

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

**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with David Carson
Conducted by Jason Stewart
Date 31 March 2011
Transcribed by Aaron Kellerhals**

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 JS: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University
2 conducting an Oral History interview with Mr. David Carson. Today is March 31st, 2011.
3 I'm in Lubbock, Texas, in the Special Collections Library on the campus of Texas Tech,
4 and Mr. Carson is joining me by phone from Missouri. Is that correct, sir?

5 DC: Yes.

6 JS: Okay, all right, why don't we begin if we could with a little bit of biographical
7 information? First of all, when and where were you born?

8 DC: I was born the 30th of April in 1951 in Detroit, Michigan.

9 JS: Okay, all right, could you tell me just a little bit about your parents? What
10 were their names, and what did they do for a living?

11 DC: Mary Carson was my mother. She worked as a waitress. My dad, Charles
12 Carson, worked at a service station.

13 JS: Okay, all right. You grow up there in Detroit?

14 DC: No, I grew up in Flint, Michigan.

15 JS: In Flint, Michigan, okay. All right. If you wouldn't mind, could you tell me a
16 little bit about—I don't know—I guess what life was like growing up in Flint at that
17 time?

1 DC: Well, you know, we went to an all-white school to begin with. I'm pretty
2 well—I hung out with—oh, that was in the big days, you know money was busting
3 everywhere and the production plants for vehicles was on it's high end, so it was a
4 relatively medium-income communities. But for me, I just hung out with a few people
5 and get in a little trouble, no law, they didn't catch me (laughter). I stayed in Michigan
6 until I was—my mother left when I was fifteen, and then when I turned seventeen, I went
7 in the Army. My life was—dad was working; mom was working. I'm the only child. I
8 never saw them.

9 JS: What made you decide to join the Army when you did? Did you have any
10 interest in the Army as a kid?

11 DC: No. No, I just did it I guess out of spite to leave Flint. So, my dad had to sign
12 for me. My birthday is on the 30th of April. I was in basic training on the 6th of May.

13 JS: Oh wow, wow, okay. Well, before we get into, excuse me, before we get into
14 basic could you tell me I guess—well, did you have any jobs as a kid growing up?
15 Anything like that?

16 DC: No, they only—yeah, I had one job. I worked at a gas station, pumped gas
17 and little oil changes and stuff like that. I worked for the big money of \$1.50 an hour.

18 JS: Had you had any other relatives with military service prior to your joining?

19 DC: Well, let me see. I had a distant—I mean my uncle was in the Navy. I don't
20 think there was anybody else that I know of.

21 JS: Well, again, as a kid growing up, did you pay any attention to what was going
22 on in the world with the Cold War?

23 DC: No, I was dumber than a box-of-rocks on that. I just—I was a fifteen year old
24 kid. Hell, I just didn't pay anything. No attention to nothing, I didn't read the newspaper.
25 Let's see we had television, so I didn't watch TV much of news.

26 JS: All right, yes, sir. Well, by the time you joined, had you heard much about
27 Vietnam though?

28 DC: No, no, no. I was the only child, so I didn't pay attention to nothing.

29 JS: Okay, all right. Excuse me. Well, once you joined—can you tell me a little bit
30 about the process of joining and I guess your introduction to the Army and what that was
31 like for you?

1 DC: Well, I went down to the recruiters, and they asked me what I wanted to do I
2 says, “I don’t know. Probably mechanics.” “You don’t want to fly? You don’t want to
3 jump?” I said, “No, I’m not going to do nothing but turn the key on something.” They
4 weren’t going to mole me into infantry. I was at least that smart. Then take the papers
5 back to my dad. He was upset that he had to do that, but he did it anyway. Then I went to
6 Detroit processing station, and one line was regular Army, right-side was U.S. draftees.
7 The Marines would gather their people by going down the hallways going, “You, you,
8 you and you. You’re Marines now.” But oh, I don’t know. Then we went through the
9 normal processing of medical and personal. Then they put us on a plane and sent us to
10 Fort Knox, Kentucky.

11 JS: So that’s where you went for your basic then, at Fort Knox?

12 DC: Yes, at Fort Knox.

13 JS: Okay. All right. Could you talk I guess a little bit about what basic was like
14 for you? The typical day of basic training that type of thing.

15 DC: Well, I think it’s unusual. First week I broke my ankle. So, I couldn’t do
16 nothing of much of anything, If I had to go somewhere I had to ride on the supply truck. I
17 went through seven castes on my leg because I was trying to do as much as I could.
18 Because back then they didn’t have recycling, and I know now why they didn’t because
19 they had to get bodies to Vietnam. I mean I didn’t realize it until years later. Another
20 thing I learned of; I didn’t have to go to Vietnam because I was the only child. Basic—
21 just basic was basic. I’d pick up cigarette butts, I dug holes, we were hazed which was
22 allowed. You know grab your footlocker and run outside in your BVDs [Bradley,
23 Voorhees, Day] in the middle of the rain. I didn’t enjoy it, even when my future-wife
24 visited me that was about the only good time I had. All this training we got was, as in
25 today’s standard, was primitive. Very primitive. The tactics were led more to Vietnam
26 than—all they were doing was shoving bodies out. There wasn’t any real emphasis on
27 anything. You’re at a firing range, you shoot, you shoot, you shoot, you miss, you miss.
28 Well, that’s because all they wanted was bodies. Or I would’ve never went through
29 because of my broken ankle.

30 JS: How’d you break your ankle?

31 DC: We were running, they hit a rock, then my foot turned on me and I sat on it.

1 JS: I see. Right. When you were going through, did they make much mention of
2 Vietnam? Did they talk about it very much?

3 DC: One individual did and that was the senior drill instructor. He probably had
4 forty-years in Vietnam (laughter). He must've been there the day Ho Chi Minh was born.
5 Yeah, he talked about Vietnam, "I'm going to take you up in a helicopter and push you
6 out." He was an old infantry NCO [Non-commissioned Officer], and you know I was
7 about of age. There was very little talk about Vietnam even though we realized we were
8 destined to go at one time or another in our career. But other than that, the Army's
9 secluded in base. We didn't have cell phones and laptops. The media really didn't cover
10 anything but the blood and the gore at night. But it just—it just wasn't any real mention
11 of it.

12 JS: Well, I know you've mentioned that you guys were destined to go to Vietnam,
13 at what point did you learn that you would probably be going?

14 DC: About day one.

15 JS: About day—so they told you guys pretty much from day one that—

16 DC: That you guys ain't nothing but bodies, my drill instructor says, "All I'm
17 here to do is get you through basic training so I can send you to Vietnam." And he was
18 pretty well right.

19 JS: What was the reaction to that?

20 DC: Well, everybody goes, "Oh, crap." You know, some just, "Ah yeah, yeah,
21 yeah, yeah la-di-da." Trying to brush it off.

22 JS: I know you mentioned the one drill instructor that probably had plenty of
23 service in Vietnam, how about the others? Were they all or most of them Vietnam
24 veterans?

25 DC: I'd say there was—I think there were five drill-instructors and a senior. They
26 tell you all the same crap. "You don't learn this, you're going to die in Vietnam because
27 of not learning this." I think all but one, one out of the five hadn't been to Vietnam yet.
28 You know the cooks had even been to Vietnam, our lieutenants no. Our captain, no. But
29 first sergeant, senior drills, and four other drill sergeants were all Vietnam vets.

30 JS: Were there any—I don't know—discipline problems or anything like that, that
31 you remember that stick out in your mind? Anything like that happen?

1 DC: To me?

2 JS: Well, to you or to any of the guys that you were going through with?

3 DC: Well, I started to laugh one time. The drill sergeant comes through other third
4 rank and tells me, “You can’t do ranks,” and he just knocked the wind out of me. Hit me
5 square in the chest like a baseball bat. I’m thinking, if you ever tried to take a number-ten
6 can and fill it up with cigarette butts, enjoy yourself. I’ve dug holes. We’d help the drill
7 sergeant when he’d come in too drunk to walk. But let’s see, discipline was standard. It
8 was just about standard, if you messed up, you’d get punished by doing physical activity
9 until you couldn’t go no more, and then—but I used to be a drill instructor. So, I can
10 understand why they did what they did, but at the time it was pretty well across the board.
11 If one drill sergeant caught you doing something, he’d do something to you, PT [Physical
12 Training], make you run more. It didn’t matter because all of the drills were together, so
13 they took care of the whole company. But it was no, what I’d consider, extreme hazing. If
14 you were a dud, they got rid of you within days. We had one fellow trainee that he huffed
15 glue. So, he huffed glue too much and we never seen him again. If you were rejected for
16 your sexual preference, you were gone instantly. Punishment. That’s about all the real
17 punishment or things I noticed ever went on, that I can remember.

18 JS: You mentioned the weapons training, at that point where you guys training on
19 M-16s yet? Or was it still—

20 DC: M-14s.

21 JS: M-14s, okay.

22 DC: I still love an M-14, I have a mini-14 I own just because I can’t afford an M-
23 14 because you can’t find an M-14 because they all went to Iraq and Afghanistan as
24 sniper rifles. Plus, the M-14s considered an automatic weapon. But we were still training
25 on the M-14—I mean yeah on the 14. I’m taking showers with my M-14 because in them
26 days, as I know now, they were using a corrosive primer and powder. So, if you didn’t
27 take ammonia, you did but run it once with ammonia and then you take it to shower with
28 you. That was an everyday part of your shower was to make sure you had your weapon
29 with you, scrubbing the bore out with soap and water. Plus, it was part of punishment in
30 this roundabout way. But we kept our weapons in a rack at the end of the building since it

1 was an old, two-story, World War II vintage barracks, we keep our weapons in a rack at
2 the end of the rooms.

