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Christopher “Chris” M. Beam, interviewed by Doug Rawlings

Christopher M. Beam

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Chris Beam **August 29, 2000**

Doug Rawlings: This is Doug Rawlings. It's August 29th in the year 2000, it's eight o'clock in the evening, we're at my place, and as co-director of the Maine Vietnam Veterans Oral History Project I'm interviewing the other co-director, Chris Beam. Chris, how are you?

Chris Beam: Pretty good.

DR: Good. The purpose of this interview is to get on tape, and later on paper of course, Chris' experiences as a Vietnam veteran. So let's start this off by asking Chris to give us some background information about when he was born, where he was born, and a little bit about his childhood. Chris?

CB: Okay, I was born in Portland, Maine. Actually my parents lived in Brunswick but they took, they went over to Portland to have me at the Maine Eye and Ear Infirmary. I was born on February 21st, 1945 right at the tail end of WWII. I grew up in Brunswick, first four years on Belmont Street and then my father built this house on Spring Street and that's where I was raised. I went to Longfellow Elementary School, Coffin Jr. High School, and then I graduated from Brunswick High School in 1963.

DR: What did your father do for a living, and your mother? Do you have any brothers or sisters?

CB: Yes, I have a younger sister, Becky, who was born in October of 1947. She now works as a flight attendant for American Airlines out of Logan Airport. My father was on the faculty at Bowdoin College, he was in the art department there. My mother mostly was a housewife, as was typical during that period. My father originally was from Texas, was born and raised in Texas, and came east to go to college and then found a job in the late 1930s, I'm thinking it's around 1936, at Bowdoin College. My mother was born in, well she was born in Brunswick but raised in Topsham so she was local, is local.

DR: Now tell us something about your high school days. Now when did you graduate from high school again?

CB: Well I graduated from Brunswick High School in 1963. That was about ten years before you were at Brunswick High School.

DR: That's correct, or I taught. So the war, consciousness of the war, well actually Vietnam probably was at nil then, right, (*unintelligible word*)?

CB: Well, the only, yeah, the only thing that I knew about Vietnam was from recollections I have from reading the newspaper or *Time* magazine about the first, I vaguely recall something about the fighting in Indo China with the French.

DR: In 1963, you remember?

CB: Well, I remember it from earlier news reports and references to what the French were doing. But I had heard in the early sixties about the crisis in Laos in 1961 when Kennedy first came in, there was a Communist led insurgency in South Vietnam, and I have to say I, when I was in high school very early on, I did follow the news, I followed politics very closely, I, at the time I was caught up in the whole mentality of the Cold War, I was fearful that the Communists would advance and take over the world and undermine American democracy and freedom throughout the world, so my take on the situation in Vietnam was that it was a serious situation that could possibly get worse.

DR: And you were seventeen, eighteen years old when you had these, formulating these thoughts?

CB: Oh yeah, yeah.

DR: Did your -?

CB: But I wasn't, yeah, l, let's put it this way, Doug, it wasn't something that was very much in the news, I didn't think about it a lot. It was one of several cri-, mini crisis around the world where I thought that the United States was on the defensive, the United States was in decline, the United States needed to get its act together. I remember very distinctly, I don't want to digress but I want to give you a sense of what things were like when I was growing up. When I was in

the seventh grade, and that would be in the fall of 1957, I remember when the Russians launched the Sputnik satellite and I remember what a hullabaloo there was over that. There were all kinds of public accusations that Americans were letting education slide, American youth was mentally and physically soft. I remember our teacher, our home room teacher saying that from now on we're going to beef up math and science, you know, there were all of these signals coming in that, you know, we were an embattled nation.

DR: What kind of signals were you getting at home, what were your parents' politics like?

CB: Well, both my, well, my mother was more overtly political than my dad. My dad tended to kind of keep things close to his chest. I would describe my mother, my mother was a Republican but then most people at that time were Republicans. Later on she would be described as a middle of the road, even a liberal, Republican. Later on she became a Democrat partly under the pressure of the war in Vietnam. My dad's politics were a little bit undefined, at least they were to me. He had a strong element of sort of Texas populism in him, but I don't think he, he didn't really say too much. I mean we discussed politics a lot, and when I was growing up I was a Republican, I was very conservative growing up.

DR: What about your sister, you have any, remember any political discussions or historical discussions with your sister at all?

CB: No, not when I was growing up. Becky and I were raised very differently, and it was a gender difference and also we had very different personalities. Becky was very young for her class, you know, when she was going through school and so she had a very tough time academically. I was always a very good student, I got the good grades. And the expectation of me as a young man was that I was to be serious about studies, serious about other activities, I got into swimming in a big way so I was to be serious about that.

DR: You were state champ?

CB: Well, that was when I was a senior in high school.

DR: Senior in high school, right, okay.

CB: Yeah, but, and that was expected of me. I was to go on to a good school, you know, and make it big. It wasn't so important for my sister except that she struggled along in school. She went three years to Brunswick High School, very young for her class, then what happened was she transferred to Waynefleet School and repeated her junior year, and then did better academically. But there was never the pressure on her to be serious. Becky was also very social, I mean she was the one who had all the friends.

DR: So who was putting the pressure on you, was it your father and your mother, or did you, was it -?

CB: I think it came, well I think, it, well it, it came from my parents but I don't want to put it all on my parents. I see my parents as sort of conduits of a prevailing attitude among sort of middle class people and we were definitely middle class. My father had a Ph.D., was a faculty member, I mean we weren't rich or even affluent, but we were okay financially. And, you know, so certainly, you know, the values they picked up were values very much in evidence at that time. And while there was some criticism of it, even in the 1950s and early >60s, I didn't, I didn't know any better.

DR: Did your father have any military service in his background?

CB: No.

DR: Have any uncles with military service?

CB: His, well I didn't know my uncle. See, my father was born and raised in Texas. His mother, his father died, oh, I think just before I was born, and my grandmother, I didn't meet my grandmother until I was twelve years old, 1957, because she didn't have much money and she lived in Houston at the time. And his brother was seven years younger. I don't think they had too much real connection certainly growing up. And he lived in Houston as well, so I never met my uncle until 1968 when I was on my way to Vietnam and I took a detour down to Houston.

DR: That was the first time you met him?

CB: That was the first time I met him. And my dad was born in 1910 so he was, and my

parents got married in 1939, so he was thirty one when WWII broke out and he was, my, I was told that he was called in 1943 for a physical exam, he had a heart murmur, he was older, they were already, had enough people so he never got drafted, and he had a, no, he didn't have a child but, so he never got drafted. So, no, my father had no military experience.

DR: How did he feel about that, any, one way or the other, did he have any resentment about that?

CB: He never said anything about it. He never said anything about it, and I never pressed him on it. So, but you've got to understand, I, in some ways I was born at an odd time, I mean I was born in 1945 before the baby boom. I mean, people like my wife who is two years younger was born in 1947 as the oldest child, I mean she was part of that generation whose parents, mostly fathers, were returning GIs, and I was just a little ahead of that.

DR: As the son of a faculty member, did you, do you remember encountering any college students when you were in high school, did they affect the way you were thinking in any way at all?

CB: No, they didn't affect the way I was thinking. We lived near the college, we lived, we lived actually katty corner to where the old Brunswick high school was located on Spring Street. I encountered college students, occasionally some would come over to babysit us when I was quite young. There was a fraternity house around the corner from us, the Ki Si Fraternity on Booty Street. I remember early years of high school going over and, you know, trying to create trouble for the inmates over there. They tried to ignore us. Later on when I was out for swimming both in junior high school and high school we'd practice at the Bowdoin pool, the Curtis pool, at that time. And we'd practice at night but there were a lot of the swimmers hanging around so we got to talk to some of them, and actually we got to know a few of them pretty well. So I knew some of the students, but I can't say they influenced my thinking one way or another. Most of my friends, my high school, I had a small circle of friends, none of my friends had any direct connection to Bowdoin. One of them did go to Bowdoin as a student, but they were all townspeople.

DR: So you graduated in 1963 from high school, so where did you go to college?

CB: I went to Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

DR: That's a pretty good school.

CB: Yuppie U.

DR: Yeah, what, what caused you to go in that direction instead of Orono or USM or whatever?

CB: Well, social pressure. I mean, the, you know, when I was growing up the expectation was that I would go to a school very much like Bowdoin in terms of prestige, standing and all of that stuff. And I did in the summer between my sophomore, my junior and senior years, that would be the summer of 1962, my dad and I did take a trip around to visit some campuses. Williams, Amherst, Colgate, Hamilton, Union, a couple of other places.

DR: Why not Bowdoin, why didn't you go to Bowdoin?

CB: Well, it was too close to home, and my dad taught there. No, I wanted to get out. One thing I should say, when I was growing up, and this may seem sort of odd and I hope people don't laugh at it, but when I was growing up I felt very self conscious about being from Maine. I mean, you don't see this as much now, but back, up until the sixties, Maine was sort of the hillbilly country of New England, you know, the butt of jokes, you know, the hayseeds, you know, and that sort of thing. And I do remember, and especially in the late fifties when I was in junior high school seeing these charts that showed Maine was just ahead of Mississippi in terms of educational funding and all of that sort of thing. So I really felt sort of self conscious, and I thought well, I want to get out of Maine. I changed my mind after I got out of Maine, but at the time I thought well I want to get out. Williams was a high powered school, it also had a good swimming team and I thought, I had some notion that I would go out for the swimming team at Williams.

DR: Did you?

CB: I did my freshman year but I wasn't good enough to stay with it.

DR: Really? State champ from the state of Maine and you weren't good enough to -?

CB: Well, I was state champ because the guy from Deering who should have won my event, which was a hundred yard breast stroke, got disqualified in the trials.

DR: So you were the second best.

CB: So I was the second best, you know, that was championship.

DR: So what happened at Williams, I mean what transpired there, over the first couple of years anyway (*unintelligible word*) remarkable?

CB: Williams, Williams was a mistake for me, a big mistake. But I didn't think so at the time. It was an all male school at the time, they integrated in the early seventies, but that was too late for me. It was situated in a rural area, since been developed, it's gone sort of ex-urban gentry gentrified, but at the time it was a, it's a beautiful, it's located in a beautiful valley, but for a young guy like me it was just like being put off in a monastery.

DR: There weren't any girl's colleges around?

CB: Well, there were, there was Smith and Holyoke, there was Bennington College which was about twenty miles away. Bennington had a reputation for being sort of, you know, avant garde and artsy and I was a very conventional young man at the time, very conservative. I didn't have a car for the first couple of years. Well, actually for the first year and a half, so I couldn't travel anywhere. And I was socially awkward. And also, I was having a tough time at Williams socially and academically. I was -

DR: What was your major, I'm sorry.

CB: Well, I started, believe it or not, I started out as poli-sci major, political science.

DR: I believe that, sure.

CB: Well, that was, I didn't, I shouldn't have done that. My first academic love was always

history. Political history is fine, but I loved history, I loved it in high school which made me unusual, and I enjoyed my history courses in college. And, but I didn't major, I didn't announce it as a major. At the end of my junior year I changed to history. But socially I was thrown in with guys from very high powered prep schools and high powered upper middle class suburban schools and I just really felt like I was on the wrong -

DR: The country club (*unintelligible word*)?

CB: Yeah, the country club set, and I really felt I was in the wrong environment, and -

DR: Was there an ROTC program at Williams?

CB: No, no there wasn't.

DR: Any evidence of military, any feeling in that way, I don't know, Williams sounds pretty much -

CB: No, no, the informal expectation, I mean I think Williams sort of had a profile of turning out people who were liberally educated but were clearly going to be on the sort of fast corporate professional track. You know, some of them will go into the service, I mean during WWII like every other place a lot went into the service, but the service was sort of a distraction. Maybe you'll go into the service, maybe you won't. Of course during the period, in the early, see the Vietnam war hit when I was half way through my college career, exactly half way through my college career. So the first couple of years we didn't really think about it. There were events, of course, like the assassination of Kennedy which occurred in the fall of my freshman year. And there had been this burgeoning crisis in South Vietnam with the Buddhist crisis that we were reading about in the papers.

DR: Let's backtrack to that, to the Kennedy assassination. Do you think that your, that the professors at Williams and also the students had a special affinity for the Kennedy family?

CB: Well most of the faculty, or at least most of the politically active faculty, were Democrats, liberal Democrats and I think they, well I don't know about the Kennedy family but they liked the Kennedy mystique. And, you know, one thing that Kennedy brought to Washington was this

notion that intellectuals now, rather than being egg heads on the campuses, would now be brought into government, brought into public service and have their ideas tested in the real world. And a lot of these people, you know, just ate that stuff right up. The students, I mean, you always had a, I mean for the first time I ran into students who called themselves radicals. I mean, to me, when I was growing up a radical was somebody who voted Democrat, you know, and that was usually a French Canadian, you know. And, you know, now you're hearing people call themselves Marxist and, and of course the Civil Rights movement was really churning up and there was a lot of in-, there was among some activist students a lot of interest in that.

DR: Were there any Freedom Riders from Williams (*unintelligible word*)?

CB: I don't know about, not Freedom Riders. I remember the guy who was the, we had two people in our dorm who were I guess you'd call them R.C.s, residential coordinators, advisors. Resid-, I forget, junior advisors. And one of the guys decided he wanted to drop out of Williams, that what he was doing at Williams wasn't relevant and he wound up someplace in the deep south and then in Harlem and got involved with student non-violent coordinating committee and so forth. So you saw that evidence. I mean most, I mean there was, you know, there was sympathy for the Civil Rights movement, although we had southern students who were critical of it.

DR: Yeah, of course, yeah.

CB: It's interesting, my father being a southerner, you know, was sympathetic to the Civil Rights movement. I mean he, I mean he left Texas not only physically but culturally and psychologically. He was a pretty conservative guy but I think his, it was clear his sympathies were with, you know, he would talk about how badly black people were treated and that sort of thing.

DR: Tell us what happened the day, at Williams, when Kennedy was assassinated, do you remember what that, what -?

CB: Well I remember what happened with me. I was in my dorm, I was walking outside, it was a beautiful fall day, it was in the afternoon and somebody came up and said, the president's been shot and I thought the president of the college had been shot. So, huh, who would go after

him? No, no, it was President Kennedy. And then of course, you know, it was all over the newspapers and the TV and the ra-, I didn't see much TV but the radio and that sort of thing.

DR: Did the school shut down?

CB: No, the school didn't sh-, I don't remember that the school shut down. I do remember for example in my political science introductory class talking about it and the instructor speculating upon the pervasiveness of violence in American Society and so forth. I'm not sure I made that connection with the Kennedy assassination.

DR: So you graduated with a -

CB: But I should say this, I mean politically I was not in sympathy with Kennedy. I considered myself a conservative Republican. In 1960 when there was an election going on and I was starting to think about politics I cheered, I was in favor of Nixon over Kennedy.

DR: So you graduated with a history degree, in what year, 1967?

CB: Nineteen sixty seven.

DR: Okay, what happened the summer after you graduated from college?

CB: I went to work for Avis Rent A Car at Bradley International Airport, north of Hartford, Connecticut.

DR: Really? How long did you do that?

CB: Until I went into the Marine Corps.

DR: Ah, so let's get to that now, all right? First of all, why the Marines, and secondly, when did you make that decision?

CB: Okay, I made that decision many months before. As I mentioned before, the war in Vietnam started halfway in my college career. I remember it was the summer of 1967 was when

Johnson, well Johnson was sending ground troops into Vietnam in early 1965, and in the summer of >65 they were going into active combat. At that time I was selling dictionaries in the Ozarks of Missouri, I had a summer job doing that, and reading it in the paper, you know. And I thought the U.S. was doing the right thing, I thought that the Vietcong Communists were going to take over South Vietnam and that this was going to start the whole domino effect, I mean I bought into the domino theory, and that the United States had to do something about it. It was unfortunate and it was kind of messy in Vietnam, but my feeling was, yes, the United States was doing the right thing. Now what did disturb me was that a lot of the students I was with, I mean a lot of the students at Williams, were indifferent to it, or they were looking for a way out of service because of course there was a draft in effect but there were also student deferments. There was a small but vocal and growing minority of students who were against the war, you know, and I -

DR: Did you think they had a good argument, did you listen to them at all when you were a student?

CB: Well, I, at first the people who were against it, you know, seemed to be sort of guys who were, how shall I say it, kind of, they seemed to be on the fringes, you know, they were the radicals, you know, (*unintelligible phrase*).

DR: (*Unintelligible phrase*), what's a radical, what does a radical at Williams College look like, I mean talk like or sound like. I thought they were all upper class hippies.

CB: Well no, no, they weren't. There were a number of guys who sort of affected that kind of, well it wasn't hippie, it was more like the, you know, the Bob Dylan look, you know, scruffy clothes, blue work shirts, you know.

DR: But loaded.

CB: But loaded, yeah, I'm sure a lot of them had money. Some, not all of, everybody at Williams was loaded, I mean there were, I knew guys who didn't have much money at all who were subsisting on scholarships and that sort of thing. But I personally, I mean I didn't know the back-, the family backgrounds of most of these people.

DR: Did they have, I mean were there debates on campus (*unintelligible phrase*), did you attend those, did you participate in them?

CB: Yes, there were. I didn't participate, I didn't, I was pretty intimidated, I didn't speak up that much except in our residential house I would argue in favor of what the U.S. was doing in Vietnam and we would get into these disputes. I don't think that really hit me. The arguments pro and con didn't sway me one way or another. I thought the U.S. was doing the right thing and my feeling was is that I was scheduled to graduate in June of 1967, I've got military service facing me, in a way I thought military service was something I needed to do, you know, as a citizen and as a man. There was a big man component in this. And I didn't want to go to graduate school, I hadn't done very well at Williams, I was unhappy there, I was depressed a lot of the time so I thought, you know, I just want to get out of college. And so I thought, well what happened was, in December of 1966 I was looking around for an officer training program because I felt, well, you get paid better as an officer, there's more prestige and all that stuff.

DR: When you say looking around, where were you looking?

CB: Well I looked at the Navy, but they were full up.

DR: But where were you looking, actually, like catalogues (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: No, no, I'd go to a recruiting office. I went to one in Portland and I went to one in Albany, New York. And, but the Navy was full up, the Air Force had a four year commitment, the Army I wasn't too sure about, you know. And so I thought well I'll join the Marine Corps, you know, their prestigious.

DR: Well, wait a minute, don't you think, I mean a college from a, from say ostensibly an ivy league school as Williams probably could be argued is kind of like an ivy league school, don't you think it's rather unusual for someone from that kind of background to go into the Marine Corps?

CB: No, no.

DR: Really?

CB: No, there were, I mean it wasn't unusual in the past.

DR: I see. I guess I don't know that much about the history of the Marine Corps, I always thought (*unintelligible phrase*).

CB: Oh yeah, well during WWII that was the case, and even during the Korean war. It wasn't so much the case during the Vietnam war because of the growing unpopularity of it.

DR: Okay.

CB: But I was distressed. I mean, I thought hey, we should be patriotic, you know. That the guys who were trying to get out of the service were just being chicken, or had a romantic view of these Communists, these liberation fighters, you know, that they, that there was an element of sort of self indulgence about this. And I didn't like it, I was reacting against it.

DR: So you were going to go into the Marine Corps as a stalwart patriotic American.

CB: Right, exactly.

DR: So the choice of the Marine Corps was really because you thought that it was your patriotic duty to enlist in the Marine Corps.

CB: Right.

DR: And you made that decision in 1967?

CB: Yeah, I -

DR: Before you graduated?

CB: Yes, I enlisted actually in Boston in 1967, I enlisted in the Marine Corps in an officer training program.

DR: What was that moment like, when you said you enlisted, you just signed a sheet of paper and walked out of this guy's office?

CB: We signed a sheet of pa-, I signed some forms and I took an oath, you know, raised my hand, took an oath.

DR: And then what?

CB: Well, the way it would work is that I would, they, at the time that I signed up I had a reporting date for boot camp at Quantico, Virginia, and that would be in September of 1967.

DR: Okay, that's what I wanted. So for the record, when did you sign that paper to join the Marine Corps?

CB: Well, I don't know the exact date. It was January, it was sometime in January of 1967, because my official discharge date, technically I had a six year obligation which would be three years of active duty, and then three years in an active reserve, okay? And so my official discharge date would be in January of 1973.

DR: Eighty three.

CB: Seventy three, six years from -

DR: Okay, >67 to >73.

CB: But I do distinctly remember it was in January.

DR: Okay, so then when did you actually go to Quantico?

CB: I went to Quantico in September.

DR: So between January and September what happened, what'd you do?

CB: Well, a lot of things happened. First of all, my parents were not happy, especially my

mother. My mother was very unhappy about my joining.

DR: Did you tell her after the fact?

CB: No, no, no, I told her I was going to join the Marines but she was, kept saying well, you know, you ought to join the Navy and, you know, it's a safer service and all of that stuff. And I wasn't listening to that. My dad didn't say much of anything at all, you know. And my mother I think was growing increasingly critical of the war and particularly of Lyndon Johnson, she didn't like Lyndon Johnson at all. She, later on I, it's funny because after I went into the service she wrote Senator Edmund Muskie a letter which was, we found in the Muskie Archives files, unbeknownst to me, and she described herself as a Republican who voted for Lyndon Johnson in 1964, you know, she was alienated by Barry Goldwater and his militant hawkishness, particularly on Vietnam and so forth. So she was definitely against the war. But I, I don't, I think in her mind it was, say, her son might be in harm's way and that's what she didn't like. Me, that was not a good argument with me, I was going to go out and try to prove something. The problem is is that from January of 1967 when I signed on, and nine months later in September of >67 I started to have a change of heart.

DR: Okay, now wait a minute, let's go back. You were still in school, college.

CB: I was still in school?

DR: Were you graduated in May?

CB: By June of 1967.

DR: So you came back to campus.

CB: Well, I was on break when I signed up in Boston.

DR: You signed up in Boston. So, did anybody know at school that you'd signed up for the Marine Corps?

CB: Yeah, close friends, people who were in my house and so forth, residential house.

