

June 12, 1990

Howard Breedlove

Dear Harry,

I am enclosing a transcript of our conversation of April 5 about your work as a DASPO photographer in Vietnam. I'm sorry to take so long about sending this back to you; another project required more attention than I expected, and I'm only now getting back to this one.


I've also enclosed a photocopy of a photograph of yours (from DoD files) which will appear in the book (page 48). Our photo researcher selected it from hundreds of tunnel photos some months before I met with you, so once again your talent for showing the essence of the scene comes out.

If you get a chance to read over the transcript, and you notice any errors on my part--or any statements you made that you feel should be clarified--please call me collect, and I'll call you back and get the corrections. I will use some of what you told me as background in my introduction, and may also quote you directly in one or two cases.

This interview was one of the most rewarding for me. I felt, after talking to you, that I had a clearer picture of the work that DASPO did, the achievements photographers took pride in, and the problems they faced. Thank you for taking the time to speak so fully about your experiences.

Thanks to you also I got in touch with Bryan Grigsby, and talked at length with him in mid-April.

Best wishes,


Owen Andrews

Howard Breedlove: April 2, 1990.

("So you served 10 years with DASPO")

I was in the front office with the Pentagon. I spent about three and a half years with Daspo in the Pacific, in Hawaii. And then I returned, after my tour was up I returned to the front office and I worked with the live motion picture crew, the Pictorial Division, the way it was set up then, and I was a Sergeant First Class, so I was head NCO in the office, and also head of the motion picture team, and still picture branch.

While I was in the Pentagon, we did films on the Modern Volunteer Army, they were modernizing the Army then from a real hard core to soft core. And we traveled all over the United States, visiting different bases and doing films for the different departments of the Army. We'd go to the White House, a big Medal of Honor Award at the White House, and record all those things, and produce the film, and give it to the widow of whoever had received the Medal of Honor. Stuff like that.

Since I was a seasoned veteran from Vietnam and Hawaii, the opening came up, and we had a special film to do in Vietnam, so we moved back to Hawaii, and I was of course getting married, and I left my family here, because I knew I'd be traveling all the time, so I went back to Hawaii and spent two years, and I spent most of that back in Saigon. So I was there during the height of it.

First went over there in December '65. I went over on the 26th of December. And the reason I went over there during that time was that Kermit Yoho was killed in action, I'm not sure of the exact date, it was probably around the 23rd of December, right at Christmastime. They needed somebody to replace him. So I went over to Vietnam and replaced him. That's the reason I left the day after Christmas, cause they let me have the Christmas holiday and all. I had just gotten married on the 15th of December and my wife was pregnant, she got pregnant before we ever got married.

The commanding officer, they let me spend Christmas Day at home, and then I left, and I hit Vietnam pretty heavy from that point on. And of course I've done the motion picture film, and also I've done--the majority of my work was still photography in the beginning.

("Had you expected to go?")

I volunteered to go. I had been in the army nine years, I was 27 years old. I'd spent a tour of duty in Korea, in the tanks. I knew more about combat than most people because I'd been in Korea, after the war, of course, but I was in a tank outfit, up on the DMZ. So I knew about being out in the field and tanks and what the Army was all about, what it was supposed to be about. So it wasn't that I was a total stranger to them.

I know a couple times we got in, we travelled in pairs of two, still photographer and motion picture cameraman, when we went out in the field. And I remember one day we dropped in, and the 11th Armored Cav. A helicopter took us in, they were out in the brush and everything, and the commanding officer--light observation helicopter--he let us use it to take us in, to get us

into the area where they were operating. And they come right in over the top of an APC because, you know, it's very difficult to get in, with the shrubbery and stuff like that. So he brought us in, they dropped us, we had to jump off the helicopter, cause he hovered over the ground, this was the tank and APC, they sort of held up their position waiting for us.

And when I jumped off the helicopter, I went over, run over towards the APC, and I heard this guy over the tank that was sitting off to the side and this guy was saying Harry, Harry, hey, and I thought, hey, what's going on, and looked, and recognized him, it was this guy I was in tanks with back in 1956 and 57 in Korea, and he was one of my platoon sergeants in the tank company I was in, and here I was in Vietnam a few years later jumping off a helicopter, it's sort of a strange world, out in the field, running into people like that.

I went to photo school to get in to photography. I had to get out of tanks. I had spent four years in a tank outfit. I was in Hawaii at the time. I spent three tours of duty in Hawaii. I was assigned over there when I went into the army. I went to Korea and spent 19 months. When I left Korea, I went to Hawaii and spent two years in Hawaii in a tank outfit. Then it came time to get out of the army or reenlist, so I was going to make a career of it, and I'd been in the army four years already. And I figured, I might as well do something else. My ears weren't that great, they were already--I've got hearing aids in both ears. Vietnam would have ruined my ears.

I already had a little problem, cause I was in those tanks. We were firing a big gun, a 90mm gun, my nose was bleeding. I'd get a nose bleed. So they told me you can't handle loud noises. So when you come up to reenlist, either get out of the army or go into a field that's not going to have loud noises. So I elected to go into Electricians, Transportation, or Photography. You had to put down three choices for school.

So when it came back for approval, to reenlist for school, I was told to reenlist for photography, because there was an opening at Fort Monmouth. So I reenlisted, that's how I got into Photography. So I went to Ft. Monmouth, I hung around there for a month or so, doing nothing, waiting to go into the still photography course, and they came to me and said, "Well, we don't have an opening in the still photography course, but the flim school has an opening, one of their classes is starting up in a week or so, so if you want to switch over and be a filmmaker rather than a still photographer. And I said "That's exciting."

And I was only, at that time I was about 19, 20 years old. So I went into motion picture photography, and then I came out of that, and of course I went out to California, and worked with the experimentation type film production, and I spent about a year doing that.

Then I got my orders and went to Naples, Italy, and when I got there, I was a still photographer. They don't have any motion picture there. So I became a still photographer and a lab technician. There's only two of us in the little lab there. There's the Air Force Master Sergeant. And here I show up. And later on, we had a Navy guy assigned to us, so there's three of

us, for the most part of my tour there.

I spent four years in Naples, and that's where I got all my photography training. I was able to take courses at the European Institute of Photography, I took a course there in all phases of photographer. And the Air Force Master Sergeant was very good at it, very good with me, and the information officer I was with gave me permission to use the lab any time I wanted to use it for anything I wanted to use it for, except pornography.

And don't reproduce any photography, or anything illegal. But you can use it to shoot weddings, or to do portraits, anything to increase your ability to take pictures. Because, he realized being an Information man, that the more I took pictures, the better I'd get at it.

And people don't understand that. A lot of times, in the Army, "Well, you can take one roll today, and one roll next week, and that's it." It's real structured, because they don't understand what photography's all about. So he gave me access to use the lab. I was still young. Every time something happened, I'd grab my camera. If they had a star come up to the club, I'd grab my camera, I'd show up there and take a couple of pictures.

They put up Christmas lights on the -- I had a little porsche, if they had Christmas lights on the exterior of the building, I'd bring my Porsche up there and shine it up and park it underneath the Christmas lights--take night shots of it, you know, and experiment.

I spent a lot of time doing that, four years. When I left Naples, by that time I'd worked for the European Stars and Stripes, doing feature work, and by the time I left Naples, I was traveling to Greece, Turkey, out into Sardinia, out into the Sixth Fleet, and I was traveling all up through Northern Italy doing feature work for Stars and Stripes. So, based on that, I had extensive experience.

So when I came back to Washington D.C., my boss in Naples realized that I wanted to get into hardcore photography, that I wanted to get out into the field and shoot pictures. And of course, I'd never heard of Vietnam at this time. It just wasn't in our vocabulary.

I got reassigned back to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and the Navy captain I worked with in Naples, he was coming back to Washington, I left a couple months before he did, and he said when I get back there, if you're not satisfied with your job at Walter Reed, call me up in the Pentagon, and I'll be at the Information Service, and I'll make contacts, so you can get transferred.

So how that's I got the job in the Department of the Army Special Photo Office (DASPO). I took my portfolio of work, and I interviewed, and they accepted me.

From that point on, I was hooked up with Saigon. For the next ten years, '65 to '75. When I wasn't in Saigon--I say Saigon, that was where our office was at, but we didn't spend very much time there--we worked the same way that UPI and AP and those guys worked. The officer in charge of our team, in Saigon, would go over to the MACV War Room for their daily briefings, and he would come back, and based on what he learned at the meetings,

he knew--if the 1st Cav Division up at An Khe was starting a major operation, then he would dispatch a motion picture cameraman and a still photographer to go to the 1st Cav at An Khe and hook up with the 7th Cav or what outfit was supposedly getting ready to make a move, or were doing the most damage, what have you.

