The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Paul Garrity
Conducted by Jonathan Bernstein
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Transcribed by Jennifer McIntyre

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.

Jonathan Bernstein: This is Jonathon Bernstein conducting an oral history interview with Mr. Paul Garrity on the 3rd of May 2002. It is approximately 10:10 in the morning, Central Standard Time. I am in Lubbock, Texas and Mr. Garrity, where exactly are you?

Paul Garrity: In Carrollton, Texas.

JB: Now, Mr. Garrity can you start off I guess, by giving us a brief biographical sketch of yourself from birth leading up to the time you decided to enter the military.

PG: Okay, I was born November 11, 1946 in Homestead, Pennsylvania. I grew up my whole life in that area. I went to Catholic grade school, went to public high school, upon graduating from high school I worked in the steel mill back in Pittsburgh and at that time I became interested in aviation. I wanted to become an airline pilot, so I was taking flying lessons on my own and then you needed a college degree to get into the Air Force and then become an airline pilot, that's what I wanted to do. So, I quit working in the steel mill and went to a junior college called Point Park College in Pittsburgh. I was in my early second semester, my first year and I got my draft notice. At that time everybody was up for the draft, so I told them that I was in college and they said, 'Well, you had a job deferment when you worked in the steel mill', because I was in an apprenticeship program and that was a job deferment and then when I went to college that was a school deferment and they said, 'well you can't have two different

deferments', so they said that they would let me finish my second semester, since I was already into the second semester and then at that time I would be drafted. So without a college degree I could not go into the Air Force so the only opportunity I had to was to go into the Army and fly helicopters. Upon my getting out of the second semester, I enlisted into the Army, becoming a helicopter pilot.

JB: Now, what year was this?

PG: That was 1968.

JB: Now, I guess, going in to enlist, were you familiar with the warrant officer program?

PG: Just what my recruiter told me.

JB: Do you remember what exactly he told you?

PG: In fact, I knew more than what he did about it because I was researching it and I knew that you needed a high school certificate and you needed to pass through a mental test that they gave you. There was some kind of easy test on airplane instruments and so forth and then your standard military test that you had to take and you had to meet some minimum requirement scores to qualify for the program.

JB: Let's see, moving into training, of course your induction, first impressions of training, what was that like, basic?

PG: You mean after basic training?

JB: Going into basic training.

PG: Into basic training. Well, that was an eye opener. The basic training was done in Ft. Polk, Louisiana and that was in the summer of '68 and that's essentially the first time I was down in Louisiana and being in the summer it was quite hot and humid and I was in a company of, I guess, fifty people there that, they were totally different people. They were from the swamps of Louisiana and everything that you did was based upon demerits and for some reason we just didn't get with the program. These guys were lazy, they were not very intelligent, so we were always getting whipped by the DIs and everything and we always did everything last.

JB: Were all the guys in your company regular Army, or were all draftees?

PG: I think the majority of them were drafted. There is very little regular Army, now that you mention it, you had to, a lot of times, tell your ID number and in that ID

number, I think it started with RA, which is Regular Army, and everybody else was drafted or National Guard or something like that and I remember being criticized all the time because, 'what is wrong with you for joining the Army, why would you ever join the Army at that time.'

JB: Now, because of that, did your instructors look on you any differently than the rest or was there any preferential treatment.

PG: One of the instructors, he was back from Vietnam and he knew that there was a couple of us were in there because of going in to be a helicopter pilot and he did not like helicopter pilots from his relationship with them in Vietnam and so I didn't think we got any special treatment for being Regular Army at all. In fact like I said, we were in the minority and also this guy just didn't like helicopter pilots, so it was different.

JB: Were there any other instructors that were Vietnam veterans?

PG: Yes.

JB: I guess at that point everyone was sort of assuming you were headed to Vietnam, did your instructors sort of invoke, 'this is what you're going to need when you are over there', or anything like that to motivate you?

PG: In basic training? No, it was just your basic training program.

JB: Then moving on to warrant officer candidate and basic flight training, what exactly did that entail, how was that different from basic?