3 JS: Well, let's see. Overall, you said that the training was just, you know you
4 talked about just getting you guys through so they could—

5 DC: Just getting us through. Because I spent twenty-years, I was a drill instructor
6 for two years, twenty, I know what you're supposed to by the training doctrine. But today
7 you wouldn't want to put an old Vietnam vet at the same age as a modern soldier today.
8 Because they know they're getting the training. We just got the very—I realize it was
9 only basic, but it was like just having a bologna sandwich without the bologna.

10 JS: Well, did you feel that you were adjusting to the military fairly well, going
11 through basic?

12 DC: (Makes noise of uncertainty) I didn't know if I was going to make it or not at
13 that particular point.

14 JS: Well, before moving on to advanced training, any other memorable moments?
15 Funny moments? Anything like that from basic.

16 DC: (Makes noise of uncertainty) let me think. I got to think on that one now.
17 There was always moments. Drill sergeants friend was I, a Thunderbird. We had two old
18 cannons in front of our barracks, and one Sunday his friend drove his Thunderbird
19 through the barrel, on the end of the barrel, and took out his windshield. Drunk. Tore up
20 all the lawn. Drill sergeant said, "You guys got about three minutes to get this car out of
21 here." He took care of his friends. We cleaned everything up, and nothing was ever said.
22 The worst thing that I think I ever seen; somebody stole a case of beer from the mess hall.
23 One of the drill sergeants had. Mercy. It was like—oh I don't even know to express it. It
24 was bad. Until they found out who did it. Because of course everybody was punished
25 until they found that case of beer. When I had to do KP [Kitchen Patrol], which was very
26 often, first thing I did is I knocked the leg off the table with the ball. And the drill
27 sergeants had a habit just to mess with you if you're on KP duty and you had the dining
28 room. You had to bring them their breakfast. Well, they had this down to a science.
29 Anyway, they'd rattle off their breakfast, and you better hope you remembered because if
30 you didn't, he just threw it on the floor until you got it right. Then that makes the mess
31 sergeant mad. So, then you're punished even more. Peeling potatoes, that was still an old

1 thing, but we used a machine that somebody had to have invented, peeling potatoes by—
2 well, I had a machine with—like huge sandpaper in it. Well, then, we thought it was
3 funny, we'd take a good sized potato and make a golf ball out of them. Just aggravate. I
4 think that's about the only thing we can do. Yeah, no—oh yeah, more with that broken
5 leg. I had to ride out with the—I couldn't go on the road march just like at the range, and
6 I had to ride with the senior drill sergeant and his Riviera. So that meant I rode in the air
7 conditioning, and then by the time I got there them guys were all mad at me. Because I
8 rode out in a Riviera with air conditioning, and they just get off a ten-miler. I wasn't the
9 most-well liked guy, but I wasn't hated, hated. I didn't get a blanket party, so I knew it
10 wasn't serious.

11 JS: Were there others who were hated?

12 DC: Yeah, if they get us in trouble, it took only one guy to get us all screwed up,
13 we'd all get in trouble. So, then we'd give him a blanket-party. Throw a blanket over him
14 and hold the blanket down, take a bar and a sock and beat him. Broke him that little habit.
15 Nobody ever found out, drill sergeant never asked, those guys got blackened eyes and
16 bruises all over, but drill sergeant never asked. Because it was condoned, I mean yeah
17 something similar to that word.

18 JS: Well, despite the broken ankle, I know you said that you couldn't—that they
19 weren't recycling people at that point, so despite the broken ankle did you go through
20 with your class on time?

21 DC: I went through everything.

22 JS: Okay, and so you graduated with—

23 DC: Even like we'd get out the hand-to-hand combat pit. I had to try to do as
24 much as I humanly could and above that. Because they did—yeah, they did recycle, but it
25 was very limited. I couldn't go on the road marches, so just about all I didn't do. I did as
26 much physical training as I could do with a cast on, but went through seven of them, so I
27 tried. But wait until they get wet and mushy, and we'll get another one. They did not like
28 me to go on sick call, oh no. That was a sin. You wish you had just died, and they just
29 buried you than to go up to the drill sergeant and ask for a slip to go over to medical.
30 Because you would be crucified by him, but not a day or so, for a week. Plus, he never
31 forgot. Now I understand how you can do it five different ways, but it took me a while.

1 JS: Well, anything else from basic before moving on to advanced?

2 DC: No, I think that pretty well covers it as much as I can remember.

3 JS: Okay, all right did you go through the AIT [Advanced Infantry Training] there
4 at—

5 DC: No, they sent me to—they sent me from basic straight to Fort Carson,
6 Colorado with no AIT. So, I didn't know what was going on, they said I'd get on-the-job
7 training. That's about what I did too. I worked as a mechanic assistant since I was only an
8 E-1. I'd pull KP, guard duty every other day. The unit I was assigned to, they had just
9 taken five-hundred guys and moved out to Vietnam, so they were reorganizing still in the
10 battalion, a battalion runs about five-hundred men. Well, the company I was in had
11 fifteen people. Well, after you take the first sergeant, the captain, the lieutenant, and the
12 senior sergeant there, that don't leave many people. So yeah, KP and then I worked down
13 in the maintenance section working on tanks as an apprentice to an E-5 because I was still
14 an E-1. I was just a total screw-up. I took in—I had a spring. It was about four foot tall. It
15 was a recoil spring for an M60 tank, it came with Cosmoline on it, and they told me to
16 clean it. So, I got tired of carrying blue-cans of solvent to clean this Cosmoline, so I went
17 and got me a wastepaper basket. I filled it up, and just as soon as I started pouring, I went
18 head-over-heels and had it all down—the bucket darn-near stayed on my head. So here I
19 am soaked in solvent, then comes in a warrant officer, an E-5 I worked for. They had to
20 take me to medical. So, what they did was put me in the trunk of a car. So, I rode over to
21 the barracks, I took a shower, but I still had to go to medical because it burnt anything
22 that wasn't skin. Eyes, other orifices that you can find on your body. But I had to ride in
23 the trunk of my boss's car. He wasn't a happy camper. Then I—you had to go stroke
24 [means stoke] the heat with a coal-fed furnaces in all the maintenance buildings. Well,
25 I'm on guard duty and your supposed to guard them. You had to stroke the boilers. Then
26 another time on guard duty I got bored and I pulled a fire extinguisher for a whole tank
27 and laughed about it, thought it was funny. In being poor as a private, and I had just got
28 married. My wife was still in Florida. Well, when I got her out there, I was making
29 maybe \$150 a month. Well, food got a little tight, so what I'd do is we had ambulances,
30 since it was a medical battalion, we still had ambulances and they were in the ready for
31 the Chicago conventions. I'd just go in there and get what C-rations I could and take

1 them home, or when on KP take food out in the garbage cans, put it in the dumpster, and
2 then when I left, I'd get it out and take it home. Then one day I got caught by the mess
3 sergeant. He says, "Carson, don't steal from me. If you need some food because you're
4 hungry, it ain't payday, you come see me. I will take care of you guys. But don't steal
5 from me." I didn't steal no more from him. Man, being in that taught me—we'd go to the
6 field and the doctors that we had assigned to the medical unit, they didn't do squat. A
7 doctor was a doctor. We'd put the tents up; they'd go sit on the table. Then we'd have to
8 finish everything else up for them because they were doctors. We went to field quite
9 often, but I was only seventeen. Then I got orders to go to 'Nam. Well, I'm still dumb.
10 Remember I'm only seventeen. I'm still stupid. So, I went to Oakland, California. I got to
11 Oakland, and they stamped my records "too young," because you had to be eighteen. So,
12 that was my experience at Fort Carson, Colorado.

13 JS: All right, did your time working in the gas station as a kid, did that help you
14 out with the mechanic—

15 DC: No, didn't even come close, I could wipe your windows pretty good. Because
16 civilian vehicles are like military vehicles, all you do is replace parts. Diagnose and
17 replace parts, well if you don't know how to diagnose which I didn't, I just replaced
18 parts. If my boss told me to replace that part, I replaced that part, whether it run or not I'd
19 have to wait. But no that didn't help me at all.

20 JS: I know you said that they sent you back because you were too young, how
21 much longer did you have to wait until—

22 DC: I stayed in Oakland, California for thirty days and I was going to turn
23 eighteen on the thirtieth of April, and I says, "You know I've got an enlistment contract;
24 you guys haven't even sent me to school yet." And they looked, and I said, "Oh yeah."
25 They shipped me out, sent me to Fort Ord, California, for mechanics AIT and I stayed
26 there until—yeah, like I said, thirty days. Went to AIT, six-weeks there, then—and that
27 was a goat rope and two. Then I took again the two-weeks leave, I went back home
28 before and then I still got my same old orders going to Vietnam.

29 JS: Well, upon getting those orders, how did you feel about it?

30 DC: I was scared because I had just gotten married, wife was pregnant. My
31 daughter was eight-months old when I come home. But I was scared. I realized the world

1 is going to change for me and—the intensity still goes with me today. I haven't lost that
2 little fear, as some people would say. Even though I'm sixty years old. Some of these
3 millennial guys, they said crap like that, that boasting guys did drive me crazy. But that
4 fear is still with me today, as it was the day, I got my orders the first time.

5 JS: By that point, had you heard much about what was going on in Vietnam?

6 DC: No. No, the only thing I knew of 'Nam was—the amount of time I spent at
7 Oakland, California, for approximately thirty-days, my job was to go get what they call
8 the manifest. I'd go to personnel; they'd give me a manifest of who was shipping out.
9 They had a big, we called it The Barn, it was a big—an acre, building. Once you got that
10 building, you didn't go nowhere but on an airplane. Or on a bus to the airplane. So, my
11 job was to take that manifest, call roll-call, they'd get on the bus and ship, but I didn't
12 think nothing of it. Then years later I realized what I was doing. I was the next guy
13 sending them to Vietnam. Even though I had no direct—the only direct contact I had was
14 calling, checking off their names. Call the names and check it off and made sure they got
15 on the bus. But that was all I ever heard while I was there, and then about twice a day,
16 you know how today they'll send ten bodies home on a C-19? They'd take a thirty-seven
17 foot tractor-trailer, stack as many as they could in it, and haul them over to the mortuary
18 at Oakland. That was how nice and formal they were. They shipped you like a piece of
19 meat. But that's always stuck in my mind, especially when I see them doing it in today's
20 world.