And we would go out there, and a lot of times, at the very beginning of the war, we would go out to the dustoff pads, the medic pads, have you ever heard that expression, "dustoff pads?"

The dustoff was used to describe a helicopter that was coming in to pick up the wounded. It was a medical helicopter, had a cross on it, on the front of it. Those were call signs, "This is Dustoff, Dustoff 1, Dustoff 2, cause when they come in, they come in so fast that all they did was come in, dusted off the area, and got out, pick up the wounded and get out.

So what we would do was go out to the--cause you could go out with a unit, and walk with them for two or three days, and may not get shot at, or see anybody, or nothing will happen, and then you might transfer to another unit, and by the time you got over to the other unit, the unit you just left has got hit. So you'd be bouncing--we'd always go out looking for action, that's what we were looking for.

Something like this right here (points to picture of men leaping out of helicopter), we were looking for stuff like that, a combat assault, you know a combat assault? You got eight or ten helicopters, six or eight, usually about eight, they were small, like this right here there was six helicopters in this outfit here. They were on recon; we hit the ground ten or eleven times that day. We'd hit the ground, they'd circle round and take off, and we'd search the area a little bit, if there was nothing there, they'd come back and pick us up, and we'd go hit the ground someplace else.

Recon--and stuff like that, we'd position ourselves on maybe the second helicopter. I'd try to get on the second helicopter maybe, because that way I was able to get them coming in. I'd hate to get on the first helicopter. I'd try to position myself up front someplace, so I could get off and maybe get the other helicopters coming in.

That's what happened here on this hilltop. There was only one helicopter coming in at a time. So I was able to get three or four other helicopters coming in on that sortie there.

I very seldom went out with a squad, because there's not much people with a squad, and if you did get hit with a squad, the first round is fired, everybody hits the ground anyway, so who's going to be taking pictures, it's very rare. But I would try to limit myself to platoon-sized operations.

I very rarely, I'd never go out on an ambush, never would I go out on an ambush, because it was totally out of my, you know, I just didn't need to be there. You can't do anything in an ambush, and usually they're at night anyways. I never messed with those things, because they were just too dangerous. You couldn't get any pictures anyway. Ambushes were always set up by squads, small squads. I stayed away from that sort of stuff.

I went out a few times in the early days, then I learned

better. In the early days of the war, the best way to get into a fire fight was to get out with the dustoff. Cause they were sitting there waiting, and as soon as they got the call, they just jumped on the helicopter, start them up, and they'd take off. They would move directly in, and pick up the wounded.

A lot of times they would, most case they would go in, and they'd still be fighting. And so what we would do is get on the dustoff, on the ship. And of course, we had an agreement with the pilot, that when we got close to the ground, we'd jump off the helicopter and get away from it, so they could load on the wounded and get out of there.

Somewhere along in the middle part of the war, they had a couple photographers, the rumor was they were from the 221st Signal photo unit--ever heard of them in your talks? the 221st? And there were supposed to be a couple of photographers with those guys went out with a dustoff, and it was a hot LZ, and they refused to get off the helicopter. So they outlawed photographers from traveling on the dustoffs. That was about midway through the war. It was around '68 when that started happening.

That wasn't an exclusive way of doing things, because it was very dangerous to do that. But we'd usually go in with resupply missions and stuff like that. Or either we'd hook up with them on a regular combat assault.

But a lot of times you go in with combat assault, and nothing happens. One of our photographers was Leroy Massie. He just died recently. This guy right here. He just had a heart attack about six months ago and died. Driving down the road down here. He had a heart attack and ran off the road. He was a good man. He got really messed up because he went in with a, took a sound crew, an Aeroflex, a Niagara tape recorder, and a still photographer, and they went in on an air assault. And he said, all the noise and everything, the guy next to him fell off into a rice paddy. And he didn't realize when the guy went off--he thought the guy jumped, but he fell out of the helicopter, he was shot. And so Leroy said "I jumped out too. When we hit the rice paddy, up to our butts in water or mud," he said, the guy over to me in the rice paddy turned red, and he wouldn't move, and so he realized then, and of course he started hearing rounds going off. Because you hear the rounds when they're going by you popping, but you don't hear them, because the bullet travels faster than the speed of sound. So by the time you get hit, you haven't heard anything

I got hit in the leg, right here. But in a firefight like that, you don't hear the round that hits you, because the sound comes later. That's one of the ways of telling how far the first--how far away they are. If you hear them fire a round, if you hear the round go by you, you hear that round's pop go by you, then you count, and you can tell when you hear the gun go off how far away it is from you. That's the way they tell with artillery, mortars, mortar round. You don't hear the mortarist firing. You don't hear it till it hits the ground and explodes. I think some of them in world war II made a noise, a hissing noise, or something. Because the round is travelling much faster

than the sound. It explodes, and then you know you're under attack.

People don't realize that. Our detachment, our people had a lot of pictures in this book right here--Bryan Grigsby, this right here, did you ever hear of Dick Durrance? He wrote that book, Where War Lives, have you seen that book? I was down at the dedication, that's his picture there. I'm not sure about some of these, there's credits in the back.

And this is Bryan K. Grigsby. Did you ever hear of him? He works with the Philadelphia Inquirer, he's a photo editor, and he shot this photo of course after the return of the regiment. He's got quite a bit of pictures in here. Cause we were in a firefight in Saigon when I got wounded. As a matter of fact, my picture appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer about six months ago. This is my picture right here. That was an ambush.

I was up there, and they had done this two nights before the ambush, and the general came out to visit the brigade, and they bragged about it to him, that they had an ambush, and they flew him over the site and showed him the bodies. They weren't piled up like that, they were spread around. And we piled them up there to try to bury them.

The general got mad, said "That's a gruesome sight." He ordered the squad that killed them to go back out there and bury them. I don't know why he done that, it was some kind of punishment or something. But we went out there, we took a platoon, and surrounded the area, and they took the squad and went in there, and by that time they stunk, because in the high humidity and the heat, decomposition started immediately, they started stinking immediately. They tied wire around these people, because the flesh was beginning to come off, so they piled them up like that. But the ground was so hard, it was in the dry season, if I remember right, it must have been the dry season, the ground was hard as a rock. And they used these crater charges that they got a charge they lay on the ground, it blows a foxhole. Blows a hole in the ground. And what they tried to do was blow, they couldn't dig the graves to cover them up, so they tried to blow the holes in the ground. But the ground was just too hard. So they just turned around and walked, they said "We can't do nothing about this." It was starting to stink so bad. I remember I had a Nikonos personal camera, and I had a lens cap on it that had a rubber band around the lens cap to hold it on. And I took that rubber band off, and I took me a twig, and I broke me a little stick, and I broke it like a clothes pin, and rigged it up to lock my nose, because it just smelled just so bad. It was so hot, you couldn't wear a gas mask, you couldn't move in a gas mask, it's just so hot and humid. But they just finally gave up, they just took aside, and to hell with it. So I got the picture as they were walking away.

These pictures right here were taken by Grigsby in Saigon. I done the film on this stuff right here. These guys were coming up out of manholes. This shot right here, this is all of Grigsby's stuff right here, all of this is on motion picture film. And this shot right here, Grigsby got it on still. And also I got this on motion picture film. I done the zoom, exactly

what you got in here, then I zoomed into the HELL, and it's a real dramatic shot. And a few minutes later, I got hit in the leg.

Bryan Grigsby was a sound man, then we trained him as a still photographer, and we went out on--that job in Saigon there, he got a lot of good pictures there.

("It sounds like you trained in photography for a long time before you went to Vietnam. Was that unusual?") I didn't train, it wasn't that I trained specifically to go to Vietnam. I worked in photography, and I had a background in military photography before I ever went into the war, so to speak. It wasn't that I just came into the Army like a lot of young guys did. They come in, they went through the photo schools, and were shipped directly over to our unit. And we had some older people who had already been in photography in the army, that came in our unit. Since it was an elite group, they tried to select the people that they brought in.

See, the Army's not that way. The Army feels if you got the MOS and you got the job title, you can do the job, and you can if you were tightening the track on a tank. But when you're doing photography, it becomes a different--it's not that, you're no longer a mechanic. You're in more of a creative field, your eye sees, rather than something you can touch and feel. And so the Army has a real poor way of or did have a real poor way of treating their photographers and writers and artists, because they tried to treat everybody the same, everybody's an infantry man. And that's not true.