PG: Well, now you went from Ft. Polk, Louisiana, to Ft. Walters, Texas, out here in Mineral Wells. Now you were in a group with your peers, so everybody was geared to fly helicopters at that time and the officers in charge were helicopter pilots that were returned from Vietnam and so that was a very good training, they essentially locked you up for months there at Ft. Walters and everything was programmed and I thought it was quite well presented. Now, there was a lot of discipline, there was a lot of instructions, but of course everybody was there to fly and that was the enjoyment part of it, so I thought it was a very good, three or four months there.

JB: Any idea what the split was as far as classroom time versus flight time, and why types of aircraft were you flying?

PG: Well, you went to class every day and you only flew, I think probably one hour a day or something like that. I really don't remember how many hours you flew a

day, but there was a lot of classroom and the type of aircraft was those trainers, the TH-55, I think it was, the two-seater trainer.

JB: What did you think of that aircraft?

PG: It was unstable, that's for sure. That's a small little aircraft. It was very small and it was, I don't know, just unique. After flying airplanes, that was a challenge, to fly that thing.

JB: Yes, I actually was going to ask, how was the transitioning from fixed wing to rotary wing?

PG: Well, fixed wing is so much easier then rotary wing because you have so many, especially in that small trainer, because the wind was a major factor in it because it was so small and everything and so you had a lot of coordination you had to do all the time with your hands and feet and so forth.

JB: Anything that was particularly challenging during basic flight training?

PG: In Ft. Walters. I would imagine just getting used to flying a helicopter like that. I think you only had about ten or eleven hours before you soloed I believe, maybe it was more than that, I don't remember right now, but anyhow, it was more of the trying to hover I think, three feet off the ground, trying to move it left and right and getting into position for takeoff and so forth. That was a real challenge.

JB: Yes, that seems to be a common theme; a lot of guys have said that. Stepping up to Ft. Rucker, advanced training, how did the progression go there, did you transition into H-13s and then to Hueys or how did that go?

PG: No, well the instrument part of it was in the H-13 and then the Hueys. The instrument part was very challenging; to fly a helicopter under instrument conditions is very challenging, it's a lot more difficult than flying airplanes.

JB: How so?

PG: Well, to give you an example, on my first instrument takeoff, I took off backwards, so it was a challenge.

JB: Now, how did the tactical end of things at Rucker work?

PG: Well, I was lucky. When I got in there I got into the guns section of it, so that's what everybody wanted to do and I don't know how I got picked but anyhow I got into that and that was a lot of fun; flying those Hueys down the gun course and

everything and so we didn't have to fly formations like the rest of the guys did, so that was very enjoyable.

JB: And these were Bravo and Charlie model Hueys?

PG: I think they were Charlie, but they could have been Bravos too, but I think most of them were Charlie models.

JB: So, I guess what was the gun training like as far as weapons systems, actually getting out on the range, how did that work?

PG: That was great. It was very well presented. They showed you what you should be doing setting up the mission, how do you shoot the rockets and so forth, and also we did gun runs in the landing zones and so forth. Then they had gun runs set up where they had tanks and targets out there on the gun course, and you flew down the target and shot at the tanks and so forth.

JB: So basically you were practicing air assault and LZ prep type tactics?

PG: Right.

JB: All right, when was the first time you saw a Cobra and what did you think?

PG: First time was probably at Ft. Walters. We saw them flying and then you can just seem them parked up there and of course everybody was, that's what everybody wanted to do is fly those. So that was probably the first time I saw one, Ft. Walters.

JB: Anything specific at Ft. Rucker that stands out in your mind?

PG: Well, flying in the gun section of it, that was very nice. Everybody was envious of you because you got to go into that section of it; so that was the best part of the training; that was the most fun of course.

JB: You finish up Ft. Rucker; you get orders to Hunter Army Air Field.

PG: No, I didn't go to Hunter. I was one of the ones that didn't go.

JB: Really, when did you transition to Cobras?

PG: Over in Vietnam.

JB: Really excellent, I haven't actually spoken to anybody who went through the in country transition yet, so okay. So, then I assume you got orders straight to Vietnam form Ft. Rucker.