21 JS: Seeing those bodies coming home like that—

22 DC: I knew I was in trouble. I realize that this is not going to a baseball game. But
23 I know what them little aluminum shipping crates were. So that's when I got too scared,
24 and that's when I asked to go to AIT. So, I thought maybe I'd squeeze out. I didn't
25 squeeze out. But of course, nobody told me I didn't have to go because I was the only
26 male sibling in the family. So, there I went, but home—I went home after AIT and
27 then—for two weeks, then the big ball game was coming. I had to leave. My wife was
28 pregnant. In them days you didn't have fancy concords to walk on. You walked outside
29 and went up the steps. I got to top step and almost went back down, almost went AWOL
30 [Absent Without Leave] because I knew I was scared and didn't know how to react. I
31 knew I had a commitment legally by the Army. I knew they'd come looking for me. You

1 know they used to have AWOL hunters at police stations getting fifty dollars for every
2 AWOL they caught in a traffic stop. So, I knew I'd get caught, but I didn't want to leave
3 her and the baby. I mean when I was talking, I stayed there for thirty minutes but I sit
4 there for a good minute or two while the rest of the guys were loading, and that was one
5 of the worst things that ever happened to me, decision making. And I've made a lot of
6 decisions since Vietnam in my twenty-years plus life itself. That was the hardest one.

7 JS: When was this, around what time of year? What year is this?

8 DC: I think it's—let me see. I got to—oh, shoot. I'm going to say what day I got
9 to 'Nam, and then I can backtrack it. I got to 'Nam on I think the thirtieth of June or the
10 first of July. I only got two weeks, so it was that timeframe of the same year.

11 JS: So, this, when you were trying to decide whether or not to get on the plane,
12 that was when you were leaving her and not getting on the plane to go to Vietnam, right?
13 Is that correct?

14 DC: Right, right I was headed to Oakland. I was headed right back where I had
15 left.

16 JS: And once you got to Oakland, was it immediately on a plane? Or was there
17 any—

18 DC: No, I probably was there maybe a week. And waited my turn on the manifest.
19 And my turn to The Barn. Once you hit the Barn, you were locked in. You know they
20 snack bar and a little bit of television of what you could have in them days and then you
21 know soda machines and little snack bar and stuff, but you couldn't get out the door.
22 Because the MPs [Military Police] were there. And then you wait for flight times, then
23 they would take you up to, by bus, up to Travis Air Force Base there in California. That
24 drew me even closer to realizing this wasn't going to be a ball game for what my little
25 seventeen year old mind could think of. We went on an airflight of Evergreen. You only
26 had two rows of seats on each side, so it was a—shit we called it the champagne flight
27 without the champagne. It was the smallest aircraft I've ever been in as far as commercial
28 goes. You could probably set that aircraft and seating arrangement on one corner of a
29 747. But it was long. It was sixteen hours, we had one hour in Japan, but they still
30 wouldn't let us off the plane. It was a total of sixteen hours until we hit Long Bien,
31 Vietnam.

1 JS: What was the mood like on the plane ride over? Do you remember?

2 DC: Quiet. Somber, there wasn't nobody whooping and hollering, that comes
3 later.

4 JS: You came into country you say at Long Bien?

5 DC: Right at Long Bien.

6 JS: Okay, all right. What was your—I guess what was your first impression upon
7 arrival?

8 DC: They opened that door, and that's the worst stank than putting your head in
9 the toilet. Hot, humid, and just pure stank. I've been to outhouses that smelt better. So, I
10 realized, this is not going to be fun. Then they took us, put us down there and welcoming
11 us to Vietnam, now that was a hoot. As I see it today. Then they divided us up, told us
12 which barracks we were going to be in, so we went through our bags down there, come
13 back out in formation, went over to personnel. Went through personnel, then they gave us
14 our orders of where we were going at in-country, then we spent two nights there. They're
15 the scariest—the boogeyman is nice. I was so scared, in the distance you'd hear
16 explosions, you'd hear gun fire. You're about to emotionally die because you know, this
17 is not the right place to be. We weren't at Disneyland. Then oh about second or third day
18 like I said then they give us order, put us in a bus, took us to an airport. Back to the
19 airport in Long Bien, then the guys was either getting in helicopters, getting in the back
20 of trucks, small aircraft depending on how far they had to take them. I got, what did I
21 get? Oh, I got a ride in a C-130. No seats. All they did was put cargo straps across it, and
22 you had your duffel bag, and you had to hold on. We took off, it was everything you
23 could do to hold onto the strap, and when he stopped it was like he hit a brick wall.
24 Because the C-130 can go up almost vertical I think, and when it stops it's on a dime. So,
25 there I was in the Da Lat, Vietnam. Got out of that C-130, and it still stunk. I didn't
26 realize it, the whole country stunk. It's the fish. The fish, and the rotten cabbage and it's
27 the nutmeg.

28 JS: Well, once you arrived at Da Lat, what was the experience like at that point?

29 DC: They of course give us a barracks, and oh, I don't know. It probably took us a
30 week. Time, we drew our equipment. Drew our weapons. Do a little bit more personnel
31 paperwork, and then we go over to the club and drank. And drank. That drinking kept me

1 going well, until ten years ago. Then they put us on a truck, took us up the hill. We're
2 about fifteen-miles out of Da Lat on this sixty-five-hundred foot mountaintop. It was one
3 road up, one road down. Scared again, still scared. We didn't have any dust on our boots,
4 and we of course were the new guys, and they always used FNG [Fucking New Guy]. I
5 think you know that one already by heart. So, I don't want to repeat it on our little
6 conversation here. I think it would out of class.

7 JS: (Laughter) Well, you're free to say whatever you want to, but that's
8 completely up to you.

9 DC: Yeah, I'd prefer not to.

10 JS: Sure.

11 DC: Because I do ignorant things like I've done all my life, and every once in a
12 while, I like to act like I've got some common sense.

13 JS: Well, what unit were you assigned to?

14 DC: The five—I was assigned to the 1st Signal Brigade, 21st Signal Group/, at that
15 time it was the—Oh Lord, I'm forgetting numbers. Then it was the E-43rd Signal
16 Battalion in Da Lat, the 21st Group was in Cam Ranh Bay, 1st Signal was in Saigon, the
17 main headquarters. Then from the battalion, I was still—I was like in Charlie Company
18 E-43rd, but later on about halfway through they changed it to the 556 Signal Company. It
19 was an experience, and it's still an experience to me because I want to go back but I can't
20 afford it. I watch some of the shows on TV where the guys went back, the place is
21 downright beautiful.

22 JS: Yes, sir. Were you assigned as a mechanic, like what you had been doing
23 there?

24 DC: Yes, yes. Torque mechanic and generator repair. My additional duties, since I
25 was only an E-3 was I was a master poop burner. Because every time I said or did
26 something wrong the first sergeant says, "You know what to do." Time to do the pooper.
27 Eight, yeah ten cans. Only had ten half-cans of poop to scoop. Pour a little gasoline and
28 diesel in there, light them up and stir it. And drink a lot of beer. Let's see I was—We
29 worked, you know, whatever other slop job they wanted done around there, maintenance
30 got it. We only had five vehicles, six counting the old man's Jeep. We had one wrecker.
31 My truck was a fuel truck, which only used collapsible bladders of four-hundred gallons

1 a piece. The mess sergeant had a trailer. Then we had a general—I mean a truck. Then
2 they used another truck for oddball—to carry the guys down with, yeah it was a troop
3 carrier. We were stuck on one—let me visualize this. You come in the gate, well on
4 convoys, when you went down a hill you went down in second-year low, or in first-gear
5 low because it was so steep and the rock looked like 10 A stone, it looked like boulders.
6 When you went up the hill, you went up the same way, one-low all the way. Because of
7 the steepness and your—even just the weight of the vehicle. What else, what other goofy
8 things did I do in maintenance? Bust tires, I was good at doing tires. I'd do five a day,
9 just on my truck because they were getting cut up. We didn't go over to Tire Joe's, and
10 he uses his automatic machine to put my tire on. I took a pickaxe and broke the tire loose
11 in the beads, then I'd pry the bead off, then I'd put my new tube and tire on. Well, when
12 you do five a day, you get a little bored. If the first sergeant had somebody that was being
13 funny, they'd send them to me. So, he'd be busting tires all day, and as a matter of fact
14 I'm still in contact with a guy in Washington state that busted tires for me. I was
15 responsible for the fuel truck that held eight-hundred gallons. I had a guy addicted to
16 opium was my assistant driver, which he never drove. He was my shotgun, so he'd sit up
17 in front seat on the way down, and on the way back I'd have to pick him up at an opium
18 den and he'd sit at the back of the eight-hundred gallons of fuel. Just sitting there. (Makes
19 frustrated noise). Let's see what else did I do in maintenance? I repaired my own truck, I
20 did my own breaks, entire system. Got all put back together and went on convoy, got
21 about a quarter of the way down and I heard a "pop," and I didn't have no breaks. So, I
22 tried to take it out of low, get it into first but you can't do that, stupid. Well, I told this
23 guy, Leonardo that was with me, about six foot tall, and he sat right against the
24 dashboard, I said, "Man hold on, I'm going to have to hit a tree or we're going to go off
25 this mountain." So, I started to head towards the tree, and I hit a boulder the size of a
26 truck. That slung us over and we went off a ten-foot embankment. Yeah, he got—he lost
27 both his knees. I just got my shoulders real bent and got my lip cut. My commander
28 fibbed on the accident report, saying that I honked the horn to warn everybody I was
29 coming, I didn't have time to honk no horn. I still got pictures of that today and I still
30 remember those days. During the days go by, I don't think of Vietnam. I think it was—
31 yeah it was a life experience that I carry with me. Good times and bad times.