DR: What was their reaction?

CB: Well, the guy who had been my roommate the sophomore year said, well, you know, what the hell did you do that for, you know. All the Marines are is a bunch of killers, you know, they just go out and get killed. I mean, he wasn't going to be inconvenienced by the war at all.

DR: So they didn't buy into your patriotism at all?

CB: They didn't buy into it. There were some, the funny thing is, I mean, there were a number of people who were quite conservative but didn't say very much, and it was clear, I see it clearer now than I did then, weren't, just weren't going to be inconvenienced. They were not going to put their backsides on the line.

DR: But it's okay if other guys did.

CB: Yeah, it's okay if other guys did. But I remember having an argument with one guy who said he was opposed to the war because he just didn't think it was worth it, you know, why get all these people killed. And I think over the next few months I began to think, wait a minute, maybe the assumptions we have made about Vietnam and the nature of the conflict were wrong. That maybe this has roots in Vietnamese history, that this is a struggle against Vietnamese nationalism with which I had no beef whatsoever, that the government we were supporting really wasn't worth it and wasn't showing that they were worth it.

DR: As a budding historian, and now as a new member of the Marine Corps, did you do any research on Vietnam in those months?

CB: I can't say I did any research. I mean, I was so tied up with homewo-, you know, studies that I couldn't say I did any research.

DR: And there were no course being offered at the time that dealt with Vietnam, Southeast Asia history, any of that kind of stuff?

CB: No, no. There was a history of Japan and China that I took in my sophomore year, and the

guy who taught it didn't like the war but he wasn't particularly outspoken. But we didn't really touch on Southeast Asia.

DR: So in June of 1967 at Williams College, consciousness about the war was at what level would you say?

CB: Well it wasn't a hotbed of activism like Berkeley, even at that time, or Madison, Wisconsin. I would say that a la-, I don't know the numbers, but a large number were going to graduate school or professional school. Some were getting out and going to work. How they got out of the draft I don't know. I do remember the valediction of our class, or the class speaker, giving a speech justifying protest against the war. The guest speaker was the King of Thailand.

DR: The commencement speaker was the King of Thailand?

CB: Yeah. And I remember my father was very, very irate because a story went around that he had to have special silverware shipped in for him, he just couldn't eat the common fare. And my father's populist instincts were aggravated, you know, this, and what he said was is this is what we're fighting for, you know. And, you know, things like that started to hit home.

DR: Well, why the King of Thailand? Do you know, what the history of that was, why would they have chosen that person as a commencement speaker? Did he have a son at Williams or something?

CB: I don't think so. I mean I, apparently somebody had connections with the royal house and he happened to be in the country and, you know, was invited, they brokered a speech.

DR: Did he make any, you remember him making any reference (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: No, no, it was, I don't even remember what he said but it was something, some puff piece he had. But I, you know, there were people, you know, there were people who were against the war and I would say that they were by far the more outspoken. And there were clearly many faculty members who were opposed to the war. I don't know of any, there was only one faculty member who supported it, he was a political science professor, Fred Greene, G-R-E-E-N-E, who later on went to work for the State Department. And I remember his, he being in a debate with a

guy named Frederick Shuman who was an elderly gentleman who taught international relations, had a kind of distinguished record, who was opposed to the war. And, you know, I remember Fred Greene saying, you know, that the Vietcong were terrorists and that they were making these peasants fall into line and that sort of thing. And I, and I thought he was telling the truth, or telling it as it was.

DR: Did you, okay, you were going to say something?

CB: Well, it's just, I would say between September, I mean January of 1973 and the time I had to report I was starting to -

DR: January 1967.

CB: January of >67 to September of >67 I was starting to have serious doubts about why we were in Vietnam, but it was too late, I was scheduled to go into the Marine Corps.

DR: Did you know then do you think, I mean deep down, that you were going to Vietnam, did you think joining the Marine Corps was a straight ticket to Vietnam, there was no question that's where you were going to go.

CB: Right, right.

DR: Why as an officer, did you decide that when you, when you joined the Marine Corps that you wanted to go in as an officer or did someone talk you into it?

CB: No, no, I signed up for an officer training program.

DR: Okay, why.

CB: My background, you know, I was a college graduate, I was raised to think that I was going to be a professional, assume a leadership position.

DR: Well see, now that's exactly where I wanted to go with this, because you're characterizing yourself as a college student, as a high school student, as not much of a leader really, just as

someone who's sort of, sort of, not withdrawn but stays away from a leadership role. And now you're saying that you wanted to be a leader of men, that you were going into the Marine Corps and have all of these guys following your orders. That doesn't seem strange to you?

CB: No, it doesn't seem strange. I mean, it was sort of, becoming an officer, I can't say, Doug, that I had this all thought out clearly in my head, you know. At the time I thought I was old at the age of twenty one or so, but really I was a very naive kid, or post adolescent, and so I really never systematically thought through either my motives or the way I fit into the larger scheme of things. Going in as an officer, you know, seemed to be on track with the way I was raised.

DR: Did you have any romantic images of the Marine Corps at that time, (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: To some extent, yeah, yeah, that they were a cut above the Army, that sort of thing.

DR: Nice uniforms and all that kind of stuff?

CB: Yeah, yeah, I mean it's, I, you got to understand it's very painful for me to admit it.

DR: Oh sure, of course. But still -

CB: People could easily laugh and say, you know, what a jerk.

DR: Not back then, no, there was that sort of (*unintelligible word*). Okay, so between June and September what did you do, what was (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Okay, I graduated from college in June of >67 and I had the whole summer ahead of me, and I really wasn't sure of what I wanted to do. I had absolutely no idea what I wanted to do. And so I took this job with Avis Rent A Car, they had sent a representative up to Williams and they recruited some people to work for them, and I said, well, you know, anyplace in the New England area. So they assigned me to this airport outside of Hartford, Connecticut, Bradley International Airport. And it was a mistake, I should not have been so passive because what they did was, well first of all Hartford is a nondescript city, it's just an insurance city. And Bradley is

about, I don't know, ten, fifteen miles north of the city out in the middle of nowhere -

DR: Here you are again, out in the middle of nowhere.

CB: Out in the middle of nowhere, and they really didn't know what to do with me because they knew I was going into the service so they put me on the graveyard shift and I had to balance the books from twelve at night until eight in the morning. And I lived in a, I was a boarder in this house in west Hartford so I had no social life, didn't have any friends, working, working this graveyard shift that sort of threw my metabolism off, so it was a pretty dreary summer.

DR: Do you remember any discussions about the war or any, I mean -

CB: Well, no, the people I worked with were, there was one young woman who I worked, with whom I worked whose boyfriend was in the Marines and he was on his way over there. You saw a lot of GIs wandering around, you know, in uniform. There wasn't much talk. There was another guy, there was a guy working with me, kind of a punk, who was very proud of himself because he got himself into the Air Force Reserve, you know, and he was going to spend the war that way.

DR: Did you tell him you were going into the Marines, did you do that?

CB: Yeah.

DR: And what'd he say?

CB: He wasn't that impressed. He didn't say much of anything at all. I didn't actually, I mean I worked with him for a couple weeks and then I was on the graveyard shift so I didn't see him any more.

DR: So a nondescript summer, September comes along.

CB: Well, I went home, saw a couple of friends of mine. One friend of mine who had been sort of hawkish on the war had gone to Bowdoin and he was cooling on it, but he was going to dental school for four years. He had a good deal because he had, for the last two years at

Bowdoin an ROTC scholarship, and that committed him for two years in the Army, but he didn't have to serve until he finished dental school. Now the dental school added four more, two more years onto his service, but when he got out, of course eventually he got out in 1971, the war's winding down, he gets commissioned as a captain and he practices dentistry in Germany. You know, some people had it lucky. Another, the good friend of mine back home who had gone to University of Maine, this, I couldn't figure out how he got out of it but he had flunked out of college in his freshman year, so he stayed behind but, and he had another year to go at University of Maine, so he had a student deferment, then when he graduated in 1968 he got a job in a bank. And when I ran into him again when I got back he had, he was, he had this job in a bank, local bank, he had a, he was engaged which meant that he had a social life, and he had a boat down on Orr's Island, so he was living all right.

DR: Did you, in 1967 did you know anyone from your high school experience or from college who actually went to Vietnam and came back and talked about it?

CB: Not at the time. There were people I heard about.

DR: Did you know anyone who was killed over there, high school friend or -?

CB: The only, well I found out later there was a guy in my college class who, a guy named William Gilger who, he'd gone to Exeter Academy, I knew that because my roommate freshman year had gone to Exeter so these two guys knew each other, and then Gilger had dropped out of Williams and I didn't hear anything. And then I found out that he had gotten, he had joined the Army, this is after I got back from Vietnam and I was reading in the alumni review that he had gotten, that he had joined the Army and then in December of 1967 he had gotten killed over there. Actually there were, I think there were about three, maybe four guys from my class who had gotten killed in Vietnam, from Williams.

DR: From Williams, okay.

CB: There was nobody from my high school class who got killed. There were guys who served over there. There was one guy from my Brunswick high school class, Eddie Braun, B-R-A-U-, or -W, -N, who had gone to Bowdoin and then he had gotten drafted. He was wounded in Vietnam but he got back okay. There were some kids from my high school who had gotten

killed. One was a guy named Earl Garrison who was killed in 1967, he had an older brother, Ronnie, who was in my class. And I ran into Ron later on at our high school reunion and he talked about how his brother had gotten killed. I vaguely remember Earl but he was younger than I was. But the guys at Williams, there were th-, I don't know, there were about three or four who were killed, but except for Gilger, the others I didn't know.

DR: Okay, so it's September 1967, right?

CB: Right.

DR: What's the exact date, when did you go into the Marine Corps?

CB: It was right after Labor Day, so I don't know what the exact date was.

DR: Did you, let's say September 5th or 6th, so was it Portland, Boston, or what? Did you fly down to Quantico yourself?

CB: Well, yeah, I, what happened was that I was, I mean I went home for a couple weeks, spent time at home, and regretting doing what I was doing but I didn't see any alternative. I was not going to go to Canada.

DR: So you were really, so you had really, there was a real (*unintelligible word*) change in this.

CB: Yeah, there was.

DR: So September Labor Day you did not want to go into the Marine Corps, nor were you supporting our efforts in Vietnam?

CB: I, I didn't mind going into the Marine Corps, but I wanted the war to end.

DR: Before you got there.

CB: Before I got there, put it that way.

DR: I mean, were you afraid, personal, I mean were you afraid or were you just thinking the war was immoral, illegal and all that other stuff?

CB: Well, I didn't think it was illegal or immoral, but I thought we were making a big, we had made a big mistake. And, you know, when you don't think a war is justified, then, you know, getting killed is going to be a waste, putting yourself into harm's way is a waste. And sure, I admit to a personal fear, but I think I might have felt differently had I agreed with what we were doing.

DR: So this is of course in retrospect and probably very hard to do, but can point to a couple of things in that summer or that period of time that made you change so radically in the way you thought about the war, or drastically I should say?

CB: Well, I, I'm not sure. I remember once, and gosh it was in >67, I was still in college, it was maybe in the summer of, the spring of >67. I remember reading the paper where Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who was hauled up before I think it was the House Arms - . . .

End of Side A, Tape One
Side B, Tape One

CB: Okay, well you asked if there was any particular moment of truth or any incident that changed my mind. I think it was an accumulation of things. I was mentioning this report I read about where Ramsey Clark was hauled up before the House Armed Services Committee, and F. Edward A. Bayer who was this right wing congressman from Louisiana, and Mendel Rivers who was a equally right wing congressman from South Carolina, were demanding to know why Ramsey Clark wasn't cracking down on people like Martin Luther King, Jr. and other dissidents against the war, and Clark was explaining that this would violate the First Amendment. And I remember, I think it was Rivers who said that, you know, this is a war between the cross and Communism. And at that time I was very anti religious, I was not religious at all, I considered myself an atheist, and I thought oh, my gosh, here are two of the most reactionary, backward looking, you know, members of Congress, and here are these people backing this war. And I thought, oh, something's not right here, you know, so, you know, I'm in league with the wrong people.

DR: So it was more a matter of being in league with the wrong people than looking to someone who had a, you thought had a good argument against the war. At that point you weren't really, there wasn't anybody coming out there that was inspirational to you?

CB: No, there wasn't any particular one individual who had the clinching argument. I just thought, you know, over time, something is wrong and that, you know, I'm trying not to insert any hindsight but I think, you know, picking up through discussions I'd heard about the war with the French by the Viet Minh, the Vietcong were clearly the offspring of the Viet Minh, the United States had backed the French, the people who we were supporting were French colla-, you know, Vietnamese who collaborated with the French, and I thought, boy, this is, this is a bad group, you know, we're just on the wrong side of it.

DR: Let me, I guess I want to backtrack a couple of years and think about Diem, what was your feeling when Diem was assassinated after Kennedy's assassination?

CB: Before Kennedy's assassination.

DR: Before, that's right.

CB: Yeah, he was assassinated November 1st, >63. Well, I guess at the time I thought okay, he brought on all these troubles himself, maybe a new group will take over and straighten things out. Well, of course it didn't happen. But at the time, I mean 1963-64 I thought anything's better than having the Communists take over, even if they're corrupt and so forth. And maybe the United States will figure out a way to straighten it out.

DR: So let's jump back to >67 now, all right, so that's, the doubts are beginning to wear away at you, all right, so there was never any point you thought that I'm going to ditch this whole thing and go to Canada, go to Sweden, do something?

CB: No, absolutely not.

DR: Okay, you're going to go forward with the Marines.

CB: Well, for one thing, I didn't think it was possible, I don't think Canada was accepting deserters at the time. They were accepting people who had dodged the draft, but, you know, to me, giving, losing my American citizenship plus the ignominy of running away, I mean there were a lot of people in my town, I mean Brunswick, you know, was kind of hybrid. You had Navy people, you had a large blue collar element that was, you know, rah-rah strongly in favor of the war, there were people connected with Bowdoin who were against it, you know. In fact, starting in 1965 there were a few people who'd go on the Brunswick mall or commons there and carry signs, you know, for peace in Vietnam. But I just didn't want to be seen as a coward. And I think my parents would have been upset just at the whole situation so I thought, well, I'll take my chance, I'll go in, you know, after all there's an election coming up in about a year, maybe Johnson will settle it, you know.

DR: Is that an iron clad contract with the Marine Corps, when you join? Would it have been possible for you to go back to your recruiter or to the Marine Corps and say, look, I've had a change of mind here?

CB: Yeah, then I would have been drafted. But, I don't know if there was because I never checked it out, I never tested it. I'm sure that as soon as I did that my name would go right into the hopper, I'd be reclassified 1A and, boy, I'd be drafted in a minute. And I felt that, well, if I was drafted, you know, I don't have any control over my fate. And a lot of draftees, you know, were being sent into the infantry. And in a way I'm glad I didn't.

DR: How did you get from Brunswick, Maine to Quantico, Virginia?

CB: Well, for the first time in my life I flew down, Northeast Airlines from Portland, Maine which was a very small airport, down to, down to Washington, D.C., National Airport. What happened was I flew down a little early, a couple days early because my mother's oldest sister and her family lived in Bethesda or Chevy Chase, Maryland, and I remember my aunt Dorothy, she was an ardent Democrat, she was against the war but very sociable, she was one of these people who love to tell stories and so forth and I liked her. And so I stayed with Dorothy and my Uncle Reynard. Reynard had been a member of the Bowdoin faculty and then had taken a job with the National Science Foundation, so the, the family moved down there. Dorothy was one of these people who was sort of a real Mainer, you know, loved to tell stories and that sort of thing. But, so I went, I spent a couple nights with them. They had a boat on the Chesapeake and we

went out there. They were just very nice to me, you know, and it was really nice and it was kind of a, kind of a hard thing to take because the day after Labor Day I got on a bus in Washington to take down to Quantico, Virginia, it's about thirty miles south of Washington, and there were guys looking like me, sort of nervous and -

DR: So you're all in civilian clothes (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: We're all in civilian clothes, mostly conventional looking. Long hair, I mean the hippie phenomenon was starting to come in, you know, in 1967, that summer was the summer of Haight Ashbury and so forth, and it was starting to have an impact but not that widespread. But, you know, I started to talk to some of these people, it was clear where we're all going, we're going into this officer training program down there. There was one guy on the bus who was a Marine sergeant, E5 sergeant, real lean looking guy, has what we thought was a nasty face, and one of the guys walking on the bus said, you know, I don't know whether I like the way that guy looked. So we thought he was some kind of drill instructor. Turns out he was an enlisted guy who had signed up for this officer program, you know, he was going in, he'd been ten years in the Marines. Eventually he got killed in Vietnam.

DR: Did you have to be a college graduate to be an officer, to go to the officers training?

CB: Up until the Vietnam war you did, and then, and I found this out, see, I'm finding out a lot of things, the military was a real education for me. Let me proceed, we got into Quantico, God, I can't remember how we got out to the base, but we got out to the base and immediately these sergeants started, you know, saying, barking orders at us, fall into line, stand here, put your stuff there and that sort of thing. And just like you with the haircuts, you know, everybody is sort of dressed differently, you have a sort of individual personality. But I remember lining up outside the barber shop and these guys coming out with skin, looking like skinheads, and that's really when you become anonymous. And it's all a blur to me now but I remember they were constantly yelling at us to hurry up, hurry up, get your clothes, get this, do this, do that, so they really sort of broke us in very quickly.

DR: Is it any different from boot camp, Marine Corps boot camp for officers than it would be for an enlisted man?

CB: Yeah, I went to boot camp at Quantico. Technically I was part of the officer candidate school, it was a ten week boot camp and it's at Quantico. The enlisted people go either to Parris Island, South Carolina or San Diego, so there are two boot camps there. And just talking, and quite a number of the guys in my platoon, we were organized first by platoons of about forty, forty five candidates, and four platoons for a training company, and in our particular class we had an alpha and a bravo company, so you're maybe talking about, I don't know, there must have been about three or four hundred guys. And there were a number of them who had been enlisted, you know, they, usually the guys who would drop out of college, enlisted in the Marine Corps, but were encouraged or convinced to sign up with the officer training program. And then there was that guy who was on the bus with us, he didn't have any college I don't think, but he had a lot of time in the Marine Corps and he was actually, it turns out, pretty smart. So he was encouraged to sign up for an officer training program.

DR: Did you guys -?

CB: And, you know, boot camp at Parris Island or San Diego is very different. Our was rough, at least I thought it was rough -

DR: I'm sure it was.

CB: But it none of the physical stuff, you know, nobody got hit. We got screamed at a lot.

DR: But I was always thinking it would be kind of strange that these guys, that in ten weeks you would be an officer and therefore above them in the ranks.

CB: Well, yes, yeah, but you know, it's true we got commissioned after ten weeks but we still had a good six months of officer training, infantry training to go, you know. So while we had butter bars on our shoulders, the only advantage we got out of that is, yes, enlisted people have to salute us, you know, and we got paid an officer's salary, but that was sort of an enticement to get us in.

DR: So when you finished the ten week training, we'll go back, but when you finished that did you stay on, did you stay at Quantico?

CB: Yes, yeah, but we moved to a different place.

DR: Okay, so you, presumably you actually encountered these DIs and stuff after you had your butter bars and they were saluting you guys?

CB: Well, no, I don't think, I never ran into them. There was one, we didn't call them DIs, we had a platoon sergeant, a staff sergeant which would be an E5 and an E6, and usually a first lieutenant or a captain would be the company commander. We, the platoon sergeant some of us visited afterwards because, and he was a real nice guy, he shouldn't have been, you know, a training sergeant. He was a black guy, he, all of the trainers we had were Vietnam veterans by >67, and I remember he used to yell, you know, I'm waitin' candidate, I'm waitin' candidate and all of this stuff. But he just didn't have that nasty edge to him, and he actually was a real nice guy. Not very happy, he felt he got passed over for E6 because of race discrimination and so forth. But we, some of us went out and visited him, he lived in a trailer park nearby. But he was the only guy we saw afterwards.

DR: What were some of the things they told you about Vietnam?

CB: Well, they told us a lot about Vietnam. I mean, all of our training was oriented towards Vietnam. Now in boot camp, basically what you do is you learn, you know, you learn how to march, you learn how to salute, you learn military protocol, you learn about the structure of the Marine Corps, you do some rudimentary squad and platoon tactics, you learn drill with an M-14 rifle. We did some, God, I can't remember, we did a lot of forced marches and a lot of drill in the field. Basically the ten weeks was seasoning to break us in.

DR: How were you physically, were you in good shape then?

CB: I was in reasonably good shape. I smoked a lot in college, I was a smoker, and I'd given up swimming and I really wasn't in great shape. But I gave up smoking when I signed up for the Marine Corps, I figured I'd better get in shape. And I remember the summer of >67 I used to go out and work out, I used to run a lot, running was one of my favorite activities. I do remember an incident that I found kind of unsettling. I was jogging around, it was late afternoon in Hartford, and this guy, a middle aged man who was working out in his yard, it was a small house, and he said, you know, I see you running out here, what are you doing? And I said, well

I'm going into the Marine Corps, you know, so I need to get in shape. And this guy said, in a really kind of nasty way, well I feel sorry for you, like, you sucker. I felt like saying, go to hell, you know. I mean I was really, I didn't know how to take this. I don't think he meant I feel sorry for you in any benign way. But I was okay, in physical condition. And actually, the things I enjoyed most about, boot camp was rough for me, I remember our barracks was right on the Potomac River and I remember, you know, having to get out there at six o'clock in the morning and not daring to look either way, so I was looking, for the first three weeks I was looking straight out. But the things I actually enjoyed were forced marches, believe it or not, because I was in pretty good shape, and I enjoyed close order drill.

DR: Oh, God, yeah, two things I hated.

CB: Yeah, well, it got, we got into this sort of competition with other platoons.

DR: Oh sure. Not only this physical condition, how about your mental condition? I mean, did you suddenly put your objection to the war on hold and just, I got to learn this stuff?

CB: Yeah, I just, well I got to learn this stuff.

DR: So you didn't question any of the orders you were given, or -?

