replacements. Then, as was the norm, we would all move away from that area a little bit
13 because you can see helicopters from a long ways away, so, why tell the enemy exactly
14 where you are. So, you would move away from that a little bit, but obviously we didn't
15 move quite far enough. I couldn't tell you what time it was. I don't know, midnight,
16 something like that. You could hear the (makes thud noises) that kind of a hollow sound
17 that a motor makes when it's being fired, and then, of course, immediately all around the
18 perimeter you could hear guys screaming, "Incoming, incoming!" Then we would dive
19 for our holes because the normal way we slept out there, you either slept on the ground—
20 my company, there were no air mattresses, they were too loud. You slept right on the
21 ground, or I permitted hammocks. These are hammocks that were nine foot long pieces of
22 nylon that we took off of NVA troops because that's what they used them, and then tied
23 with like, parachute cord. You could suspend them between trees, and because it's kind
24 of a stretchy material, there was a little bit to kind of play with. The idea was that your
25 butt was about two inches off the ground, and if something like those incoming rounds,
26 you heard it, all you literally had to do was flip, and you were right in your hole, and you
27 set your hole up in such a way that your helmet is right there, your weapon is right there,
28 your ammunition is right there, and so literally within seconds you are ready to fight. We
29 heard the mortar rounds come in, and we go, I don't remember how many rounds, but we
30 probably picked up ten or fifteen rounds. Most of which impacted inside the perimeter,
31 which means there were some guys who knew what they were doing at the other end. We

1 had a couple wounded. One of whom, was a guy who never went into his hole. He was a
2 guy who had come in that afternoon on the replacement bird. I'm going to go way ahead
3 to a present day story. In the year 2000, the company had its first reunion, and my wife
4 came along with me. One of the guys there was a guy by the name of Joe Rotabush, and
5 nobody could remember who he was, until we started talking to him. He talked about,
6 "Well, I never had a chance to meet any of you guys because I got wounded the very first
7 night I was there." We figured this out. In talking to Joe, we figured out because he had
8 been hit in the head, he would've gone to the ward that my wife worked at. So, Cindy
9 took care of Joe. Joe's wife was also a nurse, and if you don't think that was an emotional
10 moment when, that night during the banquet, Joe's wife came up to Cindy, gave her a
11 hug, and said, "Thank you for saving my husband's life." I always thought the great irony
12 of that was that the nurse, who took care of Joe, was married to the CO of the unit that he
13 was with the night he was wounded. I also do remember that we took a few rifle rounds
14 that particular night. We knew by that time then that the NVA knew exactly where we
15 were, that they were following us. So, the next day we moved up the trail, and were still
16 looking for stuff, and we didn't find anything. I do remember that night as we dug in,
17 strangely enough we found some old, slit trenches, and I mean, very different from the
18 kind of holes that Americans did, we dig fox holes. These were literally slit trenches, and
19 they were deep. The only thing that we could figure out was that the French must've dug
20 them a long, long time ago. They were all moss grown, and everything else, but they
21 weren't ours, and they weren't typical of what the NVA built either, whatever it was. I do
22 remember the Duke. That was our Kit Carson scout. Kit Carson Scouts were NVA who
23 had come over to our side, and now they were out in the field acting as scouts for us.
24 Duke went to one of those slit trenches, jumped way down in the bottom of that thing,
25 and the only thing he would say to Top Allen was, "*Bo Cu NVA, Bo Cu NVA.*" I heard
26 that and I went, "Damn, after what happened last night, they obviously know where we
27 are," and Duke is scared out of his mind. So, I ordered something different that night.
28 There were normally three men to a fox hole, and normally one man stayed awake on
29 guard, and the other two slept. I changed it that night and I said, "Two up, and one
30 down." In other words, two guys awake, and one asleep. We got hit, and we got hit very,
31 very hard that night. We got clobbered, as a matter of fact. They knew exactly where we

1 were. We were to find out after the intelligence reports got back, that we were hit by an
2 entire battalion that night. They didn't over run us. That's a word that's over used, but
3 they came pretty close to it because they opened up a pretty good hole in my third
4 platoon sector. They had to send Top over there with the Ready Reaction Force to clean
5 that out. We had to call in artillery extremely close. I'm sure you've heard about doing
6 that. To the best of my knowledge, none of my men were hurt by that, but you sure felt
7 like you were going to because 105 round goes off within fifty yards of you, you think it
8 just landed in your ear. It's incredibly loud, and it's pretty scary to hear those big pieces
9 of shrapnel going over your head. I don't know exactly how many casualties we took that
10 night, but we got his pretty heard. I do remember the next day when it was over, they
11 pulled us out of there. We'd had enough, so we went back to the LZ. That was a fairly
12 major encounter. That was one that the enemy had initiated. I'll give you an example of
13 the other way. This, what we were doing was changing—we were operating now in a
14 way that was a little bit different then when General Westmoreland was in charge in
15 Vietnam. By that time he had left, you know, he was kicked upstairs as the Army Chief
16 of Staff after Tet, and General Abrams took over. They had fundamentally different ways
17 of looking at ways to fight that war. What General Abrams had talked about was to cut
18 off the logistical nose, and I was vaguely familiar with this as a company commander
19 because I can remember some of us kind of filtering down a little bit, through my
20 battalion commander. I mean they were just trying to help us understand a little bit more
21 what our mission was, but we had the capabilities because of helicopters to go into an
22 area, and then our logistics could follow them. The NVA had to come in with the
23 logistics first, and then their combat troops could come in, so that they had food, and
24 other supplies that they needed. In other words, those had to be in place, and that was the
25 caches that the supply troops would put in place, and we knew that. That was one of the
26 things that we did, was to look for these supply caches of rice and ammunition and water
27 and things of that nature and so forth. We were operating the Mustang Trail again, and
28 most of what we did operating out of LZ Ike, and there was one day we were moving
29 along, and I knew that we were getting close to something because we kept getting
30 regular sniper attacks all the time. They were just trying to delay us, was what they were
31 doing. I knew we were close to something, so this is a good case of something that we

1 initiated. It would be like, we would catch a few sniper rounds and so forth, and then we
2 would have to stop, and I would deploy a couple of squads. There was one instance, for
3 instance, there was one small bunker, so I forgot which platoon it was, but he deployed a
4 couple of squads, just laid down a base fire on the bunker while the other squadron
5 around the back. The idea is that you come up on top of a bunker, then you throw
6 grenades in. We were able to take out that bunker. Then we moved along a couple
7 hundred yards and we get something out of a tree, and we'd have to stop and get our
8 gunner and so did my grenade launcher to spot the, figure out where the sniper was, and
9 then get him out of the tree that way. So, those were kinds of regular things that we
10 would do. We eventually found that cache, which was just full of rice. It was a huge
11 cache. It was far too much to be able to fly up by helicopter. We tried to do what we
12 could, so we just doused it with fuel oil, and ruined it that way was about all we could do.
13 These were fairly, normal, typical operations that we would do. Sometimes, another
14 company would get into trouble, and you'd go bail them out. Just like sometimes we'd
15 get in trouble, and somebody would come to our help.

16 JS: I wanted to ask you, as far as the Mustang Trail is concerned, how close to the
17 border was it, and how close to the Cambodian border were you guys operating?

18 DY: There was one night where we were so close, we literally heard trucks
19 driving around on the other side of the boarder, and occasionally saw their headlights.
20 Most of the time we weren't that close. I do remember that night and everybody was so
21 pissed off. Why the hell can't we shoot the bastards?

22 JS: You mentioned a little bit earlier about them having artillery and rockets in
23 fort. Was that primarily from Cambodia?

24 DY: No, the rockets were deployed within there. 122 rockets were very often used
25 when they would attack firebases, that kind of a thing. It was hard for them to launch it
26 when they were against us as just an individual company when we were in the jungle
27 because they needed enough clearing space, just like our artillery needed to have a little
28 bit of clearing. Since a rocket is not a precision device, like our artillery pieces were, they
29 were more of an area weapon. Yeah, 122s a pretty good sized war head, folks, and they
30 had large mortars too. They had an 82mm mortar, which was intentionally just a little bit
31 bigger than ours, so they could use our ammunition but we couldn't use theirs. They had

1 a larger mortar than that too. I've forgotten the size of it, but those they did use against us
2 in the field.

3 JS: You also mentioned a while ago, you were talking about working with the Kit
4 Carson scouts. Did you always have a Kit Carson scout with you?

5 DY: Just about, yeah. It was rare that we did not, and usually it was the same one.
6 Duke's the only one I remember.

7 JS: Did you find him to be a—did you guys trust him?

8 DY: Oh, yeah, absolutely. I've got a picture of him too, by the way. I always
9 wondered what happened to Duke. I'm sure they killed him.

10 JS: I was just wondering because I've heard stories where sometimes they were
11 not reliable such as that, so I was just curious.

12 DY: It was always—I think the only thing that came with doubt, was not so much
13 whether it was trustworthy, but how much could he know. I mean, he's right there with
14 us. Outside of that one note—that one night that I was telling you about, when he was
15 going, "*Bo cu NVA*," it didn't take a rocket scientist. We knew, we could figure that out
16 for ourselves. He was useful and helpful and all that, but I don't know. They really added
17 a lot to our abilities.