I wasn't specifically trained to go to Vietnam. I just happened to have a good job in Naples Italy and my boss was a Navy Captain, and he liked me, and he liked the, he wanted to see me make good in photography. He let me use the lab, and he sent me to Germany to train with Stars and Stripes. The guy that ran the--If you've ever seen the picture of Eisenhower during World War II, when he's standing, just before the guys are getting ready to go into Normandy? He's standing there talking to the paratroopers. That picture won a Pulitzer prize back in that time. And the chief photographer at the Stars and Stripes, a guy by the name of Ray Grandy, he's the one that shot that picture, a real famous photographer. He was the chief photographer of the Stars and Stripes. And the navy captain in Naples Italy, the Stars and Stripes did very little work in Southern Europe, cause they were based in Germany, and my boss knew the editor of the Stars and Stripes, and I want Sgt. Breedlove to come up and visit for a couple of weeks and work with your photographers.

So I went up there and I spent a couple weeks under the eyes of this guy Ray Grandy and his staff. They turned me on to a lot of things, how newspapers do things, and stuff like that so I was able to take that information back to Naples and apply it to what I already knew and instead of just shooting handshake shots, like that, I was able to create more pleasing shots for the newspaper by shooting over the shoulder at the recipient, stuff like that.

So based on that, they started using me in Southern Europe to do some feature work. So I was able to do centerpage stuff for their travel section and based on that I put together a good

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portfolio. When I came back here and interviewed for the job in DASPO--they were supposed to be an elite group of photographers--at that time, cause it was a small team, they were just starting, it was just getting underway.

So then all of a sudden they decided well, they're going to send the 25th Division over there, they're going to send these others, so they started escalating the war, so they had to bring in more people to fill in this detachment so they could cover the war more thoroughly. It was expanding.

I went in with about five or six other guys, and when we got there, the people who were there, they felt that they were prima donnas, they were just the best in the army. Some of them were pretty good, and some of them weren't. That's the way human nature is. Matter of fact, when I got there, I'd been in photography about five, six years, and I'd never won any awards, but I had my portfolio, a good portfolio, and immediately they started training me. They told me to go draw a camera out of the supply room, so I could go join the Jungle Warfare School up at Schofield Barracks to photograph it and go through it with the students, because I was going to be going to Vietnam.

And I figured well, and of course, myself and a couple other guys had to go, and there were a bunch of us who were, didn't have to go. My thought was, well, I've got all this experience, since I've been stationed with this 25th Division a couple years before, I already went through the Jungle School as a trainee, so I knew all about it. So I argued with my superior officer: "Well, I've already been through the stupid school, I was a trainee, I already know how to shoot the pictures, so why don't you just send me to Vietnam now, so I can go on and start shooting pictures?" And he said "No, no, no."

So when I went to draw my camera out of the supply room, I asked for a wide-angle lens, and the sergeant who was in charge threw a fit. He said, "You got to train to know how to use a normal lens before you go to those special lenses," that sort of nonsense. So that's what we were up against.

When we went through the Pentagon, and they showed us the editors there, even down there where the girls edit the photographs and everything, well, those girls, they had as much experience at that time, as some janitor.

Well, Mary Lou Noakes, you ever met her? She's a manager there now. During that time, she was a receptionist in the lab, a young teenager, a receptionist in the photo lab. They had an opening come up in the still picture branch for a picture editor. She was a nice girl and everything, so they promoted her up into editing pictures. So I was sitting, here's this girl, she's a receptionist, all of a sudden she's down--the only pictures she's probably ever noticed are pictures of her boyfriend and pictures when she read the paper. She had no experience at all, and all of a sudden she's editing pictures that we were shooting in Vietnam, deciding which one's going to go in the file, and which one's going to be thrown in the trash can.

When we come back from Vietnam, we found they threw most of our stuff in the trash can, because they had four or five girls sitting up there. The colonel would tell them--I guess they had

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to report to the colonel every so often. They were getting so much work in out of the field, because so many more photographers were out there shooting pictures like Life, you know. And we were sending back, and instead of adding more people to the staff, they just--"If you had a lot of pictures come in on tanks last week, then concentrate on infantry this week." You could send an award-winning picture in on tanks, and they would throw them in the trash can. Because they just wouldn't select a picture on tanks.

And when I came back--I spent 3 1/2 years in Hawaii--I came back to the Pentagon, and I started looking through there for myself, and I couldn't find it. And I started to question, "Well, where's it at? Where's it at?" and everything. And they said well, "We didn't even save that." "Well, why didn't you save it?" "Well, we had enough stuff on tanks."

So I went out and spent a week with the 11th Armored Cav, getting shot at, living in the heat and everything, and shoot all those pictures, and sent them back to the Pentagon, and found out that they threw them in the trash can, because they would edit them out, because they had so much stuff on tanks from the week before, and this particular week, they were concentrating on radios and helicopters, and so if you happened to be unlucky, and be working with a tank outfit that week, they didn't even edit your stuff. They'd look at it and say, well, "We don't need any stuff from tanks, we've already got too much."

So they tried to balance out the stuff they were putting into the files. They wanted to cover the armour, artillery, aviation, infantry, signal corps, so they'd try to balance it out. And that was real stupid. And the girls that were editing the pictures--and what turned me onto it really was they called me down there one day and they had a loup, a magnifying glass. They were looking at a proof, and they were trying to see if that was a tank in the background.

And I said "What difference does that make? The picture ain't no good anyways." It was a lousy picture. What it was was somebody was coming in on a helicopter, and shot a shot just before the helicopter landed, looking out over the terrain, and you could see tents, and guys standing around, this and that. There was some tanks in the background, but you could hardly tell they were tanks. And I said "What difference does it make?" The picture was lousy, and it was even out of focus, because the shaking of the helicopter made it real poor, it wasn't even a good photograph.

And they said, "Well, if it's a tank, we've got to keep it--because it's got a tank in the picture."

And I said, "Well, what difference does that make? The picture's not even worth using." You've probably seen a lot of lousy pictures in there [the repository], just lousy, no meaning whatsoever.

["They were adequate for portraying something, but..."]

Aesthetics, as far as creating pictures?

["They were static--but I only spent one day helping to look through them"]

You'd probably go nuts if you spent a lot of time in there.

Because I spent a lot of time in there. I was going to try to weed out my own stuff because I shot so much stuff, and they've used so much in the Army Digest, the army magazine, I had covers upon covers, center spreads, you know, in Army Digest, and different magazines.

There was a guy by the name of Dey, Richard Dey, and he was over at Cam Ranh Station with the Army Digest magazine, and he was a writer. And what he wanted to do, he contacted me when I got back: "Go pull out your work, and we'll do a book." And I couldn't find anything. I literally couldn't find anything. The way they were filing, systems, and it meant I had to wade through acres and acres, and I just lost interest. At that point in my life, I was in pretty sad shape.

And you think this picture right here would be a historical picture, that they would preserve it. I've got good copies of it myself.

The Colonel at the Pentagon, his name was Del Vito. He decided to have a filing cabinet, it was like a microfiche cabinet, it had three by five cards. And every time a photographer sent in a picture, and it was selected to go in the permanent file, the photographer's name and the number of the photograph went on the three by five card. And it was filed in alphabetical order by the photographer's name. And this was since World War II that they'd been doing this. They had a whole filing cabinet full of cards.

What this colonel does, he had the card file destroyed, because he said, we weren't there to record photographers. He just didn't like photographers, even though he was commanding officer of the photographic unit. He just didn't like photographers, evidently. And he had that card file destroyed.

If a photographer sent his work in, it was just buried in the files, and there was no way he could come back and say, well, my name is Breedlove, and they say OK, go to B--nyee--pull out Breedlove, all these numbers, and you just copy the numbers down, and reference them and pull out the negatives and have them printed. And every picture that you ever took would have been filed there. But since he destroyed that file, there was no way of tracking it.

And if I sent back four or five rolls of film, and I shot some of helicopters coming in, and I shot guys on radios, or guys crawling around with their rifles, or whatever have you, the guy's eating C-rations or something, well, they would split that up. Maybe the guy eating C-rations, the negative would go into the Quartermaster, or the guys with these rifles, a good shot of the rifle? "Oh, OK, we got a good shot of the rifle, it's nice and clear, he's holding it up and everything," so they'd put that into the small arms area. And the next shot--same job, same operation--the next shot might could show helicopters coming in--"Oh, helicopters." That would go into aviation. There was no way of tracking them any more.

You couldn't go in and say "I covered a job--" like I covered Operation Baker. I can't remember what outfit it was with now. But we came in, it was up near Chu Lai, and the unit that landed that came got pinned down, got under heavy fire.