CB: Well the orders that were given were just rudimentary, you know, close it up, close it up, make that man in front of you smile, that -

DR: So you weren't trying to subvert any of those kind of (*unintelligible word*)?

CB: No, no, no, no, not in the Marine Corps, not at that time. I mean, most of the people you were with, you know, if they said anything they were in favor of the war.

DR: Did you see any guys get drummed out, the new guys?

CB: Yes, in boot camp, or officer candidate school, yeah, people were drummed out. When I say drummed out they were, they didn't make the grade, they, we were constantly being evaluated for leadership, physical ability and academics. And there were guys who in a sense

flunked out. And what happened there was that they served two years as enlisted personnel, they did not become officers.

DR: So they were still in the Marine Corps?

CB: The were still in the Marine Corps.

DR: And they'd never go the basic training at Parris Island or San Diego?

CB: I don't know if they went to boot camp at Parris Island, I think they did. And I didn't want to go to Parris Island, and also quite frankly, I didn't want the ignominy of failing, you know. They really, not in a, not in a open way but that old middle class ethos really worked in favor of the program.

DR: So were you the best platoon, did you guys end up being the best platoon?

CB: No, we were second. Yeah, there was one guy, and you know who it was, who screwed it up. You know, we had this complicated steps we were supposed to do and the sergeant said halt and we were supposed to halt and turn one way, one guy didn't, a guy named Bill Ryan.

DR: No kidding.

CB: (*Unintelligible phrase*). I liked Bill, he was a great guy. And, you know, but he messed it up and he was chagrined afterwards.

DR: I bet he was.

CB: But I remember, I mean there was, I mean boot camp was a strange experience. We were al-, we were given liberty, that is, you know, a sort of weekend pass after the third week unless we had guard duty, the platoon had guard duty. So I remember that, you know, bumming a ride up late Saturday afternoon up to Washington to see my aunt and uncle and my cousins and it was so nice, you know, just to be in this civilized environment, you know. And, you know, they were very hospitable and everything.

DR: Of course then you have to get on a bus and go back.

CB: Yeah, you have to get on the bus and go back, or, actually I caught a ride with this guy going back. But I remember one thing I always dreaded, Saturday mornings we'd have these inspections and we had to have our bunks neatly laid out, everything, you know, just absolutely spic and span. The sergeants come in and just tear the place apart, they'd rip the beds apart, they would, you know, I mean they would just tear you down. And I remember a couple people were, you know, they were, the sergeants judged them to be real shitbirds and so they're not going to have liberty that weekend, and I thought oh, my God, if that happened to me I'd just, you know, (*unintelligible word*) the end of it.

DR: Was it, were they picked out for reasonable, for good reason, or were they just picked out because the sergeants (*unintelligible phrase*) grab a couple of guys and (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: I don't know, I don't know how it went. There was one guy whose, I guess his girlfriend or, girlfriend or his wife was coming down to see him, and they restricted him.

DR: Oh, God, so they knew about it. What about mail call, did you guys get, did you have to do it collectively, mail call?

CB: Well they had mail call and I remember my father sending me a package on which he put my whole name, Christopher M. Beam and the sergeants had a field day with that, really teased me up and down on that one. I remember there was one incident, oh, this is, this is classic, it must have been my first week in boot camp and this sergeant from another platoon came in, this guy was right out of Central Casting, his name was Sgt. Barts, like the platoon, he was a short, stocky black guy with a voice that would just knock you right against the wall, big, you know, built like a brick shit house as we used to say. And he came in and he was yelling, he was talking and, you know, making a lot of noise. And I called him, what did I say, I called him sir, and he just exploded. He pointed to his stripes on his sleeve, stuck his face right into my ear and said in a loud voice, sir, do I look like a sir, a offi-sir to you? Look at these stripes, I'm not an offi-sir, you got that, candidate? You know, they could say candidate as though they're saying shithead. And I, I almost said, yessir, I got that. Now you get back to the barracks and get yourself squared away.

DR: What about food?

CB: Oh, food was okay. I mean, you know, we had a mess hall, you know, food was all right.

DR: KP duty (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: No, we didn't have KP duty, we were officers and gentlemen supposedly, we were officer candidates, you know. Our, we had, let's see, the lieutenant we had was this guy, oh this guy, again, he sort of reminded me of Sgt. Barnes in APlatoon@, you know, played by Tom Berringer, except not as good looking. A real hard boiled redneck type. And, a guy named, Guypin was his name, G-U-Y-P-I-N, he was what they called a mustang, that is to say he'd been an enlisted man, an NCO, but then had been given a commission during the war in Vietnam. A lot of these guys -

DR: A battle field commission?

CB: There was kind of field commission program and they would normally be promoted both on papers, NCOs and as officers, and then when the war was over they'd revert back to NCO status. So he was in charge of the platoon, a real cold sonofabitch. We had a sergeant, staff sergeant Yannick, he was in tanks, he told us a lot about Vietnam, you know, because sometimes we would go out in the field and occasionally we would take rest breaks and that's when they'd talk to you about what was going on in Vietnam. And then Sgt. Jones, you know, the black guy who, he had really gotten badly wounded over there.

DR: So were they, were they taking you guys under their wing, do you think, or were they just taunting you?

CB: No, they weren't taking, no, they weren't taunting us. It was more like, you got to know this stuff because you're going to be leading Marines in combat and this is what you can expect over there, you know. So I don't think they were, they weren't being paternalistic, but they weren't taunting us either, you know, hey, our job is to teach you how to accomplish your mission and then survive.

DR: Did they at any time reveal any bitterness towards people who were protesting the war?

CB: Oh yes, well especially Jones, the black guy, but the other two guys would make remarks about, you know, the hippies and, I don't think they were particularly bitter but they didn't particularly like the protesters. One of the interesting things was this, in the middle of October, it must have been I guess probably my seventh or eighth week, we had liberty that weekend, and it was also the weekend there was a big demonstration in Washington, D.C., it was to take place on the mall but it turned out that Sunday a large contingent went over to the Pentagon. And one of the guys in my platoon, a guy named Miles Davis, his father was Maj. General Raymond Davis, in the Marine Corps, he was a Medal of Honor recipient from Korea, and he was going to be taking over the 3d Marine Division in Vietnam. And that night this guy I got to know from Colorado and I got a motel room up in Arlington, we just wanted to get out of there. And the next day we went over to Miles Davis', Gen. Davis' house, and we got to talking about the Vietnam war and I know there was one of the other guys was saying, gee, I don't see how these guys can really protest, you know, don't they appreciate, you know, what, you know, what, you know, their country. And I started saying, well you know, I don't think we're doing the right thing in Vietnam. And so we had this sort of argument, you know.

DR: Even Davis, or was this -?

CB: Yeah, with Davis.

DR: Gen. Davis?

CB: Gen. Davis.

DR: No kidding.

CB: Yeah. I didn't get too heated, I was very cautious about it.

DR: Did he allow you to express your views, (*unintelligible phrase*) commanding officers?

CB: I just said, well, you know, I don't think this domino theory really is that big a deal, you know. If you look at Indonesia, you know, there was an anti Communist coup, the Communist party got wiped out. You know, Communism isn't making any headway except in Vietnam. But he didn't see it that way, and of course he was sort of locked into that psychology. So in any

event -

DR: So what -?

CB: So that's the sort of thing that happened. And then I got through -

DR: So let me, so ten weeks basic training. Was there a graduation ceremony?

CB: Yeah, we had a graduation ceremony, in fact the speaker was Maj. General Davis.

DR: Did you stand tall, were you proud do you think at that point?

CB: I was just, I was glad to be out of boot camp because I had heard that basic school was a lot easier, not easier, it was a lot more comfortable. So I was glad to be out of there. See, not everybody in my training class went to officer basic school at Quantico, there were a number of people who were going down to flight school, either helicopter or fighter pilot school as well, so I don't know, maybe a third were going off someplace else and the rest of us were going to stay at Quantico.

DR: And if you stayed at Quantico you were destined for infantry?

CB: Well, we were trained, all of us were trained as infantry officers at the basic school, which is in another location.

DR: It's still on Quantico?

CB: In Quantico. Quantico's a big base, and the OCS boot camp is down right by the river, you know, you have these barracks down there. The basic school was located inland, I don't know, ten miles, and we stayed in what was called the bachelor officer quarters and it was, oh, kind of a combination motel/dormitory, you know, two persons to a room, or two bachelors to a room and a locker for a married person, married lieutenant. And we had a mess, had a bar.

DR: Wow, so how long did that go, basic school?

CB: Well basic school was until I think, gee, April of 1968.

DR: So how many weeks?

CB: Well, figure, well see I had about a week's break between boot camp and basic school, and my parents came down for the graduation from boot camp, and then we went up to Pennsylvania because my sister was going to Cedar Crest College in Allantown, Pennsylvania so we visited her. And then, let's see -

DR: Did you run across anybody who was protesting the war at that point, when you were done?

CB: No, no. I mean, I knew people were against it.

DR: No, I was thinking maybe at your sister's college or something like that.

CB: No, no, no, it was an all girl's school, there wasn't that much consciousness about it there. We, you know, then I came back, started basic school, I went home for Christmas, I don't know what I did Thanksgiving, I may have gone up to see my Aunt Dorothy in Bethesda. But Christmas I went home for a few days, saw my friends who saw me with my skin head and so forth, told them all kinds of tales about boot camp and how the sergeants would yell at us and so forth. And then I, we started, it was a more formal academic program at basic school and we got, you know, squad, platoon, company, battalion tactics, logistics, communications, you know, that sort of thing.

DR: What's the level of instruction there, was it good?

CB: Well yeah, I thought it was, it was good. I had a hard time absorbing it. You really had to do a lot of memorizing and I'm not really good at that. Most of the instructors were captains and majors, a few lieutenant colonels, all had been in Vietnam. I would say it was pretty good instruction.

DR: Most of the guys who went there were in their twenties now, were you all in early twenties?

CB: Yeah, I would say, yeah, all of them were, you know, I was twenty two, twenty three, most of them were twenty two, twenty three. There were a few who were older. There was one guy in my basic school platoon who had gotten a, he'd gotten an education masters degree at Ohio State, a guy named Ed Davidson, he was killed in Vietnam. He was strange, he couldn't wait to get over to Vietnam. And there were a number of guys who couldn't -

DR: That's what I was going to ask you, (*unintelligible phrase*).

CB: Yeah, there were guys who just, oh, they were, they were eager to get over there. I wasn't.

DR: Were you alone? Or did you have a couple of guys that felt the same way that you did?

CB: There was one guy, in fact he graduated from Harvard, who had put up some kind of protest poster on his door. He wound up in the infantry. There were a few guys who were, you know, exhibiting doubts but, you know, you kind of kept that to yourself. You're not in an environment that nurtures this kind of attitude, you know.

DR: Right, so you were training for, what was your MOS, is that what you call it in the Marine Corps?

CB: Okay, I was a 3502 which is motor transport. But what happened was this, I mean very quickly you sort of figure out, you know, you know, what's safe and what isn't. And as a new second lieutenant in basic school sometime, oh I can't remember when, it must have been like in February or March, we could indicate our preferences for an MOS. They didn't necessarily have to give it to you but they wanted to find out what you wanted. And by then I figured, well, okay, you know, the, we had these joke sayings, you know, motor T, out in three, why die, go supplies. Well motor transport, I didn't have any interest in trucks, and I put motor transport, supply, and I thought communications, that seems safe, so I put all those down. There were other guys, in fact our, the quotas, we were given, our class was given a quota. I was in Echo Company, or better known as Eskimo Company because we trained in the middle of the winter down there, and there were, our quotas for MOSs were based on pre Tet >68 casualties, so I, as I recall only about twenty percent of my class was assigned to infantry, 0302, and there were more guys who

wanted to go infantry than there were spots available.

DR: Now why would that be do you think?

CB: Well, they just, you know, got, hey, join the Marine Corps, you want to fight (*unintelligible phrase*).

DR: But why were there only twenty percent (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Well, what because what would happen is this, well, the, when they determined the number of, as I understand it, and again I just got this through scuttlebutt, but as I understand it they, in a particular class they would get quotas from somewhere, Headquarters Marine Corps, saying we need a certain percentage in these different MOSs, and my understanding was is that quotas were determined before the Tet offensive, when there were high casualties. Tet offensive broke out the end of January >68, while we were about half way through, you know, basic school.

DR: Okay, so you, so what did you end up getting? Your MOS, it was motor transport.

CB: Thirty five-oh-two motor transport.

DR: So you got the first choice that you put down?

CB: Yeah, yeah. I remember, if I can dwell on this a bit, you know, I've still got Vietnam to go and I know it's almost nine thirty, but anyway -

DR: Dwell.

CB: What?

DR: Dwell.

CB: Dwell.

DR: Dwell away.

CB: A couple things, I mean I figured that, I mean there were a couple things sort of hitting my mind. I remember right after starting basic school, I think it was still in November because I started basic school the beginning of November of >67, we had this sort of beer party, I guess it was a Friday or Saturday night and some guys got a room at the Holiday Inn. And I remember we were standing around, a bunch of us second lieutenants, and the major, Major, I think his name was Maj. Brahm who was a Korean war veteran and a Vietnam veteran, was attending this party. And he was saying, well I think what, you know, the United States ought to do is invade North Vietnam. So I got in an argument about that, you know, the Chinese will intervene and all this stuff.

DR: Were you drunk?

CB: Well, let me say this, I went on and then I said, you know, I think, you know, this war is different from Korea, you know, because it's a guerilla conflict and he corrected me on that and he said, no, we had a lot of guerilla activity in Korea, too. So actually I was getting enlightened about history. But anyway, he said, how did it go, I said at one point that I thought Sec. of State Dean Rusk and Sec. of Defense Robert McNamara were lying to the American people about what was going on in Vietnam. And I remember this major sort of pulled himself up and said, Lt. Beam, 2d Lt. Beam, to emphasize my lowly status, 2d Lt. Beam, you know, you could be court martialed for saying that. And so I clammed up right then, and it turned out he was right. There is a provision in the uniform military, uniform code of military justice that prohibits officers from being dis-, making disrespectful remarks about certain high civilian officials. But I figured at that point what really saved me was, one, I hadn't had military law yet, and two, that probably the growing anti war sentiment may have had an effect. I mean, if you put somebody in court martial for calling Rusk and McNamara a liar, what a nice cause this would be.

DR: Do you think this guy would have done that, though, I mean this is an informal party, right? (*Unintelligible phrase*).

CB: Yeah, well, I mean I was still, I was under military jurisdiction.

DR: Oh sure, but do you think he would have, did he seem like the kind of guy that would

have pushed that or was he just (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: If I had been publicly outspoken, you know, if I had gone out to a demonstration and said that, yeah, I mean they wouldn't have had any choice.

DR: Oh sure, right.

CB: But I also learned that intoxication could be a mitigating circumstance and I was well on the way to being that, so.

DR: So he sort of forgave you for that?

CB: Yeah, so he sort of forgave me for that.

DR: So you're doing this ten week training now, this -

CB: Well that was boot camp. By now I'm commissioned, I'm an officer.

DR: I mean, so do you, do they separate out the infantry training, guys doing infantry training?

CB: No, we all, we all got infantry training. But really one of the unsettling things was this is that when you go through an exercise, you know, with a platoon of second lieutenants, forty people or so, okay, usually what they do is they'd select one or two people to run the exercise, one or two second lieutenants. And it was clear they were selecting people who had apparently indicated they wanted to go infantry, and the rest of us sort of followed along. So, I'll tell you, by the time I got out of basic school I did not feel as though I'd been particularly well trained because I was never selected.

DR: What weapons were you trained in?

CB: We were trained in M14s. We did qualify, though, with M16s. And we learned, you know, the use of M16s.

DR: What about M60s, M79s?

CB: Yeah, we had instruction in M60s, we had instruction in M79 grenade launchers, we had instruction on 60 and 88 mm. mortars, we had instructions on artillery, you know, all the things you'd have to know to be a platoon company commander. At least we had formal instruction in it.

DR: Did you have any training in calling in jets and stuff like that?

CB: We had some classroom instruction on that, and also on the use of radios and so forth. But I was never very good at it, and, again, when we did these field exercises the people they would designate to actually do it were the people who were, you know, clearly going to go infantry, who wanted to go infantry, or eager to go infantry.

DR: So they didn't send them off to another camp at all?

CB: No, no, we all got trained together, we were all, the theory was every Marine junior officer is trained as an infantry small unit commander.

DR: So you didn't have any special training in motor transport or anything like that?

CB: No, no, not then, not in basic school, not at Quantico.

DR: So then what happens after basic school?

CB: Well, well we got our orders for WESTPAC, western Pacific, which meant Vietnam. Those who had the MOS of infantry had their leave and then went directly to Vietnam. If you were artillery, 0802, you went down to Fort Sill for three months. If you were motor transport you went down, after leave, to Camp Lejeune for six weeks, and that's what I did.

DR: Where's Camp Lejeune?

CB: Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, big training base.

DR: What city?

CB: Well, it's right on the coast, it's near Jacksonville, North Carolina. Camp Lejeune is a big training base down there, you know, it's like Camp Pendleton out in California. I remember just, I'll get off, I'll get off basic school and get to Vietnam in just a second, but I remember there are a couple of vivid things that happened. One of course was the Tet offensive of >68, and, you know, that really is where the defecation hit the ventilation, you know. And I remember distinctly right after that of course was the New Hampshire and Gene McCarthy had done very well. And I have to say I was really hopeful that political pressures would force Johnson to terminate the war early.

DR: So you were where exactly when Tet offensive hit?

CB: I was in basic school.

DR: So how did you find out about it, was it (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Well it was in the newspaper, we read the Washington, we had the Washington *Post*.

DR: Oh, you could read the Washington *Post* and all that?

CB: Oh yeah, yeah, hey, we're gentlemen, you know, we got the, you know, I purchased the Washington *Post*, we read, you know, *Time* magazine, *Newsweek* and that sort of thing so, you know, anything that was available to most people in that area was available to us. So we, you know, sure, we had access to that kind of news. Some people watched TV news, there was a TV lounge, but I didn't watch TV that much.

DR: So did you notice something in the Marine Corps itself because of the Tet offensive?

CB: All I knew was is that there was a great fear, because there was sever fighting in Hue, that we weren't being trained very well for street fighting, we were being trained to fight in the jungles and the rural areas, you know. So -

DR: Did, were there guys that seemed anxious, I mean you instructors about the role of the Marine Corps?

CB: No, no. Well at least they didn't say it to us. Well the funny happened was this, I remember at the end of March Lyndon Johnson was supposed to make a nation wide television address, and I didn't really pay that much attention to it, I didn't like Johnson, you know, and I figure well, he's going to say something about Vietnam and I'll read about it in the paper. And I was sitting there in my room and all of a sudden down the hall in this lounge I heard this big cheer go up and somebody came down and said, guess what, Johnson's not going to run again. Wow. So I thought, you know, hey, things are breaking now, you know.

DR: So you think the cheer was because the guys were saying, hey, maybe this Vietnam thing's going to end?

CB: No, no, no, it's just, they didn't like Johnson, you know. I mean, a lot of the hawks, a lot of the people who were really gung ho thought that Johnson was mismanaging the war. There were also a lot of the sort of, well, I wouldn't call redneck types, but you know, right wing types who thought that Johnson was, you know, soft on blacks, you know, that sort of thing.

DR: So were there any blacks in the training?

CB: There were a couple in our training outfit.

DR: So mostly you were white.

CB: Yeah, mostly white. There was one American Indian, too, who, guess what his name was? They called him Chief, you know, anyway.

DR: Oh well. So all right, so you get through this, now we're -

CB: Well, wait, I got a couple other things happening.

DR: Lay it on me.

CB: Okay. I remember, I mentioned that we could give our preferences for MOSs, I remember we had a sort of party in the bachelor officer quarters in which the representatives from different

MOSs would have almost a booth or a table set up and you could go around and talk about motor T or artillery and so forth, and basically they were trying to sell you on this, you know, their MOS. And I remember a guy who sat next to me, a guy named John Abbott, and he had gone to the University of Michigan, my understanding was he had dropped out, joined the Marine Corps, and then, as an enlisted person, but then was allowed to go to basic school. And, you know, he was one of these guys who I guess, you know, really wanted to, he was sort of gung ho. And he was married, his wife was expecting, and I remember he was there talking to the guy from the infantry table. And I didn't get the whole gist of the conversation, but the guy from the, you know, Abbott was saying, well I'd really like to go infantry but my wife, you know, she doesn't want me to go. And I remember this officer, must have been a captain or a major, said well doesn't your wife want you, when you come home from the day, to say boy, I had an enjoyable, rewarding day, you know. And this guy Abbott said, yeah, sure, you know. Well that's what you'll get when you go infantry. Well, he went infantry, and I lost touch with him. My understanding was he spent six months as an officer at the Da Nang brig and then was assigned to a line unit, and in the last week of May he was killed. And his picture was published in *Life* magazine, *Life* magazine in June had an article showing pictures of all those who died the week of Memorial Day 1969. He had a child he never saw. And there were stories like this. This other guy, this Ed Davidson guy, couldn't wait to get to Vietnam, he was killed very shortly after he got over there.

DR: You said he was kind of strange.

CB: Yeah, he was, well, strange in the sense that he told some people, you know, that he was going to die in Vietnam.

DR: And he still wanted to go.

CB: Oh yeah, yeah. The guy, that tough looking sergeant who was on the bus with us, his name was Bill Jones, actually very nice guy and he was the head, he was the top graduate of our class, he was killed, too. My understanding is he stepped on a land mine. And there were several others. There was one guy I got to know, well, I kind of liked a lot, a guy named Bill Hernden, his father was a Navy guy. Bill, and I ran into him on Okinawa, he'd gone artillery and then was, went down to Vietnam and he was killed a week after he got to Vietnam. He'd gotten engaged when he was on leave. And I think there were some others who, oh, there was another

guy, Russ Eckley, again in my class, he'd gone to Columbia, he was killed, he was in AMTRACS which were armored tractors, and from what I understood the AMTRACS would throw out this C5 or, you know, explosive, that plastic explosive, they shoot out these long cords into the brush and then detonate it and it would clear away the brush. Well apparently something happened and about fifty pounds of this C5 explosive detonated and Eckley and a couple other Marines were obliterated, he was killed over there. So we had some people in my outfit who were killed.