18 JS: How about ARVN forces? Did you work with them at all during the second
19 tour?

20 DY: Not during that second tour and I told you about the first tour. I never, there
21 weren't any ARVNs out in our area.

22 JS: I know you talked about some of these particularly memorable firefights with
23 the NVA, but if you could talk a little bit about their tactics, and how they would operate
24 against you, if you could say a little bit more about that.

25 DY: Okay, those would probably be divided into two essential categories, when
26 we fought with them out in the field, or when they hit the LZs, and of course, when they
27 hit the LZs, those were major planned events on their part. I was on the LZ one night
28 when they hit, and it was an unusually position is—I think I told you my first tour I had
29 gotten malaria?

30 JS: Right, yes, sir.

1 DY: My second tour I got dehydrated one time, and my medics evacuated me
2 back to the LZ, just so I could get some fluids in me because I was starting to get a little,
3 I guess I was getting pretty weird. At any rate, the medics filled me up with fluids, but
4 they also gave me some morphine. I was kind of a little stoned to tell you the truth, but I
5 had my command responsibilities that night when the LZ got hit. I was there with one of
6 my buck sergeants who had been in for an award ceremony for his silver star, and the two
7 of us had a good time running around shooting at NVA. I know that sounds a little weird,
8 but like I said, I was probably a little stoned, legally of course. At any rate, their tactics
9 there would be pretty much similar to assault tactics at the beginning with indirect fire
10 from primarily rockets and mortars to, if you will, soften up the position, and then attacks
11 by, what we called “sapper troops,” and sappers had the primary job of trying to get
12 through the barbed wire, and be able to breach that wire. We would use Bangalore
13 torpedoes to do that with. A Bangalore torpedo, I assume you know what it is, it’s kind of
14 like a long pipe of explosives. So, if you could get that into the barbed wire, then you
15 could kind of blast away through the barbed wire and that would be a way to gain access.
16 Their troops at the very beginning were these sappers. They often wore no other uniform
17 than just a kind of loin cloth almost. These guys either had to be the bravest guys, or the
18 stupidest guys in the world, I don’t know which. The next thing would be a mass attack,
19 and usually in larger than battalion size. I remember one attack in November, this is after
20 I was out of the field, but I was the agitate then. I went back out to the LZ at very first
21 light, and I distinctly remember that night. There being ninety nine step ons. That was the
22 phrase that we used for—this is really a confirmed body count, I mean it was literally
23 right in front of you. This was the authentic number without any guestimations about how
24 many more may have died based on blood trails or anything like that, but “step ons” was
25 what we called them. Ninety nine of them, and one American was killed. I remember
26 finding some of the NVA literally pinned to the trees by the artillery flechette rounds.
27 They were crucified, essentially, if you really think about it. Their tactics involved
28 indirect fire weapons to soften up the target, which was pretty hard to do on an LZ if it
29 had been there for a few days. The next thing would be sappers, who would try to come
30 in under the cover of this indirect fire hoping that the Americans had their head down
31 enough not to be able to pick them up. Then the third would be a human wave attack, and

1 sometimes they were successful in getting inside the perimeter. If they did, they could do
2 a lot of damage in there. Out in the field, a little harder to say because they were
3 usually—there is only that instance that I just told you about that was what I would call a
4 set attack. In other words, they knew where we were. They planned an attack against us.
5 The rest of them are what I would call meeting engagements, where we surprised them,
6 or they surprised us, but it wasn't necessarily on purpose at the time. Those were usually
7 scrambling affairs, and I can't say that there is any real tactics to that, outside of the fact
8 that both sides are trying to figure out where they are, and who the other guys is, and
9 what am I supposed to do now. The third one would be the security troops for this 82nd
10 rare supply group, which was what we were told was the unit that was using the Mustang
11 Trail to put these supplies down, but some of their forces were security forces, and they
12 were primarily snipers. I told you about that tactic of trying to slow us down if we were
13 getting near a cache of some kind.

14 JS: Are there any other engagements with the enemy, any other memorable ones
15 that you haven't mentioned before moving on?

16 DY: Yeah, there is the night that I got wounded, which fortunately, I didn't get hit
17 real bad, but I do remember Bravo Company, call sign Ridge Runner had two straight
18 days of pretty heavy contact, and they needed some help. In one of the few times that I
19 remember we actually went over land. There was not an open field close enough to them
20 for us to come in to helicopter assault. So, we were put in a clearing that was some
21 distance away from them. We had to go four or five clicks to get to them. Then we met
22 up with them midafternoon or so, after—you know, I'm sitting there talking with their
23 commander on the radio so they didn't start shooting at us as we got closer to them. What
24 we did is we formed a joint perimeter that night. They'd taken quite a few casualties, so
25 they only picked up about a third of the perimeter, but the enemy, for whatever reason,
26 wanted to do a job on them. They hit us again that night, but mostly with indirect fire,
27 mostly with mortars and rockets, and RPGs. We got some rifle fire, but it was more
28 sniper fire, but they never did actually assault us that night. They really pounded us
29 heavy. I remember that because in my third platoon I had a young platoon leader,
30 Lieutenant Paul, who had been a school teacher in Minnesota. Paul was a good officer,
31 but not on the classic West Point sense, if you know what I mean. He didn't have a

1 chiseled jaw, and all that. He looked like what he was, he was a school teacher. His wife
2 used to send him these packages every now and then of Jack Daniels and Coke. That's
3 actually—he got it in a can that way, it was already mixed together. When he got those,
4 he used to have almost like a little party. He would kind of invite me over, and I'd go
5 over to his CP [Command post] and so forth, and we'd sit there, kind of like a little girl
6 playing tea party almost. I don't want to insult the man, but it was that sort of a thing, like
7 he was trying to find some rational, civilizing force at work with this little thing. He
8 would've saved just a little bit of ice from a last resupply or something like that, and he'd
9 sit there and have a Jack Daniels and Coke. Lieutenant Paul, that particular night, a
10 mortar round landed right in his hole. It killed his platoon sergeant. It killed the lieutenant
11 who was doing OJT [On-the-Job Training] with him, a guy by the name of, Suzmarki
12 who had been in Vietnam for fifteen days, and was actually supposed to go to D-
13 Company but was getting a little OJT before he took over his own platoon. Killed the
14 medic, and left Paul really screwed up. All across his back was just all full of shrapnel,
15 and so forth. He had sucking chest wounds. They brought him over to my CP where my
16 chief medic could work on him, and I remember Paul wanting a cigarette. Why I
17 remember these things, I don't know. The other thing that I remember was, we knew we
18 had to get him out of there. He wasn't going to last very much longer, and we had already
19 taken a couple of—3 KIAs that night. We called for the medivac bird to come, and we
20 had to blast an LZ for him. We were in pretty heavy jungle. So, here's our guys out there,
21 in front of our own perimeter using C-4 to blow down trees so we can get in LZ big
22 enough to get a helicopter into and get this guy out. We did that—that LZ was so tight,
23 we literally could hear the tips of the helicopter blades hitting some of the branches of
24 near-by trees. He's got his lights on, he had to in order to be able to get down low enough
25 to be able to pick up the casualty, which told every NVA within fifty miles where the hell
26 he was, and of course he is taking sniper rounds. I always kind of wondered who that
27 crew was because I would've bought them a case of expensive scotch for that that night. I
28 just couldn't believe it, that they had the balls to do that. That was incredible. Literally, I
29 would have put that whole crew in for silver stars if I could've figured out who they
30 were, but I never did. I don't know what happened to Paul. I don't know if he survived or
31 whatever happened to him, but I remember that night.

1 JS: You also mentioned a moment ago about when you yourself were wounded.
2 Could you talk about that?

3 DY: Not much to talk about. It was that same night. A lot of the mortar rounds
4 were air-burst. They'd hit limbs and so forth above us, so they would literally explode
5 over our heads, and when that happens, being in your foxhole doesn't always do you a lot
6 of good, and actually I was a good little boy. I was down in my foxhole, and I took a big
7 chunk of shrapnel right towards my shoulder blade that night. It was enough for the
8 medic, pulled it out, what they call a butterfly bandage on there, something like that to
9 stop the bleeding, and kissed me on the forehead, and told me to get my ass back to work.
10 I wasn't his real bad.