1 JS: When you guys would be going down the hill, driving the truck, where would
2 you be going?

3 DC: We had to go back down to the basecamp which was where battalion
4 headquarters was, to get and then go out—I went out to the airport where the fuel dump
5 was, and it knows my bladders up and mess sergeant go over to class one to get food, and
6 the other guys would get off and go take a shower and get drunk. That’s what we’d do
7 when get down there, we had to go back to where we came from was Da Lat. Da Lat was
8 our main compound.

9 JS: All right, were the roads there pretty secure?

10 DC: We never had no problem. On our route we never had a problem, no
11 ambushes, no grenade throwing in the trucks and killing little kids and you know running
12 them down or just blatantly shoot them, we didn’t do no crap like that, our road was
13 good. I wouldn’t go down there at night, now that would be stupid. That would be a
14 stupid thing to do. Even the dumbest guy wouldn’t do that stupid.

15 JS: Well, could you talk a little bit I guess about—a little bit more about the
16 Signal side itself and I guess your quarters and kind of what it looked like a little bit?

17 DC: Well, we had the—since it was sixty-five-hundred foot, there was only sixty-
18 five men assigned to the Signal company, that included me, to the company there was
19 only sixty-five to eighty-five at any one given time. We used to have twelve sentry-dogs
20 and they just sent them somewhere else. We had a helipad about the size of a postage
21 stamp, so we handle one aircraft at a time, and night flights were impossible. We hadn’t
22 accepted the policy because we had antennas. Signal antennas, long distant lines, like I’d
23 go at night and sit and listen to the guys out in the field with their backpack radios and
24 you sit there and hear them screaming for help then you’d hear nothing, and I called it
25 “doing stupid stuff.” It was like in three stages, the barracks and the signal equipment
26 was on the top. The second ring was the living quarters—headquarters command bunker,
27 and on the third level was me and the bunker line. We had a regular mess hall made from
28 wood and tin roof. We ate regular rations; I don’t eat roast beef today for nothing. I mean
29 I wasn’t the grunt out in the field, I had a decent place to sleep, and we had maids to
30 clean up our drunken mess. We had showers, a guy would sit there and time it, you got
31 thirty seconds to take a shower with hot water. Because we only had four hot-water

1 heaters. Oh yeah, I forgot the water truck, yeah, we'll get—a water truck, you go half-
2 way down the hill and get water. You go by himself. Yeah, we—then we had a Quonset
3 hut that we used for a club. So, it wasn't all bad. I've been to groups where they didn't
4 think us mechanics and stuff were in Vietnam, and then I'd really make them mad by
5 saying, "Well, I had cold beer. Did you have cold beer out in the field?" You know just
6 make them mad, I did it in a vet group in Pocatello, Idaho. I was the agitator because
7 most of them were field troops, and then I'd say, "Well, I slept with one cheek my
8 sleeping bag on my cot, and then I'd wake up and grab a cold beer." Because I did, and
9 then I drank cold beer and go to breakfast, hot breakfast, serving lines. Just agitate them.
10 So, it was enjoyable that part, the bad parts it just—I guess we'll continue on when
11 you're ready on that. But our site was good, we had a good, clean site. It was orderly. It
12 was clean as you'd expect it be clean, you wake up in the morning, you come out and
13 you're above the clouds with the sun.

14 JS: All right, well, could you tell me a little bit about I guess the unit itself, the
15 company, some of the personalities you ran into? You don't have to use names if you
16 don't want to, but if you could talk a little bit about—

17 DC: Oh, personalities ran rampant. You'd get the hippy-style guy which I didn't
18 know too much of anyway, you had the dope smokers and you had us drunks. It was two
19 separate social classes. But I used to pick up their dope and bring it back to them because
20 they bought me beer and whisky. And my truck never got inspected, never. So, I was a
21 mule. Eighteen year old mule. Because when we go on convoys, under my seat of my
22 truck was a little storage area. So, in the mornings, when convoys were on Monday,
23 Wednesday, and Fridays, it'd be ice and cold beer under my seat compliments of dopers.
24 And they did that every day, they never missed a day because had they did, I wouldn't
25 have brought it back. Our unit had a lot of drug use. A lot for the percentage of people we
26 had. I think I'm getting off track here.

27 JS: No, not at all, I was going to ask you did the drug use—did it cause any
28 problems in the unit from what you saw?

29 DC: Yeah, most drunks would fight, we'd fight the heads. The heads would do
30 something to our toilet, and we'd push their toilet over. There really wasn't any fights
31 because everybody was either too stoned or too drunk to even think about fighting.

1 They'd give us a ration card saying we couldn't get whisky because we weren't E-5s,
2 crap. You didn't need that anyway, somebody else would go get it. But the dopers, they
3 had they—raised from weed-heads to heroin junkies and opium. My bunk-buddy, he
4 OD'ed [Overdose] on heroin. But they were buying heroin for thirty dollars for a softball
5 of black tar heroin. Weed went for five dollars for a grocery bag of buds, not no trash,
6 buds. Then they wanted Obesitol, which was a Vietnamese weight-reducing compound
7 which was nothing more than speed. It was pure, unadulterated speed. I quit going to get
8 it after one patrol went out, when the guys you know he's flying pretty good on that
9 Obesitol and he tripped off the ambush, and out of eleven only three come back. So, after
10 that I never did anymore, guys begging I said, "No you go downtown and by it." But
11 yeah, the divisions between the white and black was prevalent. It was very cut and dry for
12 those days, the dap you had to do, and they'd really have nothing to do with a white guy,
13 and I didn't have nothing to do with them. We only did what we had to do together, only
14 because we had to do it and not personal. Except my bunk-buddy was black. But it wasn't
15 as bad up there, as it was down in the compounds, or if you went to Cam Ranh Bay, then
16 things were thick. Because there was such a large amount of people together. But like I
17 said, there wasn't no fights. One guy got messed up, they had to call in a helicopter in,
18 but what he had done he stole a 45 caliber pistol from one of the sergeants. Then the
19 stupid guy tried to sell it back to one of the guys on the hill. Four of them held him down
20 and the other one beat him, stomped him. I had to take my truck, my little truck, and
21 backup and all he could do was moan. He looked rough. He looked like a meat grinder
22 had taken him. They took him out and flew him out. They weren't worried about seeing
23 him no more but that was probably the most tragic thing I'd seen them do to each other.
24 Our division was the NCOs and officers, was just that, division. We were divided. One is
25 due to the rank. Two, we didn't like lifers. And I turned out to be a lifer, now what can I
26 say? But at that time, they were all lifers, most of them were lifers. They all—most
27 regular Army guys used to harass the draftees and the draftees would harass us, but
28 verbal not physically. So that was about the mood on the hill, it really was intense, it was
29 almost like a playground. You know every once in a while, a sniper would—somebody
30 down there hunting on the side of the hill or just wanting to harass us. But nothing totally
31 big, every once in a while, they'd chuck a few in of mortar rounds just to watch us play, I

1 think. I think they were above us watching us like little ants. Then before I left Vietnam,
2 things got bad. One time. But that was the mood.

3 JS: Okay, all right. Well, you mentioned being the mule and transporting the
4 drugs for the—where would you get the drugs from?

5 DC: Downtown from the Vietnamese.

6 JS: Did you just know a guy, or was it pretty easy to find some?

7 DC: It was—you usually buy a package of Kool cigarettes, they looked like
8 they'd never been opened, it'd be weed. They just sit them—yeah, the Vietnamese made
9 it to where you could get Kool cigarettes with them in there. I mean anywhere you went
10 you could buy drugs. Command, you know, the lifers the commands they tried to stifle it
11 but (makes raspberry sound). You couldn't do that. Impossible. Every once in a while, a
12 guy would get stupid and get caught. The command would make his rounds in the
13 morning, look under sandbags and stuff and find weed. But nobody really cared how
14 much he found because it didn't make any difference. But yeah, drugs were very easy to
15 get. It was like going to the grocery store, you just walk in and get what you wanted.
16 Anywhere. Then you'd have a 7-Eleven, so between shopping centers and 7-Elevens
17 you'd buy all the weeds and stuff you wanted.

18 JS: Well, overall how would you—and you talked about the divisions between the
19 leadership and everyone else, but how would you describe the leadership as far as how
20 they did their jobs as commanding—

21 DC: At that time, at that age, my rank, I thought they were all dirt. But they all
22 weren't. But I get confused when I talk, like talking with you, how my feelings are today
23 as opposed to when I was eighteen. But at that time, I didn't care about them lifers. All
24 they were a pain in our butt. You know they was always doing inspections and had one
25 commander all he loved to do was turn that siren on about one, two o'clock in the
26 morning and then it's panic time. Everybody jumping up, grabbing weapons, running
27 down the bunkers. The mortar crews having to set things up. It was a goat roping. But
28 they broke into that, just turn the siren on. Just some guys blew half the barracks up. They
29 put a little C-4 underneath the building. Didn't hurt nobody. It was a storeroom.