DR: Were they killed before you went over, did you know?

End of Side B, Tape One
Side A, Tape Two

DR: So I was asking you if you, when did you find out these guys were killed?

CB: Well, see, well I don't want too far ahead. I was in Okinawa for, I forget, two or three months, no, about two months. And we did get *Stars and Stripes*, and they did publish the list of people who were killed in Vietnam, and I saw, and you know, through the grapevine I'd heard, you know, a couple of guys had gotten killed early on when they were over there. The others I sort of found out through the grapevine, you know, because you'd run into people you were in, you know, a class with and so forth. But anyway, after I got out of basic school in April, oh, I remember the other big event was the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in early April of 1969. I remember, you know, the riots all over the country, and of course Washington, D.C. was an armed camp.

DR: Did they, did they -

CB: And they had Marines up in -

DR: I was going to ask you that, yeah.

CB: But, you know, I -

DR: Did any of you guys get -?

CB: No, no, no, but they had, you know, regular Marines posted up in Washington, you know, to keep order and so forth. It was a real strange time. I mean 1968 was, I mean you got a sense that things were falling apart, you know, that, you know, the country was in an upheaval. And, you know, I, it was, and of course it was an anxiety ridden year for me, I mean the war was going on, there was this bitter fighting, there was a lot of concern about Caisson perhaps falling, it didn't fall but of course the Marines were up there. You know, the war was just going on and on and on, there was political upheaval, a lot of upheaval and growing discontent in this country, and here I felt, I felt trapped. I felt like, you know, here I am part of this treadmill, this sort of escalator and I can't get off.

DR: And you had another six years in front of you, right?

CB: Well, not really, I mean what I had was is I had a tour of duty in Vietnam facing me. I figured once I got over Vietnam it was, that was it, you know, the rest of it is gravy but, you know, I had to get through that, you know, alive. And, you know, I didn't know what was, what was going to happen.

DR: So when exactly did basic school end?

CB: Well, sometime, for me it ended, well it must have ended sometime the first part of April of >68.

DR: Of >68, okay.

CB: And then I went home for a couple weeks, you know, it's not, it wasn't a great time. I did go up to the University of Maine and this buddy of mine was up there, belonged to a fraternity, and that was a strange experience because I went to the fraternity house one Saturday night, you know, this guy had fixed me up with a date and so forth, and you know, you're just sort of hanging around with these guys who talked about, oh, you know, getting out, making a lot of money, marrying a rich woman, that sort of thing. And I thought, my God, you know, you got this war going on, these monumental issues, and all you're concerned about is, you know, the next beer party and how are you going to stay out of the service. And that's really, I think, looking back on it, where I sort of developed a kind of contempt for draft dodgers, that yes, there

were many draft, people who were evading the draft because they had genuinely moral objections to the war. But I don't think that was the majority of our generation. I think most of them, you know, well, they were indifferent, maybe they didn't like the war, but they were really just saving their backsides.

DR: Did anybody confront you during that time, during those two weeks?

CB: No, no.

DR: Were you obviously in the Marines?

CB: Well, yeah, I mean you could tell by my haircut. No, nobody confronted me, no. I met a couple people who were against the war and we talked about it, but no.

DR: So was your buddy genuine when he invited you up there, or do you think he just wanted to say, hey guys, here comes this guy, he's a Marine (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: No, no, no. He, Dave Wright, you know, was a nice guy, you know. He, you know, he was trying to be friendly.

DR: Did he feel sorry for you, do you think?

CB: I don't think he felt sorry for me. But I, you know, he was just trying to be helpful and, you know, come on up, you know, we'll go to a party or something.

DR: How about your parents, what happened in those two weeks (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Well they were, I, I didn't communicate much with them because, you know, it was clear where I was going to go, I mean I had orders to Vietnam.

DR: But you're in their house, now you're in their house for two weeks.

CB: Yeah, I'm in their house. I guess they just tried to make me feel comfortable, you know. But there was nothing they could do about it.

DR: Were there any protests or anything in the town of Brunswick at the time?

CB: Not that I knew of. I mean, my mother would tell me about people who had written letters to the editor and so forth. There was a lady who lived across the street, Marianne Holmes, her husband Cecil Holmes was a professor at Bowdoin, and she was very much of an anti war activist, you know. But my parents, particularly my, well both my parents tended to look upon people who were outspoken like that as sort of troublemakers, you know? You know, there was this sort of aversion to people who were too publicly outspoken.

DR: It wasn't quite appropriate.

CB: Yeah, it wasn't quite appropriate, you know. And so, you know, it wasn't like I should make contact. I mean nobody said anything, you know. But I did feel, I did feel sort of estranged, I felt estranged from a good part of American society, and it wasn't just protesters, you know, I felt estranged from the college environment but I certainly felt estranged from sort of conventional America that was still supporting the war that some of these people were perpetuating.

DR: And somewhat estranged from most of the Marine Corps too then, too.

CB: Yeah, it was a very lonely period.

DR: Yeah, I guess. Any contact with your sister at this point, (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Well Becky I don't think, I don't know, no, Becky was still in school, she was, I don't think she came home.

DR: Was she supporting the war or against it?

CB: No, no, she wasn't supporting the war.

DR: She was supporting the war or wasn't?

CB: Was not, but I don't think she was necessarily thinking of, you know, the war is wrong, I'm going to go out, I mean her, her opinion I think was hey, my brother's got caught up in this, he's going to go, it's, you know, a waste, you know, I just hope he gets through it okay.

DR: So these two weeks now, that's what, about 1968 April?

CB: Yeah, April of >68. And then by the end of April I went down to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

DR: What about leaving your parents when you, at that point, (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Well, when I left my parents I knew that I'd have a little bit of leave, well what I wanted to do was go to Houston and see my grandmother and to meet my dad's brother and his family.

DR: Was there, what was there, was it, why were you doing this, was there a sense that this was -?

CB: No, I just, I felt, I would just take -

DR: (*Unintelligible phrase*), there wasn't any sense that I got to see these people?

CB: No, it was just, you know, you could travel cheap, you know, and this was about the only time I'm going to have a chance to go down to Texas, you know. And then I was going to spend a few days in San Francisco.

DR: So saying goodbye to your parents, what was that like?

CB: Well, it was -

DR: See you later?

CB: Not quite that callous. I didn't think I was in any particular danger, you know. I just, maybe I was out of it, maybe it was a defensive mechanism. But I didn't, I really didn't know what to expect. I think I had more anxiety before I went to Vietnam than when I actually got

over there.

DR: Did you, for the Marine Corps did they let you know where in particular you were going to be in Vietnam before you got there?

CB: You just, you just had orders to western Pacific, and when I got, well let me tell it, tell it to you. I went down to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina for six weeks of motor transport training. That was dull as dishwater, learned about trucks and that sort of thing. I know every weekend we'd drive the six hours from Camp Lejeune up to Washington, D.C. and just sort of hang out there. I remember we used to go to a place called the Gentleman Two. Hank Fuller who was in basic school a couple of classes afterwards talked about it, it was a hangout. I don't know why I went up there, you know, you couldn't hear yourself think for the music, it was kind of a rough crowd that showed up, but you know, I was a bachelor, I didn't have any, I didn't have a girlfriend or anything, you know. Mostly drinking, you know, that sort of thing.

DR: Were there proverbial fights with the swabbies and all this kind of stuff?

CB: No, no.

DR: That's straight out of the movies.

CB: Well, with us it was, you know, no, we didn't get in any fights with anybody. And Washington, D.C. I think was a disturbing kind of place. I always think of it as sort of a de-, you know, a decadent imperial capitol, you know, there are a lot of people running around who, you know, were sort of what we call yuppies now, you know. And I guess I felt like, here I am going to Vietnam and everybody else, you know, is getting out of it. And that was a very disturbing, there was a real disturbing sense almost of normality and, you know, not enough people were upset about the war, you know, at least the way I perceived it.

DR: What about the people you were hanging out with at that time, now that's, that's just before you're going to Vietnam. Were they, did they feel the same way about these people that you did, did you guys share that?

CB: No, well there were some, particularly the southern guys, who were real right wing, you

know. They liked George Wallace, you know, and that sort of thing. There was one guy who drove the car up to Washington, he was from, Irish guy from Boston, he was kind of a strange character because even though he was assigned motor transport, when he got to Vietnam he went with the 3d Marine Division, now commanded by Maj. Gen. Davis. And in the 3d Marine Division Davis imposed a rule that said all 2d lieutenants will spend at least three months in the infantry. And this guy Murphy went into the infantry, and stayed by request, in the infantry, you know. My roommate at the time was a laid back guy from Alabama named Dickie Mason. He was a real nice guy. I had a sense that he didn't like what was going on but, hey, you know, what can we do about it, you know.

DR: Were these guys going to make a career out of the Marine Corps do you think?

CB: No, I didn't know anybody (*unintelligible word*).

DR: You didn't know any-, so everybody was in it just basically the same (*unintelligible phrase*) you were.

CB: Yeah, yeah. I mean there may have been some later on who stayed in it. But you know, you don't, you lose contact. I mean, you develop, like with Echo Company, you know, you get to know the people in that training class and, you know, you run into them, you make friends and so forth, but you really sort of lose, I lost connections with most of them. Well, I got out of Camp Lejeune and flew, I went up to Washington, spent the weekend in Washington, D.C., and then flew to Houston to meet my relatives. My uncle and his wife and my grandmother picked me up, and I mostly stayed with my grandmother. And it was kind of an interesting experience. I didn't like Houston, you know, I thought it was an overbuilt place. It was really a funny experience because, and this kind of gets into sensitive family members, my dad, you know, never talked much about his family and he kind of gave you the impression that his brother was probably in the oil business or doing very well. Well, you know, my Uncle Bill wasn't. He had some job as a manager in Sears and, you know, they lived in a, sort of tract house in Houston someplace. Real nice people, you know. And I liked, you know, his wife a lot. I met one of his daughters, she had a young child at the time, but I didn't really get too close to them. I did talk to my grandmother a lot. My grandmother, I remember in 1957 when she came to visit us, this was right during the Little Rock crisis, and I remember, you know, she was a staunch old southerner, you know, she wasn't a racist in the sense that she hated blacks but she did believe in

segregation and bought into it. By 1968 when I saw her again you could kind of tell she was moving away from it, you know, she's still, I mean she was eighty years old so, you know, she wasn't going to change too dramatically. I do remember her making a remark about Mrs. Coretta King, how attractive she was. I do remember once we were sitting there, she was showing me some pictures of my dad when he was younger and so forth, and she said in this very thick Texas accent, now Chris hon, when you go to Vietnam, remember that young man coming down from North Vietnam, he's got a grandma just like you. And I thought, thanks grandma, that will really make, that'll do wonders for my morale, it'll make me want to go out and kill, you know. That was really sort of a touching -

DR: Did you correspond with any of these, who did, when you were in Vietnam who did you correspond with?

CB: The only person, I got a letter from my aunt, my aunt, my brother's, my father's brother's wife, you know, she sent me a letter. But no, I didn't communicate with too many people except my sister and my parents. You know, I didn't have any girlfriend, I didn't communicate with my buddies or anybody like that. So I flew from Houston to San Francisco, and of course, and I loved San Francisco, it was very friendly, went down to the Haight Ashbury to see what was going on there because the summer before had been this hippie thing. And it was very pleasant, I thought San Francisco was very friendly. And then I went out to Travers Air Force Base and flew, well we flew to Okinawa.

DR: So when you were in San Francisco just before that, no one spat on you, called you a baby killer, any of that kind of stuff?

CB: No, no-no, no-no.

DR: They never, okay, go ahead, so now you're back (*unintelligible phrase*).

CB: Well, we went to, I went to Okinawa and they sent me up to a place called Camp Schwab which is on the, S-C-H-W-A-B, it's in the middle of the island. I mean Okinawa is about sixty miles long, most of the people live in the southern part of the island and the northern part is sparsely inhabited. And I stayed there, oh, I guess probably two, maybe three months. It's hard to figure out because I sort of judge the time of year by the seasons, the weather, the weather

didn't change that much. And I think the reason I was kept there is because after the Tet offensive, which had died down, there had been this huge backup of personnel, they had too many people in Vietnam, they didn't know what to do with us. So I was assigned to this truck platoon on Okinawa and it was boring as hell.

DR: How long were you there?

CB: I think I was there until probably August or September of >68.

DR: So that's how many months?

CB: Well, two or three months. See, I went over in Ju-, I'm sorry, it would be in June, so that's two or three months.

DR: When you were sent, when you're sent to Vietnam as a Marine is it for a year, twelve months?

CB: Thirteen months, thirteen month tour.

DR: In country.

CB: So, well no.

DR: Or was this going to be counted as part of the -

CB: Thirteen months in the western Pacific, so the time on Okinawa counts towards the thirteen months.

DR: Were you thinking that, even though it was boring, were you saying this, I'm knocking off, here's another month I don't have to serve in Vietnam?

CB: Yeah, but I'll tell you, it was miserable, you know. I didn't have anything to do, the, I worked out a lot, got in great shape. There was another guy there who liked to run and I was into running, and I remember on Sunday, a couple of Sundays we went out and ran fifteen, twenty

miles. He was a little, he was a little nutty, you know, so I didn't want to hang around with him too much. But, and then, you know, most of the evenings we just drank, and I thought, you know, I'm going to go out of my mind, you know, you're on this island, you know, you can't go anywhere.

DR: You couldn't visit people in the villages or the towns?

CB: Well yeah, but the village people, I mean there was a kind of, there was a, there was a village, an Okinawan village right outside the base. A lot of honky tonk, you know, bars, brothels, saunas, there were people that worked on the base. But you know, I couldn't communicate with them, they spoke mostly Japanese or whatever, and so I didn't have much communication with them. So, I, you know, and besides, I wanted to see what was going on in Vietnam, I mean, you know, hey, I'm this close. So I put in a request, I asked to go Vietnam.

DR: If you hadn't of done that would you have spent thirteen months there do you think?

CB: Possibly, yeah.

DR: Okay, and so you put in a request.

CB: Yeah, I put in a request and they sent me south. So I got into Da Nang, I flew down to Da Nang, got in there late at night and of course it was kind of a freaky experience because you're in a Boeing 707 passenger liner, stewardesses, it's like a commercial flight except that all of the passengers are young men in green uniforms, you know. And, you know, we get off the plane, the stewardess says, you know, good luck guys, you know, sort of, hope you make it. And I remember getting of in Da Nang Airbase, it wasn't particularly hot, I mean some of the people we've interviewed talk about the heat but, you know, this was later in the year and it was humid but it wasn't particularly hot. And I remember I had to stay in this barracks, it was just a basically a big building with plywood sides. And of course in the background you'd hear these jet planes taking off and you'd hear these canons going off, and that was kind of scarey because even though I had never been in combat, you know, I knew these plywood walls weren't going to stop anything. I thought, oh my God, suppose they try to hit us. Well, it's sort of blurred then, I, I can't remember how I got assigned but I remember waiting a couple of days in Da Nang and then eventually they assigned, I was assigned to the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade

because the truck platoon commander was going to rotate back to the States. And what it, what the 9th Marine, 9th MAB was is that the Marines put together a battalion, they'd take an infantry battalion, I think this was from the 7th Marine Regiment, and put them aboard ship and then they would attach a truck platoon, artillery battery, some other units, and they'd do landings up and down the coast, you know, because Marines have to do these amphibious landings, otherwise they're not Marines. So I was assigned to that 9th MAB. And the guy, you know, I spent a couple weeks with the guy who was going to rotate and he introduced me to the sergeant, he had a gunnery sergeant, Costa, who was a Filipino, and some of the troops in his unit, and then he left and I took over the platoon. And we had absolutely nothing to do, I mean, except float around with these trucks.

DR: So what were you floating around on?

CB: We were on, I was on the U.S.S. Seminole which was some kind of transport ship, WWII vintage transport ship. It had a big cargo hold with our, I forget how many trucks we had, six or eight trucks, you know.

DR: Deuce and a halfs?

CB: Deuce and a halfs, right.

DR: So you were off, you were offshore? How far offshore?

CB: Offshore. I don't remember, we floated around offshore, we could see the coast of Vietnam. A couple of times we went in, my troops were required to do security duty for an artillery battery, and that was about it, saw no combat whatsoever. Had terrible problems with the Navy because, and that's where I really developed a real contempt for Navy officers. The, they seemed to resent us. The Navy enlisted guys were great.

DR: So who was in charge of the ship, the Navy?

CB: There was a Navy captain, you know, in charge of the ship. Never saw him, he spent most of his time up in his bridge or his quarters. Most of the time I had to deal with the executive officer who was kind of a jerk.

DR: Were you guys on equal footing (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: No, he was a lieutenant commander, I was a second lieutenant.

DR: Okay, so you had to follow his orders.

CB: Yeah, I had to work under him. They had a Marine officer, a lieutenant, first lieutenant attached to them. I couldn't quite figure out what his role was. He was kind of jerk, too, I ran into a lot of jerks in the service. But most of the Navy junior officers, the ensigns and the lieutenant JGs were, it was funny, they seemed to fall into a certain type. They seemed to come from the mid west, almost all of them seemed to belong to country clubs, you know, and real snobs, you know, they, I don't know, they, and I know with the election coming up most of them were for Nixon. There was one guy, a guy named Lt. Mack who, he was a real down to earth guy from Pennsylvania someplace, and we got to be friends. But they treated my, my troops really bad.

DR: So you had that kind of paternal sense with your troops, like did you try to protect them from stupid duty and all that kind of stuff?

CB: Oh yeah, I was, yeah, oh yeah, yeah. I mean I really, I felt I connected with my troops. In fact there was an incident, one thing I did was because they had nothing to do, you know, what I did was is I worked up a program of doing calisthenics and exercise. And so we got down in the hold of the ship where there's an open area and I led them through a routine of calisthenics every day and they were shocked afterwards because they said, you know, they were really surprised that I did the exercises with them, you know. Because the previous lieutenant refused to do it. He gave the orders but he didn't do the exercising, so I think they were kind of impressed with that.

DR: So did you, did you, you must have been told as an officer in officer training school that you can't really fraternize, become friendly with your troops.

CB: Well, you were tau-, well, no, the Marine Corps I think was pretty good with this. They, you know, they try to foster a sense of identification with your troops, you know, you're leading

Marines here, you know. And they're going to be younger than you and you're going to have a lot of responsibility, and your first job is to accomplish your mission but your second duty is to take care of your troops, you know. It was the ethos, if you've got forty troops in your platoon and you have thirty nine sleeping bags, you go without the sleeping bag, that sort of thing. And, you know, I sort of liked that.

DR: So wasn't there, I mean, weren't they ever considered assets in terms of a mission that they, you know, that you had to expect to lose a certain number of assets if you were to accomplish your goal?

CB: Well that was implicit, you know. Let's put it this way, I wasn't in the infantry, you know, where guys were getting shot at in real danger. Some of these guys who'd been over there for a while were part of the evacuation of Caisson and had seen action. And there was one guy in the platoon who had gotten killed about four days before he was supposed to come home. But, you know, by the time I was there, you know, the, you know, this platoon wasn't seeing much.

DR: So there were seasoned troops in that platoon?

CB: Some were.

DR: Did they treat you like some kind of shaved tail?

CB: No, they were very friendly to me and, you know, I think -

DR: Followed orders?

CB: What?

DR: Followed your orders?

CB: Oh yeah, yeah. They, I got along with my troops, I mean I felt I connected with them, you know.

DR: Did you have any sense that any of them were real losers, that if they were left to their own devices probably wouldn't make it very far?

CB: Later on, yeah. Not the group that I had aboard ship. I mean, they were guys for the most part, many of them were high school dropouts, if they had a high school diploma they were consi-, you know, they looked educated. And so, you know, in that sense, you know, they were from a different class of society than I was, you know, there was that (*unintelligible phrase*). But I kind of sympathized with them. I mean, I thought, I mean I felt more an affinity with them than the guys who were, you know, the officers on the ship.

DR: What about racial profile, how many blacks, how many (*unintelligible word*)?

CB: We had a few blacks in our platoon. Most of the guys seemed to come from the south or the mid west.

DR: Mostly white?

CB: Mostly white.

DR: What were their politics like, were they -?

CB: Oh, I, I don't, it was hard to tell, hard to tell. You didn't really get into the political discussion with them. There were a few who liked George Wallace, but I think it was more a regional identification. But most of them I don't think had much of a politics at all.

DR: So they moved in and out, I mean when their tour of duty was up -

CB: Yeah, they took off.

DR: They took off and a new guy came in to replace him, that kind of deal.

CB: Yeah. Well, let me think about aboard this Seminole. I remember one of the things the Navy seemed to have to do was take frequent vacations. And so in, must have been in November they went down, they took all of us down to Singapore, you know, so I thought, oh,

this is great, I'm in the Far East, I'm getting to see all these places, you know. So we went down to Singapore and docked at this British naval base and, you know, my guys went off to the enlisted club, I went off to the officers club and had a great time. I won't get into it on tape, but it was a great time, you know. But I remember, this is where I think the executive officer was a real jerk, before we landed, no, I'm sorry, this, yeah, this is before Singapore. Before we landed he got everybody in the squad bay or wherever it was we met and he gave this stern lecture, this sermon, that remember when you go aboard ship there will be women there, but remember you have wives and girlfriends and sweethearts who are, you know, and mothers who expect you to behave, okay? This guy was married. So we get into the officers club, okay? And he is hustling every woman he could, who'd pay attention to him. So I thought, well, okay.

DR: The old hypocritical -

CB: Yeah, I mean, you know, you saw some of this, a lot of this stuff. So anyway, after Singapore we went across the equator and went through some ritual where you have to be, go through this gauntlet and get, you know, paddled and all of this stuff.

DR: No kidding?