11 JS: Any other memorable engagements or firefights?

12 DY: You had asked me earlier about hot LZs. We did have a hot PZ one time.
13 Those are fairly unusual, it's the only time that I remember. My lead element had already
14 left and the birds had come back to pick up the second lift, of which I was going to be on.
15 Nothing had happened, and the LZ at the other end had been green, so the birds just came
16 on in. We got on board, and all of a sudden, I remember just kind of looking at the side of
17 the helicopter, and I went, "There's a hole in the—damn, there is another one." It was
18 like two or three rounds went through that helicopter before I realized, we are being shot
19 at. I realized that the major part of my unit was still on the ground. Now, the birds have
20 already lifted off. I kind of lunged forward to the pilot and pointed down towards the
21 ground to which he shook his head no, and I went, I got a little vociferous. They did let us
22 back down, but they didn't want to go all the way back down. I don't blame them. Those
23 darn helicopters are great, big, huge, aluminum targets when that happens. He did that.
24 He got us down close enough where we could jump out. A few of the guys were injured
25 because we'd jumped out of those birds at such a high altitude. Nonetheless, even on that
26 we had one kid that was killed. He was killed in the helicopter. He took a round, and it hit
27 him. He was dead before they got him to a hospital. I didn't find out about that until that
28 night when we started putting everything together. We had a brisk little firefight going on
29 after we were back down on the field, but remember, I'm shy a platoon by this time, so
30 there is only two platoons on the ground. If I recall correctly on that incident, I had to
31 direct the artillery fire myself, because my FO was off somewhere—well he was with the

1 lead platoon, and I think it was recon sergeant was on R&R, or something like that.
2 Anyhow, I had to direct the artillery fire myself, which is kind of, makes it difficult
3 because you have so many things to do that way. There wasn't a really huge firefight. It
4 was more of the fact that it was a hot PZ. I don't think it lasted more than fifteen, twenty
5 minutes, something like that.

6 JS: Are there any other things we should mention before moving on to when you
7 were the S-1 of—

8 DY: I don't think so. I think that about covers it.

9 JS: How long were you in the field before being transferred to that new position?

10 DY: Four and a half months. Since you are doing archival work here, I'll tell you
11 the reason why. It was a personal one. I had already mentioned to you about my first
12 wife. I had not met Cindy, my present wife, at that time. I had command of the company,
13 and I know this sounds a little odd, but I'm doing what I was supposed to be doing. I was
14 an infantry captain, in command of a company in combat. That's what it's about. I can't
15 say that I relished that. I mean, I'm not that stupid, but nonetheless, I'm doing what I am
16 supposed to be doing, and I'm as happy as you can be in that position as you can possibly
17 be when someone is shooting at you. As I had told you earlier, I had intended to make the
18 Army as a career. We came in out of the field one time, just normal rotation, that's when
19 we got our mail and all that. I got a letter from my wife, who in so many nice words said,
20 "I'm tired of waiting. Make your choice, me or the Army." I remember talking it over
21 with Top Allen, as I said earlier, I revered with this man. I trusted his advice implicitly.
22 Fill in all the curse words that he used, but in so many words he said, "You're a good
23 officer, you belong in the Army, the troops trust you, you're good. Screw that, there are
24 lots of women in the world, but not too many men doing the jobs they really like to do." I
25 went to go see my battalion commander, who was another man that I knew and trusted,
26 and he just kind of winced and he said, "Well, you got to do what you got to do." He said,
27 "I'm here to tell you that, I'm like Top Allen, I hope you stay." I made a decision to get
28 out. I take my marriage vows seriously, so I decided to get out, and which time I told my
29 battalion commander that I'm—you know, you need command in order to be able to get
30 promoted, and I probably shouldn't be taking a command slot away from somebody else
31 who needs it. He kind of smiled and said, "Okay, so you out of the field too?" I said,

1 “That’s the reason why.” I said, “I’ll stay out here if you want me to.” He said, “No, I see
2 your point.” He said, “What do you want to do? I know this commanding general is
3 looking for an aid,” and I said, “Hell no, I don’t want to be some damn strap hanger. If I
4 can’t have the company, I at least want to stay with the battalion.” He told me, he said, “I
5 need an S-1, or I need an S-4. Which one do you want?” I said, “I’ll take S-1.” It was as
6 simple as that. By coincidence, that was another Colonel Stephen Woods, I had two of
7 them, they just had different—I already told you about the one at Fort Campbell. This
8 particular, Stephen R. Woods, was a hell of a good commander, damn he was good. They
9 brought in somebody else, who fortunately was also somebody else who was on his
10 second tour and had command experience from before, and I took over as the S-1. Did
11 that for the rest of the time I was in-country.

12 JS: This time you were with 25 Cav?

13 DY: Correct, 2nd of the 5th.

14 JS: Where were you based at, at that point?

15 DY: The battalion we were in was at Tay Ninh and the division rear at that time
16 was at Phuoc Vinh.

17 JS: Could you talk about, I guess, the duties of an S-1?

18 DY: Yeah, they—another way to look at it is you are kind of like the personnel
19 officer. You are in charge of assignments, keeping track of wounded, who is going on
20 R&R, who is coming back, who is on leave, which company needs personnel, if so, what
21 kind of personnel do they need, mail, awards. I had a regular full time awards clerk, for
22 instance. If you did have any legal problems it would come over my preview as well. One
23 of the things that I did when I took it over, I didn’t have a regular trained, as we called
24 them, a PSNCO, a personnel staff NCO. In other words, an admin type NCO, who really
25 knew how to do these kinds of things. I just had a young buck sergeant who had one too
26 many purple hearts, and that’s where they put him. Good guy, but he didn’t know more
27 about the job than I did. We set that up almost immediately, where as one week the
28 PSNCO would go down to division rear at Bien Hoa, to start to try to get the right kind of
29 personnel that we needed. The Army is no different than any other institution, face-to-
30 face contact works better than a piece of paper. So, if I could go down there and talk to
31 the guy with the typewriter, then I had a better chance of getting the kind of people that

1 the battalion needed, than if I just sent requisitions down. He would go one week, and I
2 would go the next. After about a month or so I guess, I got a regular trained PSNCO, who
3 then really helped me out. Besides the PSNCO, who was the senior NCO in that group,
4 we had a legal clerk, who, that was a guy by the name of John Orr. I remember him
5 because John Orr and I became good friends. John Orr had been in Law school in San
6 Francisco until he ran out of money and had to drop out. Then he got drafted. After his
7 third purple heart, they sent him back to the rear, and somebody figured out he had been
8 to Law School, so let's put him to work as a legal school. Had another kid who was in
9 charge of awards, who did all the clerical work on that. Had another guy who was the
10 mail clerk, actually, there were two of them. There was a regular mail clerk, and then
11 there was a driver for all of that sort of stuff, yeah, because he acted as my driver too.
12 Once you got back to the rear area, they didn't want officers to drive their own jeeps.
13 Stupid rule, but, nonetheless. That was one of the things that I think bothered a lot of us
14 who are used to being out in the field is, the further you got on the rear, the more formal
15 things became, and not all of us were happy with that. We didn't really like it. Anyway,
16 those were the essential goodies of an S-1 in a combat operation. That's about it.

17 JS: So you were in this position for—timeline wise, when would this have been?

18 DY: I came out of the field very last part of July, I believe, late July, early
19 August. Somewhere in there, I don't remember exactly when. I had taken command in
20 mid-April. What's that come out to? Yeah, that's about right.

21 JS: So you had, I guess then what, about seven and a half more months in your
22 tour?

23 DY: Right, yeah.

24 JS: Any particular memorable moments from this time period?

25 DY: As the S-1?

26 JS: Yeah.

27 DY: Well one of them, of course, is meeting the lady who is now my wife.

28 JS: Right, that was the question I wanted to eventually get to.

29 DY: You wanted to get to that one, huh? (Laughs)

30 JS: Not to get too personal, but yeah. How you met your wife.

1 DY: Totally legitimate part of the story. I told you about the mail clerks, and the
2 driver, and one of them, the driver was a guy by the name of Eddie Gardner. He's a Spec-
3 4. He too, had been out in the weeds. Almost everybody in that shop was in there because
4 they had been wounded in the field multiple times, and somebody had taken compassion
5 on them, and gave them a rear area job so they wouldn't get shot up anymore. Eddie was
6 the one exception to that rule. I don't know why he got assigned there in the first place,
7 but he had never been to the field, and that bothered him. Anyhow, Eddie was my
8 driver—in fact, my wife is standing here right now. Eddie Gardner, right? Kenny
9 Gardener, that's right! She had to correct me. She knew Kenny. At any rate—She's
10 listening to this making sure I'm not telling too many war stories. (Laughs) At any rate,
11 Kenny was—I was going to go down to the rear area, which we did, which was at Bien
12 Hoa, and went down there, and I would do my politicking' to get the people that I
13 needed, and all that, but by that time it would be too late in the day for us to go back, for
14 obvious reasons he didn't drive at night. Normally, what we would do is go over to Long
15 Binh, which is a very short distance away, and I'd go over to the 90th Replacement
16 Battalion where I knew I could get a bunk. Of course, we are all the way back in the rear
17 areas here, so officers and enlisted were in different areas. That's normally what we
18 would do. I'd get a bunk in the officer area, Kenny, or whoever had been the driver for
19 me that particular time, would get one of the—but you know we didn't know anybody.
20 We would want to eat together or whatever. This particular night, I do remember, that we
21 wanted a beer. I didn't know anybody else, and Kenny and I just wanted to drink a beer
22 together like you would back at Tay Ninh. Nobody cared about such things back there,
23 but we had trouble finding a place where we could get a beer. Where both enlisted man
24 and an officer would be able to do this, and we asked an MP one time. The MP kind of
25 said, "Yeah, I think over the second field forces the EM club, you could probably do
26 that." So, went over there, Kenny went in, talked to the bartender, and the bartender kind
27 of rolled his eyes, and basically said in so many words, "The Captain sits over there in
28 the corner, and you come up and get the beers, that's cool." So that's what we did, and
29 we were getting comfortable, not drunk, but we were comfortable. I looked at Kenny and
30 I said, "Hey Kenny. I know where there is round eyed women here," because my first
31 tour when I had malaria I had been treated, so I knew where the hospital was. Actually