30 JS: Okay, so they weren't trying to frag him then?

1 DC: To me that wasn't a fragging, that was just get him to stop doing silly crap.
2 But we had our First Sergeant Barrell, which I happened to fly home on the Freedom
3 Birds which was ironic, he was hated. He always had the infantry sergeant with him. You
4 know they'd go put booby traps in the food piles and burn it down. Somebody—one
5 night they threw a grenade at him. They wanted to kill him bad. I even bought a bible
6 from him that I have today, I mean—it did me—but it was fun. Everybody had a good
7 time. Because he tried to walk the bunker line, you'd stand up there at the barracks line
8 and chuck rocks at him because nobody told on nobody.

9 JS: Why was he hated so badly?

10 DC: He caught four guys taking C-rations out of a CONEX [Container Express]
11 container. And that he talked to you like you were dog. He was just a pure butthead. A
12 true lifer.

13 JS: Was he pulling stuff like, I guess like the things you would expect to get back
14 at an Army base in the US, like things have to be a certain way, your uniform has to be
15 worn properly—

16 DC: He tried that; he tried that crap on us. It didn't work, my boots were just as
17 red as can be from the dust, and I had fuel oil all over me, everybody else got dusty, he
18 tried. But as long as we were together, he didn't get through with it. He tried to get you to
19 button your pocket or some crap, and "Where's your hat?" "Wear your hat a little
20 different." It would be the normal things, as normal garrison in the United States. But we
21 didn't like it.

22 JS: Well, getting back to just a moment to when you first arrived in-country, I
23 know you talked about the whole FNG thing and all of that, but was there much of that
24 new-guy treatment when you first arrived, did they give you a hard time?

25 DC: Yes. When I got up the hill, they put you on guard duty. Well, they didn't
26 give me a weapon. They said I could only go down there and use the M79 grenade
27 launcher, and fragmentation grenades. Well, to get the fragmentation grenades, you had
28 to untape it, pull it out, then pull the pins out, then throw it, but you had to go outside to
29 throw them. So, what they did, was somebody would pull a trip wire, intentionally of
30 course, knowing I was petrified, they would start shooting their M60s crisscross, there
31 was one on each side of me, and I got scared, jumped out, and I was shooting that M79

1 like a machine gun. I was shaking, about peed my pants, and I ran out of ammunition for
2 the M79, so I started unboxing and throwing grenades. When I was empty, the guys come
3 down the line laughing their butts off because everybody knew what was going to happen
4 to me. After that you just had to make your own place within them. Not everybody likes
5 everybody.

6 JS: How long did it to kind of—for the new guy stuff to stop? Before it just
7 became—

8 DC: Oh, I'd say everybody was calling everybody a new guy. No, we'd—
9 everybody would holler their days out. Excuse me, but I'm getting dry here. But anyway.
10 It wouldn't go on very long. Because somebody else was coming in. Rotating in, so you
11 got your turn at it, so nah it didn't take long. They would feel you out for a little bit,
12 and—the biggest division was if you were a Head, or you were a Juicer. That's how they
13 took it. Because the Heads had their political agenda, the anti-war, I didn't know
14 anything about that crap now, nothing. I was blind. But it stopped quick.

15 JS: Well, you, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

16 DC: Pardon?

17 JS: Oh, I'm sorry. Well, you were talking about, again about going into town and
18 things like that, having interaction with the local Vietnamese there, what was your
19 impression of them?

20 DC: They were gooks and I just go down there, if I wanted to take a little taxi
21 ride, I'd get out and the guy didn't like that I'd put my gun in his face. The little Vespas,
22 the little Vespas with the little feet on like you see in India and in Pakistan. Yeah, if you
23 didn't want to pay you just put the gun in the guy's face and get out, he wouldn't say
24 nothing. Because he knew you'd shoot him.

25 JS: Right.

26 DC: This wasn't Afghanistan and Iran—Iraq. Where they did a lot of stupid
27 things when they want to kill somebody. We'd blatantly just shoot them. Then you go to
28 the market, and everything stunk, flies all over the geese and the dogs and goats, it
29 smelled of Vietnam. That was the old, fermented cabbage and (makes sound of disgust)
30 fish. Then we'd go to a bar, a bar or two, and they only served 33 beer called Tiger Piss.
31 The French introduced it to the Vietnamese way back when, and it was always said that

1 there was a drop or two of formaldehyde in it. But that beer was nasty, but after you got
2 past one or two it didn't make no difference. So, we'd drink Tiger Beer because we drank
3 American beer up on the hill. I drank black-label for one solid year. Schlitz was for the
4 black guys to drink, we drank Budweiser—yeah, we drank Budweiser, and they drank
5 Schlitz. We one day waited for a resupply convoy coming into Da Lat itself from a place
6 about a hundred miles away, well one of them was a beer truck. Thirty-seven foot tractor
7 trailer, stacked as high as he can get the beer, and on their way, they got ambushed. So,
8 when they got in to—we see them as they pulled into town, beer was foaming
9 everywhere. And we were out of beer, so we had to go down to the locals to buy it, it cost
10 us more but shoot I—it was ten cents a can, and they wanted like a quarter a can. That's
11 pure robbery. But—whoops I got off track again.

12 JS: Oh no, not at all. Did you feel that the Vietnamese were—I don't know—
13 untrustworthy in—

14 DC: Yes, in its entirety. I trusted my barber. He'd give us a fifty-cent haircut and
15 a shave with a straight razor that shaved other heads. Oh, I'd say about eight-months into
16 it they found him in the wire. He'd been a VC [Viet Cong] sympathizer from day one. So,
17 we found him in the wire after one little skirmish.

18 JS: Now did they seem—I guess underneath, did they seem hostile? Or no? Or—

19 DC: Yeah, they hated us. Except for the whores, you know, and the pimps and the
20 storekeepers. It was a love/hate thing. They didn't want us there. We didn't want to be
21 there, but they thought they'd go ahead and profit from us because we were the ones with
22 big money. I lived well on fifty-dollars for a month. It bought all the beer I needed, all the
23 cigarettes I needed, so I was never out of either one of the two. I drank a half a bottle of
24 Aqua Velva shaving liquid because I was drunk, wanted some more, so I drank wood-
25 alcohol. I was sick, that broke me of that little bad habit in a heartbeat, I still remember
26 how sick I was. If I burped, or it came out the other way, it was pure Aqua Velva. You
27 know one of my dumb little things at eighteen. But it was just a love/hate situation, you
28 either—it's like what they got now, you don't know who was who. Same thing the guys
29 are into now in both wars that they don't know who's who. Couldn't trust nobody except
30 Joe and poop-burner. He's the only guy I trusted. Him and I was—when I got in trouble
31 Joe—I hired a guy for three dollars a day, a Montagnard from down at the village at the

1 base of our mountain to burn poop. Well, him and I burned poop together for a long, long
2 time. We were intimate friends. Then when they pulled the old outhouse out, he rode it
3 all the way down the mountain because he wanted it. But yeah, they hated us, just like we
4 hated them.

5 JS: How about the South Vietnamese military? Did you have much contact
6 with—

7 DC: No. None.

8 JS: Switching gears a little bit I guess, I know you talked about the enemy
9 mortaring you guys occasionally, that type of thing, what—from the contact that you did
10 have, what was your impressions of the enemy?

11 DC: Well, I didn't have any time to think, I was scared. I was always scared. I
12 was scared for three-hundred-and-sixty-five days. But you know, accuracy? Nah. Once in
13 a while, they'd get something decent, you know like maybe get the ammo dump, get the
14 fuel dump, you know something interesting. Other than that, they just knew where to lob
15 them in at just to aggravate us. We couldn't find them, and they found us. There was
16 always the nighttime. Because they know Americans go to sleep. It's not like today's
17 forces that can see all night, do all night maneuvers, it's just the opposite. Always scared,
18 always scared.

19 JS: Well, I know you mentioned one particular night it got pretty bad, would you
20 want to talk about that now? Is that—

21 DC: Yeah, that was on 11th of June of 1970, that was two-weeks before I was to
22 rotate back to the States. It was probably about midnight, one o'clock, all of a sudden, all
23 hell was breaking loose. There was mortar rounds coming in, gunfire up to the perimeter.
24 They blew one bunker up by our gate. It just—chaotic. I ended up working in the mortar
25 pit until I darn near killed us. You drop a round, you wait for it to go off, then you drop
26 another round. Well, I started to drop in another round before that one fired off. So, they
27 threw me out of the pit. Well, they never got to the wire, they called in Puff the Magic
28 Dragon, and we had a cloud come in like we did every night. They dropped magnesium
29 flares and couldn't see them. So, we had a guy was a—that didn't make it as a lieutenant
30 in the artillery, he plotted, for the whole company, he plotted for Puff, and Puff would—
31 he rained down his hot, it would hurt if it hit you because he was in altitude, his shells

1 dropping down everywhere, but he kept buzzing it and then we had two guys that were
2 wounded. Hadn't been for Puff, none of us would've been there. In order to get the
3 DUSTOFF [Dedicated Unhesitating Service To Our Fighting Forces] then, you still had
4 that cloud. Well, plus you got our antennas. They finally coaxed the DUSTOFF in, he
5 said, "Don't load them I don't have enough fuel." Well, why'd you even come up here?
6 You had to keep circling because he couldn't see nothing. So, the second DUSTOFF
7 finally got in, and put the two guys on it—no, it took about four, two to four, and they
8 took off and we went on probably for, god, what seemed like days, but it was only I'd
9 say, it lasted maybe two hours. I peed myself, I was so damn scared because I was so
10 close to going home. It was bad. Even the next morning it was still bad. You know we
11 had the mess hall had been mortared, fuel, ammunition, barracks, I mean our structural—
12 but they didn't hit any signal equipment. But our internal, they just tore stuff up. They
13 mortared—oh yeah, Vietnamese did get through with a satchel charge and he put it in my
14 fuel truck. So, it blew it and blew my whole truck up, and that made me mad, and then it
15 burned it up on top of that because all of the fuel had it. I still—and then after that we just
16 started cleaning up, and resupply, then I left. And when I left, they'd take the mortars and
17 shoot flares as you're going away gift. But that night, that night was hell. Have not
18 experienced nothing like that yet since.