CB: Yeah, it's a big Navy thing, you know.

DR: Every time you cross the equator or the first time?

CB: No, I think the first time you ever cross the equator, and I was never across the equator before. And then we went back up to Vietnam and I, my trucks were off loaded and then put back on the ship, and then the Navy decided that they needed another vacation so we went up to Hong Kong, you know, and Hong Kong was great, you know. You know, it was a modern city, crowded, but it was sort of great to get there. I did, I was able to call my parents from there. And then after Hong Kong we went to Subic Bay and spent Christmas in Subic Bay in the Philippines. So, and then after that we went back to Vietnam and the 9th MAB was reorganized, a new unit, infantry unit was put on, attached, and our truck platoon was detached and sent back to its parent unit which was the 1st Motor Transport Battalion which was located I think just south of Da Nang near the 1st Marine Division headquarters.

DR: And you went with them.

CB: I went with them, yeah. I was lucky, I did not, I was not, you know, I count myself very fortunate in my military career, such as it is, in that, you know, I could have gone to the 3d Marine Division where everybody goes into the infantry for three months. There was a guy in my training class in motor transport who was assigned to the infantry, should not have been, but he was badly wounded over there, you know, because he ran into a North Vietnamese ambush. They were op-, the 3d Marine Division was operating up near the DMZ.

DR: When you said should not have been, did you sense that he just wasn't -?

CB: Yeah, he just wasn't really cut out for it, any more than I was. But -

DR: Did you run across any really horrendous weather when you were out there, I mean typhoons or any of that kind of stuff?

CB: Not typhoons, just a lot of rain, you know.

DR: Okay, so you're, okay, so now you're in Vietnam so you're actually in country. How long, how many months did you actually spend in country?

CB: Well I was there in country for seven months, for the rest of the time.

DR: So this, all this, the Philippines, Hong Kong and all that stuff, that's taking place in a period of about three months or so?

CB: Yeah, yeah, the tail end of >68. Then on January 1st we were sent, we were broken up and sent back to our parent units. And I do remember there was one touching incident. We were staying, I don't know where we were, we weren't at the 1st Marine Division, I mean we weren't at 1st Motor Transport base camp, but New Year's Eve, you know, I was lying on my cot and three of the Marines in my platoon came up, knocked on my door at twelve o'clock and gave me a salute.

DR: No kidding.

CB: Yeah, I was really touched by that, that was nice. But then we went back to our unit. The guy, the 1st Motor Transport Battalion was really screwed up. The commanding officer was a major in a temporary position. I was told he was a former Chicago cop. Of course this is in the wake of the 1968 Democratic convention and the police riots and so forth. And I don't know how he got into the Marine Corps, I think he had been in the reserves and, you know, had activated himself or something like that, but anyway, he was replaced by another guy, a Lt. Col. Wilson, and the first thing Wilson did when he came in is he said, this battalion is all screwed up and I'm going to get it unscrewed. And of course needless to say he was not popular. I remember the word came down, I was first a truck platoon commander which meant I had maybe about twelve people under me, not very many, and then I was made a, no, I was, and then I was made a company executive officer which means I had absolutely nothing to do. And I remember the word came down after Wilson took over, he got it into his head that he thought it would be a good thing if the officers set an example for the men and went to chapel Sunday morning. Now we worked, you know, six and a half days a week, that is to say you work six days a week, you work Sunday morning unless you went to chapel, you had Sunday afternoon off. Well, I mean this is instructive on how things sort of translate as it goes down through the ranks, because the company commander who was a first lieutenant like me and actually sort of a devout Catholic came down and said, guess what this, you know, jerk wants us to do, he wants us to go to church. And I remember our first sergeant, who was a veteran of WWII, a veteran of the Choson Reservoir in Korea, on a second tour of Vietnam, about to get out, and he, you know, he was a sort of gravelly voiced, you know, senior NCO and he said, you know, God damn it, I been thirty fucking years in the fucking Marine Corps and I've never been in any fucking church and by God I'm not going to go right now, you know. And that was it, nobody went to church. I thought that was great. But anyway, this guy Wilson caused a ruckus and, anyway, one night somebody found a hand grenade under his hooch, you know, so they had to post a guard out there for a while.

DR: Did you run trucks, I mean convoys and stuff like that, is that what you were doing (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Mostly it was garbage runs. Occasionally -

DR: Was it on the base, just staying on the base?

CB: Yeah, around the base or, you know, between different units around the 1st Marine Division. So I never actually got off. We just assigned, you know, you got this truck run or something like that. Occasionally the trucks would have to go down in a convoy down to An Hoa, A-N and then H-O-A, where the 5th Marine Regiment was located. And we had one of our platoons from our company sent down there, attached to them, again doing sort of truck-, household runs. And so I went on those. One job I had was to take the pay down, and I'd either go by convoy or I'd take a helicopter down there.

DR: What kind of chopper? Hueys, Mosquitoes?

CB: No, it was a Huey helicopter, just a work a day horse, you know, work horse type helicopter. That was interesting because, you know, you'd fly over the country side of Vietnam. I mean, it looked like the moon, all these pock marks. Beautiful country Vietnam but, you know, clearly ravished. I remember one of the first impressions I had when I got off the plane in Da Nang, well no, I got off the plane at night but then I was in the barracks and then a day or two later I got on this truck in the morning. And outside of Da Nang were these large number of shanties, you know, where Vietnamese refugees had sort of settled in, real squalid slum. And one of the first things I remember was this guy standing out in back of the shack taking a leak, you know, right there, no sanitation or anything.

DR: Did they have, were the Vietnamese allowed on base at Da Nang?

CB: I don't remember, I don't remember that. I know we had Vietnamese workers on the base where we were located, the 1st Marine Division. They were, the Vietnamese would hire on as, you know, do laundry, burn shitters, the barber, I think they had a couple of other functions.

DR: So did you ever make any attempt to talk to any Vietnamese or meet any Vietnamese?

CB: No, no.

DR: So you didn't know much about the Vietnamese culture, first hand experience?

CB: No, but I probably wouldn't have found out if I did talk to them. I mean, you know, there

wasn't all that much communication, you know. There were guys that tried to communicate but they were communicating for a specific reason, either to get dope or to get sex, you know.

DR: Right, (*unintelligible phrase*).

CB: Right, and we did have a real problem with guys going through the wire, you know, because there was a village, a village, a ville next to us, you know. And there was a lot of prostitution, guys would get caught down there, you know, because the MPs and the ARVNs would do sweeps periodically.

DR: Did you ever get any mortar attacks or rocket attacks (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Yeah, that was the only time I really experience real combat in Vietnam. I was lucky. In February of 1969 there was a Tet offensive, not as big as >68 but Nixon had just come into office and I think the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were trying to figure out what he was going to do, you know, because Nixon hadn't announced any policy on Vietnam. And so one night I remember, in fact the day before I had been officer of the day, which was, and one of my jobs was to go around and check all the outposts, the guard points. And, you know, it was a very quiet night. The next day I was sleeping in my hooch on a cot and all of a sudden this siren goes off.

DR: What time of day do you think this was?

CB: Oh, gosh, it was early in the morning?

DR: Okay, before dawn?

CB: Yeah, and so I grabbed, you know, I got dressed, grabbed my flak jack, helmet, rifle, no, I didn't have a rifle, I had a pistol, 45 pistol, and dove out into these, into this trench. And that night we got rocketed, we had rockets.

DR: What was that like?

CB: Well, it was scarey, but I had been told if you hear it you're okay, if you don't hear it

you're not okay.

DR: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

CB: The minute the rocket, it was, I think, what had happened was is that a North Vietnamese sapper had gotten through our wire and had blown up a hooch where the cooks lived and killed, and wounded a bunch of guys. And my understanding was, I don't know this for sure, that apparently the sapper was able to get in because the guys on guard duty had been smoking grass and then passed out. And the two guards were killed, and the sapper, or maybe there was more, got in, blew up this hooch and then he was killed, you know, and you could see the hooch burning. And then a rocket attack came in and, you know, my, most of the rockets were heading for Da Nang but I think this was a short, couple of short rounds or target practice. I think it was pretty random. Later that morning we saw a piece of the rocket, it was a big ugly chunk of metal, really would have done some damage.

DR: What did it sound like?

CB: Well, it was a kind of a whistling sound, you know.

DR: So how close did it get to where you were?

CB: Oh, it exploded in what used to be a rice paddy in front of us. Our hooches were located on a kind of rise and we had trenches around it, but our truck area was down below and we had to cross I believe a kind of bridge over this dried up rice paddy, maybe fifty, a hundred feet, and it was in there that the rockets landed. And then I remember the next night -

DR: Excuse me, how long did that last?

CB: Didn't last very long, a few seconds, that was it. But of course everybody had to stay up, you know. And, you know, there were sirens, there was an ambulance had to come up and get the wounded, dead guys, you know, when that sapper got in. And so for the next month we spent out in the trenches. Fortunately it was cool at night at that time of year.

DR: Did anybody make a case that this was a sign of increased activity or was it pretty well

accepted as a random, just the way it's going to be?

CB: I don't think anybody thought about, you know, what the larger implications were. This business about a Tet >69 was stuff I learned about later, you know.

DR: So at that time you guys weren't saying, oh my God, it's Tet, they're doing it again?

CB: No, no. No, because there hadn't really been, I mean there was a flare up in fighting, but you know, you see after that incident, you know, we stayed out in the trenches, there were, there was detection of movement way out beyond our base, you know, and so we had to go on alert. I remember once sitting on what appeared to be a fire tower and see rockets go way over our head into Da Nang. But, you know, it was clear, you know, it wasn't, you know, this major offensive, at least you hoped it wasn't.

DR: Did you run across any other troops, the South Korean troops, Australian troops?

CB: No.

DR: None of them.

CB: No.

DR: Okay.

CB: A few Army guys and that was about it.

DR: Were you associated with the ARVNs at all?

CB: I saw some ARVNs but I never operated with them. I was basically in a rear echelon area, I was in the rear of the gear, you know.

DR: Rear with the gear.

CB: Yeah.

DR: How about R and R, did you go on R and R anywhere?

CB: Yeah, I went down, I went to Sydney, Australia.

DR: Oh, when were you there?

CB: Must have been April of >69, it was during their fall. That was nice, that was nice.

DR: Spent seven days there, eight days?

CB: Yeah, it was a seven day tour. Went down there, I stayed in the Sydney Hilton Hotel. Kind of a funny experience. We, as I was going down the elevator there's this Navy guy, a real, you know, kind of a all American type, you know, kind of got on my nerves. He says, hey, do you want to meet some New Zealand nurses? So, yeah, sure, why not, so we met these New Zealand nurses who had just taken their test and were on a vacation, so they invited us to a party the next day. And that, after that they had to go someplace so I went into this bar and there was this guy, a second lieutenant in the Marines, he was drunk as a skunk. (*Unintelligible phrase*) was a first lieutenant then, drunk as a skunk, being obnoxious and almost keeling over. So I walked him back to his room and the next day we got to know each other. His name was Marlin Robb and he said he was related to Charles Robb who was at this time serving in Vietnam as a captain in the Marines, had married Lyndon Johnson's daughter. He was a nice guy, this guy Marlin Robb, a real funny guy. He was in the infantry, he'd seen a lot of combat, so we kind of hung around together and, you know, went to French restaurants, met some of the Australian girls and that sort of thing. But, yeah, that was fun.

DR: How far into your tour was R and R?

CB: Well for me it was near the end, I mean, it wasn't, it was over halfway, so April of >69 I've got three more months left in Vietnam. But what happened was when I was in Vietnam, I mean when I was in Vietnam, let's see, I was the company executive officer for a while and then what happened was that the first lieutenant who was the company commander rotated back to the States, it must have been at the end of April, okay? The guy who - . . .

End of Side A, Tape Two
Side B, Tape Two

CB: Okay, well, yeah, I did R and R in April of 1969. Of course, you know, you have a choice. A lot of guys surprisingly went to places like Singapore or Kuala Lumpur, Taipei, places that, well Singapore was kind of a, oh, kind of run down, kind of shabby. I don't know what Kuala Lumpur was like, I know they had big race riots about the time that I went on R and R, but I just figured I wanted to get back to civilization.

DR: Race riots between American GIs?

CB: No, no, this is between Malays and Chinese in Malaysia and as a result they had to close the place down, but, you know, Bangkok too was I guess was a major R and R spot, but I figured Sydney, Australia would be better and it was nice, it was like San Francisco in terms of climate, beautiful beaches and, you know, people were pretty friendly. And, you know, I didn't have any girlfriend or anything, so hey.

DR: Footloose and fancy free.

CB: Yeah, footloose and fancy free. But anyway, when I got back the 1st lieutenant -

DR: Let me stop you there for, on the way back from Sydney to Vietnam did you have any sense of dread? I mean, you're close to the end of your tour, you've had a taste of civilization (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: No, no, no, I was less scared, I think I was less anxious in Vietnam than before I went over there. Because once you're over there, you know, you just sort of get settled in, you kind of get a feel for what's going on. I wasn't in much danger at all.

DR: Did you ever think that your orders were going to be changed dramatically and you were going to suddenly sent to a line unit or something?

CB: No, no, no, that wasn't going to happen. I mean, it didn't happen to anybody else. The real danger was lieutenants, say, motor tra-, let's say motor transport people who were sent to the

3d Marine Division. I was with the 1st Marine Division. Third Marine Division was an altogether different ball game, and their first three months were spent with the infantry. That didn't happen with me. Again, I was lucky, just dumb luck. And, but anyway this lieutenant was rotating back home. The guy who was down at An Hoa was brought up to be the company commander, and I was still the executive officer, not having a whole lot to do. We got this new lieutenant in and he was sent down to take charge of the platoon down at An Hoa. Now, we told this guy, said, look, okay, An Hoa is where the 5th Marine Regiment is, it is, it is a more dangerous are than we're located in, but the guys we sent down there are the guys who are not trouble makers, we had them up in Da Nang. Most of these guys were squared away, they worked, you know, six and a half days a week, you know, driving trucks, repairing trucks or whatever. Now they don't have any mess duty and they don't have any guard duty, okay, so the basic thing you should do, and the sergeant is good, the basic thing you should do is just let the platoon run itself. Well this lieutenant couldn't leave well enough alone. We sent him down there and the first thing he did was to throw the sergeant out of his tent because the previous lieutenant had shared his tent with, you know, they had these platforms with tent covers over them, the previous lieutenant who is now up as company commander, had shared his tent with the sergeant, you know. Well, this guy just wanted the whole thing for himself so he threw the sergeant out.

DR: Bad move.

CB: Well you don't, that's a bad move. And this new lieutenant had a strange, I don't know, he had some strange ideas. You know, in the Far East you could buy a lot of stuff, appliances and things like that cheap, and so he acquired a couple of refrigerators, television set, tape decks, all of this stuff cheap, you know, better than what he could get back in the States, but he's loaded down with all this stuff and that's one of the reasons why he kicked the sergeant out, he didn't have enough room to put his stuff there. He also had it in his mind that he could get a good interest rate with the Chase Manhattan Bank in Da Nang. Apparently there was one there. Now, most of us of course were just paid, I mean, you know, with our paycheck you have a certain amount given to you in MPC, the military payment certificates, and the rest gets sent home or put into some bank account. And I had this Armed Services account, except for the stuff I took in MPCs for daily expenditures, and that's the way most people did it. But no, he had to have, you know, this checking account at Chase Manhattan in Da Nang which required that he make a trip every month to Da Nang for a whole day, you know. Well anyway, he marked himself as

kind of weird, but the one thing he did do was that right outside of where the motor pool was was a guard post, and he thought that the infantry guys who were manning the guard post were either drinking or on drugs, you know, weren't paying attention. So what he did was he volunteered people in his platoon for guard duty, and he volunteered them for mess duty, you know.

DR: This guy, what's he got, a death wish or something?

CB: Well, almost. One night in end of April, somebody threw a tear gas grenade in his tent and he ran out with his pistol cocked and said, we're under attack, we're under attack, and apparently one of the troopers said, no, lieutenant, you're under attack. Well anyway, we had to remove him and take him away, and they sent me down.

DR: What was that process like, I mean did the guys literally showed up and handcuffed him and took him away or (*unintelligible phrase*).

CB: No-no, they, well it was clear he couldn't stay there so they ordered him to go to another unit.

DR: Isn't this in a sense giving the troops sort of the indication that they won, that there was insubordination and it's been sanctioned by the Marine Corps?

CB: What's the alternative?

DR: Leave him there and have him stew in his juices I guess.

CB: Well, no, this guy, this guy was having, clearly having problems. I mean it was just, it would have gotten worse, it might have gotten deadly if they didn't get him out of there. And it was funny because, I mean, it was a fragging incident but, you know, in a sense I won't say there's justice to it but it was clear that something had gone wrong and the only solution was to transfer him.

DR: So they were giving him basically the word that he's out of there.

CB: Right, right.

DR: So this guy -

CB: Because the previous lieutenant had no problems.

DR: So this guy continues in the Marine Corps but he's just, he's never going to -

CB: He's in another unit, he's in another unit. And in fact he had to load up a whole truck full of his belongings. I mean, most of us traveled with a sea bag and, oh, he had all kinds of stuff. I never quite figured him out.

DR: So you replaced this guy.

CB: I replaced this guy. But it was clear something was happening because when I would go down to pay the troops, the enlisted people would talk about him, call him names and that sort of thing.

DR: In front of an officer.

CB: Oh yeah, yeah, I mean they could be quite candid, you know, this guy. And he would, I'd have a meeting with him and he'd say, well, you know, I think these guys are talking about me. And I didn't have the heart to say, I think you're right.

DR: Figured that out anyways.

CB: So, you know, that was the only reasonable solution was to transfer him, so I was put down in charge of the platoon. And I guessed, I was trying to figure out who did it, who did the deed, and I think I figured it out.

DR: Did you do anything?

CB: No.

DR: You couldn't do anything.

CB: Well, what had happened was this, the troops that built this little hooch, and that was the club, okay? And they would buy beer and they had some kind of way of refrigerating it, so at the end of the day we'd go in there and basically drink beer at night. And one guy had a tape deck with mostly Doors, you know, Light My Fire the long version and that sort of thing, the kind of thing you get high on. And I remember one night we'd been drinking and we were sitting outside and there was this lance corporal named Eck, E-C-K, and they called him Gunny which means gunnery sergeant, and the reason they called him that was because he hated the Marine Corps, you know, so they called him Gunny. But I remember this guy, he was, oh he was strange. We were talking about the incident with this lieutenant and he was describing what happened, and he had this sort of glint in his eye that said to me, this is the guy who did it.

DR: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

CB: Yeah, but I remember he was a strange one. Our first sergeant came down for some reason, I think he came down to pay the troops, and that night he was talking about his days in Korea, and he was a part of the retreat of the 1st Marine Division out of the Choson Reservoir area, and he was talking about how there would be these North Korean civilians who would follow them while they were being attacked by the Chinese, and the Chinese and the North Koreans got, civilians got mixed up, so the Marines fired upon these civilians and killed some. And the gunny said, I mean the first sergeant said, you know, there was nothing we could do about it. And this guy Gunny, this lance corporal, honestly, his eyes lit up, I thought he was going to have an orgasm, you know, man, killing gooks, love it, that's what he said. And it was weird, it was weird. This is a story that'll interest you, while we were there down at An Hoa one evening, this grunt came in, this guy from one of the grunt units, and he walked in and he had one of these bush hats, you know, these hats with a visor all around. And on top of it was this big peace symbol. So I got to talking with him and it turned out he was a Canadian who was work-, had been working in Rochester, New York, your home town, in some photography area, and apparently he was told that either he'd have to go back to Canada or submit to the draft. So he decided, well, you know, they'll just draft me, I'll spend a couple years in the Army and then I'll be okay. Well he got drafted all right, but he got put into the Marine Corps, into the 5th Marine Regiment. He was not a happy camper, he was very unhappy with that situation.

DR: So he was just traveling through (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: No, he was, apparently he got to know one of the truck drivers and, you know, they invited him over, the truck driver invited him over to have a beer so he just wandered in that night. But, so I spent the next, the remainder of my tour at An Hoa.

DR: So where is that in relation to Da Nang?

CB: It's about twenty five miles south, southwest of Da Nang. It's inland.

DR: Inland, okay.

CB: Inland, yeah, I mean it's, I guess it's maybe about ten miles in from the ocean. We were right at the place where the flat lands meet, well, it's really the foothills of the Central Highlands. And every night, every night, there would be H&I fire going on, harassment and interdiction, these canons would be going off all night long. I never quite got used to it. It sort of, you know, I could get a night's sleep, you know, but -

DR: So they were being fired from artillery units at your fire base?

CB: Artillery units at the An Hoa base, you know, they'd be sent out to kind of disrupt, interfere with the Viet Cong, North Vietnamese, in that area.

DR: One seventy fives, 8 inchers, you know what the artillery was?

CB: I don't know what they were, I don't know what they were. I did hear a couple stories, I know for example periodically we'd have to go to a officers briefing and usually the regimental executive officer, lieutenant colonel would give a briefing, and I remember one night they handed around some stuff that was taken from a North, a dead North Vietnamese, and one of them showed a picture of this North Vietnamese guy and next to him was his wife, you know, it was a family picture. Kind of heart breaking. There was another story where apparently a patrol from the 5th Marines was out there and they got into an encounter with some North Vietnamese, and the report was is that one of the North Vietnamese was a black guy who ran like a fullback, you know, those kinds of stories.

DR: Right, right. Did you ever hear any rumors or tanks rolling up to Da Nang and all that kind of stuff, that the NVA were mounting that kind of armored attack and stuff like that?

CB: No, no, not that. I mean there had been tanks up at Caisson but not that far south, Da Nang. Did hear stories about, you know, Captain Midnight and guys defecting and that sort of thing.

DR: Who's Captain Midnight?

CB: Captain Midnight allegedly was a black guy who had defected to the North Vietnamese, but he still wore an American uniform, would drive around, give lifts to GIs and then kill them, you know, these kinds of stories.

DR: How did you hear that story?