PG: Right, exactly and when I went over to Vietnam, I got selected to go into the First Cav headquarters of the ARA, so I was at the headquarters unit.

JB: Headquarters 2nd Point?

PG: Right, exactly.

JB: What was the process form leaving Rucker, going overseas, how was the trip over and then of course what was your first impression upon getting in country?

PG: Well, I think I had a thirty day vacation there, so I went home back to Pittsburgh for thirty days and at that time I was not married so my parents had no idea where I was going and everything until the very end of my thirty days when I told them that I was going to Vietnam.

JB: How did they take that?

PG: It wasn't too bad because I don't think really they had an idea what was going on over there, they just saw it on the news and everything. They knew it was dangerous. They knew some people in the area were killed and so forth, they were concerned of course.

JB: Were you aware of the situation in Vietnam, what we were trying to do there?

PG: What do you mean the situation?

JB: Well, I mean, I guess what our involvement exactly was, what we were trying to do as far as pursuing the war, etc?

PG: Well, at that age there was a lot of questions I believe, I don't know what everybody else told you but I thought, years later after going through the training and everything – you're in an environment where you're confined to an Army base and you're programmed, I think there's a subtle program in there, no, you think you're doing the right thing and so forth and then you see on TV the people protesting against the war and so forth and you think those people are wrong. You're all gung ho, you're all programmed to do your job which is excellent because that's probably what save a lot of people's live because you didn't think of the alternative, now is this the right thing to do, is this the wrong thing to do, should I do this, should I do that, you just did it because you were programmed and then you had a lot of peer pressure from your fellow pilots and so forth to do everything right and that was one of the things that was great about being with the 2nd and the 20th and especially Charlie battery, because I thought we were the best of the best. Now you asked me going to Vietnam, what was my first impression. I was

scared twice when I was in Vietnam. The first time was when I was coming in, landing in Saigon and I looked out the window and it was just like the war movies and I said, 'What the hell am I doing over here?' and I finally realized, this is serious, this is something that is not good. If you can just picture looking out your window the airplane and seeing the sky lit up in a red and white and so forth. It was a moment that I'll never forget. That's when it really hit me that this is serious business.

JB: When exactly did you arrive?

PG: When did I arrive? I think the day after they landed on the moon, in July of '69.

JB: The 21st.

PG: I think I was over the Pacific when the pilot came on and said they landed on the moon.

JB: What was that like, hearing about that?

PG: Well, flying over it was on a 707, I guess there was, I don't know, a 150 guys on there that, but there was thirteen officers and all those were warrant officers mainly out of my class, so we were the ranking officers and we were the only ones that had the booze, so we drank the whole time over there and they were after us, the poor flight attendants were after us, 'You guys can't have this booze up here' and we said, 'well who's the ranking officers' and they said well, 'you guys are.' I said, 'what are you going to do, send us to Vietnam', so we drank the whole time going over.

JB: Well that certainly is stress relief.

PG: Well, that's a twenty-four hour flight.

JB: Getting into Vietnam, how did you get your unit assignment, how did that process work?

PG: To this day I have no idea how it worked. You just get in these lines and they tell you where you are to go. That's as far as I know and I guess the only reason I got with the 2nd of the 20th is because I had the gun training in Ft. Rucker, but I was not Cobra qualified at that time and I guess I was just fortunate that they had an opening at the battalion headquarters for a helicopter pilot so I guess just being in the right place at the right time.

JB: How did your transition training work then, getting from the headquarters battery to 2nd of the 20th into Cobra transition?

PG: Well, I was very fortunate. I was in with an officer, his name is Major Cianciolo and I was in there with a bunch of Lieutenants and Captains and I was just a W-1 at that time, but I was good. I was a good pilot and he recognized that and so he took me underneath his wing if you want to call it that and so he gave me an awful lot of opportunity to do what I could do best was fly the helicopters and after a certain period of time he made me aircraft commander before he made the Lieutenants and Captains. He and I got along great. He is an excellent person; in fact, last time I saw him was probably in December '69. Just a couple of years ago I called him up because his name is so unique, Cianciolo, and here he was, a three-star General, retired, so I have talked to him over the years and so forth. He was just one of those people, John, that you knew he was going to be something good in life. So anyhow, that was down at the battalion so I made aircraft commander soon after I got there, so that was very enjoyable.