They had cannons, recoilless rifles, small-arms fire. They got pinned down on the beach, and they called in for reinforcements. Myself and this guy Tom Wade was in the Information Office, we just got there, it was like 1 o'clock in the afternoon. We were in the information tent there, and this guy comes running in, and he was from the 221st, and he was all covered with mud, he was sweating and everything, and he shot--He had tried to get his pistol out of his holster, and it went off, and blew a hole in the bottom of his holster, and tore his trouser, and burned his leg.

And he was all upset and everything, scared half to death, a nervous wreck, and he said the unit he was with got under, had come under attack when they hit the LZ, and he refused, he didn't get off the helicopter. He shot himself when he was on the helicopter or something, trying to get his pistol out of his holster. But he didn't get off the helicopter, he came back with them. He said the unit was pinned down out there, and they were sending out replacements, because they were taking a lot of casualties. So Tom Wade and I ran out and jumped on a helicopter with the replacements.

And we got in there, and we were pinned down on the beach there for like two hours in the hot sun, about one, two o'clock in the afternoon, and we couldn't move. Then we finally started moving inland and everything. I shot a lot of pictures, a lot of action, and stuff like that, and I never was able to find that. I was able to find a couple shots.

Because when I first got back they put up an exhibit in the Pentagon of my work. They did up a bunch of transparencies and put on them on a big board-like affair that's back lit and everything, and some of those pictures were on there. But after that, I never knew what happened to them.

I went back and said I'd like to get those pictures that I shot of Operation Baker. There was a whole sequence, a whole afternoon of shooting, I shot 35mm Leica. And I shot about six rolls of film. I shot a water buffalo getting shot, and a water buffalo had charged after a couple guys, and they had to shoot the water buffalo. I was able to get that. I was able to get the water buffalo just as he bent down on his knees. And they had a fight between a tank commander and an infantryman. Cause the infantrymen--we were in a firefight, these guys were getting wounded, and a couple guys have got heat stroke, and one guy was slapping round with his buddy, angry at him and everything, and he was just sort of getting, crying and that sort of stuff. These guys were seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old, and they were under a tremendous stress situation. These guys have been burnt, shot,--but I never was able to find any of that stuff.

["You'd thing it would be logical to categorize by operation."]

They would write letters back to us in the field and say "Don't shoot any more pictures of the guys aint got their clothes on, fully dressed." Now how in the world you get out there in the field crawling around, and the guys are getting shot at, you get guys out there with no shirts on, lost their helmets. You know, it was absolute chaos sometimes, let's face it. And--look

at these guys right here. What are you going to do, stop them and say, "Look now, button up your shirt, roll down your sleeves." Look, this guy's sleeves are torn off. And they didn't want to show that.

We got little nasty notes written on the back of our--what we would do, we would shoot Rolliexes, and we'd get an eight by ten proof sheet with one 12-exposure roll on it. We had to caption every picture we sent in, had to write a caption for it. They would send us back in the field contact sheets. They would let us look at them and they would take them back and I don't what they did, I think they would destroy them. They wouldn't let us keep them. But they would send us back the contact sheet. The commanding officer in Washington would write on the back of the contact sheet, he would write little notes. "Exposure #2 is out of focus. You're gonna have to do better than that."

I shot some silhouettes. I thought it was beautiful, I shot some beautiful silhouettes. And I couldn't convince them they were silhouettes. They kept throwing my film away, saying "underexposed." And I would even write, I would circle on my caption sheet that I sent in the film, I would underline, a big red circle with a red grease pencil or something. "These particular shots on roll #2 are not underexposed. They are silhouettes and they are to be treated as such" In the trash can, underexposed.

I couldn't convince them. I had to end up coming back; I won a couple of awards, and I came back from Vietnam, off of one of my trips to Vietnam, and the 1st Sgt was making a trip back to Washington for a week, for some reason, I'm not sure what it was. They wanted to meet me back here, because I shot so many pictures, and so they said "Bring Breedlove back with you." So I came back here. It was almost like a week's vacation. So I came back here, and I had to go down to the lab, and talk to people in the lab, down in the Army lab. "These things are silhouettes, they are not underexposed."

[Procedure?]

We'd go out, say we'd get our assignment, myself as a still photographer, and so and so as a motion picture photographer. The officer in charge of the team would book us out. Say we were going up to An Khe in the highlands, and work with the 1st Cav. And he would say, OK, you're going to the 7th Cav. And they got stuff going on, say, Operation Pegasus. And we would go up there, we'd load up and everything, and he'd book us out. We had special orders to travel throughout the country. We could travel anywhere in the country on the orders we had just by going up to whoever's in charge, and say we need to go to so and so.

He would book us out on the flight out of Saigon, that would usually leave at 4 or 5 the next morning. We'd load up all of our combat gear and everything we had to take with us. We'd go as light as possible, the clothes we wore, a pair of socks, plenty of film, a pair of underclothes, our ponchos to keep, poncho liner, canteen, water, weapons, c-rations, stuff like that. We'd head out to the airport, and we'd be on our own then.

We'd go up to An Khe, and hook up with the unit we were supposed to hook up with, and maybe they were being on stand-

down. You'd get the wrong information. They might on stand-down. You'd hook up--"Nothing going on here, we're on stand-down." We'd go back to the IO office and then we'd see what's going on. And they'd say, "OK, well B Company of so and so outfit, we're going to resupply them tomorrow morning at 7 o'clock, so be here at 7 o'clock in the morning and we'll drop you off."

So they'd take us out into the jungle and drop us off with the resupplies. And we might spend two or three days with them, walking around in the jungle, living out there with them. And if we got hit, we got hit, and if we didn't, we didn't, you know. And we'd stay two or three days with them taking pictures. The way we'd get out, resupply of ammunition and stuff would come in, we'd get on the helicopter and go back out. And if we'd expired our film, and a lot of times we'd be out 2 or 3 days, sometimes we'd be out a week or so, and if we'd expired our film and everything, we'd take it back to Saigon, and we'd get back to Saigon, and then we'd take showers and get cleaned up and everything, and jump right in our captions, and start typing up our captions, and get all that together as quickly as possible. Then we packaged up our film. And we'd send electronic message, one copy went to Hawaii, and one copy went to Washington. And the electronic message had the flight number that was coming into Washington on. And we'd take it out to Tan Son Nhut Airbase, take it directly to the flight, usually Pan Am, we shipped our stuff out with Pan Am. We'd take it directly to the Pan Am terminal, drop it off there, and it was on its way, it would get the next flight out.

We had a staff here at the Pentagon, when the message came in with the flight number and everything that it was going to arrive on, and they'd get the message almost immediately. They would pick up the message in the morning when they come into work, they'd say OK, we got a flight coming in so and so, 10 o'clock this morning, it's got a shipment of film from Vietnam. So they'd go out, pick it up, take it back to the lab, process it immediately, make the proofs on it, send the proofs around through the staff in the Pentagon, and that's the way we worked. Motion picture film was done the same way. But I'm not sure where they processed the motion picture film. It wasn't processed in the Pentagon, it was processed somewhere else, they contracted it.

And they'd make a work print off of it, I think they made two work prints, because we would get a work print out in Hawaii. They would view the work print in the Pentagon, and if they had any camera problems or the exposures were a mess we'd get an electronic message back on it saying check camera # so and so because its shutter seems to flickering or something, or something's wrong.

It was well-organized, I mean, there was someplace along the line where things sort of stopped. I think the colonel in charge of the Pentagon as far as the still pictures go, he just didn't have them as an important thing. "We got to hire two more picture editors, and we need picture editors, not secretaries who think it would be nice to edit pictures."

[So you wouldn't see contact sheets or workprints for weeks] It would be weeks, weeks. We would probably shoot two or three jobs by then. By the time we'd get the proofs back for one job, we'd been out--with the job we shot up at An Khe, we may have went out with the 1st Armored Division, may have went out with the 11th Armored Cav, before we got the proofs back from the other job.

But it gave us an idea of what we were doing along the way, and of course if we had anything drastically wrong with it, they would send us a message, you know, something really wrong. Because we had photographers that really screwed up. They were just fed up with it. And they just said, "Relieve the guy." The pictures he's shooting aren't even worth sending in, he's wasting our time. So they'd ship him out. Usually we'd--There were guys that lost their jobs because they just weren't into it.

We had one guy that was fed up with it, with the way he was being handled, and I remember he went out one time and they were doing a guy by the name of Marty Stipus was doing a job on the Day in the Life of an Infantry Squad. It was a special project. And they went out with the same infantry squad. They were using a squad out of the 1st Infantry Division at Zhi An?--near Saigon. In other words, they had a helicopter pad at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, and they'd run a shuttle back and forth to the 1st Infantry division, which was only like 20 minutes away, 30 minutes away, so it was very easy to get out to the 1st Infantry Division from Saigon, cause it was like a 30 minute flight, and the helicopter they had was shuttling back and forth. It was very easy to get on, because you could call the information officer at Zhi Anh, and say "Look, we've got to get two photographers out to your unit. When's your helicopter coming in?" And the information officer would say. "Oh, are they ready to go now? We'll send the helicopter in to pick them up."