CB: Well that, the Captain Midnight was just scuttlebutt, you know. The business about the North Vietnamese soldier who was black and ran like a fullback was at a briefing for the regimental -

DR: Really?

CB: Yeah.

DR: So it had that kind of official -

CB: Yeah. I suspect what happened was, I mean there were blacks in Vietnam. I mean you'd go out, I remember once going outside of Da Nang in one of these shanty towns and seeing a girl, late teens, who was black. And I suspect she was the outgrowth of a French, you know the French had African soldiers, Senegalese, there and she was a product of that.

DR: The Montagnards and stuff were darker.

CB: Yeah, and I suspect that, you know, there were probably Senegalese up north who gave, you know, had relations with the Vietnamese women and their children, if they were males, were

drafted into the North Vietnamese army. And I suspect that probably a lot of white Americans think all blacks run like fullbacks, you know. So I think that's part of it. And likewise reports of Caucasians of the North Vietnamese army. I think, I suppose, that's my speculation. And also of course the stories about the black syph, you probably heard that one.

DR: Oh yes, right, sure. You want to tell us about it (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Well, the story, of course when I got there there were again just rumors, nothing official, that there was a strain of syphilis that if you caught there was no cure for it, and what would happen is is that if you got it you were put in a special camp, your skin would turn all black and peel away, and after you died you'd be lis-, you know, they'd come up with some story saying you were killed in action or something like that. Well, you know, I remember talking to the medical officer about that and he said that's baloney. He said there are some strains of syphilis that were more resilient to penicillin than others, but all of them, you know, could be cured and that this was, you know, one of these stories that sort of makes the rounds and get embellished, and probably with some official encouragement, you know, to keep people away from the villages and that sort of thing.

DR: Did you have any hepatitis scares when you were over there?

CB: No, I don't remember those, no.

DR: Did you sense that your guys, that your platoon, any of those guys were doing drugs?

CB: I didn't know about it, but of course I'd be the last to know.

DR: I mean in their actions and just what was going on during the day (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: No, no. I'm sure that it was going on because I remember, well I know it was going on but, you know, they weren't going to tell me about it. I remember when I was in the Da Nang air base ready to go on R and R, and I was sitting on this bench in this airport and next to me was this guy who was a grunt, you know, and he was unpacking or doing something with his backpack and his joint fell out. And I looked at it, and then quickly looked the other way, I didn't see a thing. And before you boarded the plane there were these amnesty boxes, you went

in and you were to drop all contraband off, no co-, you know, no questions asked. I looked down, you know, you could see drugs or joints and that sort of thing. But no, I didn't see that much of it.

DR: Did you have any, was there any insubordination, any guys refusing orders?

CB: Not so much refusing orders. We had, we had racial problems, conflicts between, we had one sergeant in Da Nang, sort of a redneck guy, he was from Washington state, and he and this black guy from Louisiana just, they were at each other constantly and the black of course is getting the short end of it, always busted, perpetual E1 private and that sort of thing. Yeah, and there were, there were, there were racial tensions, you know.

DR: So you didn't have to break up any fights or anything like that?

CB: No, I didn't, no, we didn't, I didn't have to break up any fights, but there were arguments, demotions and that sort of thing.

DR: So were you ever called in as a witness for any guys that got, in the Army we called them Article 15s when buys were busted and stuff like that, were you involved in any of that?

CB: I remember once in Okinawa I had to sit on a panel, a court martial panel. This involved two black guys, one guy accused the other guy of throwing a knife at him. I thought the guy was, I thought the guy was guilty but the other officers said, accepted the accused's story that he was just fooling around with a knife, you know, and shouldn't have been doing it but it wasn't, he wasn't culpable of assault, so he was acquitted. But no, I didn't, I didn't sit on any panels or was a witness or anything like that.

DR: So when you left Vietnam, what was that like?

CB: Well, a great relief, you know. Of course over a period of time what builds up in your mind is your image of America, the world, and how great it is.

DR: Did you fly out of Da Nang to Okinawa?

CB: Yeah.

DR: Did you retrace your same steps that you took -?

CB: Almost the same steps, I flew from Da Nang to Okinawa -

DR: When was this.

CB: This would be in July of 1969. A new lieutenant came in, a guy named Gormley, who, in fact he was in Hank Fuller's class. He'd been someplace else in Vietnam, but he came in, I liked him, he was a nice guy, spent a couple weeks with me.

DR: So you broke him in basically.

CB: Broke him in. There wasn't that much to do to break him in, but anyway. And then I went up to Da Nang and spent a few days there, I can't remember. Then I went to the Da Nang air base, spent the night there in a, sort of a holding barracks, and then the next day boarded a plane. I remember when the plane took off the stewardess said, okay guys, we've left Vietnam, and of course everybody cheered, and I cheered too. And we flew to Okinawa, and I got to Okinawa, spent probably two or three days there, and then flew from Okinawa, well actually we flew roundabout, we flew up to Anchorage, Alaska and had to land in Anchorage, and then flew down to San Francisco. And in San Francisco the crew had to be changed.

DR: Why?

CB: Well, apparently they have a certain limit on their hours, you see, and they very, they were very apologetic, you have to do this FA rules and so forth. Of course we're all itching to get off.

DR: Yeah, I was going to say, so you guys hadn't really broken loose yet (*unintelligible phrase*).

CB: No, no, we stayed on the plane.

DR: Even in Anchorage you stayed on the plane?

CB: Oh no, in Anchorage we got off the plane, just a, but there wasn't that much in the airport, you know. I remember this funny incident because when I got on the plane, of course it was all, you know, Marines. And sitting in the first or second row was this young woman. This is in Okinawa. And, you know, I was real shy so I sat down next to this lieutenant I knew and these other guys, these two guys moved in next to her. Turned out I guess she was a dependent and going back to college or something in the States. But anyway, no, we just, in Anchorage we just stopped off and then, we didn't stay there very long, and then flew into San Francisco. But see, we were supposed to debark at San Bernardino Air Force Base which is in southern California, so finally we flew down there. And, you know, that was kind of a strange experience because I remember flying over southern California and looking down and seeing these, you know, miles and miles of tract housing, swimming pools and that stuff and thinking, you know, I'm kind of, this is kind of depressing, you know?

DR: Depressing?

CB: Yeah, because, you know, it looked like sort of the ticky tacky suburban existence that, you know, I really didn't want to see. And so anyway, we landed in Travers Air Force Base, by then it was getting near the evening and there were about three or four of us who got a cab over to Los Angeles airport, I know we had this Mexican cab driver, and he got a flat tire, and oh, he was, he was very, he was nice guy, very apologetic, hurried like crazy to get the tire repaired, got us to L.A. airport. And so I got to L.A. airport late, I called my mother, I mean it was eleven o'clock or ten, I had a flight about eleven o'clock Los Angeles time so back in Maine it's two or three in the morning. But I said, mother, I'm coming into Boston such and such an hour, you know. My dad was teaching someplace else, I think he was down at Connecticut that summer teaching. And anyway, there was a strange incident, I mean we've talked about this -

DR: What was that phone call like with your mother, can we go back to that for a second, I mean do you remember (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Well, my mother was a very sort of practical person, you know. She was of course delighted to hear me and said, you know, I'll be in Boston, what time is your plane getting in there, you know. And there was a strange incident, and I'm not sure what to make of it. Maybe it's a touch of paranoia. But there weren't that many people in the airport at that time, but I

remember in sort of the, like the gift shop, the magazine store there, there was this guy, a big tall guy with sort of longish hair and one of these sort of almost like a cowboy hat, leather cowboy hat. And he was giving me this strange scowl, and then his, he and his girlfriend started arguing and I had the feeling that he was hostile to me. Here I was in a, a Marine in uniform, and was going to confront me and his girlfriend was trying to talk him out of it. But I don't know, I mean -

DR: What do you think would have happened if he would have confronted you, would you have the patience to put up with the guy?

CB: Well, I'm not sure, I wasn't sure, because, you know, I, you know, if I got in a fight with a guy I was always in danger of being prosecuted. Now, granted, you know, they'd probably just say, you know, forget about it, you know. But, you know, by the time I got back from Vietnam I was dead set against the war so I had mixed feelings, you know? I wanted to say, hey, I'm anti war.

DR: Were you confronted by any anti war people at all?

CB: No, no.

DR: So you're still wearing your uniform in the airport?

CB: Oh yeah, yeah, there was no anti war people in Los Angeles airport, you know, it's a, I mean it, for the most part it was crowded and of course, you know, you had a lot of uniform personnel around, you know? And Los Angeles is still a pretty conservative area, was then, so no, I didn't, I mean they may have been just, it may have been something else, you know, I may have had nothing to do with this.

DR: So this thing about spitting on you and all this kind of cursing and calling you baby killer, you never ran into (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: No, I never encountered that. Well, anyway, that night I took the redeye flight from Los Angeles to Boston, I guess I got into Boston about six or seven in the morning and my mother came in. And by then, when I was in the service my parents had acquired this Samoyed dog, you

know, big white fluffy dog and this one was named Mishkin they called it. And my mother came with him on the leash and I loved that dog, I thought he was great, he was a very down to earth mutt, you know. Well my mother's very happy to see me and, so we drove up the Maine turnpike. I remember my state of mind driving up the Maine turnpike was one of sort of, kind of euphoria. It was a beautiful day, it was in the low seventies, crystal clear Maine summer day, you know, beautiful weather. And I guess, it's sort of hard to articulate my state of mind. I had a sense that the first, you know, that Vietnam marked a milestone, that the first half of my life was ended, you know, and now I'm beginning the rest of my life.

DR: You had that real sense, you were conscious of it?

CB: I had a vague sense, I feel it more now than I did then, but the war was behind me, you know.

DR: Did you have any sense that you, now that you were back safely that you had sort of an obligation to end the war, because you were opposed to it (*unintelligible word*), to help other guys out and all that kind of stuff?

CB: No, I wasn't thinking in those terms. I was against it, but I really wasn't sure, you know, I really wasn't sure of what was going to happen. I had a sense that Nixon wasn't going to do all that much to change courses radically, but I really had no opinion on it. I remember there was one incident, again this sort of made me cynical, when I was over there sometime in the spring of >69, Sec. of Defense Melvin Laird came over, this was reported on in *Stars and Stripes*, and he said that the, you know, the large number of Marines who were extending their tours of duty, you could extend you tour of duty for six months, you know, is an indication of GI support for the war. And I thought, that's crazy, that's, that is a bald face lie or the guy's just, he's either a fool or he's a liar, you know. Most of the people that extended were in force logistics command, they were back in the rear area repairing stuff. And of course you know this, you know if you extended for six months you get thirty days free leave, you can be flown anywhere in the world, you get a free R and R, you don't pay any taxes when you're in Vietnam, you get hazardous duty pay, and you could get an early out, such as what you got. That's the motivation for extending.

DR: So, now, you've still got a couple years of active duty left now?

CB: Well, when I got back to the States, on paper I had until November of 1970 for active duty.

DR: And this is when now, what's the date now?

CB: July of 1969.

DR: Okay, so you do have a couple years.

CB: Yeah, so I was looking at another fifteen, sixteen months of active duty. But the intere-, well the thing was is that, again, being an officer you have a little bit of leeway, okay? Before I got my orders to go home you can apply for a duty station back in the States. Most of the east coast Marines of course would go to Camp Lejeune, the west coast Marines or the people on the other side of the Mississippi would go to Camp Pendleton. Well I thought I didn't want to go to swamp lagoon, you know, I didn't want to go to North Carolina. Southern California seemed a lot more interesting so I applied to and I got assigned to Camp Pendleton. And I thought, this is great, you know, I spend the rest of my tour in California, I haven't really spent any time there, and who knows if I'd ever go back there. And what I was planning on doing was, I was going to go home, I was going to buy a car and then drive out to California, okay? Now, this is a little story about the bureaucracy, you get twenty days of leave, okay? And you could apply for an extra ten days of leave, so I did that, I applied for an extra ten days of leave while I was still in Vietnam. And the reason I wanted the extra ten days, I was very honest, I said, I was going to buy a car and I needed the time to purchase it and then drive it to California. This idiot major who was the executive officer of the battalion wrote back and said, request for ten days denied, not a good enough reason. Now, why would they deny me the ten days of leave, what are they going to do with me, you know? If I didn't get it, they'd have to pay it to me when I got discharged, and it's funny because the commanding officer, the lieutenant, who was about to rotate back to the States, said well, what you should have done is said you're going to get married, because he was going to get married. I said, to whom? To whom am I going to get married, because I don't know anybody. And he said, who cares, just say, you know, and I said what if I show up in Camp Pendleton still a bachelor? He said, well just say it didn't work out. So that was a little lesson, you know, in, you know, how this sort of situation fosters dishonesty, you know.

DR: So you get out to Camp Pendleton, so did you spend (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Well, a couple things happen while I'm on leave.

DR: On the way to the (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Yeah. I spent, you know, at first I was really sort of in a high, you know, being back home, you know, wandering around in a kind of daze. But then, you know, it sort of hit me, you know, okay, I've got still time in the service, people are just sort of going about their daily business, I mean what upset me was the sense of normality, you know. I met a couple of my friends, Will Vachon, the guy who was in dental school, Dave Wright who was by now engaged and working for a bank and buying a boat and that sort of thing. And, you know, I, it's, my sense was, I was really out of it, you know? Life was, you know, I was still stuck in the service and they were going on with their lives. The big thing that happened to me on leave was that I met Joline, and it was funny, the way I met her was that I went to a, it was funny, we had a guy from Lewiston in my battalion, enlisted guy, and we were talking about places to go for entertainment, and he says, well you ought to check out the Heathwood, which is basically a bar, the watering hole of Lisbon Falls. And I'd heard of it before, and so one night, Thursday night, I decided to go there, okay? And I wasn't really expecting much, but anyway, this young woman was sitting there and talking with some friends, you know, she had a mini skirt on, looked really nice, looked really lively and intelligent. So I went up and asked her to dance, and she said, who me?

DR: Her first words to you, right?

CB: Yeah, her first words, who me, you want to dance with me? So I danced with her and, you know, I got to know her and her name was Joline Landry, she was from Lewiston, French, and you know, I asked her out on a date and almost blew it because I took her down to Portland, we went to the, what was then the Eastland Hotel to, they had a restaurant up topside, and then I, we're going to drive back to Brunswick and it was a beautiful moonlit night and Joline said, you know, there's a beautiful moon out there and I said, well, I'm not much of a moon man myself. And she said later on, you know, I almost said take me home, I don't want to go out with you, you turkey. So anyway, we, you know, I, we dated, you know, for the next, oh, couple weeks. And she was moving down to New Jersey to take a teaching job, she had graduated from, well

it's now the University of Southern Maine, it used to be Gorham State Teachers College, and she was going to be an elementary school teacher. And, you know, I fell in love, you know, I really liked her. And she went down to New Jersey and I finally got my car, Datsun, sport car, I had to have sport car, and she -

DR: All right, convertible.

CB: Yeah, oh, it was a convertible and all that stuff. So I drove down to New Jersey and saw her, Joline there, and oh, it was depressing afterwards. I thought it would be a great trip traveling across country going to California, but leaving New Jersey I felt really down because I didn't know whether I'd see her or not, you know. Our relationship wasn't that solid, and I thought oh my God, I'm going to be gone for over a year, how am I going to see her, maybe I'll see her in vacation. So, you know, I drove across the country and got to Camp Pendleton. And it turned out that I was able to wangle it, I did something illegal here, and I hope I don't get arrested for saying this, but what I would do is, I would fly, you know, you're not supposed to leave, go more than three hundred miles without official leave. But what I would do is I'd take Friday off and fly to Philadelphia and see Joline in New Jersey, you know, and that's when our relationship sort of blossomed. And we got engaged in, oh, I forget when, early 1970.

DR: So you're still in the Marine Corps?

CB: Yeah, I'm still in the Marine Corps. And, of course I saw her at Christmas time and so forth. One big mistake we made was that she had a vacation in April and her thought was that she would come out to California because she'd never been out in California, but we decided it was too expensive so I went east, you know. But it turned out that near the end of April, Nixon was starting to pull troops out of Vietnam and I, you know, the word came down, anybody who has less than six months of active duty can apply for an early out. So within five minutes I think I had my application in for an early out. So I was discharged, I think my official discharge date was May 4th, 1970.

DR: Wow, that's Kent State.

CB: Kent State day. But I actually left Camp Pendleton earlier because I had leave on the books.

DR: Did that mean that you didn't have any more reserves obligation?

CB: Well, the way it worked in the Marine Corps for, in my instance, is that yes, you have a reserve obligation but it's inactive reserve. In other words, your name is on a list, if the country goes to war you could be called up, but there's no meetings or any of that stuff. So essentially by the end of April I was out of the Marine Corps and packed up my trash and headed east, you know, in my car.

DR: Never to return.

CB: Never to return. Well, I went to New Jersey. By the time I got to New Jersey Kent State had happened. I was pretty upset by Kent State, you know. And of course the country was in a turmoil and by then I was really starting to dislike Nixon.

DR: So you were upset at the National Guard?

CB: Yeah, what the National Guard did. I was, I was particularly upset because I felt that most people still supported Nixon, you know, and most people were antagonistic. Not the vast majority, but a lot of people were antagonistic towards the students and towards the anti war movement, you know. So again I'm feeling isolated.

DR: Did you, did people know you were an, can I say ex-Marine, or you're never supposed to say that. I suppose when you're out of the Marine Corps now and you're traveling across the country, did you have any conversations with people, did you -?

CB: Now, well when I was traveling, no, because basically I was putting a lot of mileage between myself and California, I was eager to get to New Jersey. I remember one day traveling about a thousand miles from Oklahoma to Ohio, must have been Ohio. But I mean I was just hoofing it, popping into a motel, staying there and then taking off again. So I didn't talk to too many people.

DR: So you came back east and got married?

CB: No-no, I went to New Jersey, and the idea was, Joline had this apartment, she had two roommates and, ba-, I forget what was going to happen. One of the roommates was getting married, the other one had a boyfriend, but they didn't have any plans to get married so I was going to stay in New Jersey for a while, you know, for, because she was still teaching. And I was to get a job, but I hated New Jersey and she didn't really like it either. And I tried to get this job with a construction outfit, and you just, you know, you're just sort of anonymous, you know, they didn't care whether you were a veteran, you know, just show up to work. So I said the heck with this, I'm quitting. I went to Avis Rent A Car, you know, because you have sort of reemployment rights and they sort of looked at me like, well, we got to do something with you, you know, maybe we can assign you someplace. I really didn't want to go work for them. And I didn't like New Jersey, I didn't like the people in New Jersey, and so we decided that, you know, we're going to spend the summer in Maine. So I went up early, back to Brunswick, and stayed with my parents and then, it must have been about, a few, a couple weeks, maybe three or four weeks later Joline moved up to Lewiston, stayed with her folks. And, I mean, that was an unsettled situation because, you know, I mean we were close to each other but we really were guests of our parents at, now we're adults. And Brunswick was in kind of an uproar because Bowdoin College had gone out on strike and, for the rest of the year. And what happened was my dad knew this guy who was a house painter, and I got a job with him as a house painter that summer. Didn't pay anything but it turned out he had a contract with Bowdoin College to do their painting, so I was on the campus but with basically a blue collar crowd that was not too happy with the, you know, the students, you know, they thought the students were, you know, acting immature. It turned out that the leader of the Bowdoin strike was a Vietnam veteran, a guy named Brownie Carson, he's now the head of the Maine Natural Resources Council. But he had been, he dropped out of Bowdoin, joined the Marines, gotten badly wounded over there, and then came back to Bowdoin, and in fact he was the leader of the strike. One of my regrets is, I met him once but I never followed up. I think what I should have done was followed up and gotten to meet him and say, hey look, we're Vietnam veterans, you know, let's take a stand against the war, you know. But I didn't. So I worked -

DR: But you joined the VVAW didn't you?

CB: That was later, that came later. I didn't think of the concept of a Vietnam veterans against the war group. I did start to say, I never hid the fact that I was a Vietnam veteran, you know, but what I would say is I'm against the war, and I've been over there, that sort of thing. I had a kind

of unsettling incident that occurred that I want to talk about for the record. One of our jobs was to go, the college owned a house on Main Street that had been occupied by a professor of English, Herbert Coursen, C-O-U-R-S-E-N. Coursen had been a vociferous opponent of the war in Vietnam, he was constantly writing letters to the paper and so forth, getting in fights with local right wingers and that sort of thing. And apparently he'd gotten a divorce and he was vacating this house, so our job was to go into this house and paint it up and get it ready for the new occupants. Well apparently he had not finished moving his belongings so there was some furniture of his that we moved up to the attic. He also had these books on this shelf that we had to remove in order to paint the shelves. Well we did that, we piled them up in the middle of the floor and put a tarp over them. Well he saw this and just went ballistic, and he wrote this rather nasty, very condescending letter to the business manager of the college who promptly forwarded it to the crew chief, and the crew chief read it with great delight to us, you know, and, you know, it was a very snobbish kind of letter. And of course these blue collar guys immediately made the connection between this guy as a, you know, he's the guy who's always writing letters about the war, with this social snobbery. And I really felt like cringing, you know. And later on in life when I ruminate about the things I should have done, I really wish I had confronted him and said, you know, you really helped Richard Nixon by behaving the way you did. But anyway.

DR: Of course he was a WWII vet, too.

CB: Or Korean war (*unintelligible phrase*)

DR: Korean war vet, a pilot or something.

CB: Yeah, but you know, I don't care, I mean that's -

DR: That doesn't excuse him, but yeah.

CB: You know, and he did show up once and I must say his manner was very supercilious, I didn't really care for the guy. So, you know, that was, that, that - . . .

End of Side B, Tape Two
Side A, Tape Three

CB: Well, in any event, as I said, I never felt connected with the anti war movement. I just never felt that, I never felt at home.

DR: So you were, okay, so this painting job was just a temporary thing.

CB: Yeah, it was just a temporary job because what had happened was that that winter I had applied to graduate schools.

DR: Where did you apply?