JB: Now at this time, had the 2nd of the 20th gone completely Cobras or were there still Charlie model gun ships around as well?

PG: I think there were all Cobras and we may have had one in the battalion. I think when I first got there, I think they were all C models that we had and then we got the newer models in for the Hueys.

JB: Now, transitioning from the Huey to the Cobra, what were the similarities, differences, difficulties?

PG: Well, I went to in country training for the Cobras down in Vung Tau and that was pretty easy. I didn't have any problems whatsoever doing that.

JB: That was a two-week program?

PG: I don't think so; I think it was at least four weeks. I could be wrong John.

JB: Yes, actually I wasn't sure. I was just going through the original first Aviation brigade records just before and initially it said it was going to be a two week course, I think they did extend it to four, fairly soon.

PG: I don't think it was two weeks, I think it was longer than that.

JB: Yes, I think it was actually four, they did extend it.

PG: I just loved it.

JB: That's a wicked looking helicopter, it really is. What was the biggest, I want to say advantage from the Cobra over the Huey guns that you were used to flying?

PG: The power. You can fly faster, it was a smaller object to shoot at, I think you could carry more weapons on a Cobra then you could carry on a Charlie model. So it was fast, smaller target and you can use the, what would you call it, you can do a lot more things with a Cobra. It's a lot more controllable I think than a Huey.

JB: Now what was it like flying it from the front seat?

PG: Flying from the front seat? Well, at first your controls are much smaller of course so you had, everything was more condensed, your movements and everything was more sensitive, so you really had to watch, you did not overcorrect from the front seat, because of the control movements; so it was totally different flying from the front seat, because you're cyclic was over there on your right.

JB: Sadly, I haven't actually gotten into the Cobra that I'm going to be working on it yet, so I haven't felt the controls or anything, obviously not powered, you really don't get the actual feel of it, but how much of a throw was on the cyclic?

PG: On the front seat, it was very small. It would be like driving a racecar, like a Formula One racecar, where you just move it.

JB: Even the smallest input?

PG: Right, exactly.

JB: Now what was your first combat mission like?

PG: Wow, it was flying from the front seat of course, probably just like anybody you're probably along for the ride. Everything is going so fast and I would imagine it was just trying to collect everything that was going on all the time.

JB: That seems to be the fairly common first mission. What did you do yourself I guess, to slow things down and get an idea of what was going on for your next missions, was there anything in particular that you used to help with that?

PG: Let me think John, beside drink a lot of beer. I would imagine getting over the initial nervousness of the situation, having the aircraft commander give you more responsibility, talking to the new pilots, listening to the aircraft commanders and trying to put everything in a perspective where it made sense to you, what was the reason for everything; I would imagine doing that. I think a lot had to do with the aircraft

commander, how he treated you and what you wanted to do. What I meant by that is, did you just want to sit there and do nothing, or did you want to get involved and how much leash did he give you in regards to the mission. Now when you first came into the unit, the initials FNG, you know what that stands for?

JB: Yes, sir I do.

PG: So there was a lot of harassment that went along with that, so it was up to yourself to get more involved and do the right thing and again, I think getting with the program had to do a lot with the aircraft commander and how he treated you and the personalities going back and forth.

JB: All right, now how did you, I guess after transitioning training at Vung Tau, moving back to headquarters battery 2nd of the 20th, were you then assigned to Charlie battery?

PG: Yes.

JB: And that was at Quan Loi at that point?

PG: That's right.

JB: What was it like moving out to one of the operational batteries?

PG: Well, of course being in the battalion I flew to all of them all the time and I wanted to go to Charlie battery because I thought that was the best one of the whole group and so the transition to me was very easy. I knew all the officers, I knew the pilots and so forth so it was a very easy transition for me.