These two guys were working on the day in the life of an infantry squad, and the still photographer, he'd just gotten fed up with it, because he'd go out and shoot two or three exposures on a roll of film, and that was all he'd shoot. And he'd come back and say, well, nothing was going on.

That happened quite a bit. The frustration--the heat, and you could get yourself killed, too. It was more than just being in the heat, and dirty, and the frustration.

I don't understand what they're doing, they want to put women in combat. They don't know what they're talking about. They don't have the slightest idea what they're talking about. I don't believe what's going on. This girl, Pat Schroeder, she's a total nut. I think people like that are trying to screw our country, that's my opinion. She's definitely trying to do away with, just destroy our country. Cause once they insert women into situations like Vietnam, it's over, because there's no way a woman can handle a situation like that. Just the sheer heat--I seen guys look like they were football players and what have you, just dropping like, you know, from the sheer heat, and carrying the load. I've seen guys have to carry a five-gallon can of water plus their own things they needed for their own self, out in that heat and everything. It's impossible how they do it.

I can't see women doing that at all. Have you seen some of the movies, "Hamburger Hill" and so on?

[I've seen "Born on the 4th of July"]

"Born on the 4th of July," forget about that. That guy-- it's one big lie. They're lying. They're writing history of the war. These people are making, Hollywood's making movies, and they're saying, "This is facts." It's not facts. But 20 years from now, it becomes facts, history.

People in the next generation look at this "Born on the 4th of July," and say "That's the way it was." But that's not the way it was. I mean, there are so many lies in that film there, it's not even worth the film it's on.

And of course, you get like "Platoon"...why do it? Why even do it, why even try do it? If I was a mother, I'd see that movie there, I wouldn't let my kid join the Army, you know, I just wouldn't do it. And it's real strange, what's happening to our country, based on what Vietnam has done to us.

[Sometimes I wonder--why go to a film about something so difficult. What do you learn?]

Hollywood--all it is is one big lie.

[A documentary, actual footage, shows you how it was]

Some of that, it's entertaining. As a matter of fact, some of that film there, like the HELL, the Shell Station, the S is burnt away. That was on "That's Incredible ." Back about, I'm not sure now what year it was in. But I was in the kitchen, it had to be about 1980, 81 maybe. But I was in the kitchen, and I heard the soundtrack, I heard this sound, it seemed familiar, and I spun around, and what they were doing, they were talking about how incredible it was to be able to show the war being fought that morning, and being able to, as people sat down to supper, all across the United States people sat down to supper, and watched the war being fought that same day. That's incredible. But they were using that film.

I've got a film at home that's called "The Vietnam Experience." Well, it's called "The Combat Photographer." Did you ever hear about that film? It's about a seventeen minute film. It starts out with a guy by the name of Ray Goddard, he introduces it. He was a sergeant in the army, he works for one of the broadcasting companies now. He introduces the film, and he's got a bunch of still photographs, and he's sitting there showing the still photographs, and he says "This film is about photographers in combat." And it shows combat, it shows the film, it's got the Hell when I zoomed in on the HELL, and a number of street scenes, fighting in the streets, people running down the streets, firing in on everything, and then it shows the still photographs, then it goes to another scene, then it shows a still photograph--of a photographer with his camera you know. It's a good piece. It was done in the Pentagon for an audio visual show, a joint service audio visual show. And it's actual combat film shot in combat by Army combat photographers. And it so happens that it was DASPO film, because that's what they had at hand at the time.

It was combat film shot in combat by DASPO photographers from our unit. It wasn't by a whole conglomerate of

photographers.

I've got a copy at home. A friend of mine put it on the video tape for me, VHS, but it's very poor quality, because it's reproduced, and when he did it, the machine was set up a little bit wrong, and instead of shooting the whole 16mm frame, they zoomed in to close, they cut out a lot, it's poor cropping. I show it to people occasionally. Sort of like my own little scrapbook.

Now they've got a copy in the AV agency there in the Pentagon. Have you run into Logan McMinn, he's a sergeant major, in the AV Agency, 5th floor of the Pentagon. I've got a 16mm copy plus a video copy. The last copy I lent out, I never got it back.

Are you listing any killed-in-action photographers? Kermit Yoho, Richard Rein, killed in action? That's from DASPO. There were a lot of other lost photographers over there. As a matter of fact, my whole team was wounded. The week I was wounded, the morning I was wounded, in the afternoon my captain was shot in the arm, and I think a couple days later, we had a couple teams out in the field, got into action, and he got shot in the rear end, so...

[When you filmed the Hell/Shell, what was going on that day?]

That was the May offensive, 8th of May, 68, and that was called the May Offensive, when they hit Saigon, attacked Saigon. And that was, it was like the Tet Offensive of 68, was in February. And they settled down and everything, they got it quieted down, and it flared back up again in May. And they called it the May Offensive, the 8th of May.

It flared all over the country. They attacked Long Binh, Tan Son Nhut, a place called the Y Bridge was under heavy attack. It was all over the country, but it wasn't as big, it didn't last--I shouldn't say as big, but it wasn't an operation like Tet, which was all over the whole country, and it was large scale. This was like a follow-up to Tet, they attacked again, but it didn't last as long, it didn't get as much publicity and everything as Tet did, and it was called the May Offensive. And that's what was going on there.

I was with the 199th ARVN Ranger Battalion. They were going out, because they were attacking one side of Tan Son Nhut airbase, and they were sweeping through there. There was a cemetery through that area where we were in.

[Where would I find out lists of KIA photographers?]

[You were in Vietnam from 1965 to ?]

I first went over there in December of 65. I spent three months, 90 days. Then I'm not sure--I would come back to Hawaii, I'd spend two weeks, a week, a couple weeks, a month, then I'd go back to Saigon. I'd spend 90 days, 120 days, it depends. One trip would be 90 days, one would be 120 days. We'd go on 90-day trips, then some of us, depending on the workload, they would let us extend by 30 days, it was good money.

[Explanation of how he worked the tax-free combat pay follows]

It was pretty good money. We have our own selfish motives.

In everything you do, you've got your own selfish motives.

[What would you do back in Hawaii?]

We'd come in, we'd work in the morning; most of us had families there, so they'd give us liberal time off to take care of things, you know. Usually we'd get back, put our equipment away, and get two or three days off. Then we would come back to work. We'd train more or less, and talk, discuss things and sit in the screening room, and we would always screen the film that was being shot over there. We would get it back from Washington in film cans, and screen that stuff, and like I said, I was a sergeant, but I would help write critiques and stuff like that, help photographers in the field.

When I was back in the Pentagon, I did the same thing. Stuff was coming in from Vietnam. We also went, our team went to Korea, Taiwan, and places like that. But those trips seemed to be reserved for favoritism. Certain guys would end up in Taiwan, next thing you know they would end up in Micronesia, next thing they'd end up, the same people, in Okinawa, and you'd go back to Saigon. Some of sort us of stayed in Saigon.

And I don't know why that happened. Later on, I guess, we were more eager to do it than the others.

[Probably people trusted you to do good work there]

No, I don't think that's what it was, it wasn't because of good work. One major we had at the beginning--he's dead now, so I don't want to talk too much about him--but he had his favorites. When we arrived, we invaded this small photo group, and all of a sudden they had their own group, these guys were going to Bangkok, and everything, they were like a crew. The 1st Sergeant from that time lives out in Sterling Park, his name is Donald Julius. He lives right near me now. He never, I think he went to Vietnam maybe once or twice. They were covering all of Asia. When Vietnam flared up, it became concentrated on Vietnam. But they still had a team in Thailand.

The three and a half years I spent in Hawaii, I made one trip to Korea, and one trip to Thailand--out of three and a half years. And all the rest of it was in Vietnam. Shuffling back and forth to Vietnam.

[Would you have preferred more time in Korea or Thailand?]

Oh, that was great to go to Korea or Thailand. Thailand was paradise. So was Korea, it was like being--oh sure, because we were making per diem, it was clean. Oh yesh. Those were the pick of the trips, going to Seoul or Bangkok.

[Favorites got more of that?]

It seemed like George Gentry, myself, Virgil Rodriguez--he lives in Panama--I think every trip he made was in Vietnam. And of course they had their elite. The major had his pick, this crew, his old crew was always going to be better than the crew that's just coming in, you know. And they were like a clique. It's always true. I guess, even in the Boy Scouts.