CB: Well, I applied to Ohio State, Illinois, University of Wisconsin, some of the big ones. I didn't really have very good grades in college and so I was accepted at Ohio State and Illinois and I decided to go to University of Illinois graduate school.

DR: In Chicago?

CB: No, it was in Champaign-Urbana. And partly because I really didn't know what else to do I, had taken the graduate record exams in American history and done well, and I loved history, I vaguely thought, well basically I wanted to get as far away from the military as possible and I thought well a college campus is the place to be, you know. And I guess vaguely, coming from the background I did, I thought I should pursue an academic type career, not really thinking too much of what that would entail but that's how I thought about it.

DR: So you were going to go after your doctorate, is that (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Well actually I signed up for, just for a master's program not really thinking beyond that. And so -

DR: Did Joline go with you, (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: No, no-no, we were still engaged but we really were undecided about getting married, you know. I guess I was having second thoughts about, you know, whether I should get married. So the way we worked it was is that I was going to go out to graduate school, then we'd decide what would happen then. So I traveled alone in early September out to Illinois and enrolled in the

graduate school for a master's program. And we decided that fall to get married, so we got married in January, the end of January of 1971 between my first and second semesters. And then she, she had gotten this job teaching at the junior high school in Lewiston, hated it, she was, she felt, you know, that she'd been given the worst students, no support and that sort of thing so she didn't have any qualms about quitting halfway through the year to get married. So I got an apartment and I finished up a master's degree. I did very well in graduate school and I did even better after I got married. I mean, getting married was a good thing for me. And so I decided to go on for a Ph.D. program. I did get a teaching assistantship at the University of Illinois, and I finally got out of the University of Illinois, well actually, I got my Ph.D. in January of 1976 but effectively I finished in 1975, I mean 1976, but I effectively finished in 1975. During this period, this was really, in a way I started to become intensely interested in Vietnam almost to the point of obsession because, you know, Nixon was president -

DR: Now wait, when you say, okay, when was this period of time, now when are you talking about?

CB: This would be from late 1970 on, okay? Nixon was president, it was clear what his policy was going to be which was to intensify the bombing, a gradual withdrawal of troops in Vietnam, but with Vietnamization. And I was becoming more and more radical in my political outlook at this time and really came to oppose what Nixon was doing. I thought we should pull out of there immediately, that what Nixon was doing was just extending the bloodletting.

DR: Were you in contact at all now with the VVAW in Chicago?

CB: No, the only, what I heard about, well here's the thing about the VVAW, and I wasn't in, really in con-, I was never an active member. I guess I was a member to the extent that I may have paid dues once and that was about it. I had heard about VVAW, I'd heard about, they had conducted a march somewhere in Pennsylvania or New Jersey, I think from Valley Forge into Philadelphia someplace, and it was reported in the *New York Times* and I happened to see the article. Then *Playboy* magazine had a free ad for the VVAW, I saw that. So I knew VVAW existed, but I just didn't have any sense, how do you make contact with them. Now I would know how to do it, but at that time I felt really isolated, you know. And I really didn't see what my part in it would be. I sometimes think that going to graduate school was a mistake, I mean if I had my druthers I think I might have stayed home, stayed in Maine, you know, where I had

some roots, and tried to be more active in VVAW. But I really didn't have that sense of how a anti war veteran would fit into the larger movement. But in any event, I'd heard about it but I didn't think much about it. I mean, I was thinking about getting married and all that stuff, and graduate school. And in the spring of 1970, right after we got married, I had heard the VVAW was planning a march on Washington in April, but, and I thought about going, but the logistics seemed daunting. I could have stayed with my aunt in Bethesda and she would have put me up, but, you know, I felt, well, no, I'm involved in graduate studies, I had to give a report. And I could have changed it, the professor would have been sympathetic, but I just never got the initiative to do it. And to this day, you know, when you get to be our age you start thinking about all the things you should have done and didn't, you know, and one of my big regrets is not going to Operation Dewey Canyon Three because I saw it on television, I was very impressed with it, and it was really then that Vietnam veterans become sort of the poster boys of the anti war movement. And, and so I did become a member of the VVAW. A couple times there were, there were a couple of meetings that they had, but after Dewey Canyon Three I think there was a sense of floundering, well what do we do now, you know? Nixon seemed to be getting the upper hand, especially in 1972, you know, with his trips to China and the Soviet Union. You know, what more can be said about the war in Vietnam? I remember that we had a meeting in Champaign-Urbana, there was a guy from Chicago came down and wanted to organize something, but I don't know, it just, it never got off the ground. And there were a couple guys in the unit who, or this unit, I mean this group, who seemed to be a little crazy. So nothing came of it.

DR: What were your feelings when the war officially ended, do you remember how you -?

CB: What do you mean, >73 or >75?

DR: Well actually I was thinking of >75, but, say, >73?

CB: Well, in >73 I guess I was relieved, you know, I didn't know how long it would last. I sort of suspected that Nixon got his way, you know, and I didn't like that. I had supported George McGovern in 1972, you know, because he was the anti war candidate. I suppose I ought to be careful saying this, now that I'm director of the Muskie Archives, but, you know, I was pretty sore at Muskie, you know. He'd been my senator, and of course I mentioned that my mother had written to him right after I went into the Marine Corps saying she objected to the

war. And Muskie wrote her back a letter saying, well, I believe Lyndon Johnson is striving for an honorable peace, you should be proud of your son and so forth. And of course my mother was miffed at that, she saw it as a kind of brush off. And I guess I was pretty angry at Muskie and felt that he really had dropped the ball on this issue because he had supported Johnson all the time Johnson was in office, and didn't really turn against the war until Nixon came in, you know, so he was a johnny-come-lately. And so I supported, for example, in the Illinois primary which was a match up between Muskie and McGovern, I voted for McGovern.

DR: Did you work for him at all?

CB: McGovern, well, I was delighted McGovern got the nomination but it was clear that, I was a little naive but it was clear McGovern's candidacy was going nowhere, you know, the conservatives in the Democratic party, including organized labor, were dead set against him. I worked for McG-, and of course there was the Eagleton fiasco, I mean McGovern was just not getting any traction against Nixon. I worked for McGovern in the sense that I went around and, you know, handed out fliers and so forth. By then, you know, I looked like a graduate student with long hair and that sort of thing. But there wasn't that much activity in behalf of McGovern, you know, in Champaign-Urbana.

DR: So what were your feelings when the war ended?

CB: Well, now, as I say, like >73, you know, I was relieved that there was a peace settlement. I was a little nauseated, you know, Nixon seemed to be getting a ride with the POWs and so forth, but then Watergate came, you know, or rather Watergate of course started in June of >72 and I was appalled that nothing seemed to be done about it. But when the Watergate case started to unravel I thought this is great, now Nixon's going to get caught up, you know. And, you know, when Nixon was forced out of office I was delighted. When the war in Vietnam ended, I guess I had to say that I had a sense of relief, that was in April of >75, I guess I could say with some caution that by that time if I were a Vietnamese I'd probably be a Viet Cong, too, you know. That we were fighting on the wrong side. And I remember there was a rally on the quad of the University of Illinois with a bunch of, I mean there weren't that many people there, who were cheering the end of the war. There was one young student with a big American flag, you know, lamenting the outcome. But for me it was just a big sense of relief, you know. But, I still feel that the war really hasn't been truly resolved as a episode in our culture, you know, there's

still a lot of people who say, you know, we could have won it, the war was fought wrong, you know, it was a good cause that failed. And it wasn't a good cause, I don't think.

DR: How did Joline feel about it at this time, (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Well that's, we had, well, she didn't really have too much, she didn't think that much about the war. She grew up in very different circumstances than I did, she grew up in a blue collar French Canadian family in Lewiston. Her father was a head of the meat department of a grocery store and her mother was a librarian. Neither one, her father was a WWII vet, staunch hawk, yeah, we ought to be there, and peace demonstrators are, you know, a bunch of potential traitors and scum, you know. And, you know, so when she brought me home, now, this got to be something of a point of antagonism because when I first met her father, well I met him when I first met her but I didn't really get to talk to him until Christmas of 1969. We got into an argument about the Vietnam war, and, I mean I got a little miffed that he, you know, didn't take into account that I was a Vietnam veteran, and we never resolved it. We'd get in these bitter arguments, I mean I remember once her mother got, who doesn't like these kinds of disputes, really got very upset. And Joline I remember at first said, well, you know, when I expressed my anti war opinion, said well don't mention that to my dad, you know, and I got mad at that. What do you mean I can't mention this to your dad, I'm a Vietnam veteran. Well, I think what she meant was, this is just, you know, you're not going to change -

DR: Not going to go anywhere, right.

CB: You're not going to go anywhere. She came around to my point of view. We did go, when I was in Champaign-Urbana, we did participate in demonstrations, you know, marches, you know. She had to be a little more cautious because she was teaching school there, she got a job with a Catholic school. It's interesting, some of the nuns would agree with her politically but the civilian teachers, you know, were very conservative. So she had to be a little cautious, but you know, she was pretty much along my lines. I mean, she would ask me what's going on in Vietnam, that sort of thing.

DR: Now, in retrospect, many, many, many, many, many years later, what's your feeling about your service and about being a Vietnam veteran?

CB: Well, I don't regret it.

DR: Let me ask you this, okay, but let me just ask you in particular, how does Veteran's Day hit you, or how does Memorial Day hit you, is that -?

CB: Well neither one of them hit me, no, they don't have any meaning for me in that sense. I don't regret, I mean being a veteran is part of my identity, okay. And one part of me says I'm glad I was in the service. I don't think I would really feel complete if I had done what many of my friends did which was to avoid service. On the other hand, I was part, not a big part, I didn't kill anybody, I didn't shoot at anybody, but, you know, I was part of an enterprise that I think was criminal in nature. So I have contradictory feelings. My veteran status I try in a sense to use in a positive way, sometimes to kind of keep yahoos shut up. I guess in a sense I look upon it in a positive way. I've never hidden the fact that I'm a veteran, I've, in a sense I've been very fortunate because, you know, after I got out of graduate school I couldn't find a teaching job, I went to work at the National Archives and after I did my training I worked on the Nixon White House tape processing staff, and it was there that my interest in Vietnam was rekindled because I heard hundreds of hours of conversations about Vietnam. Now, I couldn't do much with it but I did get some real insight into Vietnam policy making right in the cockpit of the American presidency during the Nixon period. And later on after I came to Bates in 1988 I had the opportunity to teach at Bates, and also at the University of Southern Maine and at Lewiston-Auburn College, courses on the war. And that has been very cathartic for me, to be able to talk it in a way that, to put it into historical perspective. And for me, history for me is like poetry for you, it's a way of sort of organizing things, you know, and coming to terms with it. So I think if I didn't have this opportunity I think I'd be very, very frustrated and not have any outlet, any constructive outlet for this experience and my thoughts on Vietnam.

DR: So do you think you'll be talking about the war for another twenty years, thirty years, whatever (*unintelligible phrase*)?

CB: Well, let's put it this way, I enjoy teaching it, you know, I enjoy grappling with the historical questions and, about Vietnam. If interest in, you know, I'll do it as long as there's interest. If interest wanes, well, you know, I can go on to other things.

DR: So you think you've pretty well, in your own personal mind, sort of wrapped it up, I mean

you don't -?

CB: Yeah, I think so, I think so.

DR: It's a part of who you are but it's not a dominating part.

CB: Well, it's a dominating part but I don't think it's something that, I mean, you know, I was lucky, I mean I didn't see lots of people get killed, I didn't suffer post traumatic stress disorder. There was certainly a lot of stress, but I never suffered at a psych-, I'm not a psyche casualty, and so I was lucky. And so I was lucky, I didn't have, I didn't kill anybody, I didn't, you know, I saw ugly things but, you know, I was fortunate in that respect. But Vietnam was important, I mean in terms of my, the way I look at American society, the way I look at my own life, it's, it's, it's the seminal event in my life.

DR: Do you ever, having three sons, do you think there's ever a possibility that you would encourage any of them to join the military?

CB: No, no. I mean, I have mixed feelings about that. I think one of the biggest, I think one of the most corrupting elements in American, recent American history, was the way the draft operated. I mean, to give student deferments while, which meant that the more fortunate in our society get on the fast track and are protected from the vicissitudes of the war and the responsibilities of citizenship while the less fortunate have to bear the burden of the fight, that was I think a, an enormously corrupting factor in our generation. I think it has fractured out generation. And I think it was done for political purposes, I mean it's clear Lyndon Johnson did not want to end student deferments because this would stir up a hornet's nest. I think conversely the anti war movement should have, of course it never would have, called for an end to student deferments.

DR: So you're suggesting that your sons should perhaps commit themselves to some kind of national service?

CB: Well, no, no, because, I mean, no, I would not want my kids to go into the military. If they were determined to, I mean I wouldn't stop them. But no, I wouldn't want them to go into the military. For one thing, I mean I just don't trust, I don't, I'm not a pacifist, I think there are

times when, you know, military action is necessary. But, you know, when you go into the military, you know, you're really a pawn of somebody else, you have no control over your existence and who knows what you, and it's not only the physical danger, who knows for what purposes you'll be put to use. I mean, you could be supporting something that's morally or politically repugnant.

DR: Forced to do.

CB: Yeah. When my kids say, I mean now my oldest doesn't say this because he's pretty conservative, but I know my second son who's now a senior at the University of Vermont says, if there's a draft I'm heading for Canada. My youngest, well he's, I'm not quite, I can't remember what he says, but you know. But in a way I think it's a moot topic, it's a moot point.

DR: So, final words.

CB: Oh boy, I'm not sure how to sum it all up. You know, I'm sure once the tape ends I'm going to think of all kinds of things I could have said, but. I don't know whether my experience is characteristic of Vietnam veterans or not. I certainly was no hero. I did everything I could within ethical and legal limits, you know, to save myself without, you know, dishonoring myself. And I guess that's the way I'd sum it up. I was just lucky. I mean, one thing, I emphasize this because, you know, I think most, certainly most Americans, don't see luck as a factor. But I've concluded in my middle age now that luck is a factor, whether you get rich or whether you have misfortunes, you know, it's just dumb luck. And I was very, very lucky to be, to avoid the wrong places at the wrong time.

DR: So that concludes our interview?

CB: I think it does, Doug, yeah, I think it does. It's, what time is it.

DR: It's eleven forty five.

CB: Oh, wow, I've got to get home. Let's turn this off.

DR: Thank you Chris.

CB: Okay, thank you, Doug.

End of Interview

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Gilger, William Grant iii, 2LT

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BIRTH - 1945

Ohio

1 Source · 1 link

1955 - 1975 Vietnam War - Age: 22 years

YEARS SERVED
0

RANK
Second Lieutenant

SPECIALTY
Field Artillery Unit Commander (ARMY)

BATTALION
2nd Bn

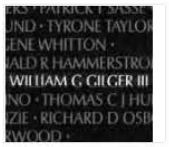
BRANCH
Army

REGIMENT
19th Artillery

MAJOR COMMAND
1st Cav Div

SERVICE START DATE
3 Nov 1967

COMPANY



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GRADE
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CONFLICT PERIOD
Vietnam War

SERVED FOR
United States of America

CASUALTY - 7 Dec 1967 - Age: 22 years

Multiple Fragmentation Wounds

Recovered

Hostile, Died

ENLISTMENT
Reserve

1955 - 1975 Vietnam War

CONFLICT PERIOD
Vietnam War

BRANCH
Army

RANK
Second Lieutenant

SERVICE DATES
1966 - 1967

WALL COORDINATES
31E 057

MOS
1193-Field Artillery Unit Commander

MOS GROUP
FA-Field Artillery (Officer)

SERVED-FOR
United States of America

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CASUALTY - 7 Dec 1967 - Age: 22 years

Binh Dinh

KIA-Killed in Action

Multiple Fragmentation Wounds

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AWARD - 1968

Purple Heart

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AWARD - 1968

National Defense Service Medal (2001-Pre...

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AWARD - 1968

Vietnam Service Medal

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AWARD - 1968

Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation

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AWARD - 1968

Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal

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DEATH - 7 Dec 1967 - Age: 22 years

22

BURIAL

Woodlawn Cemetery

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OTHER FACTS

RACE OR ETHNICITY
Caucasian

RELIGION
Episcopal (Anglican)

GENDER
Male

MEMORIAL WALL LOCATION: PANEL
31E

MEMORIAL WALL LOCATION: LINE
57

HOMETOWN
Cleveland, OH

FULL NAME
William Grant Gilger, III

MARRIAGE
Single

GENDER
Male

1 Source · 1 link

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BIRTH - 1948

Maine

1 Source · 1 link

1955 - 1975 Vietnam War - Age: 19 years

SERVICE START DATE
28 Jan 1967

SPECIALTY
Light Weapons Infantry (ARMY)

CONFLICT PERIOD
Vietnam War

BATTALION
2nd Bn

RANK
Private First Class

YEARS SERVED
1

GRADE
E3

COMPANY
C Co

REGIMENT



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503rd Infantry

MAJOR COMMAND
173rd Abn Bde

BRANCH
Army

SERVED FOR
United States of America

CASUALTY - 3 Mar 1967 - Age: 19 years

Hostile, Died

east of Katum

Recovered

Gun, Small Arms Fire

ENLISTMENT

Regular

1955 - 1975 Vietnam War - Age: 19 years

CONFLICT PERIOD
Vietnam War

BRANCH
Army

RANK
Private First Class

SERVICE DATES
1966 - 1967

WALL COORDINATES
16E 010

STATUS
USA Veteran

MOS
11B20-Infantryman

MOS GROUP
IN-Infantry (Enlisted)

SERVED-FOR
United States of America

1 Source · 1 link

AWARD - 1966 - Age: 18 years

National Defense Service Medal (2001-Pre...

1 Source · 1 link

AWARD - 1967 - Age: 19 years

Bronze Star

1 Source · 1 link

AWARD - 1967 - Age: 19 years

Purple Heart

1 Source · 1 link

AWARD - 1967 - Age: 19 years

Meritorious Unit Commendation

1 Source · 1 link

AWARD - 1967 - Age: 19 years

Vietnam Service Medal

1 Source · 1 link

AWARD - 1967 - Age: 19 years

Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation

1 Source · 1 link

AWARD - 1967 - Age: 19 years

Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal

1 Source · 1 link

CASUALTY - 3 Mar 1967 - Age: 19 years

Tay Ninh

KIA-Killed in Action

Gun, Small Arms Fire

1 Source · 1 link

DEATH - 3 Mar 1967 - Age: 19 years

18

OTHER FACTS

MEMORIAL WALL LOCATION: PANEL
16E

MEMORIAL WALL LOCATION: LINE
10

GENDER
Male

RELIGION
Roman Catholic

RACE OR ETHNICITY
Caucasian

HOMETOWN
Brunswick, ME

FULL NAME
Earl Stanley Garrison

MARRIAGE
Single

GENDER
Male

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+ ADD A FACT

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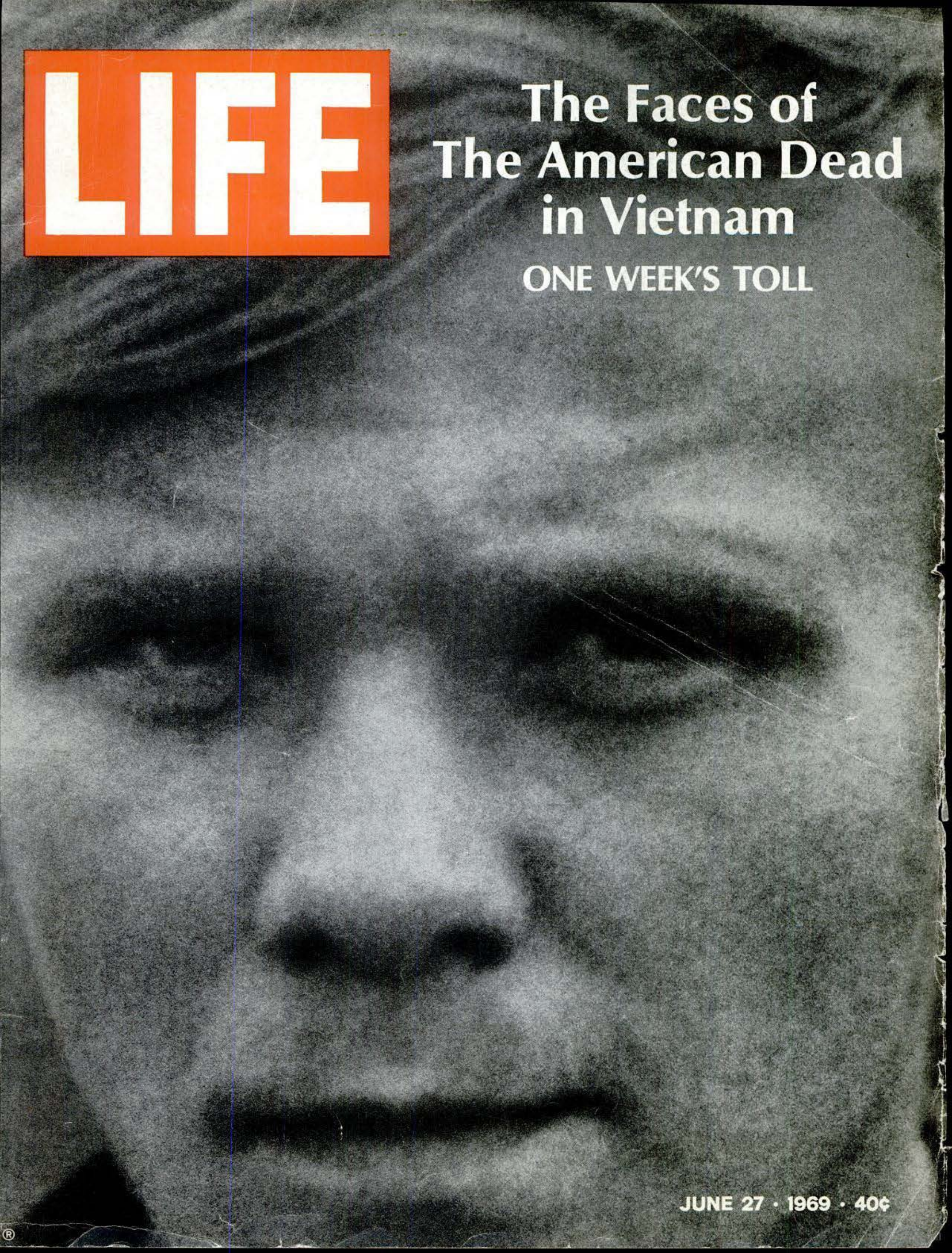
LIFE

The Faces of The American Dead in Vietnam

ONE WEEK'S TOLL



JUNE 27 · 1969 · 40¢

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June 27, 1969 Volume 66, Number 25

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EDITORS' NOTE

An incredible will of creativity

LIFE began in 1936 with four staff photographers: one of them, Margaret Bourke-White, is officially retiring this week. Carl Mydans, now stationed in Tokyo, joined the photographic staff that same year. He cabled his reaction to the news.