1 there were two of them on post, but that's okay. Kenny, I remember distinctly, Kenny
2 reached over, took my beer, and said, "I think you've had enough Captain." I said, "No,
3 really." So, we drove over there, over to the 24th Evacuation Hospital, and of course what
4 I started doing was to walk into the wards. I'm looking for nurses, right? All these guys
5 kept coming up to me. Well, I had my little story manufactured, I introduced myself, I'm
6 the S-1 of the battalion, and I'm looking for a Sergeant Smith, I don't know, but I made
7 up a name. "Oh, I'm sorry, sir. There is no Sergeant Smith in this ward," and I'd go on
8 out and go to the next one. All these darn hard tails came up to me all the time. So,
9 finally, I had almost given up, and I walk into the last one, and I walked in and I went,
10 "Oh, damn." The way the hospitals were set up was over every bunk was a placard of
11 some kind that had the unit patch of whatever major unit that patient belonged to. Plus his
12 name and rank on there, so they could be identified. When I walked in this ward it was,
13 first of all it was full of striker frames, the things that you see when people are all
14 bandaged up and everything, and they've got kind of one limb elevated in the air and all
15 that. Almost everybody in that place has got a Cav patch. I looked at this and went,
16 "Damn, somebody in the Cav has just walked into it big time." I'm getting sober kind of
17 fast, so about that time this pretty, young, blonde, second lieutenant came up to me,
18 "Good evening, sir. Can I help you?" The rest, as they say, is history. We kind of went
19 from there. First Lieutenant Cynthia Mason was the one who came up to me, to tell me
20 about it.

21 JS: How much time did you have left in your tour when you met your wife?

22 DY: That was at the end of August. So, we had quite a bit of time together.

23 JS: Other memorable experiences, or humorous experiences, or anything like that
24 during this time period?

25 DY: I remember the battalion having to pull palace guard at Phuoc Vinh which
26 was the division's forward operating area, and of all things we had to go through an AG
27 inspection. I mean talk about idiocy, you know, here's a state side, kind of, do you have
28 your records in line kind of a thing. We got through it, and let's see, I still have this one
29 little bit of memorabilia. Had a guy by the name of Bob Cummings and John Orr and
30 Kenny Gardner, and a bunch of other, and we did a good job of finishing off a bottle of
31 Canadian Club that night, and I still have that bottle signed by all of those guys. John Orr,

1 David Wisecock, yeah, he was my PSNCO, yeah. They all signed the thing. In fact, on
2 the label it says, “Killed by,” and then we all signed our names. We got pretty drunk that
3 night. You have to remember, I was the only one, was the only officer that could buy
4 liquor. Enlisted men couldn’t buy liquor. The only other one was one towards the very
5 end. At that time we were at Quon Loi. You may have heard about LZ Andy. Quon Loi
6 was fairly close to the Cambodian border, and it was a forward base operated by the 11th
7 Armored Calvary Regiment [ACR], but our battalion was working out of there at the
8 time. In fact, it was there that I left out of there when I came home. We were just working
9 in tents, and that sort of a thing. There was one night, I was just doing some late paper
10 work, and I had a kerosene lantern there. We didn’t have electric lights in there. I’m kind
11 of finishing up my work, but I had the radio on, and I think the 11th ACR must have had
12 the coolest Commanding General in all of Vietnam because he knew that a lot of the stuff
13 that was played on armed forces radio was crap. I mean, we got some rock ‘n roll, but it
14 was cleaned up, sort of. A lot of it was polka music and bleh. So, the CG of the 11th ACR
15 allowed these guys to run their own little FM radio station, and it played album rock just
16 like back in the States. The DJ’s even acting the same way. So, I’m sitting—that’s what
17 I’m listening to. I’m just kind of doing some work, and I hear the DJ come on and says,
18 “Well, uh, hey, uh, this next one is kind of going out, for like uh, Captain Young over
19 there at the 2nd of the 5th Cav man.” You know that sort of a—you got the idea, right? I’m
20 sitting there going, “What the hell,” and then he plays, of all songs, he plays
21 Steppenwolf’s “The Pusher Man.” I am dying with laughter. I am hugging my ribs
22 laughing. I knew the guys that have done all this, right? So, I waited until the song was
23 over and all that, and I finished up my stuff, and then I walked on over to their hooch. I
24 got over there, of course, in a bunker is what I’m saying. I saw the lookout up on top, so,
25 I stood there long enough where he knew where I was. Gave him a couple of minutes to
26 jump down and warn everybody so they could put their roaches out and all that sort of
27 thing. I mean, hell, I’m not stupid. I knew what was going on because if you really think
28 about it, how you chemically altered your consciousness depended upon your rank. If you
29 are an officer, you could chemically alter it with hard liquor. If you were an NCO, you
30 could alter it with beer, and if you were a lower enlisted man, you chemically altered it
31 with marijuana. I mean, I’m not an idiot, and it didn’t bother me at all if the guys were

1 getting stoned. Who cares? So, I let them put their roaches out and I went in and joined
2 the party, and we had a hell of a good time that night. I need to say something along those
3 lines too. During the period of time I was in the field, I never once saw anybody stoned,
4 incapacitated anyway. I heard about it one time from one of my lieutenants, that
5 supposedly a squad leader had found one of his guys smoking a joint one night, and the
6 rest of the guys in the squad beat the living shit out of him. They didn't want anyone
7 stoned out there when their lives depended, or whether he was going to be awake or not
8 during his guard duty. That was not something I ever had to enforce. I never had a drug
9 problem, never heard of a drug problem, and that was self-enforced by the troops
10 themselves. They weren't stupid. They wanted to go home, and at that time when I was
11 with them, we did not have any drug problems in the battalion that I ever even heard of.
12 That's not saying that when they got back to Tay Ninh, they didn't smoke some weed.
13 Damn right they did, and I could have cared less. I have found out subsequently, that on
14 the firebase, a few of the guys would fire up, but they was pretty nervous about that
15 because it could be smelled so easily in a fairly small area. You still had the same sort
16 of—those LZs got hit, so you really didn't see much of it there either. The drug problem,
17 in my estimation, was not a problem when I was there in my particular circumstances. I
18 guess it did later on, but not while I was there. I just didn't hear of it. I pretty much
19 enunciated the different ways you could get drunk. It just depended on what your rank
20 was, so take your choice. Along those same lines, I never had any other disciplinary
21 problems either. I never heard about any franking's. I never had any threats made against
22 me at any time, during either one of my tours. I know it happened later. My own personal
23 opinion is that it had a lot to do with the way the 1st Cav operated, as opposed to other
24 units because we didn't spend a lot of time in these big base camps. The guys were out in
25 the weeds. They didn't have time to get in trouble. I remember coming back to Tay Ninh
26 and the 25th Division operated out of there as well, too. Most of their troops were not on
27 firebases; they were stationed right there at Tay Ninh. I remember talking with some of
28 the other guys in my own battalion, the guys in the 25th in a mech infantry unit. I mean,
29 they were in tracks for Pete's sake. About every two weeks they'd go out and they'd
30 spend three nights in the field, and they called them bush masters, and they would gripe,
31 and complain, and moan about it, but the rest of the time they are back at Tay Ninh.

1 They're really not doing anything. They really didn't have anything to do, but to get in
2 trouble. They are hearing all the rumors and everything else, and I think that is why the
3 Cav didn't have as much of a problem with disobeying's of orders, and all of that. When
4 I was the S-1, we had just one guy that was a true refusal situation, and as the S-1, that
5 was my job to prosecute that, and bring him to court martial, which we did. I think that is
6 pretty low, considering the amount of time that I was the S-1, to only have one
7 circumstance. It wasn't, it hadn't been my own company, it was somebody in the
8 battalion where a kid refused—he came back from R&R and he refused to go back out to
9 the field. That's it. That's pretty low, I think. My situation was not like a lot of the other
10 things that I heard about later on. It just didn't happen to me.

11 JS: How about things like—did you notice there in the second tour, did you notice
12 any racial discrimination, or any problems like—

13 DY: No, not a bit. The valid truth is that it was the same circumstance. I really do.
14 I just simply think that because of the way the Cav operated—and that says something
15 else. This is a morale question that you had asked earlier. The Cav was not formally, an
16 elite unit. Draftees were sent to the 1st Cav, just like any other unit, but the men did seem,
17 even at that time, to have a certain amount of pride of being members of the 1st Cav. I
18 think that pride came from the fact that we knew that because of the way that the Cav was
19 equipped with all these helicopters, that the Cav went wherever the things were the worst
20 because we had these incredible capabilities to move around like other units did not have.
21 The 101st, remember, didn't become an air mobile unit until late 1968 after Tet, so the
22 Cav was where they sent to put out fires. There was a sense amongst the men that they
23 knew that. So, while it wasn't like you were special forces, or something else, you really
24 had to volunteer for, there was a certain pride that knowing that you were with a damn
25 good unit. I'll give you an example. There was one time when I had command of the
26 company. We came in for a three day stand down at Tay Ninh. You know what these
27 idiots did? They went into a 25th Infantry Division club and started a fight. What they
28 fought over was, 1st Cav is better than the damn Mickey Mouse 25th. They used a few
29 words that was stronger than Mickey Mouse, but you got the idea. They literally picked a
30 fight with the guys in the 25th. The other thing that I asked the MPs when they woke me
31 up to tell me about it and to go down bail my guys out, I said, "Hey by the way, who

1 won?" He says, "Your guys kicked ass." (Laughs) I was proud of them, of the
2 camaraderie and the morale. So, I'm not saying that everyone enjoyed it. I don't want to
3 make this into one of these, "The older I am, the better I was," sort of a thing, but the men
4 at that time had a certain amount of pride in being part of the 1st Cav.