I had a disadvantage, because when I left Walter Reed Army Medical Center, I was a Sergeant E5. And when I got orders to go to Hawaii, the commanding officer at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center promoted me to E6. So when I got to Hawaii, here I was a Sergeant E6, rather than a Sergeant E5. And any time that

happens, it means you take up a slot. They had people there who wanted to be promoted from E5 to E6. I took up their slots. And that right away didn't go over very good at all. They tried to, the first couple months I was there, they tried to get rid of me, because I'd come there as a sergeant E5, and they thought they were getting a Sergeant E5, but when I got there, I was a Sergeant E6, because I got promoted en route. They didn't like that at all.

I was in a detachment about two months before I went out in the field. Some of the guys went out within a week after we got there. Some of the less experienced guys--I'd already been in the Army nine years, plus--some of the less experienced people, before I ever went out in the field, had come back, and I'm still sitting in Hawaii going through training. I always felt it was because they took an early dislike to me, because I'd been promoted en route.

And they were expecting, they were going to train me and everything, and here I came in, I had all this experience and everything, and that didn't sit well. But later on, as things changed, and I started growing into it, they started using my pictures, and I was the only photographer in the detachment to win, I won, two still photography awards--that picture won an award--as the best photograph that came into the Pentagon during that period, six month period. Then I won the same award a second time, and it shows a guy sitting in a stream, taking a bath.

Eastman Kodak blew it up to the size of that door there. It was from a 35mm negative. It was taken about 2 o'clock in the afternoon under a bright, hazy sun, and since these guys were sitting in the stream, the reflections from the water give it a--the negative was perfectly exposed--the reflections from the water filled in the shadows, because the ratio, in color film, the ratio between the highlights and the shadows was just perfect, so Eastman Kodak printed for the Army, they blew it up to larger than life-size. Since it was from 35mm negative, they used it as an example of how large you can actually blow up a 35mm negative. Because it was a perfectly exposed negative. Not that I exposed my negatives perfectly. But it turned out that it was exposed perfect, and the reflections from the water balanced everything out nice and soft, and it was a beautiful picture.

[Problems with finding photographs]

I don't like to give that stuff away. [Discussion of payment for photographs]

Time-Life has used that picture four or five different times.

I don't have a lot of stuff, but I have a good copy of that picture there. I think I may have a copy negative. I've got some silhouettes which are dynamite, too.

This happened in very early days. I bought a Nikonos, an underwater camera. I didn't use it very much. I strapped it onto my rucksack, and it stayed there, it was sort of lightweight. The very first ones they made weren't very big, they were very small. It had no metering system in it or anything. Just a lense and a focus ring and an exposure ring.

But I think I only shot one roll of film through it.

Later on, they said, no more personal cameras. They didn't allow it. Dick Durrance, now, he carried his with him. Dick Durrance was a photographer in civilian life before he ever came in the army. His mother and father were professional photographers, still might be, and he had already seen photography before he ever came in the army. And I think he was a draftee, I'm sure he was, and when he went through basic training down at Fort Jackson, he got permission from his instructors to photograph his own basic training. So they let him do it. You've seen the book? That's where he got those pictures from.

I was the only photographer in DASPO to win the two still awards. Other photographers won the still award one time, I won it two times, and also I won the motion picture emmy for the best combat motion picture film to come out of Vietnam. That was on that film with the "S" burnt away. I had about 600 feet of pure combat film there. The cinematography award--May, June, July '68.

[But generally, early on, people carried cameras of their own?]

But it was against the rules. They didn't really say too much about it in the early days. Later on, they got real hot on it.

[Was there any reason for that?]

Well you couldn't do that--Let's face it, if you were taking pictures, you were either taking them for yourself or for the Army. You're under assignment--are you writing for yourself, or for your company? Do you carry two notebooks with you, so you can write your own book on the side? It would be pretty hard in Vietnam.

Bryan K Grigsby, I shot that picture of him, we went into the cemetery, there was thick fighting going on right outside of Tan Son Nhut. We went in there, I was shooting still photography, we had a motion picture camera with us, and he was doing my sound. But the motion picture photographer refused to go in there. We didn't know it, he was behind us. We went running in there, and went down through the cemetery, and we missed our motion picture guy, he wasn't with there. So we went in there, and messed around a while, and we got out of there, and came back. And he was down by the Jeep.

We could only take the Jeep up so close, then we had to get out of it. He wouldn't go down in there, he said, naw, that wasn't for him. So we didn't get any motion picture film on it. So we went back to the villa, and we loaded up again. He took up the still camera and I took the motion picture camera, and we went back down there. And by that time, they'd already gone through the cemetery, and by that time the captain was interested, and he wanted to go with us, and he went with us, and as a result he got shot in the arm, ripped the muscle out of his arm.

Then I got hit in the leg, and anyway Grigsby saved these pictures, and he wrote this article here, last year, 20th anniversary. This is him, right here.

That's Ron Kovic, from "Born on the 4th of July," the real Ron Kovic. He's a turncoat, that's all he is, he's a deserter.

That's the monument out in Clinton, Iowa. They're building monuments everywhere. Like going back to Egypt. That's all they did in Egypt was build monuments, back in the early days.

Here's that picture I was telling you about where they used the photograph and reversed it, and then they called it, courtesy US Marine Corps. They just reversed it, added a little color to it. I called the magazine. They just hung up on me. I said, "I'm the photographer who shot that photograph. It's not a Marine Corps photograph, it's a US Army photograph. At least you could keep it in the service it came from." They hung up on me." They said, "We got that picture from the Marine Corps. If you want to argue, call the Marine Corps."

[My discussion of where the photographs are located today]

That was in the Washington Times. I couldn't get any response from the Mint. The executive director of the Mint, and the director, they wouldn't even talk to me. They had the ceremony, when they had the ceremony down at the Mint, passed out all the congratulations and everything, they forgot to call me.

I didn't even know they used my photograph on that until Bryan K. Grigsby up in Philadelphia, I came to work one morning, and he sent me a little note and this clipping right here. I didn't know they'd used the photograph. He knew that photograph, and he clipped this out of the paper. That was in the New York Times Coin section or whatever.

[One thing I want to emphasize in this intro is that these images that you all took continue to play a role in the way we all see the war etc]

They took us out of the system. In other words, you were in the Army, you weren't a photographer, you were in the army. You were a soldier first, and the images you took were US Army photographs. They weren't attributed to any individuals, even though I was just as much of an individual as Al Chang or Larry Burrows or anybody else. And I was taken out of my ability to take pictures, not because the army said "You're a soldier." I wasn't taking photographs as a soldier, I was taking photographs as a photographer. Do you know what I'm saying? Later on, I polished my shoes and said "Yes sir." I was a soldier then. When I was taking pictures, I was no longer a soldier. I was taking pictures.

Because I got in trouble sometimes, running out in front of a parade field, because I was in uniform and holding a camera and all I wanted was the shot, was going out there and getting the shot. I was in Korea, and I was covering General Abrams, he was Chief of Staff of the Army, he was on tour. We were already in Korea, our film team was in Korea, we got a message: The Big Man is coming over, you'll be detached with him when he gets there, photograph him in Korea, document his tour. So, first thing they had at Army Headquarters there was the biggest, fanciest parade ground in the world, I think. They manicured that thing, the dirt's about so thick on there--they rake go out there with rakes, and rake it smooth. They really rake that thing smooth, there's not a footprint on it, and then the troops march on, and

they're in position, everybody gets into position. And that place, the field itself is just as smooth as it can be.

Of course, when the General and his escort passed in review, I ran straight across the field, and I ran straight, it was like a horse running, kicking up dirt. I turned around and looked, there were these footprints there. I ran straight across the field and squatted down, not in front of the colors, but where I could get him in a low angle shot as he passes the colors, and they caught me, they tried to ship me out of Korea for that.

They really got on my case for that. I was unfit to be in the Army and everything else. I'm a photographer; that sequence, that shot there I needed. Without that shot there to me it wasn't complete. I did a number of things like that to get in trouble.

An army photographer was very restricted. He was expected to get the photographs, do this and do that, get this thing, but don't do this and do that.

When I say "they", it was the staff at the Pentagon, the people who had never been into war, never been over into Vietnam, and all of a sudden this thing flared up in front of them, and we'd been taking pictures of handshakes and everybody erect, standing tall, you know, and all of a sudden they would start getting all these films in of people being wounded.

We had instructions to not be emphasizing photographs of wounded Americans. In other words, stay away from that, because we're not going to use them anyways.

So for example, I was getting ready to go out on a--it wasn't a fire support base per se--they'd been there maybe two or three days, clearing this area out and filled some sandbags, put up some mortar pieces and stuff like that. And I was out there with them, and everybody's the scuzziest-looking you could ever believe. You figure construction here, everybody crawling around in their own ditches, right? That's what you're going to look like, if you're crawling around for two or three days, or a week. You're covered with mud...