"My first view of Margaret Bourke-White was of two shapely legs, two petite feet shod in luxuriant alligator shoes and the rest of her hunched under a great black cloth which covered her head and part of her 4x5 Linhof. 'Put it on the table,' she said. And an arm appeared and pointed. She came out from under the cloth and reached for her pocketbook. Then she saw me and instantly laughing away her mistake exclaimed, 'I thought you were the sandwich man. Come quick and look. My caterpillar eggs are turning into caterpillars. Oh! I'm so glad you've come at this very moment. It's so exciting, isn't it?'

BOURKE-WHITE

"Later, after I left, still swept up by her excitement and enthusiasm, I realized that she did not know who I was. And still later, after we became friends, and these more than 30 years since, I have understood how significant that first meeting was: how profoundly it revealed the key to Margaret Bourke-White's greatness as a photographer and as a person. It did not matter that day who I was. What mattered was the opportunity for her to share with me—with anyone, with everyone—the excitement she sees and feels in the world around her.

"Margaret Bourke-White's creative years opened whole new vistas to the world of photography. It was her eye which saw the excitement in industrial wheels and pipelines, in the sweep of farmlands at dusk, in the curve and flow of rivers. And she cried out when refugees limped from battle and sharecroppers stared in painful want. Her eye functioned like the focus of her lens; when she saw something she turned it up sharp in her mind and in her will, excluding everything else. She saw only that. 'If anybody gets in my way when I am making a picture,' she once told me, 'I become irrational. I'm never sure of what I am going to do, or sometimes even aware of what I do—only that I want that picture.' This incredible will of creativity has often made her the target of professionals who said she shot 'hundreds of sheets of film to get a good one.' But of course this isn't so. What has made her the target is that she is a woman shining in a man's world. And what has made Bourke-White what she is is simply that she is a great photographer: an artist, a true photo-journalist.

"Not since 1952, when the cruel attrition of Parkinson's disease finally forced Bourke-White to put up her cameras, have we had the thrill of seeing any photographs added to her great portfolios. Instead, she has turned herself to writing. Yet in her writings her goal is the same as it was when she was using her cameras: to share with others the excitement and enthusiasm she still feels and sees about her.

"Margaret Bourke-White has set a standard and established a tradition in the art of photography. Not long ago she said, 'We grew up on this magazine. It has been our life. In fact it's been much more than that. It has been a kind of family.' And so retirement for her is a mere formality. One can never really retire from a family."

Ralph Graves

RALPH GRAVES
Managing Editor

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LIFE Vol. 66, No. 25
June 27, 1969

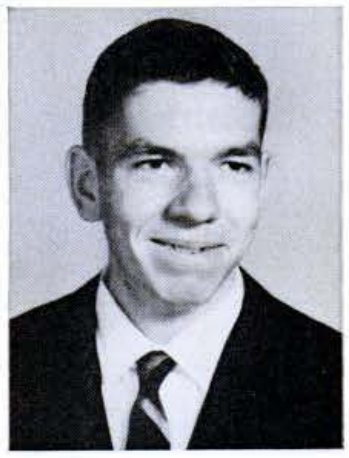
VIETNAM
ONE WEEK'S DEAD

The faces shown on the next pages are the faces of American men killed—in the words of the official announcement of their deaths—"in connection with the conflict in Vietnam." The names, 242 of them, were released by the Pentagon during the week of May 28 through June 3, a span of no special significance except that it includes Memorial Day. The numbers of the dead are average for any seven-day period during this stage of the war.

It is not the intention of this article to speak for the dead. We cannot tell with any precision what they thought of the political currents which drew them across the world. From the letters of some, it is possible to tell they felt strongly that they should be in Vietnam, that they had great sympathy for the Vietnamese people and were appalled at their enormous suffering. Some had voluntarily extended their tours of combat duty; some were desperate to come home. Their families provided most of these photographs, and many expressed their own feelings that their sons and husbands died in a necessary cause. Yet in a time when the numbers of Americans killed in this war—36,000—though far less than the Vietnamese losses, have exceeded the dead in the Korean War, when the nation continues week after week to be numbed by a three-digit statistic which is translated to direct anguish in hundreds of homes all over the country, we must pause to look into the faces. More than we must know *how many,* we must know *who.* The faces of one week's dead, unknown but to families and friends, are suddenly recognized by all in this gallery of young American eyes.

May 28 - June 3, 1969

Michael C. Volheim, 20
Army, SP4
Hayward, Calif.



Roy E. Clark, 23
Army, Pfc.
Culloden, W. Va.

Cleveland Browning, 22
Army, Pfc.
Miami, Fla.

Matthew T. Lozano Jr., 21
Army, Pfc.
San Antonio, Texas

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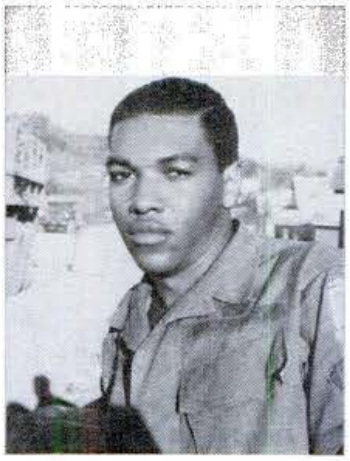
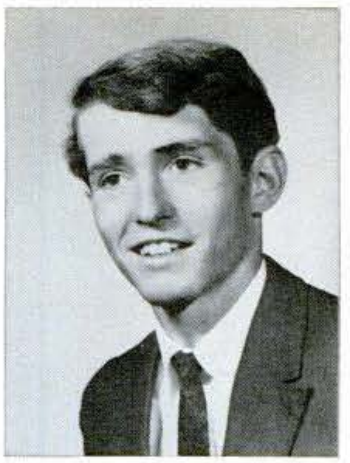
Army, WO1
Poquonock, Conn.



William L. Alexander, 19
Army, SP4
Flint, Mich.

Robert J. Rosenow, 20
Army, Pfc.
La Farge, Wis.



Craig E. Yates, 18
Army, Pfc.
Sparta, Mich.

John C. Pape, 25
Army, Capt.
Amityville, N.Y.

James P. Hickey, 19
Marines, Pfc.
West Quincy, Mass.

Mario Lamelza, 21
Army, Pfc.
Philadelphia, Pa.

Valentine Dwornik, 20
Army, SP4
Detroit, Mich.

David Tessmer, 20
Army, Pfc.
Wausau, Wis.

Gary A. Wallace, 19
Army, Pfc.
Louisville, Ky.

Charles C. Fleek, 21
Army, Sgt.
Petersburg, Ky.

James Patrick Francis, 22
Army, S/Sgt.
Napa, Calif.

Joe E. Bragg, 20
Army, SP4
Versailles, Ky.

William C. Gearing Jr., 20
Army, SP5
Rochester, N.Y.

Gary D. Carter, 19
Marines, Cpl.
Tyler, Texas

Winston O. Smith, 24
Army, Pfc.
Madisonville, Tenn.

Robert B. Read, 24
Army, Pfc.
Hamden, Conn.

Mark J. Haverland Jr., 21
Army, Sgt.
Poca, W. Va.

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Norfolk, Va.

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Queens, N.Y.

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So. Portland, Maine

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Army, SP4
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Chicago, Ill.

Michael D. Melton, 20
Army, SP4
Little Rock, Ark.

Melvin Green Jr., 31
Army, S/Sgt.
Manhattan, Kan.

Gary C. Fassel, 20
Army, Pfc.
Buffalo, N.Y.

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La Crosse, Wis.

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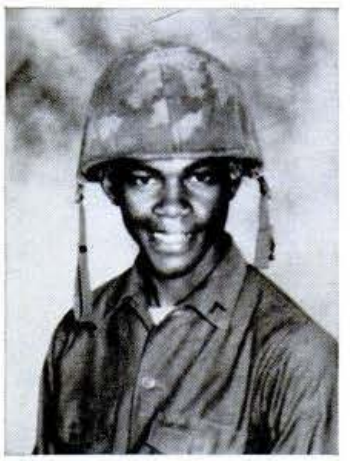
Army, Sgt.
Poplar, Wis.



Joseph L. Rhodes, 22
Marines, L. Cpl.
Memphis, Tenn.

William L. Anderson, 18
Army, Sgt.
Templeton, Pa.

David L. Mills, 22
Army, SP4
Decatur, Ill.

Ramon L. Vazquez Nieves, 21
Army, Pfc.
Puerto Nuevo, P.R.

Carl R. Martin, 26
Army, SP5
Rapid City, S. Dak.

Daniel L. Pucci, 22
Marines, Cpl.
Berea, Ohio

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Army, S/Sgt.
Rockdale, Texas

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Westbury, N.Y.

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Carnegie, Pa.

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King of Prussia, Pa.

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Nickerson, Neb.

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Gloversville, N.Y.

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Army, SP4
Ramona, Calif.

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Army, SP4
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Bedford, Pa.

Byrle B. Bailey, 19
Marines, Pfc.
Omaha, Neb.

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Army, Pfc.
Richmond, Va.

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Army, Lt. Col.
Morganton, N.C.

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Army, Sgt.
Great Falls, Mont.

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Army, Pfc.
Cochran, Ga.

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Milwaukee, Wis.

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Chillicothe, Ohio

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Middlesex, N.J.

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Dallas, Texas

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Army, Pfc.
Hondo, Texas

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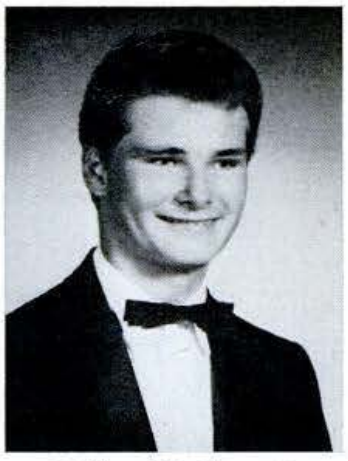

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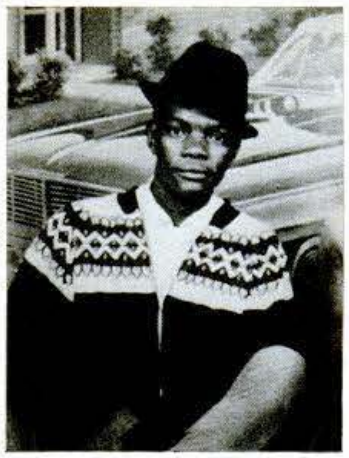

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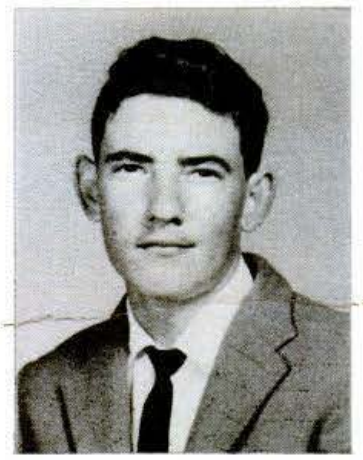

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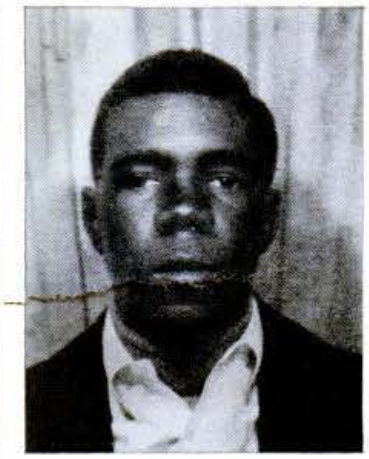

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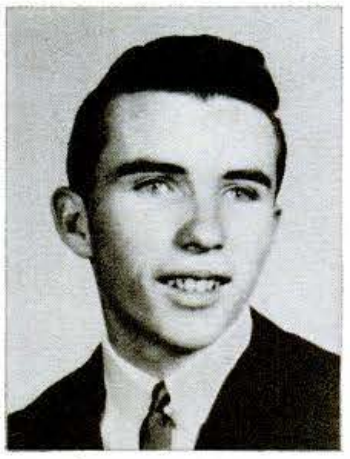

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Clark, N.J.

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Denver, Colo.

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Morgantown, W. Va.

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Columbiaville, Mich.

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Santa Fe, N. Mex.

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Parksville, Ky.

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Middletown, N.Y.

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Army, SP4
Hobart, Ind.

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Army, S/Sgt.
Lawton, Okla.

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Army, Pfc.
Meridian, Miss.

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Army, Pfc.
Castleberry, Ala.

William H. Darden, 20
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Jan Rauschkolb, 22
Marines, Cpl.
Denver, Colo.

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Army, SP4
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Marines, 1st Lt.
South Bend, Ind.

William J. Peterson, 23
Army, 2nd Lt.
Ephrata, Wash.

Wayne E. Garven, 21
Army, Pfc.
Mt. Vernon, Ohio

William H. Beske Jr., 21
Army, Pfc.
Lathrup Village, Mich.

Ralph H. Crowley, 20
Army, Sgt.
Remus, Mich.

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Marines, Pfc.
Littleton, N.H.

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Hilo, Hawaii

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Mansfield, La.

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West Covina, Calif.

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Annandale, Va.

Edward F. Clennon, 23
Army, Pfc.
Joliet, Ill.

Billy L. Thomas, 19
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Richard L. Brumfield, 21
Army, Sgt.
Denham Springs, La.

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Army, SP4
Indianapolis, Ind.

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Army, Pfc.
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Gallup, N. Mex.

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Marines, L. Cpl.
Bedford, Texas

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Army, Sgt.
Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich.

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Army, SP4
Wingate, Texas

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Army, Pfc.
Winchester, Ky.

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Army, SP4
Seattle, Wash.

James F. Hilliard, 23
Army, Sgt.
Kalamazoo, Mich.

Michael E. Gerber, 20
Army, SP4
Conway Springs, Kan.

Donald W. Ide, 25
Army, 1st Lt.
Beirut, Lebanon

Gary M. Paul, 19
Marines, L. Cpl.
Norway, Mich.

Gary W. Leighton, 19
Marines, Pfc.
Washington, Pa.

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Derrill L. Price Jr., 20
Army, SP4
El Dorado Springs, Mo.

During the week of May 28–June 3 these men were also reported killed in action.

Earl A. Godman, 21
Army, Sgt.
Baltimore, Md.

John P. Karr, 21
Army, 1st Lt.
Clearwater, Fla.

Gary K. Smith, 20
Army, Pvt.
Detroit, Mich.

James S. Luckett II, 28
Army, 1st Lt.
Columbus, Ohio

Claude R. Van Andel, 19
Army, Sgt.
Norfolk, Neb.

Charles E. McMillion, 20
Army, Pfc.
Jefferson, Ohio

Albert C. Walls Jr., 22
Army, Pfc.
Elmsford, N.Y.

Richard L. Cox, 21
Navy, HM3
Shakopee, Minn.

Valarian L. Finley, 21
Marines, L. Cpl.
Mandaree, N. Dak.

Peter R. Adams, 19
Marines, L. Cpl.
Dorchester, Mass.

Kenneth W. Smith, 20
Army, SP4
Detroit, Mich.

David T. Chapman Jr., 20
Army, SP4
Dumas, Miss.

Charles R. Jones, 29
Army, SP4
Calhoun City, Miss.

James E. Workman, 22
Army, Pfc.
Harts, W. Va.

Wesley G. Ice, 21
Army, Pfc.
Bridgeport, W. Va.

Richard N. White, 21
Army, Pfc.
Golden Valley, Minn.

James P. Duffy Jr., 20
Army, Sgt.
Brunswick, Ohio

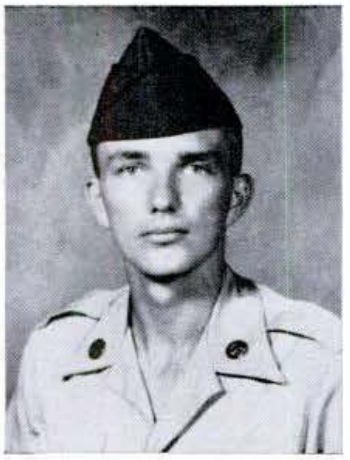
Farrell J. Vice, 21
Army, SP4
Abbeville, La.

Scott E. Cochran, 18
Army, Pfc.
Eugene, Ore.

Philip L. Gamble Jr., 26
Army, 2nd Lt.
Newport, R.I.

James W. Clark, 21
Army, 1st Lt.
Reno, Nev.

Terry V. Miller, 23
Army, Pfc.
Ottumwa, Iowa



Herman L. Judy Jr., 23
Army, Pfc.
Alexandria, Va.

James Hebert III, 20
Marines, Pfc.
New Orleans, La.

Willie L. Kirkland, 20
Army, SP4
Avon Park, Fla.

Thomas A. Nebel, 20
Army, Pfc.
Keota, Iowa

Jim J. Walters, 20
Marines, Pfc.
Sioux City, Iowa

Dick E. Whitney, 22
Army, SP4
Newberg, Ore.

Robert L. Boese, 22
Army, Pfc.
Marion, Kan.

Jack L. Johnson, 20
Marines, Pfc.
Elkhart, Ind.

John M. Stenberg, 20
Marines, Pfc.
Pasco, Wash.

Thomas J. Orr, 20
Marines, Pfc.
Garden Grove, Calif.

James B. Smith, 19
Marines, L. Cpl.
Louisville, Ky.

Robert G. Schmidt
Marines, L. Cpl.
Levittown, N.Y.

Pedro A. Rios, 40
Army, Sfc.
Mount Holly, N.J.

Gary W. Cox, 19
Army, Pfc.
East Gary, Ind.

Ronnie E. Parker, 23
Army, Pfc.
Fullerton, Calif.

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'I see death coming up the hill'

On the back of a picture he sent home shortly before his death near Saigon, Sgt. William Anderson, 18, of Templeton, Pa., jotted a wry note: "Plain of Reeds, May 12, 1969. Here's a picture of a 2-star general awarding me my Silver Star. I didn't do anything. They just had some extra ones." His family has a few other recent photographs of the boy, including one showing him this past February helping to put a beam into place on his town's new church. His was the first military funeral held there.

Such fragments on film, in letters, in clippings and in recollection comprise the legacies of virtually every man shown in these pages. To study the smallest portion of them, even without reference to their names, is to glimpse the scope of a much broader tragedy. Writing his family just before the time he was scheduled to return to the U.S., a California man said, "I could be standing on the doorstep on the 8th [of June]. . . . As you can see from my shakey printing, the strain of getting 'short' is getting to me, so I'll close now." The ironies and sad coincidences of time hang everywhere. One Pfc. from the 101st Airborne was killed on his 21st birthday. A waiting bride had just bought her own wedding ring. A mother got flowers ordered by her son and then learned he had died the day before they arrived. A Texan had just signed up for a second two-year tour of duty when he was killed, and his ROTC instructor back home remembered with great affection that the boy, a flag-bearer, had stumbled a lot. In the state of Oregon a soldier was buried in a grave shared by the body of his brother, who had died in Vietnam two years earlier. A lieutenant was killed serving the battalion his father had commanded two years ago. A man from Colorado noted in his last letter that the Marines preferred captured North Vietnamese mortars to their own because they were lighter and much more accurate. At four that afternoon he was killed by enemy mortar fire.

Premonitions gripped many of the men. One wrote, "I have given my life as have many others for a cause in which I firmly believe." Another, writing from Hamburger Hill, said, "You may not be able to read this. I am writing it in a hurry. I see death coming up the hill." One more, who had come home on leave from Vietnam in January and had told his father he did not want to go back and was considering going AWOL, wrote last month, "Everyone's dying, they're all ripped apart. Dad, there's no one left." "I wish now I had told him to jump," the boy's father recalled. "I wish I had, but I couldn't."

Such despair was not everywhere. A lieutenant, a Notre Dame graduate, wrote home in some mild annoyance that he had not been given command of a company ("I would have jumped at the chance but there are too many Capts. floating around") and then reported with a certain pleasure that he was looking forward to his new assignment, which was leader of a reconnaissance platoon. In an entirely cheerful letter to his mother a young man from Georgia wrote, "I guess by now you are having some nice weather. Do you have tomatoes in the garden? 'A' Co. found an NVA farm two days ago with bananas, tomatoes and corn. This is real good land here. You can see why the North wants it."

There is a catalogue of fact for every face. One boy had customized his 13-year-old car and planned to buy a ranch. Another man, a combat veteran of the Korean War, leaves seven children. A third had been an organist in his church and wanted to be a singer. One had been sending his pay home to contribute to his brother's college expenses. The mother of one of the dead, whose son was the third of four to serve in the Army, insists with deep pride, "We are a patriotic family willing to pay that price." An aunt who had raised her nephew said of him, "He was really and truly a conscientious objector. He told me it was a terrible thought going into the Army and winding up in Vietnam and shooting people who hadn't done anything to him. . . . Such a waste. Such a shame."

Every photograph, every face carries its own simple and powerful message. The inscription on one boy's picture to his girl reads:

To Miss Shirley Nash
We shall let no Love come between Love.
Only peace and happiness from Heaven Above.
Love always.

Perpetually yours,
Joseph

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