5 JS: Something I just thought about, being there in the Tay Ninh area, did you ever
6 have any interaction with Cao Dai?

7 DY: You know what, I did. By the way, have you ever been out to the temple?

8 JS: Yeah, yes, sir.

9 DY: It's beautiful, isn't it?

10 JS: It's a little strange, but it's really nice.

11 DY: Yeah, that one eye. It's funny that you mention that because—I'm trying to
12 think of when, I want to think somewhere around November I heard about that temple. I
13 think it was Kenny. I'm trying to think who went with me, but we drove over there to see
14 that thing, and trust me, it was nowhere near like it is now because it was pretty run down
15 and shabby. I mean, there was a war on, but we kind of went through that, and I
16 remember seeing a few of the priests out there, and all of that sort of a thing. I remember
17 going through that village area around it. That's one of the reasons why I really wanted to
18 go back and see it in these present days because I had been over there then. By the way,
19 you weren't too far from the old Tay Ninh west base camp when you were there at the
20 Cao Dai Temple. You were maybe ten kilometers away. In fact, if you'd stay provincial
21 Ninh, I was to kind out later, that the provincial headquarters buildings, the
22 administrative buildings today, are built on the side of an old runway at the Tay Ninh
23 west base camp that we were at, and I asked why, and they said, "Because there is
24 already a foundation in place." They didn't have to put another foundation in place for
25 new buildings. Isn't that interesting? So, at any rate, I had seen the Cao Dai back then. I
26 didn't know how dangerous that was at the time. I was to find out later, in talking to, like
27 the brigade S-2s and you know, "You're damn lucky you didn't get your head blown
28 off," and I went, "Why? The Cao Dai seemed pretty peaceful." He said, "And a camp
29 right next to that is a major staging area for regional VC," and I went, "Oh, damn."

30 JS: How far was it, I can't remember, but how far was the base camp from Nui
31 Bai Den?

1 DY: Oh, you could see it, easily. It was very visible. I had gone back, since then,
2 these days, to take pictures of Nui Bai Den to show the guys how peaceful it is today with
3 the tram-way that is on the side. That was kind of a landmark. Any time you got out of
4 the jungle, up in the helicopter, you could easily see Nui Bai Den from anywhere around
5 that area. You know, if you recall, it's all flat around there. Nui Bai Den, just kind of
6 sticks up like a boob all of a sudden in the middle of this plain. The big Dao Tien Lake
7 was not there then at that time though. That's been built since. In fact, we—at some of
8 the firebases that we operated out of are now flooded by the Dao Tien Lake. This is cool
9 talking to somebody who has been back since the war, the way.

10 JS: Well, I certainly want to talk to you a little bit more about your trips back a
11 little bit later on. I definitely want to talk about that, but anything else we should mention
12 during this time as the S-1? Anything else we should cover?

13 DY: No, I don't think so. I think that about covers it. Not exactly the most
14 exciting life.

15 JS: Did you get another R&R during this tour?

16 DY: Another R&R? Actually I took two. The first one was in October when I was
17 the S-1, and that was to go to Hawaii to meet my wife. Now, I had talked to you earlier
18 about First Sergeant Allen and his mustache stunt, right? I had carried that out, as Top
19 Allen's encouragement, to actually grow a handle-bar mustache. Now, by this time I am
20 the S-1, right, and I have a handle-bar mustache. A pretty good one, and I used chap stick
21 for my mustache wax. It worked. So, I went on R&R, and I went down to Camp Alpha
22 which is at Tan San Nhut Airbase, there outside of Saigon, and I am processing in, and
23 here is this old sergeant major, doesn't even say, "Hi," "Yes," "No," "Go to hell," or
24 anything else. He says, "You're not going anywhere with that damn mustache, Captain!"
25 I went, "Okay." I just looked at him and I went, "Strap hanger." I said, "Sergeant Major,
26 first of all, my name is Sir, to you. Second of all, take me to your commanding officer
27 now!" Okay, he realized he want screwing around with somebody. I was well prepared
28 for this. I told you about John Orr, who was my legal clerk, right? John Orr was a master
29 forger. To my battalion commanders full knowledge, John Orr used to forge his name to
30 some of the stupid reports that the battalion commander has to sign, like the report of the
31 number of nail bags that have been received in the last month, you know, that sort of a

1 thing. Colonel looks at me and he says, “Do I have to sign this crap?” I said, “I can get
2 them forged, sir.” He said, “Do it. Just don’t tell me how you do it.” I said, “Yes, sir.”
3 John Orr could forge the Colonel’s signature so well that the Colonel couldn’t tell the
4 difference. So, the Colonel knew who was doing it, and what was done, and he trusted me
5 to make sure it was cool. I got other things to worry about, I couldn’t agree. So, John Orr
6 sat down, and he drafted up this letter, that basically said, in so many words, that, “The
7 5th Calvary is celebrating its something anniversary, and there is a part of that selected
8 officers and senior NCOs with any regiment will be putting on period costumes,” or
9 something like that, and, “It is my expressed permission that Captain Young be allowed
10 to wear his handle-bar mustache to R&R, so that he will have it when he returns,” or
11 some crap like that. Signed, Lieutenant Colonel, Stephen R. Woods, Lieutenant Colonel
12 Infantry Commanding. So, Sergeant Majors brings the end of the strap hanger
13 transportation Lieutenant Colonel to his office, and the Colonel looks up and said, “Right
14 off the bat, the answer is no, Captain.” I said, “Sir, may I give you this letter from my
15 battalion commander?” He reads it, looks up to me and says, “Either your battalion
16 commander is the best PR clerk in the entire world, or you are full of shit. I don’t know
17 which one, but permission granted.” I turn around and just flip the bird at the Sergeant
18 Major and just walked off. Here’s the kicker, when I got to Hawaii, my wife said,
19 “You’re shaving that thing off.” I was so pissed I couldn’t see straight. The last kicker of
20 that is, by this time I had met Cindy, and now I come back, no mustache, and its, “What
21 in the hell happened to your mustache?” She still has a picture of me somewhere around
22 here with that damn handle-bar mustache. That was one of the war stories that came out
23 of all that. The other R&R, the two of us took together. By this time I had—yes, we had
24 realized that we had a very strong relationship, and we went to Sydney, Australia,
25 together on R&R, and that was in January of 1970. I want to say, in my own defense, it
26 was a chaste relationship, but nonetheless, the two of us realized this was something
27 serious. So, we didn’t stay in the same room, or any of that sort of crap. We had a very
28 good time, saw Jose Feliciano in concert, and went to some dinners. There was one funny
29 story about that. They are kind of associated. One is, she had gone shopping at one little
30 boutique, and I’m standing outside, just kind of watching the traffic go by, and a hooker
31 tried to pick me up. The funniest thing though, was on the way back, and we could dress

1 in civilian clothes going to and from Australia. We were not allowed to wear uniforms
2 while we were there. We were going up, at the R&R center, we were going up the ramp
3 towards the processing center, and she was just ahead of me. She's got a short little mini
4 skirt on, and one of the NCOs stopped me and he said, "I'm sorry, sir, but you can't take
5 her back with you." (Laughs) She had to show her I.D. and he goes, "Oh, I'm sorry
6 ma'am. I didn't know you were an officer." The two of us are cracking up laughing.

7 JS: Well, despite the fact that you weren't supposed to wear uniforms while you
8 were on R&R, did most of the Australians there know that? Could they pick out the
9 American servicemen? Did they pretty much know who they were?

10 DY: Yeah, I think they did, I think they did. One of the things that they had at the
11 R&R center was, there was a list of Australian families who wanted to host you for
12 dinner one night. So, we did that. That was a very enjoyable evening. We went out to a
13 couples house, who, they had teenage kids themselves. I do remember we had to go on
14 the hydrofoil ferry to get out to their house, and just had a thoroughly enjoyable time. It
15 was just nice to be in a house, just normal stuff, not even a restaurant, but with a
16 television going, and Cindy was in the kitchen with the ladies cooking, and just being
17 normal for a while. That was very nice. I think most Australians knew who we were, of
18 course as soon as we opened our mouth, they could tell we weren't Australian.

19 JS: That kind of, in some ways, answered what my next question was about to be,
20 was, how did the Australians—what was the Australians reaction to you guys? How did
21 they treat you?