JB: Any particular reason why Charlie Battery?

PG: I think the group of people up there, I don't know how many people you have talked to or whoever, but I just thought the group of guys at Charlie Battery were the best. We had a hell of a good time and I just really blended in there with those people.

JB: Well, going operational with Charlie battery, any memorable missions early on, well throughout your tour but I mean just what really stands out to you, mission wise?

PG: Well, there was a couple of them and of course this Medevac meadow was one of the ones that was also tragic and also, when you saw Sergeant Rocco down there saving all this people's lives and so forth, that was very impressive what he did that day. Then the second mission that comes to my mind is flying at night in Cambodia. We were

supporting a firebase out there and what we did; you're familiar with how we make the gun runs and everything?

JB: Yes, sir.

PG: Okay, so what happened was I think I went in first after we talked to the commander on the ground, he told us where to shoot and everything and I went in and shot and I pulled up and my wing ship, you haven't talked to George Alexander yet have you?

JB: No, I haven't I actually have his email address and I will be talking to him soon.

PG: Yes, I would highly recommend to talk to George, crazy George. George and I flew a lot together over there and he's just a super person and I think you would really enjoy talking to him and I know he'll enjoy talking to you. But anyhow what happened is, I went in first and shot and you have to pull up and so forth, and George came in and shot and then I came around and shot again and George come around, so on the third time and all this time we're not taking fire. On the third time around I called the a commander on the ground and I said 'Are you sure we're shooting at the right place because we're not taking fire, we don't see any activity or anything.' He says, 'Yes, you're hitting them right on.' So, I came in for the third time, shot as soon as I start pulling up all hell broke loose, I mean they were just waiting for us. They let us make two rounds of it and they got our position and everything and it was a low ceiling that night, the clouds were low so we were a little bit lower than what we should have been, but you had to, to get below the clouds and so all I saw in front of me was red, because of the tracers. The tracers were coming up and they were hitting the clouds and the clouds were turning red and this is all in front of me and so I'm sitting there and I'm saying to myself well if I continue to go forward I'm going to get shot, okay because they knew based upon the prior two runs what we were going to do so I pulled up that Cobra; so here I am, I'm nose up now and I'm going as straight up as I can because I can't go forward and here I am now in the clouds and everything is red, because I am completely in the clouds and the tracers are lighting everything up in red and I stalled the Cobra and that's not good. So the only way I could get out of it, I kicked it to the right and I had enough altitude where I could get my airspeed back up and now, if you could picture this,

going straight up, everything's red in front of you, you turn, you're still in the clouds and you're almost sideways coming down at a high speed now and you hope you have enough altitude so that you can pull that sucker out at the bottom there and so that's what happened and George, my wing ship, as soon as he saw what was going on, he radioed and said 'I'm turning off my lights', so I didn't know where he was, because he turned his lights off so they couldn't see him form the ground, and there I am fighting this thing because I stalled it and so that was a lot of fun. Yes, so that was the second time I got scared in Vietnam.

JB: Do you know what the process was you went through to recover it?

PG: I would imagine what happened is when I got up there and I noticed I had to do something because the thing was probably starting to shake, the only way out was to kick in the right rudder and get the thing over so I can get air speed and the second thing was hopefully I had enough altitude where I can pull back out at the very end.

JB: Now I guess moving on to Medevac Meadow, can you go into detail as to what the mission started off as, what it became and your experience there?

PG: Well, the Medevac missions overall were dangerous. As you know, what we did is one Cobra flew low around the Medevac and one flew higher. On this particular mission, George was the low ship and after all these years with some talking and so forth, when we got the mission I believe it was supposed to be on a secure LZ, of course they had wounded and everything, but what I remember was it was a secure LZ, so there was no problem, so George went down low with the Medevac bird and I was up higher. When he was coming in he started taking fire. At that time George and Moran, Moran was in his front seat I believe; they went and started shooting at where the fire was coming from, from the tree line and I was up above and I was trying to get George out of the way so I could shoot my rockets so we took turns. George when he vacated the area, I would come in and shoot rockets and George would come in and shoot the mini-guns and forty millimeter and I think he shot some rockets from a low level. And then we saw what was going on down there and I believe what happened is I came down onto the deck also with George and we tried to protect Sergeant Rocco as he was going back and forth from the helicopter to the tree line and I remember looking down and watching Sergeant Rocco; you can see the dirt around his feet kicking up from the bullets hitting around

him. What George and I did was we continued to suppress the fire as much as we could so he could go back and forth from the woods to the helicopter and we did everything we could to protect him and also bring in the rest of the Medevacs and the Cobras that were bounced to protect us.