Anyways, these guys were getting ready to go out, patrol outside the perimeter, but the medic came over and says, "Alright, before everybody goes, lets get their shots." A lot of guys had caught VD. The way they were getting shots, these guys dropped their drawers and leaned over against the sandbags, lean over on the sandbag, and the medic give them a shot, pull up their pants, and the next guy came. So I took pictures of it. I mean, you see it from the back. And some of the guys turned around and waved--they didn't care, you know. I took pictures of that.

And they had a Playboy magazine, a centerfold. And I thought that was neat, because they were out here in this strange bombed out desolation, and here these guys are doing the things that GIs do. Joking around, doing this. One guy had a Playboy magazine, he had the center spread opened up, you know. So I got up on top of these sandbags, like a command bunker. I got up on top and I was able to get a good shot. I took a Rollieflex, you know, in a Rollieflex, you look through the top of it, and I held it over, and got a real nice shot. You couldn't even see the

guys' faces, but it was a perfect shot. Playboy, these guys with their elbows, laying down on the ground, with their rifles laying across. canteens and all, and they're down, and there's three or four guys around this Playboy center spread. Well, they destroyed that.

And these guys getting shots, the medic treating these guys in the field under the most adverse conditions you'd ever see, they threw the negatives away, they destroyed them. And they told me, the note I got back said, "Don't ever shoot pictures like that again."

They thought I was being funny, because I put a note on the caption that Playboy magazine should be sent a copy of that picture. Hugh Hefner would have loved that shot, to run in his--of course, I disagree totally with Playboy now, I have nothing to do with them now. But then they were a magazine--I was into the same thing everybody else was doing. I don't participate in that sort of garbage any more. I think they should close it down, the presses. but then I thought it was a hot shot. I thought it was a real great shot. It was perfect for an award-winning picture.

If Larry Burrows had shot that shot, it would be in his portfolio.

[What were the limitations?]

No see, they wanted to protect their own. But some of the people at the Pentagon, it wasn't the Army per se, it wasn't the Army, the policy of the Army, it was certain people making policy along the way.

And if something happened, these people were in the chain of command, they were in the power seat. They were--like this Colonel Del Vito up there. He was in a position to literally just stop everything. By going into this room and telling the picture editors there, "Just concentrate on tanks for the next two weeks." So everything else went in the trash can. And that was bad policy.

And of course the girls there, I believe some of them are retired now. Viv Destefano she was pretty good. But I know there were a couple others there who had nothing to do with photography, and they were editing pictures. We were risking our lives to get these pictures and they were coming back there to the administrative people, who were overworked, because they didn't add to the staff, they just didn't add to the staff, they should have hired maybe two or three more picture editors to the staff, so they could select these pictures, and protect them. But they didn't do it.

[Question about procedure]

Like the guys in the field, they'd been shooting a lot of tanks. Concentrate more on individuals--we'd get advice. The greatest advice I ever got was "Don't shoot any military personnel in any compromising positions. And don't shoot any wounded, because if you shoot any wounded pictures, then the families might see them before they heard about them or something like that." Which--we weren't in the business of releasing stuff to the press. We didn't shoot it and turn it over the press where it was published in a magazine or newspaper the next day.

Our stuff was for archival use, in other words, for future historical use. We weren't shooting it for--even though our stuff did get released, because I know that picture there was on the Washington Post, it went to the Post right after I shot it, and here it is on Saga magazine, Saga no longer exists, but it was on the cover of Saga magazine, and the same year it was on a calendar. It was used. People came into the Pentagon and picked that stuff up. But we didn't shoot it to be released to the press, but it was there available for them to use.

[The Pentagon makes photographs available--how do they release them?]

They didn't per se print up a bunch of pictures and release them to the news media, they didn't do that. The Library--any researcher could walk in and get the current pictures of Vietnam. Of course, they came in all the time [the pictures], and they would get them that way. They would look at them and say, "Yeah, I like that one, and that one, and that one, and they would print them up for them and give them to them. I'm not sure if they gave them to them or sold them. I think it was like a courtesy.

[Some people I've spoken to have implied that military photographers would sell photographs privately to the media. Some media photographers tried really hard; they would go out etc.]

We had guys that got caught selling stuff. We had one of the guys--not sure which one it was now--but he was accused of selling 100 feet of film that came from Cambodia, he went into the intrusion into Cambodia; and he had sold 100 feet to the network or something. But I never did run into anyone that approached me, and I never did solicit that. Like I said, I was a career soldier, and I was there to do a job. And I wasn't interested in myself at all. It just turned out that later on, my stuff got a lot of use.

[People exaggerate the way things happen. Did you have much contact with press photographers?]

I run into them, but they sort of shied away from us. They were like the elite. In my opinion, you'd see them, but they just didn't want to associate, they just didn't socialize with us. And we weren't in a socializing atmosphere, so to speak. Most of the press were around the Caravelle Hotel, the Continental Hotel, and I'd pass them, every once in a while I'd be out with the unit and might see one of them, a United Press or a UPI photographer, but we didn't cross paths hardly at all.

I was out with a unit--Sam Casteen, I don't know if you ever heard of him or not, he was a reporter for Look magazine? Well, he was killed, and I was with a unit, and I'm not sure if it was Happy Valley, there was a place called Happy Valley--did you ever hear of Happy Valley?--Operation Crazy Horse--I think that was the unit. I was with a unit there; I spent 4 or 5 days with them, I guess. And I ended up with some kind of fever or something. I was extremely sick.

And we came out of that area about 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning, and the ship that brought Casteen in, the helicopter that brought him in, myself and my photographer went out with that ship. It was like a 25-minute flight back to An Khe, and by

the time we got back to An Khe and walked over the runway, and got over to the information office, the radio caller out in the field had already got back to the information office that he was killed. The unit I was with was overrun. It was overrun in that LZ, and he was killed.

A lot of that unit was wiped out, I don't know what the percentage was, but we just left the unit, we'd spent three or four days with them. We'd had contact all along, and we'd picked up a couple of casualties on our side, and the helicopters and what have you that come in to support us I think had left a few bodies along the way, Vietnamese. But we got out of there, the photographer and I--I was shooting still photography, and the other was shooting motion picture.

And there was a guy got hit by something, he passed out. It was like 10 o'clock. A black guy, he was chopping down elephant grass, to make room for the helicopter to come in. And all of a sudden this guy hollered, and he started moaning, and he went out, passed out. Like convulsions. And they don't know if he was bit by a bug or something, or what happened to him. We never did find out.

But the ship that brought this guy Sam Casteen in, and we went out with the guy that got bit by a bug, he probably got bit by a bug or a snake or something, when we got back to the base camp, that unit was overrun, and Sam Casteen was reported dead. He was killed, and a lot of other guys.

So we got involved in everything that everybody else got involved in. That's what we were...I've met a lot of people who said, "Oh, you were a photographer in Vietnam, that didn't count. Did you ever get shot at?" And I says--not necessarily--I don't think--"That guy there, we'll shoot him." Because it didn't work that way.

[It sounds like you were often in combat]

Oh yeah. These are some of the letters that used to go back and forth to the Mint. You might want to take a look at it. And the wording they would use on that. That's the same picture in the book.

They gave me credit in the biographies, of the people who, the designer. Because they were going to let it go, it wasn't a photograph, it was just somebody's fancy design. I almost let it go. I was encouraged, people said "No Harry, that's your photograph, don't be taken advantage of, let them know." If they mint this, it's going to become history. That's part of the national treasure. Once you mint something like that, it becomes part of the national treasure.

I'm not sure what he calls that, the Time-Life books or something, but that book is not the Time-Life book. I think you refer to it as the Time-Life book.

[Comment about British military books--then some photographs of Breedlove's]

My understanding is that Colonel Del Vito had that negative destroyed, because he didn't want to show the combat photographers wounded.

[I'm interested in getting pictures of photographers--to accompany the introduction]

I've got a copy of that picture at home. I've got to get it framed. I don't know if I've got two copies or not. Now Bryan Grigsby though, he's got, what he'd done is took the proofs. When the proofs came back, he kept the proofs. Because if they were 2 1/4 proofs, what he did later on was copy the proofs.

[I want to contact Grigsby]

He'll help you. He did a lot of stuff. He's been a real (unclear) of this stuff. He kept a lot of stuff. I talked to him a couple of weeks ago. The only time he comes down here is when somebody dies. Last two or three times he's been down is when one of our buddies died. They've started dying off now. At a young age, too. Kidney diseases, heart attacks, like Massie. Tom Wade died. he had both kidneys, like that with cancer.