22 DY: Nothing but the best. They really treated us very, very well. Everything that I
23 can think of was very positive, and that was including whether we were at a restaurant, or
24 a club, or whatever. They were all very nice.

25 JS: Well, getting back to the issues like the handle-bar mustache, and things like
26 that for just a moment, the spit shine kind of military issues. Was there any difficulty
27 adjusting to that, from coming out in the field to dealing with that as being an S-1, and
28 then later on was that a bit of an issue dealing with the, more of the day to day military, I
29 guess?

30 DY: Yes, it was for me. I, in fact, it's funny that you mention that because I was
31 rather proud of the fact that I had boots on that had never seen any polish. I guess that

1 was a little rebellious streak in me. I refused to shine my boots, and it was probably a
2 little on the juvenile side, and certainly not behavior expected of an officer, but I wanted
3 people to know that I was at heart a combat soldier, not some strap hanger.

4 JS: Well, any—did you get to see any USO shows, or anything like that during
5 your—

6 DY: No, I never did. The closest we got was, Miss America came out to Tay Ninh
7 one time, and I got to see her get off the helicopter. That was about it, never did.

8 JS: Well, anything else we should mention before—one more question. Who's
9 tour ended first, yours, or your wife's?

10 DY: Within two weeks of each other in March.

11 JS: Oh, wow, okay.

12 DY: That was just pure coincidence. She came home about two weeks before I
13 did. Speaking of USOs, to back up to that, on my first tour, Jonathan Winters came out to
14 our firebase and put on a show.

15 JS: Anything else about the second tour before we discuss coming home?

16 DY: No, I can't think of anything else.

17 JS: How about the—I know you talked about the good experience that you had in
18 the airport from the second tour, but overall how was your trip home that last time?

19 DY: Well—this needs to be said just to clarify things too—I was, I left Vietnam a
20 little bit ahead of my DEROS, and I took that time to go to Ohio, and spend a few days
21 with Cindy. Part of that was just to discuss what I was going to do when I did get home. I
22 mean, by that time she knew I was married, which made no bones about it by that time.
23 That was basically that what I needed to do was to go home, do everything that I possibly
24 could to make my marriage work, and part of that deal would have to be that we just, if I
25 see you again, it's because I'm divorced. In other words, we won't be in touch with each
26 other again. That was something that we mutually agreed on. So, I spent a couple of days
27 with her and her parents in Ohio. Then I flew on home, went through Atlanta, and then to
28 Orlando. My coming home was not good, at all. I'm talking about personal matters, here,
29 that had nothing to do with the war, per se. I've already covered that. Nobody spit on me,
30 or anything of that nature.

31 JS: You certainly don't have to go into the details with that if you don't—

1 DY: That's okay, let's just, and I'll leave with you at this, let's just say that there
2 was another man at the house when I got there. Within three months I was divorced and I
3 found Cindy, and the rest, as they say, is history, and we've been very happy since. I did
4 try to get back in the Army, by the way.

5 JS: My next question was, were you out of the Army at that point?

6 DY: Yes, I was, and because I was a reserve officer on extended active duty, I had
7 fulfilled all of my obligations, so I had no reserve time, except for inactive reserve. In
8 other words, I was just in the pool, but I didn't have to be in a unit or anything like that.
9 When I got out at Oakland I was out, that's it.

10 JS: At what point did you try to get back in? Was it pretty immediately, or was
11 it—

12 DY: No, it was after Cindy and I were married and that was, we got married in
13 July of 1971, and of course, we were really moving, getting out of Vietnam fast by that
14 time. Really not much after that, we both—she was still in the Army, and stationed at
15 Fort McPherson there in Atlanta, and we both decided we liked the Army. We would like
16 to make it a career, and I tried to get back in, but remember I had gotten out as a reserve
17 officer, and they were getting rid of a lot of officers by that time. The reduction in forces
18 were going on a lot, so that was basically a phone call, and they said not a chance. I tried
19 something else, and that was to go back in as warrant officer. I remember talking to the
20 recruiter, and basically he said was, “You have to enlist, go through flight school, and if
21 you are granted your warrant, that's fine, but if you flunk out of flight school, you are
22 going to be a buck sergeant. You think you could handle that to finish out your three-year
23 enlistment?” I swallowed hard and went, “Yeah.” He said, “Okay,” and I went through all
24 of the physicals and everything else. Did all of that sort of stuff, and I think it was two
25 maybe three months over the age limit to do flight training as a warrant officer. So, they
26 weren't granting any waivers because they weren't all that desperate for people anymore,
27 so that was the last chance of that. Cindy spent over eight years on active duty. Then a
28 number of years after that, once we had left the Atlanta area, we also spent time in the
29 National Guard.

30 JS: Once you found out that the Army was no longer a really viable option for a
31 career, what did you do at that point?

1 DY: I was already working at that time. I was a police officer in Atlanta. I had a
2 job. It wasn't like I was starving to death or anything like that. We just both liked the
3 Army, that's all, simple as that.

4 JS: How closely did you follow the war? Did you follow it up to its conclusion?

5 DY: I don't think I followed it in a lot of detail, no. Like an awful lot of other
6 people, what I do remember was the fall of Saigon. I had read enough in the papers to
7 know that the fall of Saigon was eminent. This is one of those, "Where were you when"
8 kinds of things. By that time Cindy and I had been married for a little while. In fact, we
9 had moved out of an apartment into a house. I was pursuing my hobby. I used to be a
10 competitive pistol shooter, and in order to keep the cost down I reloaded my own
11 ammunition. There was one night when I am sitting there just doing reloads, which is a
12 fairly mindless thing to do. Cindy is in the other room watching the tube, and I have one
13 of those little tiny black and white televisions. I don't know if you remember those things
14 or not, but I just had that on while I was working. I remember them coming on and
15 interrupting the TV shows and showing clips from Saigon. I remember getting up, and
16 walking into the living room and telling Cindy to turn it to whatever channel it was, and
17 the two of us sat there, didn't say a word, just cried very softly as we watched all of that
18 going, "For this, 58,000 guys died? For this?" It just broke our hearts. Still does.

19 JS: Is there anything else—what I'd like to do before wrapping up the interview,
20 is ask some broad based questions to get your opinion on some of the larger issues of the
21 war, and also, of course, to talk about your return trips. Is there anything else, as far as
22 the time line of your life to this point that we should cover that we haven't?

23 DY: I don't think so. Not that I can think of right now, no.

24 JS: Okay, looking back on your experiences, how do you feel about American
25 participation in Vietnam, and your own participation in the war?

26 DY: I'll answer those in reverse order. I am extremely proud of my service. My
27 uniforms hang in the closet today, and while I am far too large to get into them, I look at
28 that uniform every now and then. I am very proud of my service. Do I think America was
29 right to be there? That's an extremely complicated answer. Basically, I think what we
30 were doing was the right thing. It just went in very much the wrong way. I think it was
31 doomed to failure from the very beginning. I don't think it was very winnable in the usual

1 sense and what I find in my own personal experience since I've been back to Vietnam
2 and actually lived there, was to actually reinforce that feeling. What I mean by that is,
3 Vietnam is becoming today, what we said we wanted it then. Yes, I know it is still a
4 communist country, but it's a whole hell of a lot different than it was immediately after
5 1975, when it was really hardcore communist. You'd been there, and you understand
6 what I mean that it's in so many ways a crazy capitalist country now. I mean, it's
7 unbridled capitalism. In fact, that's part of their problems is they don't know how to kind
8 of regulate some of this stuff. So, Vietnam is becoming what we said we wanted it to be,
9 slowly, but surely, in a way that their society can handle that. If you will, we are winning
10 today, and nobody is dying. I like this way a whole lot better. I think we were there for
11 the right reasons. We just did it the wrong way, and the way we did it was doomed to
12 failure from the very beginning. It was an unwinnable war. I say that for strategic, I
13 mean, military strategic reasons, and I say that for political reasons, it was unwinnable.
14 It's funny that the two people that only understood that it could only be won by the South
15 Vietnamese, were John Kennedy, and in the end, President Ford. Those were the two
16 presidents that really understood that concept. It was unwinnable by us. I'm not going to
17 shift the blame off and say that it was really the ARVNs that lost the war. That's not fair
18 either. We created our own worst enemy there, but just to finish that out, I feel very proud
19 of my service. I am unashamed at all. All of my students when I lived there, all knew I
20 was an American Soldier. Never denied it and would tell them that. Well, yeah, I have
21 answered your question.

22 JS: That brings up some other questions about, you mentioned the War being
23 unwinnable, how about—what is your opinion? I guess, looking back on it now that—
24 you have mentioned you read quite a bit about the war. Looking back on it from your
25 perspective now, how do you feel about the overall strategy, and the way the War was
26 handled? If you could talk—

27 DY: Surely, I'm going to discuss some books that you are familiar with, but
28 Westmoreland had it totally wrong, I mean, he really did. He totally screwed things up.
29 He was working in a war of attrition, which is fine against an industrial country, but it
30 made absolutely no sense from a military stand point. McNamara had been helped,
31 saying things like, "We are going to bomb them back to the Stone Age," when that's

1 where the Vietnamese were already. We had this incredible faith in technology, which is
2 a sickness that I think still plagues us. I think when they took over, that really changed a
3 lot of things, and I'm sure you've read Lewis Sorleys' books, *A Better War*, and I think
4 he had a point. I don't think that's revisionist history at all because I was part of that.
5 That's why I had said earlier about the kinds of tactics and strategies that we were
6 employing when I was the company commander, I knew what we were doing, and we
7 were not longer working on the idea that Westmoreland had of a war of attrition. We
8 were cutting off the logistical nose, and we were freeing up the ARVNs to do what they
9 would be able to do, and that's to work with the people themselves, and to get us out into
10 the weeds where we belonged. I think that was a very good strategy, but by that time
11 politically, it was too late in this country. We had given it up for ghost, and all we wanted
12 to do was get out by that time.