JB: Now, what type of fire was this, was it just small arms?

GP: I believe it was mainly small arms.

JB: No 51 cal?

GP: I don't believe so.

JB: All right, now how long did you stay with them before you had to head back and refuel and rearm.

GP: Well, as you know we have a limited amount of fuel that we can maintain, so we shot everything we had I believe, I know George and I, we shot all our rockets, all the mini-guns and forty millimeter that we had. I believe we were probably on station maybe an hour, maybe, I don't know, and at that time, the second Medevac was on station, do you know his name?

JB: Hank Tuell?

GP: Right. I think we covered him going in also and then he took fire and he did not land, he had to take off again.

JB: Let's see, the next wave comes and relieves you on station, did you go back, rearm, and then come back out?

GP: I don't remember that, I don't know John.

JB: Now, Jim had mentioned the following morning, mounting basically the entire battery, going out on the rescue mission. First of all, were you a part of that and what was your experience there?

GP: I don't remember that day.

JB: Certainly, it's amazing hearing the different perspectives of the mission and just how it all fits together. As a historian it's rather rewarding.

GP: Well, do you know that George and I put Sergeant Rocco in for the Medal of Honor?

JB: No, I didn't really know that.

GP: There's a whole story that has evolved from there now. After that mission and everything, we were all talked about it and everything and George and I went over to the headquarters over there and we wrote up the recommendation for Sergeant Rocco to get the Medal of Honor and that's really the last time I was involved in that. At the same time, a couple of months later, Hank Tuell wrote up a recommendation for George and I for the Silver Star for that mission. Were you aware of that?

JB: No, I wasn't.

GP: And I have the original documentation, a copy of it signed in ink by Hank and I kept it all these years. So just in the last couple of months, we all start talking to each other again after thirty-some years and I got a hold of Jim Moran; now we all start telling war stories again and Jim told me that Sergeant Rocco got the Medal of Honor and that's the first time I heard about it was a couple of months ago, I think in March.

JB: That was right around when I started the project and he and I started talking.

GP: So I got all excited because I put him in for the Medal of Honor, so I called Sergeant Rocco, he lives in San Antonio down here and I was talking to him and I said, 'I was one of the pilots that put you in for the Medal of Honor', and he said, 'Well that's not why I heard.' I said well, 'I did' and he said 'Well, the Medevac pilots put me in for the Medal of Honor', and he says 'if you don't mind I'm not feeling too good', because he has cancer and he says 'Why don't you call Lee Caubarreaux, one of the Medevac pilots and talk to him because he knows everything.' So I called Lee, he lives over in Louisiana and I told Lee who I was and everything and Lee says yes, he heard that some of the Cobra pilots put him in for the Medal of Honor, but the paperwork was lost. So he and the other Captain that was there in the Medevac put in for the Medal of Honor years later and then that's how he got it. So I was talking to Lee and Hank Tuell and I said George and I were put in for the Silver Star and we never heard anything and Lee says, 'During that time period the first Cav lost a lot of the award recommendations', and so I said to George Alexander, I said, 'Well, George if they lost our recommendation for Rocco for the Medal of Honor, I would imagine they lost our recommendation for the Silver Star', so what I've been doing in the last couple of months, and George has to; is trying to get all the information to resubmit our Silver Star and just yesterday I got from

the National Archives and Records Administration, some information about that Medevac mission and everything. Have you talked to them?

JB: Actually there again about three weeks. I'm actually leaving; I'm from New York and I'm leaving on Wednesday, the semester ends, be back up there for a couple of months.