19 JS: Was that the only night that was like that at all? Or was—

20 DC: That was a hell-night out of three-hundred-and-sixty-five days, other than
21 that we had, like I said, sporadic. They'd drop mortars in sporadic later, they'd hued in if
22 we were too lax on ourselves. But we didn't get constant barrages every day like some of
23 the guys in the field, or in some of the basecamps, there was a Green Beret basecamp at
24 the bottom of our—and the VC messed them all the time because they had five
25 Howitzers. So, they were always shooting them guys up. The night they got hit pretty
26 hard, our mortar men had it plotted to where they would—I was sitting on a big rock with
27 another guy drinking bar. Everything relates back to beer. You could see where the
28 mortars were coming from, but the command they called MACV [Military Assistance
29 Command, Vietnam] would not issue permission for them to fire down on them. Isn't
30 crap, you know? Two guys got killed down there for what? For our guys not to lob one or
31 two down and maybe get that mortar crew that was shooting them? Stupid crap like that.

1 JS: Let's see. When you were not on duty, how would you guys spend your day
2 on—I know you've mentioned—

3 DC: Get drunk, get high.

4 JS: Anything else? Letter writing? Writing letters—

5 DC: I wrote every night, but I'd make a tape occasionally, and most of the time in
6 them days of course we didn't have DVDs, all we had was them magnetic tapes, and
7 these were three-inch models and I still got them. But I have never found nothing yet, I
8 had the recorder for years and I finally threw it away, there was no repairing it. Wait for
9 the mail, take pictures, and the Heads would stay Headed, and the drunks would be
10 drunken. That was down time.

11 JS: Speaking of which, I meant to ask you this earlier. What was the daily
12 schedule like? Like what time would you get up in the morning?

13 DC: (Laughs) That was a good one. The old first sergeant tried to have formations
14 and maybe about seven. But he couldn't find half of us because we were still in the
15 bunks. We were defiant to orders and maintain chaos to the first sergeant. Was supposed
16 to gotten up at like five, have breakfast at six, and—but we still always—oh once in a
17 while we behaved. Not very often, but Bubba the cook was the most late guy in town. He
18 was real dirty and wet and had exhaust dirt on me (means him), I went in to eat and I was
19 standing beside one of them Signal guys in the chow line and the guy said, "Man get out
20 of here. You ain't eating in here with me," and then a few words after that, about that
21 time you heard smack! Bubba the cook slapped the guy upside his face with a spatula,
22 and told him, "Don't you ever mess with Carson. If it wasn't for Carson and his crew,
23 you wouldn't be eating, and don't you ever talk to David like that again." That was one
24 of the more—and they'd let Joe the poop burner. After we all got done eating, they'd beat
25 him. We couldn't stand the stink of him (laughter). They tried to make it formal, but it
26 didn't work quite so well.

27 JS: About how many hours a day would you put in, in the garage?

28 DC: Let me see. What were we, we were supposed to work from daylight to dark?
29 But if we didn't go out on convoy, we'd only be working five, six hours a day. And we
30 were drinking while we were working, so it didn't make much difference. My
31 indoctrination to drinking, of course, was genetic on my mother's side. Well, Vietnam

1 enhanced my drinking, so I drank every day for one solid year. I don't remember missing
2 a day. That played a major role on if I was going to do any work or not. So, we didn't get
3 much done other than tires. I hate tires. I hate to see a truck go by me; I hate tires.
4 (Laughter).

5 JS: Well, did you get a chance to go on R&R [Rest and Recuperation]?

6 DC: I had the chance; my wife and I were going to meet in Hawaii. But we
7 changed our minds. We didn't have the money to do it. So, she said, "Well, you can go to
8 Australia or Bangkok," "No, if I went I wouldn't want to go there either." I'd get in
9 trouble, more trouble than I wanted to be in. Because that's where most of the guys went
10 was Australia and Bangkok. Give me one second here please. (Talking to third party).
11 My grandson.

12 JS: Okay.

13 DC: Okay, yeah no I wish in a way we had done it, but in another way I'm glad
14 that we didn't because there'd been too much heartbreak you know, to go, be with her for
15 less than two weeks, then have to give her up again. So, I just didn't go.

16 JS: Any other particularly memorable moments? Anything else that we should
17 mention from your tour before talking about coming home? Anything that we haven't
18 talked of yet?

19 DC: Going home. Got on the trucks, the same supply trucks, as a matter of fact I
20 went down in my own truck and I wasn't driving, the new guy was driving. Then they
21 fired the flares off of course for us, and then—well, I got down to Da Lat and then I tried
22 for three days to get a flight out—Vietnamese villagers were getting priorities with their
23 goats and their nasty fish. It took me three days to get a flight to Cam Ranh Bay. We out-
24 processed, they give us a pee test and took a blood test because if you're drunk weren't
25 going home, and if you had drugs in your system, you weren't going home, you'd go to a
26 rehab tent. But yeah, that was funny part.

27 JS: Well, what was the actual coming home like for you?

28 DC: That was fun, it was different. We took sixteen-hour flight, we landed at
29 McChord Air Force Base in Washington state. They took us by bus to the Army side. We
30 went to the warehouse, got fitted for our class A uniform. We went to a debriefing. Then
31 they told us to go downstairs and get dressed, and stupid me I had brand new fatigues, I

1 probably had three or four sets, brand new, brand new pair of jungle boots. All I did was
2 strip my clothes off, put my class A's on, and got on a civilian bus to the Seattle/Tacoma
3 airport. Me being young, and stupid, there was some good people on the airplane, and
4 they'd buy me drinks. Well, I couldn't handle my liquor, I can drink beer all day, but I
5 couldn't handle my liquor. I jumped up one time, knocked the stewardess carrying a tray
6 and that made a real ass out of me. Then the old couple wouldn't buy me nothing more to
7 drink. So, I slept. I hadn't called my wife yet, so I said, "Well, I'll just keep going," so
8 I flew from there, a few bunny hops, and got to Tampa, Florida. Got me a taxicab, drove
9 right to the house, right up to the house one house up, and started to walk in, and the
10 neighbor yelled, "David's home!" That's how far I made it, and then I was home. My
11 oldest daughter, which is still a pain in my butt, was born and like I said she was eight-
12 months old. That was the ending to the rest of the beginning.

13 JS: How much longer did you have before you had to go back? How much—did
14 you have—

15 DC: I didn't have to go back.

16 JS: Actually, what I meant, sorry, what I meant to say was, how much time did
17 you have off before you had to report for your next duty station?

18 DC: I had thirty days.

19 JC: Thirty days, okay.

20 DC: Then we travelled to Fort Bliss from Tampa, Florida, in a 1960 Chevy that
21 would overheat if you're pulling a hill too hard. So, we carried like twenty, twenty-five
22 gallons of water. Oh, it was terrible on the trip. We had the baby, of course, and then we
23 had a little dog, about all we had was gas money. We had a lot of bologna on the trip. I
24 had a U-Haul trailer, wheel bearings weren't on it. So, we had a State Trooper come by.
25 He made a call and they got me a—U-Haul took me to the U-Ville, and they fixed that.
26 Hundreds of miles away my cargo's bad. The '60 Chevy has two dry shafts, and then
27 they have a bearing in the center. Well, the bearing went out, so no money, out in the
28 middle of nowhere, this guy just kept driving real slow-like, one mile an hour, with it
29 flopping. So, we finally got to this town, and we pulled in for the night, well the guy—the
30 guy that owned the place, "What's up soldier?" And I go, "My car, something's wrong
31 with my car I got," he says, "Yeah, your bearings out," I said, "Well, how much money is

1 that going to cost?" He says, "For parts? Fourteen ninety-five, but I'll do it for free the
2 labor since you just got back from 'Nam." So, he put the bearing in, we went on our
3 merry way, and then went to Fort Bliss, Texas, out in the middle of nowhere, I worked—
4 from my house to my work was thirty-five miles in the desert. Maybe twenty-three miles
5 from White Sands Missile Range. I was assigned to a missile company, in repair in the
6 motor pool. Had nothing to do with missiles. But other than support vehicles. I had went
7 from E-1 to E-5 in that year in Vietnam, well my mind was still an E-1, but I was an E-5.
8 So, my warrant officer, he was a W-3, got tired of my antics and told me, "Go get a
9 toolbox." He put me with the C-3, he called him over here and he says, "Carson you go
10 with him until you're ready to become an NCO." So, he got me a toolbox. I worked for
11 about three weeks with this E-3, and I said, "You know, I've had enough of this crap." So
12 I went, knocked on the chiefs door, and he says, "Come on in Carson." I said, "Chief, I'm
13 tired of this crap. I'm an E-5 and I want to be one." He says, "Good, good, that's fine."
14 "And I want to turn my toolbox back in," "Yeah, yes, mm-hmm, yeah you can do that."
15 Then he handed me my blank efficiency report. He said, "You fill it out, I'll sign
16 whatever you put down there." (Laughter) Where normally it's like three people in chain
17 for efficiency report, he says, "Whatever you want, I'll sign it." He said, "You tell me
18 what you want to be, or what your efficiency was." So, I did it the best I could, and then
19 I—that carried on throughout my career. When my junior NCOs, when it was efficiency
20 report time for them, I'd say, "Make me one. I'll sign whatever you put down there." And
21 it worked.