13 JS: How about the media's coverage and the way they handled the war?

14 DY: Yeah, I've read that so many times that it was the media's fault that we lost,
15 and I think that is just being a scapegoat. I think the media did what it did best, and they
16 covered it. I have a little heartburn on some things, but a lot of it was a lack of
17 knowledge. The classic one, of course, is Cronkite's editorial immediately after the Tet
18 Offensive, and then Johnson's reaction to it, you know, "If I've lost content, I've lost the
19 American People." We simply did not know what was going on or had known at the time.
20 All we would see what was on the ground, and we didn't know that we had really delt an
21 incredible military blow to the communist. We had no way of knowing, but the same
22 thing would happen to General Giap that happened to General Westmoreland, he was
23 kicked upstairs because the Tet Offensive was deemed to be a failure by the leadership at
24 Hanoi. We didn't know all of those things at the time. I think the only thing we could
25 blame the press was, that they maybe have jumped to conclusions. What else are you
26 going to do? You have to say something during your half hours of news every night. You
27 have drawn some sort of editorial conclusions. I've always thought that blaming the
28 media for losing the War was simplistic, and essentially incorrect. I don't think that was
29 the case at all.

30 JS: What about, what are your thoughts on the protest movement?

1 DY: That was all right to do that. I don't think that they were all necessarily
2 incorrect either. I can't say that they were my popular kind of people. When I came back
3 and went to work as a police officer in Atlanta, I saw a lot of them there along Peachtree
4 Street, and a lot of hippies, I mean. I'm not sure that most of them dreamt it through, and
5 I think some thoughts can be made from the fact that we've never been able to generate
6 that same kind of anti-war movement today against the War in Iraq that we had back
7 then. I simply think that there is no longer the draft. I really do think that an awful lot of
8 those people, it was more of the fact that they didn't want to go to combat, as opposed to
9 some highly, lofty, ideal of America interfering in another country's internal affairs, and
10 those kinds of higher sounding principles. I think it was just the fact that they didn't want
11 to go. With no draft today, that why you never really saw that strong of an anti-war
12 movement during the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

13 JS: Next question then, first of all, how did you get, how did you first get
14 interested in going back to Vietnam? Let's talk about how that all come about.

15 DY: Okay, actually it had to do with a professional interest at first. Before I
16 retired, I was into instructional technology. In the early '90s when we lived in
17 Albuquerque, that meant a video conference based sorts of systems, television, that kind
18 of a thing, and the internet was just coming about. I realized professionally once I saw the
19 web for the very first time that this was going to be a strong medium for use for
20 education. I became interested in it almost immediately. There was a company that
21 existed at that time called Web CT, and they were having conferences, and I had the
22 chance to use Web CT, and build a course, and I could do it for free—this was all
23 professional work now, I mean, that was my job at the time. So, I decided to put a course
24 together just to learn how to use the software, and I was kind of jokingly saying
25 something about, “Well, what do I make this course about,” and almost off handed Cindy
26 said something, “Why don't you do it about the Vietnam War? That's something you
27 know about.” The interesting thing is, I began to put together this very simple course, and
28 I begin to realize, I really didn't know very much about it, I knew about my own personal
29 experience, but I really didn't know much about how we got into it, why we did the
30 things that we did, and I began to read a lot of books, and but books, and read articles, and
31 everything else. One day, just browsing around the internet, I found the website for the 1st

1 Calvary Division Association. I signed the guest book on there, and then probably forgot
2 about it. Three or Four months after that, something like that, this was in the late '90s by
3 this time, and I got an email from a guy that said he too had been with Charlie 2nd of the
4 5th, and we got into swapping emails back and forth. I didn't know who he was, and he
5 obviously didn't know who I was. I remember one time getting an email from him along
6 the lines of, "Boy, do you remember the night of June 1969, when those idiots over in the
7 CP brought in the artillery so damn close?" I'm sitting there going, "Oh, boy." I just told
8 you that incident a little while ago. That we almost got over run. I chewed on that for a
9 couple of days and said, "How do I answer this guy?" I am the idiot that called it in that
10 close. I finally screwed up the courage and I answered him, and basically said, in so
11 many words, "I am the idiot that called it in that close. I used to be your CO, and by the
12 way did you get hurt that night?" As it turned out this gentlemen's name was, Jim
13 Nachen. I don't remember him, I mean, just to be blunt about it. As the CO, they all knew
14 who I was, but I didn't remember them, and there were eighty, ninety guys, and constant
15 turnover, so I don't remember him. He was called, "Tree" at the time because he's six
16 foot, seven. He's a great big huge mountain of a guy. At any rate, Tree became very
17 active in organizing the unions, and he organized the very first one in 2000 in Atlanta.
18 We had moved away from Atlanta at that time. We were living in Albuquerque, but we
19 went to that. Cindy and I were both very nervous. I told you about one of the things that
20 had happened where she had met a guy, she had taken care of. I was nervous about it
21 because I had actually come to believe all that crap about the enlisted must hate the
22 officers, and all of that, and found out that that was bologna. They really didn't care, we
23 were all out there together, and the rank didn't really make that much difference. That
24 was an eye opening experience, and in the subsequent months Tree asked different people
25 to take on different tasks, and he asked me if I would be willing to run a website, which I
26 did. You can find that today at, www.tallcommanche.org. That's on the Web, and he
27 asked someone else to be the historian. That didn't last very long, but I wound up being
28 the historian. I did a lot of times at the National Archives. I solicited photographs, and
29 stories from the guys, and all of that sort of stuff. You can see that up there now if you
30 ever want to. One of these days I'm going to burn all that in a DVD and send it to you
31 guys for the archives. I still update it a little bit every now and then, but it's literally, it's

1 the history of the company from when it became Charlie 2nd of the 5th on the first of July
2 1965, until it came home in April of 1972. I have documented all of the company
3 commanders, for instance, got a lot of names of the first sergeants, and lots of pictures
4 and all of that sort of stuff. That's all I got involved, and as I did that more and more I
5 began to read a lot more of the various books, many of which have nothing to do with
6 that website but do have to deal with knowing more about the War in general. I'm
7 standing in front of my bookshelf now, told you about Sorley's *A Better War*, and *A*
8 *Stolen Valley*, which I'm sure you've heard of, and *Unheralded Victory* by Mark
9 Woodruff, *Bright Shining Lie*, Bernard Falls' books: *Street Without Joy*, *Hell in a Very*
10 *Small Place*. But I've also supplemented many with that, that are translations of
11 communist documents as well too. I have one, which is *PAVN: A People's Army of*
12 *Vietnam, A History*, which was originally written in Vietnamese, and then translated up at
13 the University of Kansas. Giap's book about the final campaign, the Ho Chi Minh
14 Campaign, and all of that sort of stuff, post-1975 stuff like, *Brother Enemy* by Chanda,
15 and some of the others. So, it's become kind of a minor life study, as I've gone through a
16 lot of this stuff. Probably has paled a little bit in the last few years because of the fact that
17 I lived in Vietnam, and I am less intrigued by the War, and far more interested in what
18 Vietnam is like today. That's what really fascinates me now.

19 JS: How about that first trip back? How did that come about?

20 DY: Yeah, that came about after the reunion Cindy and I—I'd had a boss in
21 Albuquerque, for instance, that was a retired colonel who had been a grunt in Vietnam, as
22 well. Every now and then Jim and I would talk over a scotch or something, and he would
23 say, "Have you ever thought about going back?" and I went, "Yeah, I'm curious." So, the
24 idea was kind of in my mind. It was Cindy that really didn't want to go back. I think in
25 many ways she had a more difficult experience that I did. After all, she saw a lot more
26 people die than I did. It was really hard on her. After we went to that first reunion and
27 learned about it a little more, and chew on it, and it became more of a part of our daily
28 lives. We both started to get curious, and switching that around, I came across a group
29 called, "Vets with a Mission," and it is what it sounds like. It's a Christian organization.
30 Cindy and I are both practicing, believing Christians. That's an important part of our life.
31 What Vets with a Mission is about, is to for what it says, vets to go back, on two-week,

1 humanitarian trips. The idea began to appeal to us more and more. Not to put too much of
2 a theological spin about this, but it was something we thought about a lot, and we prayed
3 about it, and finally decided, let's do it. So, we did, and there was a medical trip into Da
4 Nang. We had never been to Da Nang before. Cindy, being the nurse, that was fine, and I
5 just went along as a skut monkey, I mean, I could run errands or something. Have you
6 been to Da Nang?