GP: Well, do you know where it's at?

JB: Yes, I do.

GP: Would you like me to give you this person's name who did this; she's very familiar with it?

JB: Sure, is it Jeanine Swift?

GP: No, her name is Susan, middle initial A. and then she had a name Frances- and I'll spell the last name for you H-A-U-G-H-T-O-N; Frances Haughton and she's the one that did all this and she was very helpful and she has this all documented, that day, what happened. It's mainly written up for Sergeant Rocco though and if you want me to I can mail this all to you.

JB: That would be great. That would be fantastic.

GP: Then you can see what's going on with it, what was I going to tell you there? You want her phone number.

JB: Yes, hold on let me just pause the recording.

GP: What I'm doing now is I'm going to prepare a resubmission of this Silver Star and I'm going to get all the documentation that I have and give it to a Congressman and if this Congressman approves, then he'll send it on to the Army to have it reviewed again. So, I don't know how much information that you can provide me to help me, if any.

JB: Let's see, well as far as I've got right now, I've got at least one of the tail numbers of the aircraft involved, the major participants, basic altitudes and directions of gun runs, but of course I've gotten all of that in the interview with Jim Moran; so actually he sent me an article too which I believe was in the Army times.

GP: That's the one George had, from 1965. Yes, I have that. By the way I have Susan's phone number if you want it now. You ready, and what's your address and I'll

send this to you, all this information she gave me, so if you go down to see her, she'll recognize it and everything.

JB: We actually had the Triennial Vietnam symposium here a few weeks ago and two of the Archivists came out and did a whole presentation and one of the artifacts they used was a Xerox copy of the bar rules for the Blue Max bar and the whole Constitution, so it was a piece of.

GP: How did you get that?

JB: They actually had made a copy of it from the National Archives and they brought it out as part of their presentation and I was just sitting there; I happened working that room on the AV equipment and we got to talking about it and they gave it to me and it's a full size copy of it and it was a scream and it was actually from late '71 so it was after they had become F Battery 79th ARA, but all the pilots had signed it at the bottom and everything and of course, just reading it was quite amusing.

GP: Who has the original?

JB: I assume the National Archives do.

GP: Up there in Maryland, how about that. Well I have a, do you have a picture of it and everything?

JB: Yes, its funny, Jim sent me a picture that he had taken of it and I compared that to the Xerox that I have and there are some differences but the wording is pretty much the same.

GP: Well, I have it on file, I can send it to you, for what its worth.

JB: Yes, that would be great.

GP: Did anybody ever give you the ARA song?

JB: Well, actually that was my next question. Jim said he definitely needed a few beers before relating that to anyone, so I haven't yet found that.

GP: You know we had a lot of fun over there.

JB: Well I guess it sort of a good way for stress relief and certainly being a stressful situation. Well, let's see, let's talk about weapons loads and stuff, was there any standard outfitting of a Cobra, how did loading up for a mission go?

GP: Yes, based upon, George knew a lot about that. When you talk to George, he'll describe that better than I can, but the rockets were ten pounds and seventeen

pounds I believe and so you had to get a mixture of that because of the weight and then you put so many rounds of mini-gun and forty millimeter in the front. You also had the flechette rockets; you're familiar with those?

JB: Yes, sir.

GP: Yes and so it was all a mixture between what you wanted to do and how much weight you can carry and I don't know the exact ratio at this time, I really don't.

JB: How did you go about selecting what rockets you were going to use, for example, you're in a situation, you need flechettes, how do you select those?

GP: Well, usually, when the helicopters are sitting there for a mission, I would say one hundred percent of the time they were set up for the ten pound, seventeen-pound rockets. Only when you had a special occasion would those rockets would be pulled out and flechettes put back in, so you really had a special mission to go on before you put the flechettes in there.

JB: Now, were there any, I've got pictures of tail number 600, which had twin mini-guns, were there any other different armament configurations that you were aware of, that you ever worked with?

GP: No, I'm sorry I don't.

JB: Any twenty-millimeter birds arrive when you were there?