22 JS: All right, well, how much longer did you stay in after you got back from
23 Vietnam?

24 DC: Until 1988 when I retired. Twenty years. I had like a total of twelve-years
25 total in Germany, that three months in Fort Bliss, my basic and AIT. Yeah, I stayed
26 twenty, I became a lifer. The words are eating me up from the year ago. Then I went to
27 reenlist, and my first sergeant says, "Nah Dave, you don't want to go to Hawaii. You
28 want to go to Germany." So, I reenlisted. We went to Germany for the first time. After
29 that, oh let's see where else have I been in my life? If I had four tours in Germany—I
30 can't think where else, I went in the world. Mercy, I didn't go to very many places. My
31 last assignment was Pocatello, Idaho, as an active duty medic with the reserve unit.

1 Which is totally—that's how they worked it, they put at least one or two active duties in
2 with the reserve unit—that permanent duty station. Well, I called my manager, my career
3 manager one day and you know it was getting close to—I think I had seventeen in, and I
4 called my career manager for my MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] and I tried to
5 get it out of my system. He said, "I'll get them—they'll send you somewhere Dave." I
6 said, "What do you mean you're going to send me somewhere? What are you going to
7 do, send me to Korea?" He said, "Well, I can't tell you that," I said, "Yeah that's what
8 you're going to do, aren't you?" to know that I got to back track. Normally the Army
9 would only give a one to three-year extension on your duty station. I had asked for four
10 years, in order to finish out to my twenty. We—I got an approval for four years, so that
11 set me in to—so but I didn't realize, they still could reassign me at twenty, do an
12 involuntary stay until they wanted me out, but I called my career manager again and told
13 him, "I want to retire." And I'm scared to death. That's the biggest decision I've ever
14 made in my life next to getting married. I asked him nicely, "Where am I going? I want to
15 retire." I says, "Are you going to send me anywhere?" He says, "I can't tell you that
16 Dave, you know that." I said, "Come on man, tell me." He wouldn't tell me, he says,
17 "But if you want to retire, you got two words to use, you can use yes or no. If you say,
18 yes, I want to retire, you'll never talk to me again. Because I'll have you ready to retire
19 very shortly. If you say no, then fine I'm going to send you somewhere," and I knew in
20 my heart, in my head, where he was going to send me. He was going to send me to
21 Korea. So, I finished out my twenty years in Pocatello, Idaho. That's the finest soldiers I
22 have ever had or served with. Because most all of them were prior-service. What we'd do
23 when we'd go to the fields, my people had to put a GP medium up for all the guys and I
24 did have women in maintenance, so they'd put up a separate tent. Well, went to Fort
25 Carson, Colorado, the exact place I started and the last place when I ended, but it was
26 raining so they got the big tent up and got the lights on, she was my driver for convoys,
27 and she went and got my bags and made sure my briefcase was sitting in my own bunk. It
28 was raining bad, people were trying to come in to get out of the rain I said, "No, no, no,
29 no, no, no, no. You get out of my house." Then they would go start the spare generator
30 that we used for the bakery unit, and have coffee made. And the reason they had coffee
31 made was because if they didn't get coffee to me and chief, we'd start micromanaging.

1 So, then we decide to get a coffee, and we just sit there and shoot the breeze. So, they had
2 it made. You know that's all their hair, both of them. Then the last time we didn't get the
3 female tent up, we only had two females in the company, two or three. Well, my driver
4 was a female, and would not let a male be my driver on convoy, no, no, no, no, no. No. I
5 didn't want no man driving me. She was probably—she was a deputy, and I would only
6 let her—(speaks to third party). I'm back.

7 JS: Sure, no problem. All right.

8 DC: But was them—I made the section make an ass out of every other section in
9 the company. Because we'd have our tent up, our lights going, generator going, coffee
10 made. She would set my, like I said, she'd put my—all the maintenance crews would go
11 in there and help each other, and for me and my boss even, and put their cots together,
12 put the sleeping bags out for them, put the personal gear underneath, have everything set
13 for nighttime. Well, it was raining, and we only had one female, the rest of them they had
14 put in another tent somewhere. Well, my driver says, "I don't care if I stay here with you
15 guys—I'm not seeing anything I haven't seen lately." First sergeant come in and he was
16 hot, "You can't do that! We'll get in trouble!" I said, "No, come on top," I says, "She
17 don't care, I don't care, the guys don't care, all she's going to do is get in her sleeping
18 bag and take her clothes down to—however she slept." And she got dressed the same
19 way. I love my convoys. When we'd convoy from Pocatello, Idaho, to California,
20 Washington state, I'd have about fifty vehicles and I'd tell them, "Do not drink these
21 beers in them trucks." So, I would drive ahead with my driver, get out of the truck
22 because there's certain things, I could looked that they couldn't see. They'd throw beer
23 cans at me, they'd moon me, each time they always did it. But they were enjoyable folks,
24 I had a good time, and I was sad. They gave me a going away gift. I was scared to have
25 retired to begin with because I figured if at the age of thirty-seven, I wouldn't have any
26 luck looking for a job. And number two, Idaho, Utah, the Mormon religion runs
27 everything. It's like I'm in the Bible Belt right now, I'm Baptist, but not like how the
28 LDS [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] people, and I'm not criticizing
29 them because they do, do good things for people. But there's a majority, you know they
30 couldn't ask you what your religion was on a job application, they'd wait and ask you
31 what war or state you were in. And then you wouldn't get the job because you were a

1 non-Mormon, but I—that was one of my factors in. Trust me, I was going to be too old
2 for the job market period, so I went ahead and got out at thirty-seven and we moved back
3 to Florida. The wife and kids went back to Florida, I had to go back out, I had six-months
4 left. And I didn't do nothing. I mean I did nothing. I was volunteer fireman, I enjoyed
5 that immensely. Then I went home. I tried to run a business, a lawn equipment business
6 and repair, (makes raspberry sound). That went in the hole in five years because I had
7 got—I had went to a treatment center, an alcohol and drug treatment center in California,
8 outside of Vacaville, Air Force Base. So, I was dry for five years, and then I let it go. I
9 was back off to the wagon. So that brought my business-less mind to nowhere, so we lost
10 everything we had. So I went, let's see, I went and applied at a factory. That lasted three
11 months. That was the cleanest maintenance job I had ever had, linoleum floors, nothing
12 to get dirty on. They closed down three months after I got started. So, then I went to
13 another company, made electronic cables. That lasted two-days, three maybe, maybe
14 three. There's six owners and the old guy that did electronics was a retired electronic-
15 man he used to get his buck seventy-five and me. Well, me can't do six peoples request at
16 the same time. So, I figured it out, I went and got the dolly at lunch time, went and got
17 my toolbox, dollied it out to my truck, I went back into the breakroom, stood there, one
18 of the owners come in and says, "What's up?" I says, "I quit. I cannot work under six
19 peoples directions." "Well, we can change this," I said, "No, no I got to go." So, I quit
20 that job. I went to work for another guy in a lawn mower shop. He was dumber than a
21 box of rocks. Accused me of being a thief, so it went from there. Then another guy had
22 bought a lawn mower shop, I went to work for him, but I had to do wrench turning this
23 time, not supervising. So, I worked for him for a year, and the guy that was going to
24 replace me, he was a big guy he drove a Harley, and he stood up on his Harley for some
25 reason to stretch his legs, and he lost control and he killed himself. Well, that's where the
26 mechanic went, and I kept telling Carl the whole time, I said, "Man, we've got to get
27 somebody in here because I'm not getting any younger." I think I was forty-eight, playing
28 with lawn mowers, I worked like a dog. He paid me like a—I got about half median pay
29 of being a mechanic for lawn mowers. I got nine or ten, and best is fifteen. Well, anyway
30 I kept telling him, I said, "Carl you've got to get somebody, I'm getting wore out." One
31 day I got wore out, ended up in the hospital. In the hospital for about three-weeks because

1 I had—in the outcome, I smoked, I drank. I partied too much, I did this too much, well it
2 all caught up with me. So, then I went on Medicare disability. Then we moved—my dad
3 lives here in Sikeston, Missouri where I’m moving out because I’m moving into his
4 trailer, he passed a year ago, and my diabetic doctor is Jordanian. But I didn’t know that
5 he had worked for the VA [Veterans Administration] for two years, he says, “You don’t
6 have your VA?” “Well, no.” He says, “You get up there and do it now.” So, I went and
7 did the preliminaries at the VA, and I got my hundred percent service connected,
8 disability. Then the Army has a pay system for—all stem from the federal employees
9 double-dipping. So, they wanted us to double-dip, that’s how I seen it, so VA sent my
10 paperwork to the Army. They made the decision of my health. And they came up with
11 seventy percent, well that gives me three checks. I get my social security disability, I get
12 my VA, and I get my combat related service connected, so I do pretty good financially.
13 I’m more fortunate than millions and millions of other guys that served, whether they
14 went to ‘Nam or not, and you know my sympathy that goes with them. The one thing that
15 helped me was, I had my original medical file. The day I went into the day I got out.
16 Excuse me. (Talking to third party) I’m back.

17 JS: Okay, all right.

18 DC: Yeah, I mean, so that helped a lot. I mean it took a while, you know that
19 social security took eighteen months and had to go in front of a hearing Federal Judge.
20 But he approved me that day, and the normal was one to three-months for approvals. He
21 did it that day. I was scared. He asked me how was my golf game, I said, “Sir, I can’t
22 golf.” Then we went through the other procedural crap they got to have, and then his last
23 question to me was, he says, “Mr. Carson, how’s your golf game?” I said, “Sir, I can’t
24 golf.” So, we did the bowling and the golf questions, well fine we’re done. I got approval,
25 he said, “I approve it right now.” I guess he was in a hurry, but anyway. I’ll let you ask
26 another question now.

27 JS: Okay, all right. Well, what was your rank when you retired from the Army?

28 DC: I was an E-7, sergeant first class.

29 JS: Okay, all right. Backing up just a little bit here to a couple of questions
30 about—Vietnam-related questions.

31 DC: No problem.

1 JS: When you left—after you got back home from Vietnam, did you follow the
2 War at all through the media? Did you keep up with what was going on?