We were in a lot of Agent Orange. We went up, Leroy Massie, Tom Wade, and myself, was up in the highlands doing a film for the 1st Cav. Division, for some colonel from the Pentagon. "The 1st Air Cav Story" was the name of the film we were putting together. And we had to pick up a lot of shots. They took us up into some defoliated areas, where the leaves were already turned brown and everything, just acres and acres of brown, and they dropped us down in there from a helicopter. We were doing rappelling out of CH-47s, and we were down on the ground, and they brought them in and rappelled out of them like down on ladders, and of course the dust was so dense that it was hard to take pictures, because it was like a desert, all the foliage was dried up. It was just brittle, everything was brittle, brown, you know? And we were in that stuff. And a friend of mine said, "Well, Tom Wade, he died, he was like forties, in his mid-forties, he had both kidneys go with cancer." And then Leroy Massie, a couple of months later he had his heart attack. He was in his early fifties. A couple of other people were having problems.

[Nick Mills book--Massie's problems]

Leroy Massie. Yeah, he was really messed up. He got into a situation where we sent him up to the 173rd Airborne, and see we usually go to the Information Office, and they knew who we were. And once we got out to the unit--a lot of times we'd get off the helicopter, and the commanding officer would say, "Oh, two replacements. Come on, we need you bad." And we'd say "We're photographers." And he'd say "You're in the Army? You're working for me now." They just took over.

And a couple times, we got out there, and they said, "You can't leave." We were out of film. And we were going to be there a couple of days, we were going to catch, we were going to ask the commanding officer, "When's the next resupply ship coming in?"

"What do you want to know for?"

"Well, we're going to go out on it."

"No you're not either. You're assigned to our unit."

"No, we're not." We carried our orders with us.

"We got a call, we got two people coming out."

So Leroy got stuck in a situation like that. He went out there, and then the information officer--I forget his name now--I think his name was Major Silers or something, I might be

mistaken--anyways, he said, when he called the unit up out in the field to let him know they were coming out, he said, "They're yours, do want you want to them." So when he got out there--because this major didn't like us for some reason, he didn't like our freedom, because we had freedom to come and go. I don't think he liked that.

Leroy and the other guy got out there. Once you got out in the boonies, there was no way to get out of there, unless they were coming in--they were on a long-range mission, and it lasted something like two weeks. And they didn't move during the day. They slept during the day, and stayed quiet, they just hid themselves in the underbrush all day long.

And when nighttime fell, they would work their way through, and when it come daylight again, they lay down and stayed quiet all day long. And of course, he couldn't take any pictures. And he came back really traumatized from that. Because he wasn't fit to do that. These airborne people, they're supposed the healthiest and strongest the Army's got, they're the elite, Cav. These guys went out there for weeks, and sometimes months I guess, and they were seasoned. And here Leroy Massie is. About that time, I guess he's probably in his late twenties, not in real good shape, because basically photographers weren't in that good a shape. Leroy's a little bit older than the rest of us.

When he comes back to Saigon, he's really messed up. We knew that from the beginning. Because when he came back, he was traumatized. He wasn't right after that. Some of the things that happen out there at night. Of course, they're trying to move at night, carrying that camera equipment, not knowing what you're doing.

I got hooked up with one of those one time. They said they'd have a couple of hooches that were offset from a village. This was a small village. When we got there, it was two huts, and had been abandoned a long time ago, and there was no indication that anybody had been there for months.

But the word they had was there was a couple of American prisoners of war being held there. So there was, this was the 1st Infantry Division, there was a lot of Australians showed up there that evening. These guys were real strange people. They were mercenaries, I guess. They were going to guide us.

And we didn't know what we were getting into. So we were all hyped up and everything. We figured we were going to go down the road a ways or something, or with the truck. We were loaded up on trucks, and everything, this was about 3:30, 4 o'clock in the afternoon. And they drove us down this road through this rubber plantation for a while, and all of a sudden we've come to this point, it's getting pretty close to dark, and they just dropped us off.

The commanding officer--the trucks left--the commanding officers, there were two of them, started checking everybody's canteens and everything. "OK, you ready? Tie this down, strap this down, strap this down."

"What's going on?"

"Tape this up, so it won't rattle." And what we were going to do, he said, "We've got a hard push. As soon as it gets dark,

we're going to take off from here. We're going to march--it's going to be a forced march all night long." And he says, "we've got to be at this village before daybreak."

And we were out there in the pitch-black jungle, holding onto the back straps on the guy in front of us. And once you turn loose from the guy, and lose him--you're supposed to be quiet--we were like a bunch of horses going through there. The noise, talk about the noise, you could hear us for miles. Things were rattling, people were falling down, trying to get up, under that load, it's like, fall down in the mud, trying to get up. Somebody's trying to help you, and like cursing, you know, and we were supposed--"Be quiet, be quiet." All night long, total fear and exhaustion.

And when we got to where we were going, I remember laying down, we finally stopped, and I just lay down, and sort of went out of it. And the next thing, I woke up, it was daylight, the roar of these tanks and APCs woke me up, that's what woke me up.

And we were by the village. There were two huts there, and they were empty. The tanks had got there before we did. I was totally exhausted. I just went over to the APCs and I told the guys my name, I said, "How about us going with you?" He said "Crawl on." So I just left the infantry unit, crawled up on the APC. and went to sleep. I was totally exhausted. It was all for nothing, I didn't take any pictures, I was totally unfit, totally exhausted.

We learned as time moved on, who to attach ourselves and who not to attach ourselves to.

[So that particular experience was early on?]

Yeah--yeah. Most of my really bad experiences were early on when I didn't know what I was doing, even though I'd been in the army ten, nine, close to ten years.

I was so eager to take pictures. It was exciting when it happened, you know, they spread the word. "I know they've got a couple of prisoners out there." If you get a couple pictures of liberating a couple of prisoners, those pictures are going to hit, they're going to cover the whole world, right?

Went out one time up in the highlands, went out tracking some elephants. Once I got out there with a squad, I realized I was with a squad. Went out there and walked all day long, tracking elephants. And the way they tracked them was they went up against trees and rubbed the bark off trees. And they said they were pack elephants, and the North Vietnamese were using them as pack elephants.

We were out there in the jungle, tracking these stupid elephants. When I realized we were out there with the squads--we weren't taking pictures of them. You got one guy in front of you, and one guy back there, they disappeared into the jungle. So all you do is just walk along. If you're going to take pictures, what are you taking pictures of? Can't even see the countryside, cause of the foliage. Can't really see the guy in front of you, can't see the guy in back of you, you know.

There weren't enough people, and there are some situations in the dense jungle, even though you're with a company, you still couldn't take any pictures.

One unit, the first time I was there, one unit, we got into a beehive. I mean literally, these were these big stinging wasps of some sort, I don't know what they were. Big guys, their heads swelled up and everything. But I come from the hills of West Virginia and I knew, anytime you get around a yellow jacket's nest, or something, just freeze, don't move.

I was sitting there with these bees. Guys started running all over the place, throwing their packs away, you know, they dropped mortar rounds, they dropped their weapons, you see those big beehives, like a mound of dirt. And once one of those things exploded, it's just thousands of bees. And everybody started screaming and hollering, and the commanding officer said, "Halt, everybody be quiet." If you got hit in that chaos, what are you going to do? Guys are throwing their weapons away, we lost mortar rounds, we lost a mortar, weapons was lost and stuff like that, on account of throwing that stuff around.

I was right at a tree trunk, just as those bees hit, and I just threw myself against that tree and I didn't move. I could see those swarms of bees going, darting back and forth. I didn't get one sting.

The commanding officer, his eyes, both eyes, I got a picture of him at home. I got certain proofs at home. I thought this was a book on text more than photography. I thought the way you said you wanted to talk you wanted to get some text. I could have brought a bunch of stuff to let you look at, and some of it has numbers on it.

[Company # if you want to send things]

I really don't have that much, to tell you the truth.

[My work for the book is the text--etc]

I was told when I came back to civilian life, that the things I learned in the army, don't even bring it into the workplace. Things you learn there don't even apply here. I was made supervisor in my unit for a while. People immediately went to my supervisor and said, "We can't work for him. He's going to try to impose the military on us. I was in the Army from when I was 17 years old. Spent twenty years. And you get out, and go to work someplace else, and twenty years' experience, the most extensive experience that you can ever get is in the military, because you get a dramatic amount of quality control and discipline, and that's what our work force is missing today, is quality control and discipline. Discipline and quality, whichever one comes first. Probably discipline comes before quality control.

You have to have a certain amount of it. [End of tape.]