GP: I think they came in but we didn't have any but I can remember the pilots talking about those that flew them because at first there was a lot of vibration in everything because the structure was not supported to handle that pounding, so there was a problem with the structure at first, but I never shot one.

JB: Now, your assigned aircraft, do you remember the tail number and was there any nose arc or anything like that on it?

GP: I don't remember any of the tail numbers, no.

JB: I know later on Jim was telling me there were a couple with distinctive nose arc, murder ink, sound of silence, but there were no aircraft markings.

GP: That's why it would be interesting for you to talk to George because George would have a lot more details on the aircraft and because; like the warrant officers, we were only there really to fly, where the Captains and Lieutenants had support functions to

do, so George got involved with the mechanics and everything more because he was a Captain.

JB: Where exactly, I know Medevac Meadow was during the Cambodian incursion, was that actually in Cambodia, or was it in Vietnam?

GP: No, it was in Cambodia and you knew we flew into Cambodia before it was legal, right?

JB: Yes, definitely.

GP: Do you know the sequence of how that occurred?

JB: No.

GP: What would happen is the mission would come down and when you took off, of course, the mission was given to the copilot, the guy in the front seat, so you didn't know where you were going, you knew that right, on our missions?

JB: No, actually I wasn't aware of that.

GP: We were on like a two minute call; there was a horn that blew and you had two minutes to get into the helicopter and takeoff, twenty-four hours a day. And so when you got the mission, you didn't know where you were going until the copilot would write it on the inside of the window and after a while you would recognize essentially the grids and everything, so you knew essentially where you were going, then you had to call somebody to find out what was going on actually. And on the ones for Cambodia before May of 1970, you would have a mission inside of Vietnam and then when you got there you were told to call a certain frequency and at that time, it would be somebody, I believe up in a C-130 Air Force and then they would give you a mission into Cambodia from there.

JB: And what did you think about doing that?

GP: Well, after a while you knew once the grid comes up, you knew what was going on and you would just say, 'Oh shit', because you know what was going to happen and then you flew in there and of course anything that happened to you over there before May of '70, it was your fault. You were off course or something happened.

JB: Was there any difference in contact once you were in Cambodia as opposed to operations in Vietnam?

GP: Well, before May of '70 they were Special Forces missions, so you were working with a small group of people, like maybe three or five on the ground and most of the time they would be whispering to you because the enemy was right there with them, so it was a very small group of individuals you were working with and a special mission.

JB: As far as ground fire and stuff like that, was it more intense?

GP: No, because they weren't inspecting you.

JB: Were there any particular incidents you were involved in pre-May of '70 in Cambodia?

GP: Yes, one sad mission. We were supporting a Special Forces on the ground and he was in immediate danger. I mean they were right there with him and he started to break down, so that was very emotional.

JB: Well, is there anything else about your tour that really stands out, you'd like to tell us?

GP: Well, being up in Charlie battery I thought that we had a swagger if you want to call it that. I thought we were the best of the best. I think we acted that way when we did our job, I thought we did our job very professionally, we had a lot of fun, it was a good group of guys. After thirty years we're starting to talk to each other again and it's nice to talk to some of the guys again and hear some good times and I enjoyed it as much as you can enjoy combat.

JB: All right, now I guess heading home, you finished your tour, you're pretty much done with, what was the experience getting out of country, getting back to the States and getting home?

GP: Well, let's see, I've got a couple more minutes here. Going home, you were, in your last month it started to change for you, you become a little bit more conservative and so forth, you start thinking about leaving so coming back, its kind of a let down because just imagine your life being on the line twenty-four hours a day and now that's gone and so you're relaxed and so forth and it was just getting down from a high if you want to call it that, withdrawal.

JB: How was transitioning, was going through that for you?

GP: I had no problem; it was just getting your body to settle down. I noticed, well like my sister said when I came back, she says I could hardly look at you because of the

look in your eyes, nothing phased you after that. You weren't scared of anything; just nothing phased you for a long time.

JB: I guess that's pretty much all I've got for now. Let me stop the recording, end this officially. This will end the interview with Mr. Paul Garrity on May 3rd.