7 JS: Briefly, not for very long.

8 DY: Where did you stay? We stayed over at Furama on the beach.

9 JS: We actually did not stay in Da Nang. We stayed at, oh, outside of Da Nang. I
10 can't think of the town.

11 DY: Hoi An?

12 JS: Hoi An, Yeah. We took a couple of day trips up to Da Nang, but we didn't
13 stay there.

14 DY: Okay, well we are between—you would've gone past China beach. On that
15 old China beach is the beautiful resort called Furama. Furama was one of the first big, big
16 resorts that was built in Vietnam. It's been around for a while, but that really started the
17 high-end tourist crowd. Anyway, that's where we stayed, which was very luxurious. Two
18 things happened on that trip. Besides—I remember both of us talking about, “When are
19 we going to smell the smell?” Of course, we didn't smell it when we came into Tan Son
20 Nhut. We were just like any of the other guys, all on the same trip. We are all peeking out
21 the window, what were we going to see. Since you've flown in there, you've seen the old
22 revetments there, which are now used for maintenance sheds, and stuff like that, but
23 recognized those for what they were. Still, then you pull up into the terminal, and here is
24 a jet-way that comes out, and it's an air conditioned building. I remember thinking, and
25 really about it for some time, when I get to immigrations, is the immigration going to
26 look up at me and say, “Oh, this is an old veteran,” and then cart me off somewhere and
27 arrest me. I was very foolish. I was almost mildly taken aback when he seemed so bored
28 and could have cared less. We went through that, went down to get our luggage, still
29 didn't smell the smell, thinking when we go outside, we will smell it then. Walked
30 outside to our air conditioned bus, still didn't smell anything, checked in at the Rex, and
31 then we had some free time. Cindy went shopping, and we are down in that area that you

1 know, there around the circle. It dawned on Cindy first that we weren't smelling, the
2 reason why we didn't is because there weren't refugees in the city. So, there is not human
3 waste in the streets, and all of that. You didn't have all of the little tent cities that were
4 outside of American base camps, and all of that. It was gone. It really did not take the two
5 of us very long to get over the returning vet syndrome. I'd say a half day at the most. I've
6 seen other people take a little bit longer to adapt, but we both were just blown away about
7 how incredibly different it was, and we liked what we saw. Then we flew up to Da Nang,
8 and we were working in the slums. This a little bit more like it, but it still was absolutely
9 nothing at all like the war. These were terribly poor people. It did give us a chance, every
10 night, to go on back to the Furama, sit around the pool. There was one interesting thing
11 that happened one afternoon. We came back, it was pretty hot. You know what it's like
12 over there. We've been working in the clinic. There is no air conditioner or anything else
13 and we are hotter than hell. The idea was to come back in the afternoon, take a quick dip
14 in the ocean, and then all jump in the pool to kind of just pop out the day. We had just
15 come out of the ocean, and I'm toweling off, drying out my eyes, and I head Cindy say,
16 "Doug, Doug, look, quick." I pulled down the towel, and here is, single file, walking
17 around the beach, was a bunch of Vietnamese soldiers. They had packs on, but no
18 weapons. It looked like, what was probably NCOs along the sides. We figured that there
19 was probably some trainees reservists, or something like that, and they were being taken
20 out for a night walk in the soft sand but toughing up or something. Boy, I remember that,
21 and then I turned around and here's all the rest of the guys. Remember, we are all vets, all
22 standing out there at the pool, just staring at this. That was a little weird. There was one
23 gentleman, a physician, who was on our trip, who during the War had been an engineer,
24 and I mean that as an enlisted. He was a pioneer with the 1st Division at Zion, and he
25 came back over as a physician. In fact, he was an emergency room physician in
26 Wisconsin, and brought his fifteen year old daughter along with him. When we got to
27 Hong Kong, he was freaked out about going to Vietnam, and he literally ran to the ticket
28 counter to get a return ticket right back to LA, but we caught up with him. They talked
29 him out of it, and he went. That was a good experience for him, especially, to be able to
30 talk it over with his daughter. I think there really was a lot of good things that came out of
31 it. One of the things that happened is, at that time, I was still working at the University of

1 Texas Pan American, where I retired from. I was in charge of distance learning. I had
2 tried to make arrangements with the University of Da Nang to meet, whoever it was, that
3 would essentially be my counterpart. I made a few phone calls, and lo and behold, I was
4 invited over there. I talked to the guy that ran our trip, and he said, “Yeah, go on over
5 there.” So, they picked me up at the hotel, and I went over and spent a fascinating
6 morning with Mr. Yun, and I got treated like a king, and a lot of conversation took place.
7 I had a very nice lunch. The director of international affairs came over to meet, and they
8 treated me like I was a real big shot or something, which I’m not. Somewhere during the
9 conversation came up that that particular day just happened to be Cindy and my
10 anniversary. After lunch, I went back out to the clinic, and finished the rest of the day
11 working, and then we came back to our room. When we walked into our room, there’s a
12 great big huge bouquet of red roses that said, “Happy Anniversary,” on it, “University of
13 Da Nang.” I was invited—they basically said, “When you retire, if you want to come
14 over here and teach, we would love to have you.” Of course, I didn’t wind up there. I
15 wound up in Hoi, but nonetheless, that’s how that first visit went. I went back on an
16 official visit, representing UT Pan Am the following March. I got a little bit of grant
17 money, and the idea was that we would research the possibility, at the University of Da
18 Nang, using the internet as a teaching tool. I was to work with Mr. Yun on that project,
19 which we did. Thoroughly enjoyed that, again was treated like a king, learned an awful
20 lot that time. Coincidentally, that was the same time where we invaded Iraq. Here I am,
21 sitting in my hotel room in Da Nang in the evening, watching the imbedded
22 correspondent from CNN with the 3rd Battalion of the 7th Infantry as it raced across Iraq
23 towards Baghdad. If you recall, the 3rd of the 7th was my old battalion from my first tour
24 in Vietnam. This was really super weird thing, in the country where I had been in a war
25 watching my old unit starting another war. I remember the Vietnamese really being
26 conscience about that. I was taken out to lunch one day while I was there, by the
27 president emeritus of the University, who had done all of his formal education in Russia
28 back when Vietnam was tied up very closely with Russia. We were at, believe it or not,
29 went to a Russian restaurant in Da Nang, right along the river. The wait-staff brought in a
30 television just so they could get the latest news cast on what was going on in Iraq. I felt
31 very, very uncomfortable. I was extremely uncomfortable. Finally, the president, who

1 spoke some English, but not a lot, we really needed to have a translator, which Mr. Yun
2 did, basically set me at ease. “Oh, don’t worry about it—” In fact, what he said, in a very
3 kindly way, was, “We still don’t really understand why Americans like to fight so much.”
4 At any rate, I—and while I was there was the time of the czars outbreak, if you may
5 recall that. That’s when the mission was planning another trip, which we had already
6 signed up for, which was going to come back in July of 2003. I am working with Chuck
7 Wood, who was the executive director of Vets with a Mission, trying to assure people
8 back in America that czars wasn’t wiping out every third person. This was not the
9 plagues of Egypt, but it didn’t do any good, people just panicked. So many people
10 cancelled the trip, they had to cancel it. We got our money back out of that, and Cindy
11 and I went back in July in 2003, which was essentially a vacation, a two week vacation,
12 just the two of us, and we had an absolute ball. We did things like, go out to the Cao Dai
13 Temple. We went to the Tunnels at Cu Chi, and we hired a guide, and a Toyota van, and
14 drove up to Dalat, and saw all of that, and Bao Dai’s old place, and went back over to the
15 coast at Nha Trang. Went up the coast from there, and ended up in Da Nang, had dinner
16 with Mr. Yun again and his wife, and just had a ball, then flew back to Saigon, and went
17 home. We both remember, very specifically, after that it was just so much fun. We just
18 fell in love with Vietnam. That’s the only way to describe it. I remember the two of us
19 sitting in our seats as the wheels came up, leaving Tan Son Nhut, and we were holding
20 hands looking out the window, and going, just looking at each other, and going, “Don’t
21 know how quite this is going to work out, but somehow our destiny has wound up in this
22 country.” Of course, it did because we wound up living there, and we still go back. It’s
23 just one of those really strange things in life, Jason. Go figure it out. If you are into
24 religion, then there is a theological component to this, and somehow that only God could
25 come up with a goofy story like this. It’s just kind of strange. I think I have said that three
26 of our former students are now studying here in the United States as grad students. The
27 funny thing is, next month, when I go back, one of my intentions, one of my former
28 students, the young lady’s name is Trang. Her father was an ARVN soldier. He speaks no
29 English, and I don’t speak any Vietnamese, but I do intend to interview him. He has
30 already agreed to do this. We will do it away from the village so there isn’t anybody
31 over—I want to hear about his experiences as an ARVN soldier, and the history years in

1 a reeducation camp after 1975. I'll be doing a little bit of your work, but with nowhere
2 near the expertise.

3 JS: Well, I don't know about that. Unfortunately, we have just about run out of
4 time here. Let me go ahead and close the interview, but I would like to talk to you a little
5 more if that's all right.

6 DY: Sure.