3 DC: Nope because I stayed just like when—people ask me if the Flower Child,
4 put the rose into my gun barrel or spit on me, I didn't even know what a hippy was. I
5 really didn't know what a hippy was after I got home. But yeah, I'd watch TV the same
6 stuff that my wife, to add into that, my wife watched TV every night the news to see if
7 she could see me. Which of course was impossible. I would call her occasional on what
8 they called MARS [Military Auxiliary Radio System], and that was the only system we
9 had. We didn't have cellphones and satellites, but anyway back to your question.

10 JS: Go ahead.

11 DC: I didn't see any hippies when I come home because—you stay within your
12 community, not only for camaraderie, it's a security that you feel when you're within the
13 military system, not just the Army, but the military system you've got that camaraderie,
14 and you've got that safety net. So, I watched TV every night and it didn't bother me.
15 Because I was still drinking.

16 JS: Well, any reaction to the way the War ended?

17 DC: Yeah, another flop. We got our nose stuck into something we didn't need to
18 be into, as it is present day, we got into things we didn't need to put our nose into. If
19 somebody wants genocide, we'll let them have their genocide. They're going to do it
20 anyway. I mean I don't believe in genocide, but I can't stop it. I just—I don't know.

21 JS: Well, just a few more questions here.

22 DC: Not a problem, I'm enjoying this.

23 JS: Okay, all right. Well, looking back on your Vietnam experience, how do you
24 feel about your service? How do you feel about it?

25 DC: I served my country. I served with the guys that helped serve and so-called
26 protect our country. Because that's—I did my job, I did what was expected of me. I had
27 issues, alcoholism, bipolar dis.—which I didn't know about until about three years ago—
28 Agent Orange. We, to go quickly on that one, we had the old style backpack fire
29 extinguishers you had to, it's like a backpack sprayer you'd go to Walmart and get, you
30 just pump it and it'll spray for you. Well, we had the old metal ones, but we didn't have
31 any caps for them. So, we'd pour out of this fifty-five gallon drum, fill them up, and start

1 walking the perimeter and you used to—your whole back and your pants are soaked. And
2 we'd have to do weed control about every three, four weeks we'd have to go do it again,
3 it was the same old guys. But I did my duty, and I—there's not enough—what can I say.
4 It hasn't left me, and I haven't left my country. We didn't get the big parades; I went to a
5 couple of little ones and that was a joke. The best thing that ever happened to me was
6 about two months ago, on the back of my van I have "Vietnam Veteran" and "Retired
7 Army" on the back and I we were loading grocery's in, me and my grandson, and guy
8 says, "Were you in Vietnam?" "Yeah." He says, "Well, welcome home." He is the only
9 one that had ever said that with sincerity. I about couldn't handle it. It was too emotional
10 for me, and it still sticks with me today because I watched the news, and I'm on the
11 internet like an idiot, and I like anything that's military. I told my wife, I says, "Why
12 don't all of us retirees that are getting old now, you send us to Iraq and Afghanistan. Give
13 us a little bit of whisky. Give us our weapons and ammunition, give us a vehicle. Let us
14 go fight the war. Because we don't have to come back. And save today's generation." I
15 know this been going on since time was invented, wars, and everybody's got a good
16 reason to have one. My biggest pet peeve it's that manufactory and political boo-boos.
17 The president listens to too many stupid people. His commanders in chiefs and sub-chiefs
18 and generals, they have always said the president the wrong stuff. I love my country.

19 JS: All right. You kind of, you touched on this a little bit, but do you think the US
20 should've been involved in Vietnam? Or do you think it was a mistake?

21 DC: No. No, we had no reason to be there. They didn't have weapons of mass
22 destruction and worried about another country invaded, they were just an awful country
23 to begin with. And this Communist rule stuff is just, that's bunko. It was their country to
24 begin with, and people started making a political thing out of it about Communism.
25 Because we still had that Cold War stuff going on and so I think it was a confusion in all
26 their brains. There was no reason to kill fifty-eight thousand men. I've been to the Wall
27 twice and we just had the moving Wall here. It's such a solemn place. Well, it didn't have
28 to be. It didn't have to be, and today's conflicts, they've got a low body count. Be harsh
29 about it, I mean yeah four, five, six, ten thousand people is nothing in ten years. We were
30 ten years in Vietnam, fifty-eight thousand. You know they're not taking B-52s and
31 running them up, down the streets in either place. They're worried about politics and

1 religion; religion has always dominated wars. Since the beginning and before our times.
2 Before time became time. But if I was asked to go back, yes, I would. I'd probably die
3 from the heat in about ten minutes, but I'd try.

4 JS: Well, what's your opinion of U.S. policy towards Vietnam today? With trade,
5 that type of thing, veterans going back—

6 DC: Well, you keep your tee shirts, Nike, U.S. ship harbor going into Hanoi
7 harbor or Saigon harbor, you spent ten years, fifty-eight thousand dead, millions of
8 wounded and maimed, and you want to make issues. You know? Now in Vietnam,
9 they're going to start sinking a little bit more money into Vietnam to justify. The
10 companies that have went there, they're no better than the Vietnamese. The same thing
11 goes for—ones for Mexico. Trading—now the companies go to Mexico, same difference.
12 It's wrong. Yeah, just wrong.

13 JS: Well, how about things like veterans going back to Vietnam? What do you
14 think about that?

15 DC: I like that. I would like to do it myself but like I said earlier, that's a financial
16 nightmare. I have been in contact with guys that I had known that were in my unit. One
17 had went, he's single, he went back and stayed for a month. He sent me pictures of where
18 we were at on the top of the mountain, they use that for a hiking trail. The only
19 resemblance of anything American up there is all the super-poured concrete, you know
20 down twenty, thirty feet the concrete that held the big radio antennas. I see a Vietnamese
21 girl standing by a tree, so I went through my—I don't know how they de-milled the place
22 myself. I do not know how they cleaned that place up, they must've told a whole bunch
23 of people, "Start walking." In that picture, I've got the same picture and it was just
24 outside the perimeter line, and it looks beautiful. They've got a hotel up there. I don't
25 need to go to Hanoi or make a Saigon trip, I just need a Da Lat trip, that's all I ever
26 wanted. It's not going to happen so I'll just the take best of memories and I'm glad these
27 old guys are doing it. Because I'm bringing an ending, a partial ending, to their War.
28 Economically the U.S. sucks when it comes to letting our jobs go. Especially to Vietnam.
29 But then we take Japanese then we do Chinese, China's a communist country I mean
30 we're just the sounding board for other countries. You and I can start our own little
31 country somewhere, and that's worth a couple billion dollars to get it started. Then we'll

1 defraud the government and bail them out. (Laughter) You can bail out General Motors,
2 but you can't bail out the school systems. New York's getting ready to drop, about what,
3 about a 180 schools? There's no sense in that, teachers around here and getting laid off
4 and (makes noise of frustration). I'm glad I'm sixty. But I feel for my—I feel for the—
5 well, they're not even counted. Baby Boomer time, it's the one like my grandson, he's
6 eleven year old, he's got something to worry about. Total world crap, you don't know if
7 you're going to have anything to fall back on like people and social security, but they
8 took the social security away, I think it was Hoover that started it?

9 JS: Hoover or FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt], one of them.

10 DC: Yeah, well, anyway they didn't mean for it to be your retirement tick. So
11 many elderly think that's what their retirement was, and they got fooled. Well, there may
12 not be nothing for my grandson's generation. And a lot of other things.

13 JS: Well, before wrapping things up is there anything else you'd like to say?
14 Anything else we haven't covered at this point?

15 DC: Well, I think the biggest thing is, one I overly enjoyed that I was able to
16 contact an organization like the University and have this two-and-a-half-hour
17 conversation. It means a lot to me, my wife didn't understand because I took off and
18 settled at the schools at one thirty so I wouldn't miss your call, or my house has got dogs
19 and they'd be barking, wife would be hollering at me, my grandson. So, I went over there
20 early, and she won't understand this because she (makes noise of frustration) had a back
21 operation and now she's got short term memory loss. Well, she don't understand a lot of
22 this stuff, and I wasn't going to let that—nothing ruin my conversation with you. And
23 any of your staff, and the University.

24 JS: Well, thank you, we certainly appreciate you taking the time to do this, to tell
25 us—

26 DC: I was in Killeen for two years. I love Texas. But a good-at-a-boy for you,
27 one.

28 JS: Well, thank you.

29 DC: You get my number one, at-a-boy. Number two can go to your staff, number
30 three can go to the university, and number four can go to the state of Texas. Because
31 you're the only one that I had up that had a program for just us Vietnam guys. I like the

1 way the guys are getting treated today. A four-hundred-thousand dollar death certificate, I
2 like that, that's okay, mine was five-thousand. They've gotten better equipment, as far as
3 the troops go, not as far as command goes. There's still no different than they have been
4 for ten-thousand years, but I feel that I'm not—or I haven't don't enough for today's
5 warrior. The closest military boat is where I was at for drill sergeants in '79 to '81 is Fort
6 Leonard Wood, Missouri. But that's four hours away. I had wished I was close to a
7 military installation so I could do more for those that are still serving, the wounded, the
8 families or anything before I leave this world. But I've said in contributions to AER
9 [American Economic Review] because I know the money's going somewhere, but I
10 applaud the program that you and I just had together.

11 JS: Well, thank you, sir. As I said, we certainly appreciate you doing this.

12 DC: How long has this program been going now?

13 JS: The Oral History part of the project's been going on since 1999.

14 DC: Mercy.

15 JS: But the project itself has been going on about ten years longer than that.

16 DC: Mercy, that's awesome.

17 JS: At this point we have, as far as Oral Histories go, we've got over—well, I
18 guess we're over eight hundred now.

19 DC: Good.

20